



# **Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)**

## Call for proposals

Advanced Digital Skills  
(DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04)

Version 2.0  
11 May 2023



<b>HISTORY OF CHANGES</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Publication Date</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.0	28.04.2023	Initial version (new MFF).	
2.0	11.05.2023	Second version (updated table of content)	



**EUROPEAN HEALTH AND DIGITAL EXECUTIVE AGENCY  
(HaDEA)**

HADEA. B - Digital, Industry and Space  
HaDEA.B.2.01 - Digital Europe

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of advanced digital skills under the **Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- The basic act (Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2023/2024 Work Programme<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS-** Reinforcing skills in semiconductors
- **DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-** Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls

We invite you to read the **call documentation** on the Funding & Tenders Portal Topic page carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope and activities that can be funded as well as the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme (OJ L 166, 11.05.2021).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C/2023/1862 of 24.03.2023 concerning the adoption of the multiannual work programme for 2023 - 2024 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Digital Europe Programme.

- procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
- recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

You are also encouraged to visit the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform<sup>3</sup> to consult the list of projects funded previously as well as the [EU Code Week website](#)<sup>4</sup>.

## 1. Background

The Strategic Objective 4- Advanced Digital Skills aims at supporting the excellence of EU education and training institutions in digital areas, including by encouraging their cooperation with research and businesses. The goal is to improve the capacity to nurture and attract digital talent, whilst fostering an ecosystem that will help drive innovation and digital breakthroughs. These actions contribute to reach the Digital decade target of 20 million ICT specialists employed in the economy in 2030, which include promoting the access of women to this field as well as increasing the number of ICT graduates and are in alignment with the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)<sup>5</sup>. They can also contribute, where applicable, to the Deep Tech Talent Initiative<sup>6</sup>, one of the flagship initiatives under the New European Innovation Agenda<sup>7</sup> and complement the two proposals for a Council Recommendation on digital education and skills published in April 2023.

Two topics selected for this call are Reinforcing skills in semiconductors and Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls.

Semiconductors are at the core of all the technologies that will enable key policy objectives of Europe, among them the Green Deal, the digital transformation, and those addressed by the European Chips Act, including strengthening EU's resilience and sovereignty in the semiconductor value chain. The limited human resources and the lack of sufficient qualified staff with respect to the market demand might threaten these achievements. Reinforcing skills in semiconductors is thus a priority action.

The 'Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls' topic aims to respond to significant digital skills gap in Europe. Most jobs nowadays require some level of

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<sup>3</sup> <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en>

<sup>4</sup> <https://codeweek.eu>

<sup>5</sup> [Digital Education Action Plan \(2021-2027\) | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> The Deep Tech Talent initiative (<https://www.eitdeeptechtalent.eu>) is run by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). It aims to train 1 million talents in deep tech areas (incl. AI, cybersecurity, Augmented Reality, blockchain) by 2025 and will be implemented both directly by the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the EIT and through pledges from stakeholders.

<sup>7</sup> The Commission adopted a New European Innovation Agenda to position Europe at the forefront of the new wave of deep tech innovation and start-ups. It will help Europe to develop new technologies to address the most pressing societal challenges, and to bring them on the market. The New European Innovation Agenda is designed to position Europe as a leading player on the global innovation scene.

digital skills<sup>8</sup> and many companies struggle to find digitally skilled employees/workers. There is a pressing need to significantly step up the EU's collective efforts to achieve the targets of the Digital Decade Policy Programme<sup>9</sup>. Currently, only 54% of Europeans have basic digital skills, which is far below the 80% target. Moreover, currently there are around 9 million ICT specialists in the EU, which is far from the 20 million ICT specialists aimed for by 2030.

Furthermore, a huge gender gap prevails given that only one in five ICT specialists and ICT graduates are women.<sup>10</sup> This gap does not fully recognise the value of women's contributions and talent that is essential for building a Digital Europe, and therefore there is a great need to increase the pool of talent in this space.

To fill the significant shortage of sector specialists using advanced digital technologies and ICT specialists, it is necessary to increase the pool of pupils who would ultimately be interested in studying STEM and ICT and/or embarking on a digital career. The low number of ICT specialists is directly impacted by the lack of perceived attractiveness of STEM studies and career opportunities in this field. Boosting the development of digital skills from an early age and in a continuous manner is essential to influencing the level of digital skills of the EU population and the number of students of all genders considering studies and careers in ICT or digital-related fields. Moreover, evidence shows that pupils who are involved in learning about coding or computational thinking from an early age are more likely to continue studying ICT or digital-related fields, and this has an impact on the number of students choosing this study path as well as young people embarking on a digital career<sup>11</sup>.

To respond to those challenges, boosting the development of digital skills, including coding and computational thinking, from an early age is therefore essential to increase the level of digital skills of the EU population. This may also contribute to improve the number of male and female students who chose studies and a career in the digital field. Moreover, in the bilateral dialogues with Member States as part of the Structured Dialogue on digital education and skills<sup>12</sup>, many called for innovative approaches to attract young people, and especially girls, to digital careers and to encourage a mindset shift in their perception, in line with Action 13 of the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027).

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<sup>8</sup> The study "ICT for Work: Digital Skills in the Workplace" published by the European Commission in 2017 showed that 98% of workplaces require managers and 90% require professionals (e.g. engineers, doctors and nurses, teachers, accountants, software developers, lawyers and journalists), technicians, clerical workers or skilled agricultural workers to have at least basic digital skills.

<sup>9</sup> DECISION (EU) 2022/2481, 14.12.2022.

<sup>10</sup> Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022, available here: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi-human-capital>

<sup>11</sup> [https://news.microsoft.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Microsoft\\_girls\\_in\\_STEM\\_final-Whitepaper.pdf](https://news.microsoft.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Microsoft_girls_in_STEM_final-Whitepaper.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan/action-1>

## **2. Objectives – Scope – Outcomes and deliverables – KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables – Targeted stakeholders – Type of action – specific topic conditions**

### **DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS- Reinforcing skills in semiconductors**

#### Objectives

The share of students choosing semiconductors disciplines is too low to satisfy the demand required by the labour market. The shortage of employees with specific knowledge in semiconductors, and in particular the negligible share of students willing to undertake this field, has many different causes related to the low awareness of the impact of semiconductors in the society and citizens' daily life, and too low expectations in terms of prospective career and employment conditions. The problem is acute, given the gap between the labour market demands and the unavailability of both technicians and high-level graduates, and it is even more exacerbated by a strong gender imbalance. As an example, the following documents provide an alarming picture on the shortage in semiconductors and on relevant occupational profiles across Europe<sup>13 14 15</sup>.

The image of semiconductors related studies and jobs needs to be improved in this regard with a holistic approach by industry and academia, jointly addressing:

- The low awareness among the public and particularly the younger generation, of the social importance of semiconductors and its benefits for the whole society, i.e., for the green and digital transition and the targets set by the European Chips Act.
- The perception of barren and low exciting disciplines in the relevant academic curricula. It is necessary to revert the students' perception of semiconductors' topics related to their burden and difficulty rather than to their effectiveness as enablers of future innovation.
- The awareness gap on future work commitments and employment conditions. Students' experiences within the secondary school and in their private lives, can hardly provide insight into this high-tech sector. Starting from the very first classes in secondary schools is of the greatest importance for targeting students interested to approach the semiconductor sector, with particular focus on female students.

A further effort is needed to increase the workforce, i.e., the number of graduated students and of technicians, and assure the acquired skills meet the job profiles required by industry, notably addressing:

- The need to provide updated academic curricula on cutting edge topics both in theoretical knowledge and lab experience; the high pace of advancements in the semiconductors sector forces upgrades that are difficult to implement by private and public universities, and liaison with industrial stakeholders is essential to access new technologies and launch new focused high-tech educational opportunities.

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<sup>13</sup> [METIS Deliverable D2.2](#)

<sup>14</sup> [EU STEM Coalition](#)

<sup>15</sup> ["Education Indicators in Focus N°31" by the OECD, 2015.](#)



- The need of continuing vocational and education training to enhance employability, supporting personal development and encouraging re- and up-skilling. Technicians must be provided with additional training during their lifelong careers to keep up to date with new technologies and techniques.
- The obstacles faced by companies, in particular SMEs given their limited means, to get the required talents, set up initiatives to attract both technicians and graduates, and bridge the gap between education and their labour demands.

### Scope

All proposals must commit to increase the visibility and the attractiveness of semiconductors related studies and jobs, and further apply for one of the two actions described below: I) Higher Education Network or II) Vocational Training Network.

Regarding the increase of visibility and attractiveness of the semiconductors sector, consortia, through a joint effort by business and higher education institutions or VET providers, are expected to deliver:

- Communication campaigns aimed at the public to explain the impact of semiconductors in daily life and their crucial role in supporting innovation for the benefit of citizens, society, and environment.
- Events aimed at secondary school students, also including first classes, introducing basics of chips and semiconductors, as well as knowledge of educational offers, prospective career, business environment, and future employment conditions.
- Events, still aimed at secondary school students, like bootcamps, summer/winter schools, hands-on activities at business sites, providing practical experiences like i.e., open-access toolkit, highlighting how the semiconductor technologies shape the future and enable innovation.
- Actions to address gender imbalance including, for example, ambassador programmes, career orientation, scholarship programmes, collaboration with STEMinist initiatives.
- Training for secondary school teachers to highlight links between STEM disciplines and the semiconductors sector, and the STEM disciplines prospective impact in daily life activities and semiconductors-based applications.

Besides the previous listed activities, proposals must choose between one of the two actions described below: I) Higher Education Network or II) Vocational Training Network.

#### I. Higher Education Network

Consortia must commit to support the development of a European network of degree-awarding higher education institutions, businesses and other relevant institutions active in semiconductors. The members of the Higher Education Network must work together to identify industry needs, to improve the matching between these needs

and the content of current academic curricula (hereafter education programmes) and strive to increase the number of enrolled and graduated students.

The Higher Education Network is also required to establish long-term sustainable partnerships among the members of the consortium able to sustain the activities envisaged by the call even after the project end and to award an increasing number of students with continuity over the years. Both Bachelor's and Master's (at ISCED LEVEL 6,7 or equivalent) can be targeted.

The education programmes considered for this action must focus on one or more of the following areas of the semiconductor sector:

1. Chips Design – it is the process of designing an integrated circuit, implemented by laying out basic miniaturised elements, such as transistors, and their interconnections, onto a piece of semiconductor substrate, typically silicon, in order to perform specific functions. Chip design is usually carried out using electronic design automation tools.
2. Chips Manufacturing – it is the process used to manufacture semiconductor devices and integrated circuit such as computer processors, microcontrollers, and memories, that are present in everyday electrical and electronic devices. It is a multiple-step sequence of photolithographic and physico-chemical processing steps to create electronic circuits on a wafer of semiconducting material.
3. Packaging – it is the process used to aggregate and interconnect components, integrated circuits, and multiple devices in a single electronic device. It includes, for example, multi-chip modules, heterogeneous integration, fan-out wafer-level packaging, system-in-package, die stacking, chiplets package, through electrical, mechanical and photonics techniques.

In particular, the consortium must address the following specific tasks:

- Identify industry needs of the European semiconductor market, notably in the listed areas 1 – 3. This task should be completed in short time with the help of the business partners in the consortium and of available public data.
- Revise the existing education programmes already run by the higher education institutions of the consortium, to address specific needs and to ensure future graduates be experts in the listed areas 1 - 3.
- List the courses to be updated, the university laboratories to be upgraded, the enrolment of new teaching staff and/or the training of existing teaching staff, and any other action needed to fulfil the education programme revision.
- Upgrade the content of courses reflecting the leading-edge topics of the today's semiconductors development in the selected areas 1- 3. The contents must be clearly specified and jointly discussed with business to assure the best matching with requirements of the labour market.
- Upgrade equipment within laboratories in higher education institutions. These labs must be clearly linked to one or more courses of the selected education programmes and be functional to their learning activities. The upgrade must

be jointly agreed with business to assure the best matching with requirements of the labour market.

- Organise learning activity in companies' premises, like internships or courses delivered by business experts. The activity must be vetted by higher education institutions as part of the education programme. The consortium must clearly explain the business contribution and how the teaching activity integrates within the education programme.
- Start-ups and SMEs active in semiconductors, regardless of whether they are partners of the project consortium, must be involved as hosts of students' internships.
- The contents of the upgraded courses need to be agreed across the higher education institutions of the consortia to eventually lead to an automatic recognition of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) across higher education institutions to facilitate students' mobility.
- Enact specific initiatives addressing migrants and immigrants to ease their enrolment and attendance during the whole curriculum period.
- Provide financial support to students to: reward excellence, attract female candidates, support candidates from socially vulnerable families or immigrants.
- Consortia commit to deliver the updated education programmes for at least three cycles, regardless the duration of the action.
- Explain the added value that the new designed education programmes and the upgraded courses bring to existing education offer, as delivered in the latest academic years prior to this action.

## II. Vocational Training Network

Consortia must commit to support the development of a network among business and Vocational and Educational Training (VET) providers and academia, aimed to address the need of new and continuing vocational training for workforce in semiconductors.

Training shall enhance employability in the semiconductors sector. The specific topics of training will be fine-tuned based on input received from industry members and emerging from the analysis carried out by the consortium.

The members of the consortium are required to establish long-term sustainable partnerships in given local contexts, able to sustain the activities envisaged by the call even after the project end and to deliver training on semiconductors with continuity over the years.

Consortia shall also commit to the recognition of specific hard and soft semiconductors VET courses across Europe to foster worker mobility and job transition. Innovative teaching and learning methods supporting fully digital and blended learning functionalities may be experimented so that the training contents can be accessed by the widest cohort of prospective users across Europe.

Consortia shall also identify business and industry sectors with workforce surplus as prospective sources for workers in need of mobility and to set up specific courses and incentives to support job transfer.

Training shall be built on a modular approach, with stand-alone and self-sustained modules that can be delivered as individual learning courses or be part of a full curriculum. The modular approach ensures flexibility for the trainee in terms of design, delivery and learning.

The training modules shall be built in more structured programmes, depending on the length of the training (i.e., from few days to several months), depth of content, and validation mechanisms of the acquired competences.

In particular, Consortia must suggest innovative approaches to attract talents and re-/up-skill workforce and commit to:

- Identify urgent industry needs in semiconductors skills, notably considering input by business members. Consortia are required to provide evidence of the identified needs and the areas to be addressed. This task should be completed in short time with the help of the business partners in the consortium and of available public data.
- Define new and/or adapt current VET courses' contents according to the identified needs.
- Deliver VET courses for young employees, the future workforce. The courses must be practical and provide specific knowledge about semiconductor technologies and their applications.
- Deliver VET courses for upskilling and reskilling the current labour force to fit semiconductors needs. The courses must be practical and provide specific knowledge about semiconductor technologies and their applications.
- The consortia must deliver specific courses and set up initiatives addressing employability for migrants and immigrants.
- Consider learning activity in companies' premises, like for example internships, apprenticeships, traineeships and alternate learning. The activity must be vetted by VET providers as part of the student curriculum. The consortium must clearly explain the business contribution and how the teaching activity integrates within the VET programmes.
- Start-ups and SMEs active in semiconductors, regardless of whether they are partners of the project consortium, must be involved as hosts of the students' learning activities and apprenticeships.
- The contents of courses, when considering MOOCs and microcredentials<sup>16</sup>, as well as broadly recognised industry certifications, need to be agreed at least across VET providers of the consortia to eventually lead to an automatic

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<sup>16</sup> Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability

recognition across institutions in order to easy individual learning and facilitate job transition.

- Consortia must explain the added value that the new courses delivered by VET providers bring to existing education offer in place prior to this action.

Proposals are highly encouraged to cover the following points under the RELEVANCE criteria:

- Explain how the activities to reach out public and secondary schools' students address the need to increase awareness on semiconductors and on semiconductors ability to shape future daily life.
- Explain the relevance of the proposed activities for secondary schools' students and teachers in the long-term.
- Explain how the education programmes or the VET courses address the labour market needs and will contribute to train specialist in semiconductors.
- Explain how the education programmes or the VET courses are designed to take into consideration all relevant new developments and trends regarding semiconductors technologies and responsiveness to labour market needs.

Proposals are highly encouraged to cover the following points under the IMPLEMENTATION criteria:

- Explain how the public initiatives will be organized and offered with the involvement of relevant higher education institutions and businesses.
- Explain how the secondary school will be involved in the design and delivery of events for students and for teachers.
- Explain how initiatives for public and/or secondary school students, drawing attention to the importance of STEM disciplines for the development of the semiconductors sector, will be delivered through concrete, direct and user-friendly approaches.
- Explain how the project will explore the use of business innovative facilities and equipment to rise interest of secondary school's students on semiconductors.

For the Higher Education Network

- Clearly outline the structure of the education programmes, with identification of leading-edge disciplines and describe differences and improvements with respect to the education programmes as delivered in the latest academic years prior to this action. All education programmes must result in a certification released by the higher education institutions.
- Explain how courses and university laboratories to be upgraded will be selected and their relevance in the education programme with the areas 1 – 3.
- Organize actions to encourage the mobility of the teaching staff across the institutions that are part of the consortia, in particular between the business

and higher education institutions and to incentivise employment of high-quality teaching staff.

- Explain whether and how students will be financially supported e.g., via scholarships, fee waivers or others. This support should also aim to promote diversity in terms of gender, social and economic background and easy enrolment and attendance of migrants and immigrants.
- Explain how the new education programmes will be vetted by the higher education institutions and relevant authorities, the starting date and the minimum number of cycles the consortium commits to deliver the new education programmes.
- Provide evidence of the consortium commitment to establishing a long-term sustainable partnership between the members, beyond the planned cycles, and how the consortium intends to disseminate information on the delivered activity.
- Provide evidence of the organization of internships and courses at business's premises and of the involvement of SMEs as host of students' internships.

#### For Vocational Training Network

- Clearly outline the structure of the VET courses, the improvements with respect to the courses as delivered prior to this action and their relevance for the semiconductors sector.
- Explain whether and how the consortium commits to organize bootcamps or hands-on activities on specific semiconductors topics as part of the VET programmes.
- Explain how the consortium will encourage the mobility of the teaching staff across its members, in particular between the business and VET providers.
- Explain how trainees will be financially supported e.g., via scholarships, fee waivers or others. This support should also aim to promote diversity in terms of gender, social and economic background and easy enrolment and attendance of migrants and immigrants.
- Explain how the new VET courses will be vetted by the relevant authorities, the starting date, and the timescale for their delivery.
- Provide evidence of the consortium commitment to establishing a long-term sustainable partnership between the members and how the consortium intends to disseminate information on the delivered activity.
- Provide evidence of the organization of internships, apprenticeships, traineeships and alternate learning at business's premises and of the involvement of SMEs as host of students' internships and apprenticeships.

### Outcomes and deliverables

Proposals are highly encouraged to demonstrate, under the IMPACT criteria, that by the end of the action:

- Communication initiatives toward the public have been delivered in all countries of the beneficiaries via national or international media/social media. Both physical events and contents published online must be considered.
- Local or regional programmes and events to target secondary schools' students, including for example summer/winter schools based on practical learning activities, introductory seminars, on-the-job experiences, and visits to business facilities etc. have been provided.
- Training events for secondary school teachers have been delivered.

For the Higher Education Network

- Existing courses and university laboratories used for the teaching activities have been upgraded for the delivery of the education programmes jointly by the partners of the consortium.
- Updated education programmes using the ECTS system with capacity for at least 500 students/year across at least 5 Member States, for both BSc and MSc levels, are offered and taught to students in all higher education institutions participating in the action.
- Support through a scholarship programme or other initiatives has been provided to at least 10% of the students taking part to the education programmes.
- The education programmes have been adequately promoted, and information is available on the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform.
- Quality assurance and quality monitoring mechanism have been put in place by the Consortium, to ensure that the courses remain relevant and up to date.
- Number of students attending a course or learning activities delivered by business experts in companies' premises, as part of the education programme, has increased with respect to the existing education offer in place prior to this action.

For Vocational Training Network

- VET courses have been designed and updated jointly by the partners of the consortium.
- VET courses with capacity for at least 1000 trainees/year across at least 5 Member States are offered and taught to trainees in all VET providers participating in the action.
- Support through a scholarship programme or other initiatives has been provided to trainees to take part to the education activities.

- The training courses have been adequately promoted, and information is available on the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform.
- Quality assurance and quality monitoring mechanism have been put in place by the Consortium, to ensure that the courses remain relevant and up to date.
- Number of trainees attending training activities delivered by business experts in companies' premises, as part of the training programme, has increased with respect to the existing training offer in place prior to this action.

#### *KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables*

- Number of communication initiatives delivered toward the public.
- Number of persons attending physical events and number of visitors or dimension of the audience for online events.
- Number of events targeting secondary schools' students, including for example a summer/winter schools, introductory seminars, on-the-job experiences, and visits to business facilities and number of involved students.
- Number of training events for secondary school teachers.
- Number of partners from countries where semiconductors skills levels are low, according to the Digital Economy and Society Index.

#### For the Higher Education Network

- Number of higher education institutions in the consortia offering the upgraded education programmes.
- Number of updated education programmes in selected semiconductor areas and listed on the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform.
- Numbers of courses, seminars and lectures delivered by expert of businesses (member/non-member of the consortium) included in the education programmes.
- Number of cooperation agreements signed with industry partners, involving sharing of technical equipment and/or facilities.
- Number of agreements with start-ups and SMEs hosting students' learning activities.
- Number of students enrolled to the education programmes (gender, educational background, country of origin).
- Number of students who have successfully completed the education programmes foreseen by the action (gender/educational background, country of origin).
- Number of students benefitting from the support (financial or other).
- Number of students benefitting from mobility across partners of the education programmes (courses attended in businesses or in higher education institutions different from the enrolling one).

#### For Vocational Training Network

- Number of courses delivered.
- Number of applications received per course.
- Number of selected participants.



- Number of participants that have successfully completed the course (gender/educational background, country of origin), i.e., number of certifications/diplomas issued.
- Number of participants benefitting from the support (financial or other).
- Numbers of courses, seminars and lectures delivered by expert of businesses (member/non-member of the consortium).
- Number of SMEs that have been involved in the training activities.
- Number of participants that have rated the courses as satisfactory in terms of teaching and learning methods.

### Targeted stakeholders

The consortium should demonstrate a good balance between semiconductors businesses and higher education institutions or VET providers in Europe. Research and technology organizations, research centres or foundations, and any other institution active in the semiconductors sector can be part of the consortium.

Moreover, the consortium should include organisations able to deliver communication events toward public and secondary schools, and all members must provide evidence of complementarity of their roles for the delivery of the actions requested by the call.

Particular attention should be given to:

- Widening the education offer across Member States and encouraging the inclusion in the consortium of organisations particularly in countries that lag behind and where semiconductors skills levels are low, according to the Digital Economy and Society Index.
- Ensuring inclusivity of public or private bodies that are not currently already engaged in other European projects addressing skills in microelectronics and semiconductors.

Higher education institutions and VET providers participating to this action must explain the added value that the designed education and training activities bring to existing education offer, as delivered in the latest years prior to this action. Participating businesses must clearly explain their contribution to the objectives of the action.

### Type of action

Simple Grants — 50% funding rate



For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

### Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (*see section 6*)
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation and full cost for listed equipment (*see section 10*)
- For this topic, financial support to third parties is allowed (*see section 10*)

- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
  - extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union\*
  - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance\*
  - extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects\*

### **DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls**

#### Objectives

To boost the digital skills of young people, the European Commission currently is, among many other activities, supporting the EU Code Week, which is a grassroots initiative launched in 2013 that aims to spread computational thinking, coding, computing and related digital skills such as robotics, AI, hardware, app making, etc. to as many people as possible. At the heart of EU Code Week are volunteers – Code Week ambassadors and leading teachers – from around the world. Code Week takes place throughout the year with a peak of activities celebrating coding in October. Often Code Week activities are used as an icebreaker to lower the barriers to integrating programming and technology in everyday teaching practices (beyond STEM subjects) in an innovative and engaging way. Code Week can help more young people to discover and master the basics of coding and computational thinking and make them interested in pursuing studies and careers in computing/computer science and in advanced digital technologies. EU Code Week, thus, supports the targets of the Digital Education Action Plan to cut in half the number of 13-14-year-olds who underperform in computing and digital literacy. It also supports the digital skills targets of the Pathway to the Digital Decade to equip 80% of the population with basic digital skills as well as to increase the talent pool, which can contribute to the intended increase of the number of ICT specialists to 20 million by 2030. Given that half of all EU Code Week participants are female, the initiative also supports closing the gender gap in ICT specialists and graduates in the EU.

The first objective of the selected project is to scale up the EU Code Week initiative to spread computational thinking and coding to as many people as possible, focusing particularly on young people, teachers and schools. This action will support putting the EU Code Week initiative on stronger and broader footing, thus further increasing its impact beyond the millions of people reached every year, among whom almost 50% are young women and girls.

The second objective of the selected project is to put a strong emphasis on boosting the digital skills of young people, particularly of girls, to encourage them to pursue studies in STEM disciplines and take up a career in ICT. While both girls and boys have similar levels of interest and competence in digital technologies at primary school level, fewer girls go on to develop this interest at secondary school level, take up studies in the ICT domain, or eventually a career in the digital field. Role models and support - to overcome lack of confidence and negative stereotypes - are often missing for girls and young women. Furthermore, courses and activities are often not tailored sufficiently to their specific needs and interests. Moreover, in the bilateral dialogues with Member States as part of the structured dialogue, many countries also called for innovative approaches to attract especially girls to digital studies and

careers and to encourage a shift in their mindset. The selected proposal is therefore expected to include dedicated activities by increasing the pool of young people, and in particular girls, who would be interested in studying STEM and ICT and/or embarking on a digital career. In addition, the proposal is expected to run strategic initiatives involving the full continuum across all sectors of education to promote digital studies through hands-on activities and challenge-based projects (from primary education to secondary and higher education, and even from as early as early childhood education), including also encouraging cooperation with industry to develop these activities.

### *Scope*

The selected project should address all of the following listed activities:

(1) Scaling up the EU Code Week initiative in all EU Member States, EFTA and candidate countries by:

- Managing the network of volunteer EU Code Week ambassadors, as well as volunteer leading teachers and coordinators at the education ministries or other educational authorities and organisations, by engaging them on different channels (including creating central and national communication channels), and regularly bringing these communities together in physical as well as online meetings to discuss ideas and prospects for upcoming Code Week editions, to strengthen the community spirit (e.g. by organising team activities), and to strengthen cross-border collaborations among community members, schools and students<sup>17</sup>;
- Expanding the volunteer network by focusing more on attracting a younger audience (students and young professionals) to contribute to the initiative by organising activities and supporting communication actions around Code Week;
- Managing the wider community of tens of thousands of teachers and coding enthusiasts and incentivising them to organise, register and participate in EU Code Week activities (including coding festivals, hackathons<sup>18</sup>, etc.);
- Running year-round innovative communication and engagement campaigns at European and national level (including paid promotion campaigns and working with influencers), taking care of existing (and possibly new) EU Code Week social media channels<sup>19</sup> (including engaging with the audience, providing

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<sup>17</sup> For managing the community, the consortium is encouraged to set up a “EU Code Week presidency” system involving ambassadors, a selection of leading teachers and the coordinators at the Education ministries or other educational authorities and organisations. The presidency of the Code Week could rotate among the EU member states in periodic intervals (e.g. every 6 months). During this period, the consortium could be supported by the EU Code Week presidency in organising and chairing community meetings (either in Brussels or at Member State level of the country with the current presidency).

<sup>18</sup> Consortia are highly encouraged to take into account the EU Code Week Hackathon Handbook when preparing the proposal, that serves as a guide on how to plan and organise online Code Week hackathons, available here: <https://codeweek-dev.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/hackathons/CodeWeekHackathonHandbook.docx>.

<sup>19</sup> After signature of the grant, the consortium of the selected proposal will be provided with access to all existing social media accounts, including Twitter: <https://twitter.com/codeweekeu>; Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/codeEU/>; Facebook group for teachers: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/774720866253044/>;

content in English as well as in different national languages), taking into account the social media audit performed in 2023<sup>20</sup>, as well as developing, procuring and sending out goodies (e.g. t-shirts, bags, etc.) and taking care of the existing email mailboxes<sup>21</sup>;

- Upskilling, training and empowering teachers as well as school leaders in the areas of coding, computational thinking, digital literacy and the wider field of digital education via a multitude of activity types, such as MOOCs<sup>22</sup>, TeachDays<sup>23</sup>, study groups, webinars, etc.
- Incentivising schools and teachers to become active in EU Code Week (including via upscaling the Code Week School Label<sup>24</sup>, providing grants to schools/teachers to organise initiatives/events at local level<sup>25</sup>, etc.);
- Developing, managing and maintaining the EU Code Week website (<https://codeweek.eu>)<sup>26</sup>, supporting multilingual content and interaction, including translating new content into 29 languages<sup>27</sup>, as well as improving the website taking into account the UX audit performed in 2023<sup>28</sup>, as well as a proposal how to implement gamification mechanics on the website<sup>29</sup>, and taking into account security assessment performed in 2023<sup>30</sup>;
- Providing accessible and easy-to-use resources, including coding challenges, learning bits, videos, and podcasts in English. A large part of these resources should also be translated into local languages. The educational resources provided should maintain a fun and interactive approach, be appealing to pupils and have a multidisciplinary character applicable also to non-ICT subjects.

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Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/codeweekeu/>;

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/codeweek/>; YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/CodeWeekEU>. The consortium is also encouraged to explore and create official Code Week accounts on other social networking channels relevant for supporting the Code Week goals and attracting more participants.

<sup>20</sup> <https://codeweek-s3.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/docs/EU+Code+Week+Social+Media+Audit+Final.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> [info@codeweek.eu](mailto:info@codeweek.eu); [school@codeweek.eu](mailto:school@codeweek.eu); [media@codeweek.eu](mailto:media@codeweek.eu).

<sup>22</sup> Example of a previous Code Week MOOC: <https://codeweek.eu/view/391506/eu-code-week-online-bootcamp-mooc>.

<sup>23</sup> Example of 2021 EU Code Week Teach Day: <https://codeweek.eu/teach-day>.

<sup>24</sup> Further information on the School Label pilot can be found here: <https://blog.codeweek.eu/eu-code-week-is-piloting-its-school-label>.

<sup>25</sup> Supported with grants of up to EUR 10 000 via financial support to third parties (FSTP).

<sup>26</sup> After signature of the grant, the consortium of the selected proposal will be provided with access to the structure, content and resources of the EU Code Week website, which currently runs on Amazon Web Services (AWS) and is currently run by the European Commission. The website shall migrate to infrastructure under the contractor's responsibility.

<sup>27</sup> Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Maltese, Montenegrin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian.

<sup>28</sup> <https://codeweek-resources.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Code+Week+2022+UX+Audit+February2023.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> <https://codeweek-s3.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/docs/Code+Week+2023+-+Gamification+Proposal.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> As soon as the contract is signed, the consortia will be provided with the results of the security assessment conducted by the European Commission in 2023. The next generation of the EU Code Week website should address the weaknesses identified by the UX audit as well as the security assessment, as well as take a more streamlined approach as to the implementation of the Code Week objectives. This would include reorganisation and reassessment of the degree the existing system reflects and achieves the Code Week goals. Nevertheless, all legacy Code Week data and operations, its past resources and history commitments should be maintained in the evolution to the new system.

- Strengthening the network of coordinators at the education ministries or other educational authorities and organisations;
- Providing support to the national networks to strengthen the cooperation and collaboration at national level between ambassadors, leading teachers and coordinators at the education ministries or other educational authorities and organisations, where needed.
- Facilitating cross-country collaborations between ambassadors, leading teachers and coordinators at the education ministries or other educational authorities and organisations from different participating countries in order to encourage implementation of joint Code Week activities and sharing of best practices.
- Managing existing relations with EU Code Week partners and building up new partnerships with key stakeholders (e.g. libraries, makerspaces, coding clubs, non-profit organisations, etc.) and actors from industry, with a particular emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as start-ups and companies with headquarters located in the European Union and eligible countries, and involving them in back-to-school visits in which companies and organisations lend their staff to schools or coding clubs for Code Week activities;
- Developing new and innovative Code Week elements (e.g., launching best practice competitions, creating a new community of leading principals, etc.).
- Conducting accompanying impact studies to demonstrate how participation in Code Week activities impacts pupils' learning outcomes and acquired digital skills. Input from the community of ambassadors, leading teachers and coordinators at the education ministries or other educational authorities and organisations on the collection and analysis of data should be encouraged.
- Providing high quality documentation for a possible handover of the EU Code Week initiative as well as the EU Code Week website after the end of the project duration.

For the planning of all the activities listed above, as well as new EU Code Week activities proposed, it is of fundamental importance that the grassroots nature and the values<sup>31</sup> of EU Code Week shall be at the heart of the planning and execution of the project. The selected project needs to embed this principle and respect the values in all the actions and services it provides. This is why it is highly recommended to ensure that the relevant stakeholders (EU Code Week ambassadors, leading teachers and coordinators at the education ministries or other educational authorities and organisations<sup>32</sup>) are consulted and/or involved directly when the proposal is drafted. It is also highly recommended that the project builds upon the previous editions of EU Code Week, maintaining the continuity and brand of this initiative.

(2) To increase the pool of young people, and in particular girls, who would ultimately be interested in studying STEM and ICT and/or embarking on a digital career, by running strategic initiatives, including:

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<sup>31</sup> <https://codeweek.eu/our-values>.

<sup>32</sup> For a list of all community members, see: <https://codeweek.eu/community>

- Introducing training activities for pre-school educators on how to introduce concepts including computational thinking and coding to pre-school children, e.g., by running unplugged activities.
- Running free-of-charge courses or camps during holidays, evenings or weekends on digital topics targeted predominantly at girls attending primary or secondary schools, whereby preferably female teachers should be involved in the teaching to act as role models<sup>33</sup>.
- Organising extracurricular afternoon activities throughout the school year to keep pupils attending the above-mentioned courses/camps still engaged in the subject.
- Organising career days targeted at pupils attending secondary schools and young people interested in opting for a career in ICT or digital-related fields, collaborating with female ICT specialists that can act as role models.
- Providing study guidance/information events targeted at pupils attending secondary schools, their parents as well as young people.
- For pupils attending secondary schools as well as young people interested in enrolling in a study programme, providing access to state-of-the-art laboratories, in order to enable them to experience the campus facilities and to follow seminars at higher education institutions from the most renowned experts in quantum computing, cybersecurity, AI, cloud, etc.
- Running targeted awareness raising campaigns (e.g., together with influencers), with a focus on debunking stereotypes, tackling self-efficacy and confidence gaps of particularly girls and young women related to digital skills and breaking preconceptions (of girls, but also of parents and teachers) about the accessibility of tech careers, with special attention to and on International Girls in ICT Day.
- Developing a sustainability plan to enable actions developed to be integrated at national level in ad hoc development plans ensuring the continuation of the initiatives engaged.

The selected proposal is encouraged to launch open calls for participation through financial support to third parties (FSTP). The maximum amount of FSTP, distributed through a grant, is EUR 10 000 per third party (e.g., not-for-profit schools or non-governmental organisations like a coding club) for the entire action duration. These calls could cover the funding for running Code Week events or camps/courses organised by schools or by non-governmental organisations (e.g., coding clubs). The grants could cover costs for purchasing hardware (tablets, robotics, etc.), software, reimbursement of expenses for travel and accommodation (e.g., guest speakers/invited teaching staff) and catering. FSTP can also be provided in the form of prizes (e.g., for smaller competitions among pupils, etc.). The total financial support to third parties can amount to up to 10% of the EU funding.

The selected consortium is also expected to seek links and cooperations established with other existing international, European and national networks, initiatives and

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<sup>33</sup> Such courses or camps could be organised by the project consortium, or directly by third parties (e.g. schools or non-governmental organisations) receiving financial support to third parties (FSTP).

programmes in the field, boosting digital skills of young people as well as tackling the digital gap of girls and women, like the Girls Go Circular (<https://eit-girlsgocircular.eu/about>), the EU STEM coalition (<https://www.stemcoalition.eu/programmes>), Women in Tech (<https://women-in-tech.org>) and Supernovas (<https://www.eitmanufacturing.eu/what-we-do/cross-kic-transversal-activities/supernovas/>). Moreover, collaboration with other EU initiatives (e.g., eTwinning, Erasmus+ for mobility for teachers) is also encouraged.

Finally, collaboration with Digital Europe Programme consortia already awarded under the first work programme (DIGITAL-2021-SKILLS-01-SPECIALISED and DIGITAL-2022-SKILLS-03-SPECIALISED - Specialised education programmes in key capacity areas) would be particularly welcomed for setting up visits of higher education institutions, sharing / promoting / reusing adequate training resources.

Proposals are highly encouraged to cover the following points under the RELEVANCE criteria:

- Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in section 2
  - Describe how the proposal addresses the specific objectives and scope of the call;
  - Describe how the proposal addresses all of the expected activities listed under section 2 of this document;
  - Describe the proposed methodology to scale up the EU Code Week initiative;
  - Describe the proposed methodology to increase the pool of young people, and in particular girls, who would be ultimately interested in studying STEM and ICT and/or embarking on a digital career, and to what extent the full continuum across all sectors of education is covered by the different activities proposed;
  - Describe how to demonstrate positive impacts of different elements of the proposal on learning processes and outcomes (e.g., on the level of digital skills).
  
- Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level in these areas
  - Describe how the project contributes to the Digital Education Action Plan and other long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies in the area of digital education, digital skills and women/girls in ICT;
  - Describe how the project is planning to seek links and cooperations established with other existing international, European and national networks, initiatives and programmes in the area of digital education, digital skills and women/girls in ICT, as well as with Digital Europe Programme consortia already awarded under the first work programme (DIGITAL-2021-SKILLS-01-SPECIALISED and DIGITAL-2022-SKILLS-03-SPECIALISED - Specialised education programmes in key capacity areas).

Proposals are highly encouraged to cover the following points under the IMPLEMENTATION criteria:

- Maturity of the project
  - Describe the state of preparation and the readiness to start the implementation of the proposed activities as soon as the Grant Agreement is signed.
- Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources
  - Describe the work plan including work packages, tasks, deliverables, milestones and timing to reach the project's objectives;
  - Describe the resource allocation to work packages, tasks and partners;
  - Describe the organisational structure, decision-making processes, management structures and measures for quality assurance and quality monitoring;
  - Describe the management of the financial support to third parties (if applicable);
  - Identify critical (and relevant) risks, relating to project implementation and achievement of project objectives, as well as the risk-mitigating measures.
- Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable of the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work
  - Describe how the consortium as a whole matches the project's objectives and requirements mentioned under "targeted stakeholders";
  - Explain how the members complement one another by having a clear role and how each member contributes to the proposed work.

Proposals are highly encouraged to cover the following points under the IMPACT criteria:

- Describe how the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals
  - Provide key performance indicators that are specific, measurable, ambitious (yet realistic), relevant and time-bound;
  - Describe the European dimension of the project and how wide geographical coverage is foreseen.
- Describe in detail the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements and how to tailor these activities to the needs of different target audiences
- Describe in detail how the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society
  - Describe in detail how the project will seek cooperation key stakeholders (e.g., libraries, makerspaces, coding clubs, non-profit organisations, etc.) and actors from industry, with a particular emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as start-ups and companies with headquarters located in the European Union and eligible countries;



- Describe in detail how to cooperate with and involve education policy makers (mainly Ministries of Education) and other education stakeholders.

### *Outcomes and deliverables*

The selected project shall work strategically and combine all the deliverables and activities listed under scope, in order that:

- The digital skills of young people, and particularly those of girls, are boosted;
- The pool of pupils, who would ultimately be interested in studying STEM and ICT and/or embarking on a digital career in the future, is increased;
- Awareness is raised about the relevance of digital skills, including of coding and computational thinking, among pupils, teachers, school leaders and parents;
- Teachers, educators and schools are empowered in their digital transformation;
- Stereotypes and preconceptions (of girls, but also of their parents and teachers) regarding the accessibility of tech careers are debunked; and
- Self-efficacy of girls regarding digital skills is strengthened.

For the entire action, measures for quality assurance and quality monitoring need to be put in place by the consortium. The project should also include measures to demonstrate positive impacts of different elements of the proposal on learning processes and outcomes (e.g. on the level of digital skills, on the level of interest in taking up ICT career or studies, etc.) as well as to run satisfaction surveys.

### *KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables*

KPIs regarding Objective 1 (scaling up EU Code Week) should include as a minimum:

- Number of activities registered on the EU Code Week website (minimum target in year 1: 70 000, minimum target in year 2: 100 000);
- Number of participants (minimum target in year 1: 2.5 million, minimum target in year 2: 3 million), share of female participants, and age of participants reported on the EU Code Week website;
- Number of teachers and school leaders successfully completing a Code Week training (minimum target per year: 2 000);
- Number of teachers in the EU Code Week Facebook group for teachers (minimum target: 35 000);
- Number of EU Code Week ambassadors (minimum 1 in each EU Member State) and active leading teachers (minimum 500);
- Number of community events at EU level, including number of participants (minimum 1 in-person meeting per year taking place in Brussels and at least 1 in-person meeting per year taking place in another EU Member State, as well as a minimum of 2 online events per year);

- Number of events at national level, including number of participants, strengthening the national collaboration between ambassadors, leading teachers and correspondents in Ministries of Education or other educational authorities and organisations.

Furthermore, consortia are encouraged to provide additional KPIs regarding objective 1 (scaling up EU Code Week):

- Number of learning materials developed which is made accessible and promoted on the EU Code Week website;
- Share of learning materials translated into national languages;
- Number of followers on EU Code Week social media accounts;
- Number of feedback actions involving the Code Week community to generate new community ideas and to involve the community in strategy development (minimum 2 activities per year);
- Number of implemented community ideas (minimum 1 per year);
- Number of reward actions for the active Code Week community (e.g., School Label, certificates, distribution of Code Week goodies, grants, prizes, etc.);
- Number of interactive activities involving teachers, parents and students (e.g. challenges, coding@home activities);
- Number of established partnerships with external stakeholders.

KPIs regarding **Objective 2** (i.e., increasing the pool of young people, particularly girls, who would be interested in studying STEM and ICT and/or embarking on a digital career) should include as a minimum:

- Number of Member States reached with the different activities, ensuring inclusivity by putting the focus on those Member States that lag behind regarding the number of women in ICT and percentage of female ICT students;
- Number of courses or camps delivered during holidays, evenings or weekends;
- Number of extracurricular activities organised;
- Number of career days organised;
- Number of study guidance/information events organised;
- Number of pupils visiting higher education institutions, e.g., state-of-the-art laboratories, experiencing campus facilities and/or following seminars;
- Number of awareness raising campaigns conducted.

Furthermore, consortia are encouraged to provide additional KPIs regarding **Objective 2** (i.e., increasing the pool of young people, particularly girls, who would be interested in studying STEM and ICT and/or embarking on a digital career):

- Number of applications received per course/camp organised;
- Number of selected participants per course/camp;

- Number of participants that have successfully completed the courses/camps;
- Number of certifications issued per course/camp (if applicable);
- Number of participants that have rated the summer school as satisfactory in terms of teaching and learning methods;
- Number of participants per career day;
- Number of participants per study guidance/information event;
- Number of influencers engaged per awareness raising campaign;
- Number of links and cooperations established with other existing international, European and national networks, initiatives and programmes in this field.

### Targeted stakeholders

The selected consortium for this proposal should be composed of a minimum of four applicants from four different eligible countries, each taking over the leading role in one of the following pillars of activities:

- Education, pedagogy and community building
- Communication and social media channels
- Information system development and management
- Impact assessment

The full consortium is expected to cover the following skills:

- a) Excellent project management skills with a proven track record of managing EU-wide projects and consortia in the areas of digital education and digital skills;
- b) Excellent communication campaign skills and experience in reaching out via communication and dissemination activities (including on social media) to all EU Member States, EFTA and candidate countries;
- c) A deep understanding of how the school and university systems in these countries are organised, as well as proven regular contacts with representatives of education ministries, school agencies or equivalent in the same countries;
- d) A deep knowledge of the general education landscape, both in schools as well as at higher education level, and in informal learning settings that take place e.g. in libraries and code clubs and other opportunities in the respective countries;
- e) A deep understanding of the gender digital divide as well as a proven track record of projects or initiatives to overcome gender stereotypes regarding the update of STEM studies and digital careers;
- f) Vast experience in stakeholder engagement and networking and community management of stakeholders coming from different countries and sectors/levels of education and training;

- g) Deep knowledge and expertise in developing, maintaining and managing the IT infrastructure, particularly covering the information system supporting business processes, data organisation (including data analysis), professional web development and the design of user interface and experience. This includes knowledge and expertise in designing and maintaining reliable and high-performing web-based applications and services focusing on both the underlying software and databases (back-end) as well as on its interface and visual design (front-end) and professional web development;
- h) Vast experience in organising training courses and workshops for educators (online and in person):
- i) Vast experience in organising courses/camps;
- j) Vast experience in event organisation of online and on-site events, including experience in managing international hackathons with a large audience;
- k) Deep knowledge of conducting accompanying impact studies to demonstrate positive impacts of different elements of the proposal on learning processes and outcomes as well as to conduct satisfaction surveys.
- l) For all activities, the selected consortium is encouraged to seek cooperation with key non-governmental organisations as well as actors from industry. Cooperation with companies with headquarters located in Europe is particularly encouraged.

In order to implement a mainstreaming and sustainability approach of the results, the selected consortium is also encouraged to cooperate with and involve education policy makers (mainly Ministries of Education) and other education stakeholders.

### Type of action

CSA — 100% funding rate



For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1

### Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (*see section 6*)
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation and full cost for listed equipment (*see section 10*)
- For this topic, financial support to third parties is allowed (*see section 10*)
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
  - extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union\*
  - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance\*
  - extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects\*

### 3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 16 000 000**.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below.

Topic	Topic budget
<b>DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS- Reinforcing skills in semiconductors</b>	<b>EUR 10.000.000</b>
<b>DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT- Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls</b>	<b>EUR 6.000.000</b>

We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

### 4. Timetable and deadlines

<b>Timetable and deadlines (indicative)</b>	
Call opening:	11 May 2023
<b><u>Deadline for submission:</u></b>	<b><u>26 September 2023 – 17:00:00 CEST (Brussels)</u></b>
Evaluation:	October to November 2023
Information on evaluation results:	December 2023
GA signature:	June 2024

### 5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable section 4*).

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠️ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded WHEN APPLICABLE ONLY*):

For topic DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS- Reinforcing skills in semiconductors

- detailed budget table: not applicable
- CVs of core project team: not applicable
- activity reports of last year: not applicable
- list of previous projects: **applicable**
- ownership control declaration: not applicable
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For topic DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls

- detailed budget table: not applicable
- CVs of core project team: not applicable
- activity reports of last year: not applicable
- list of previous projects: **applicable**
- ownership control declaration: not applicable

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **70 pages** (Part B) but **50 pages** (Part B) for **CSA** (DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

## 6. Eligibility

### *Eligible participants (eligible countries)*

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
  - non-EU countries:
    - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Digital Europe Programme ([associated countries](#)<sup>(OBI)</sup>) or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc (*see section 13*).


### *Specific cases*

**Natural persons** — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

**International organisations** — International organisations are not eligible, unless they are International organisations of European Interest within the meaning of Article 2 of the Digital Europe Regulation (i.e. international organisations the majority of whose members are Member States or whose headquarters are in a Member State).

**Entities without legal personality** — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons.

**EU bodies** — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

**Associations and interest groupings** — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'<sup>34</sup>.  Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

<sup>34</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (see *above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

*Following the [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022, no legal commitments (including the grant agreement itself as well as subcontracts, purchase contracts, financial support to third parties etc.) can be signed with Hungarian public interest trusts established under Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals. However, in case the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties). In this case, co-applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.*

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)<sup>35</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>36</sup>). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).



For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by:

- for topic DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS- Reinforcing skills in semiconductors

a consortium composed of a minimum 5 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 5 different eligible countries.

- for topic DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls

a consortium composed of a minimum of 4 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 4 different eligible countries.

### Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Projects should take into account the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

<sup>35</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>36</sup> Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).



Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc*).

Financial support to third parties is allowed in:

-DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS- Reinforcing skills in semiconductors

-DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls

for grants under the following conditions:

- the calls must be open, published widely and conform to EU standards concerning transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality;
- the calls must be published on the Funding & Tenders Portal, and on the participants' websites;
- the calls must remain open for at least two months;
- if call deadlines are changed this must immediately be published on the Portal and all registered applicants must be informed of the change;
- the outcome of the call must be published on the participants' websites, including a description of the selected projects, award dates, project durations, and final recipient legal names and countries;
- the calls must have a clear European dimension.

Your project application must clearly specify why financial support to third parties is needed, how it will be managed and provide a list of the different types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support. The proposal must also clearly describe the results to be obtained.

### Security

Projects involving EU classified information must undergo security scrutiny to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules (detailed in a security aspects letter (SAL) which is annexed to the Grant Agreement).

These rules (governed by Decision [2015/444](#)<sup>37</sup> and its implementing rules and/or national rules) provide for instance that:

- projects involving information classified TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET (or equivalent) can NOT be funded
- classified information must be marked in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the SAL
- information with classification levels CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/ EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may be:
  - created or accessed only on premises with facility security clearing

<sup>37</sup> See Commission Decision 2015/544/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

- (FSC) from the competent national security authority (NSA), in accordance with the national rules
- handled only in a secured area accredited by the competent NSA
- accessed and handled only by persons with valid personnel security clearance (PSC) and a need-to-know
- at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continued to be protected in accordance with the applicable rules
- action tasks involving EU classified information (EUCI) may be subcontracted only with prior written approval from the granting authority and only to entities established in an EU Member State or in a non-EU country with a security of information agreement with the EU (or an administrative arrangement with the Commission)
- disclosure of EUCI to third parties is subject to prior written approval from the granting authority.

Please note that, depending on the type of activity, facility security clearing may have to be provided before grant signature. The granting authority will assess the need for clearing in each case and will establish their delivery date during grant preparation. Please note that in no circumstances can we sign any grant agreement until at least one of the beneficiaries in a consortium has facility security clearing.

Further security recommendations may be added to the Grant Agreement in the form of security deliverables (*e.g. create security advisory group, limit level of detail, use fake scenario, exclude use of classified information, etc*).

Beneficiaries must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third-country security requirements that could affect implementation or put into question the award of the grant (*e.g. technology restrictions, national security classification, etc*). The granting authority must be notified immediately of any potential security issues.

## 7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

### Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
  - an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
  - prefinancing paid in instalments
  - (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)
- or
- propose no prefinancing
  - request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Implementation' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their operational capacity via the following information:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

### Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>38</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

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<sup>38</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>39</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>40</sup>:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

## 8. Evaluation and award procedure

The proposals will have to follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An **evaluation committee** (composed or assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria (*see sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their scores.

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:

Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:


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<sup>39</sup> Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

<sup>40</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- 1) Proposals focusing on a theme that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked proposals will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) The ex aequo proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Implementation'.
- 3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall proposal portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between proposals, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

 No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.*

**Grant preparation** will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (*see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)*). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

## 9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

- **Relevance**
  - Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in section 2
  - Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level
  - Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the EU\*
  - Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance\*
- **Implementation**

- Maturity of the project
- Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources
- Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work
  
- **Impact**
  - Extent to which the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements
  - Extent to which the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society
  - Extent to which the project addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects \*

*\*May not be applicable to all topics (see specific topic conditions in section 2).*

<b>Award criteria</b>	<b>Minimum pass score</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>
Relevance	3	5
Implementation	3	5
Impact	3	5
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>

Maximum points: 15 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 3/5, 3/5 and 3/5 points.

Overall threshold: 10 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding – within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

## **10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements**

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

*Starting date and project duration*

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons - but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration:

- 48 months for topic DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS- Reinforcing skills in semiconductors
- 24 months for topic DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

### Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

- additional deliverable on dissemination and exploitation, to be submitted in the first six months of the project

### Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (*maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc*) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5*).

Project budget (maximum grant amount):

- EUR 5 M per project for topic DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS- Reinforcing skills in semiconductors
- EUR 6 M per project for topic DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement. This rate depends on the type of action which applies to the topic, *see section 2*. Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc*).

### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 6*).

#### *Budget categories for this call:*

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.1 Financial support to third parties (for DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS-Reinforcing skills in semiconductors;DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls)
  - D.2 Internally invoiced goods and services
- E. Indirect costs

#### *Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:
  - average personnel costs (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>41</sup>: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit costs<sup>42</sup>: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs:
  - depreciation + full cost for listed equipment (for topics DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS-Reinforcing skills in semiconductors; DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls)
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties allowed for grants:

<sup>41</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

<sup>42</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).



- for topics DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-SEMICONDUCTORS-Reinforcing skills in semiconductors; maximum amount per third party EUR 60 000 and maximum of the 20% of the EU funding unless a higher amount is required because the objective of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to achieve and this is duly justified in the Application Form.
  - for topics DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-04-BOOSTINGDIGIT-Boosting digital skills of young people, in particular girls: maximum amount per third party EUR 10 000 and maximum of the 10% of the EU funding unless a higher amount is required because the objective of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to achieve and this is duly justified in the Application Form.
- internally invoiced goods and services (costs unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
  - indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs.
  - VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
  - other:
    - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
    - kick-off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
    - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible

### Reporting and payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22*).

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **50%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required) – whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more **interim payments** (with cost reporting through the use of resources report

**Payment of the balance:** At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

Please note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

### Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4*). The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement.

### Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the grant agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24*).

### Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet point 4.4 and art 22*).

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
  - unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
- or
- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

### Provisions concerning the project implementation

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5):*

- background and list of background: Yes

- protection of results: Yes
- exploitation of results: Yes
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access to results for policy purposes: Yes
- access rights for the granting authority to results in case of a public emergency: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: Yes
- Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5):*
- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- dissemination of results: Yes
- additional communication activities: Yes
- special logo: No

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5):*

- specific rules for PAC Grants for Procurement: No
- specific rules for Grants for Financial Support: No
- specific rules for blending operations: No

#### Other specificities

n/a

#### Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).



For more information, see [AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

### **11. How to submit an application**

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

#### **a) create a user account and register your organisation**

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EU Login account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

#### **b) submit the proposal**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

## 12. Help

As far as possible, ***please try to find the answers you need yourself***, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- [FAQs on the Topic page](#) (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

### Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions contact: [Here](#)

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (see cover page).

## 13. Important



### IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).  
Organisations may participate in several proposals.  
BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).

- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

This includes:

- beneficiary names
- beneficiary addresses
- the purpose for which the grant was awarded
- the maximum amount awarded.

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection** — The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).



**Annex 1****Digital Europe types of action**

The Digital Europe Programme will use the following actions to implement grants:

**Simple Grants**

**Description:** The Simple Grants are a flexible type of action used by a large variety of topics and can cover most activities. The consortium will mostly use personnel costs to implement action tasks, activities with third parties (subcontracting, financial support, purchase) are possible but should be limited.

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

**SME Support Actions**

**Description:** Type of action primarily consisting of activities directly aiming to support SMEs involved in building up and the deployment of the digital capacities. This type of action can also be used if SMEs need to be in the consortium and make investments to access the digital capacities.

**Funding rate:** 50% except for SMEs where a rate of 75% applies;

**Payment model:** Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

**Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)**

**Description:** Small type of action (a typical amount of 1-2 Mio) with the primary goal to support EU policies. Activities can include coordination between different actors for accompanying measures such as standardisation, dissemination, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning exercises and studies, including design studies for new infrastructure and may also include complementary activities of strategic planning, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries.

**Funding rate:** 100%

**Payment model:** Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

**Grants for Procurement**

**Description:** Type of action for which the main goal of the action and thus the majority of the costs consist of buying goods or services and/or subcontracting tasks. Contrary to the PAC Grants for Procurement (*see below*) there are no specific procurement rules (i.e. usual rules for purchase apply), nor is there a limit to 'contracting authorities/entities'. Personnel costs should be limited in this type of action; they are in general used to manage the grant, coordination between the beneficiaries, preparation of the procurements.

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

**PAC Grants for Procurement**

**Description:** Specific type of action for procurement in grant agreements by 'contracting authorities/entities' as defined in the EU Public Procurement Directives

(Directives 2014/24/EU , 2014/25/EU and 2009/81/EC) aiming at innovative digital goods and services (i.e. novel technologies on the way to commercialisation but not yet broadly available).

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

### **Grants for Financial Support**

**Description:** Type of action with a particular focus on cascading grants. The majority of the grant will be distributed via financial support to third parties with special provisions in the grant agreement, maximum amounts to third parties, multiple pre-financing and reporting obligations.

Annex 5 of the model grant agreements foresees specific rules for this type of action regarding conflict of interest, the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management as well as the selection procedure and criteria.

In order to assure the co-financing obligation in the programme, the support to third parties should only cover 50% of third party costs.

**Funding rate:** 100% for the consortium, co-financing of 50% by the supported third party

**Payment model:** Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance sub-grants) – payment of the balance

### **Framework Partnerships (FPAs) and Specific Grants (SGAs)**

#### **FPAs**

**Description:** An FPA establishes a long-term cooperation mechanism between the granting authority and the beneficiaries of grants. The FPA specifies the common objectives (action plan) and the procedure for awarding specific grants. The specific grants are awarded via identified beneficiary actions (with or without competition).

**Funding rate:** no funding for FPA

#### **SGAs**

**Description:** The SGAs are linked to an FPA and implement the action plan (or part of it). They are awarded via an invitation to submit a proposal (identified beneficiary action). The coordinator of the FPA has to be the coordinator of each SGA signed under the FPA and will always take to role of single contact point for the granting authority. All the other partners of the FPA can participate in any SGA. There is no limit to the amount of SGAs signed under one FPA.

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

### **Lump Sum Grant**

**Description:** Lump Sum Grants reimburse a general lump sum for the entire project and the consortium as a whole. The lump sum is fixed ex-ante (at the latest at grant signature). The granting authority defines a methodology for calculating the amount of the lump sum. There is an overall amount, i.e. the lump sum will cover the beneficiaries' direct and indirect eligible costs. The beneficiaries do not need to report

actual costs, they just need to claim the lump sum once the work is done. If the action is not properly implemented only part of the lump sum will be paid.

**Funding rate:** 50%

**Payment model:** Prefinancing – second (third) prefinancing (as there is no cost reporting) – final payment

**Annex 2****Eligibility restrictions under Articles 12(5) and (6) and 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation****Security restrictions Article 12(5) and (6)**

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, and if justified for security reasons, topics can exclude the participation of legal entities *established* in a third country or associated country, or established in the EU territory but *controlled* by a third country or third country legal entities (including associated countries)<sup>43</sup>.

This restriction is applicable for SO1 (High Performance Computing), SO2 (Artificial Intelligence) and SO3 (Cybersecurity), but at different levels.

- In the case of SO3, the provision is implemented in the strictest way. When activated, only entities established in the EU and controlled from EU MS or EU legal entities will be able to participate — with no exceptions.
- In SO1 and SO2, entities controlled by third countries or third country legal entities may be able to participate if they comply with certain conditions set up in the Work Programme. To that end, additional rules will be imposed on those legal entities, which need to be followed if they want to participate.

The activation of this article will make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

**Strategic autonomy restrictions Article 18(4)**

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, calls can limit the participation to entities *established* in the EU, and/or entities established in third countries associated to the programme for EU strategic autonomy reasons<sup>44</sup>.

The application of this article will make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.



For more information, see *the Guidance on ownership control restrictions in EU grants*.

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<sup>43</sup> See Article 12(5) and (6) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694

<sup>44</sup> See Article 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694.