



Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

Call for proposals

CEF 2 Transport - Projects related to smart and interoperable mobility – Cohesion envelope

(CEF-T-2023-SIMOBEOEN)

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EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)

CINEA.B – Sustainable networks and investments
CINEA.B.1 – CEF Transport: Northern Europe, Austria + MoS and ERTMS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals in the field of Transport under the **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)**.

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (CEF Regulation [2021/1153](#)¹).

The call is launched in accordance with the CEF Transport Work Programme 2021-2027² and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

Topics under this call are linked³ to other CEF Transport calls: (CEF-T-2023-CORECOEN, CEF-T-2023-COMPCOEN, CEF-T-2023-COMPGEN, CEF-T-2023-COREGEN, CEF-T-2023-SAFEMOGEN, CEF-T-2023-SIMOBICOEN, CEF-T-2023-SIMOBGEN and CEF-T-2023-SUSTMOGEN). The grants under both calls will be managed as linked projects.

The call covers the following **topic**:

- CEF-T-2023-SIMOBICOEN-ERTMS-UNITS: Smart applications for transport - ERTMS – unit contribution

Each project application under the call must address only one topic. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic, must submit a separate proposal under each topic. Furthermore, the same application can only be submitted to one call and one topic.

Transfer of applications between calls and/or topics will not be made.

NOTE: The term 'project' used in this call, the application form and other documents is synonymous to the term 'action' used in the CEF Regulation 2021/1153.

We invite you to read the **call documentation** 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, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (OJ L 249, 14.7.2021, p. 38).

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2023) 4886 of 25.7.2023 amending Implementing Decision C(2021) 5763 final on the financing of the Connecting Europe Facility - Transport sector and the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2027.

³ Twinned proposals concern the same project submitted under different calls and/or topics. Each proposal will be evaluated on its own merits – and based on the award criteria detailed in the Call document while taking into account the twinning with other applications. This means that when submitting twinned proposals, the applicant must cross-reference the twinned proposal(s) in Parts A and B of the application form.

- 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:
 - 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 [CINEA website](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

This call resorts under the Connecting Europe Facility 2021-2027 – multiannual work programme for the transport sector. The programme has the general objective to build, develop, modernise and complete the trans-European networks, taking into account the Union long-term decarbonisation commitments, and thus to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to enhance territorial, social and economic cohesion. It shall contribute to the development of projects of common interest relating to efficient, interconnected, and multimodal networks and infrastructure for sustainable, smart, interoperable, inclusive, accessible, resilient, safe and secure mobility. It shall contribute to more sustainable modal composition of the transport system, in order to meet EU climate neutrality and zero pollution ambitions by 2050.

CEF contributes to the EU goal of climate-related spending and decarbonising transport. In accordance with the European Green Deal, CEF 2021-2027 will target a contribution of 60% of its overall financial envelope to co-financing projects supporting climate objectives and moving fast towards zero-emission mobility. A methodology to track climate expenditures against the targets set has been developed by the Commission and will be applied to all projects under CEF.

The implementation of the multiannual work programme aims at contributing to the completion of the Trans-European Networks - Transport (TEN-T), thereby further enhancing sustainable and smart mobility. It is expected that granting of support on the basis of this multiannual work programme will contribute to the timely and efficient development of the TEN-T Core Network, support the realisation of a robust and resource-efficient European transport system and address climate change in accordance with the European Green Deal.

The granted support will directly contribute, inter alia, to the achievement of important transport policy objectives, such as establishing major interoperable transport axes interconnecting national networks and facilitating the functioning of the internal market, the optimal use of existing infrastructure capacities, improving the safety and reliability of the network, fostering cohesion and cross-border mobility, enhancing accessibility of peripheral areas of the Union, enhancing an integrated multimodal approach aiming at shifting a considerable part of transport that currently takes place by road towards more sustainable transport modes, increasing the capacity and performance of rail, inland waterways and short sea shipping infrastructure, contributing to a more balanced modal distribution, and reducing the negative environmental impacts of transport, in particular as regards GHG emissions.

In the context of the evaluation and selection of proposals, the assessment of the award criterion "Priority and urgency" will, where relevant, also take into account:

- the new situation created by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;
- the Commission communication on Solidarity Lanes (COM/2022/217/Final);
- the "100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities" announced by the Commission on 28 April 2022.

In addition, under this call, the improvement of the transport infrastructure resilience, in particular the additional investments to adapt/upgrade the intended infrastructure to climate change, natural disasters and/or cyber security threats can also be part of the project proposal, if relevant for the project.

2. Objectives – Themes and priorities – Activities that can be funded – Expected impact

CEF-T-2023-SIMOBEOEN-ERTMS-UNITS: Smart applications for transport – ERTMS – unit contribution

Objective: The general objective is to modernise transport infrastructure on the Core and Comprehensive Networks of the TEN-T and facilitate interoperable railway traffic in EU.

Scope: In accordance with the Article 9(2)(b)(ii) of the CEF Regulation, the following works will be supported:

- European Rail Traffic Management Systems (ERTMS) on-board and track-side deployment with a priority to rolling out ERTMS on the entire Core Network. Projects shall be:
 - compliant with Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1695⁴, and with Directive (EU) 2016/797⁵ and Directive (EU) 2016/798⁶ of the European Parliament and of the Council or subsequent versions;
 - at least baseline 3 (B3) compliant - the set of specifications #2 or #3 in table A2.2 or A2.3 of the Annex to Regulation (EU) 2016/919 as amended by Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/776⁷, or subsequent versions;
 - introduce modularity at the interoperability constituent level as specified in Annex 1 Table B3 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1695⁴;
 - supported in the form of unit contributions as defined in the Commission Decision authorising the use of unit costs to support the deployment of ERTMS under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) – Transport⁸.

Support for retrofitting will be limited to vehicles that have been put into operation before 31/12/2020. Support will not be given to fitment of new vehicles.

Projects covering interlocking and/or GSM-R works as a stand-alone project shall demonstrate link with ETCS deployment on the railway lines in subject.

⁴ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1695 of 10 August 2023 on the technical specification for interoperability relating to the control-command and signalling subsystems of the rail system in the European Union and repealing Regulation (EU) 2016/919

⁵ Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the interoperability of the rail system within the European Union (*OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, p. 44*).

⁶ Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on railway safety (recast) (*OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, p. 102*).

⁷ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/776 of 16 May 2019 amending Commission Regulations (EU) No 321/2013, (EU) No 1299/2014, (EU) No 1301/2014, (EU) No 1302/2014, (EU) No 1303/2014 and (EU) 2016/919 and Commission Implementing Decision 2011/665/EU as regards the alignment with Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council and the implementation of specific objectives set out in Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2017/1474

⁸ Decision authorising the use of unit contributions to support the deployment of ERTMS, electric vehicles recharging infrastructure and the retrofitting of noisy wagons under CEF Transport – 22 July 2021, <https://transport.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-07/2021-07-22-ertms-af-noise.pdf>

Where relevant, ERTMS actions should be coordinated with 5G corridors deployment. Investments in GSM-R, need at least to study and take into account the future upgradability to FRMCS⁹.

3. Indicative budget

The indicative call budget is **EUR 150 000 000**.

Depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation, we reserve the right:

- To use the flexibility provided in the 2021-2027 Work Programme to exceed the indicative call budget or;
- Not to award the entire indicative call budget.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	26 September 2023
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>30 January 2024 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	February - June 2024
Information on evaluation results:	July 2024
GA signature:	September - October 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:

⁹ FRMCS- Future Railway Mobile Communication System, a 5G based railway communication system being developed by UIC and the railway and telecommunication sectors.

- 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** (*templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table per WP/calculator
 - activity reports of last year (unless exempted from operational capacity check; *see section 7*)¹⁰
 - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*)¹¹
 - timetable/Gantt chart
 - agreement of the concerned¹² Member State (letter of support)

For applications concerning projects subject to an EIA¹³, you may include a summary of the climate proofing process in the Portal Submission System under “*Other Annexes*”.

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

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**.

¹⁰ Public bodies, Member State organisations, and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check. Also, beneficiaries of grants under CEF 1 and 2 are not required to submit this annex.

¹¹ Public bodies, Member State organisations, and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check. Also, beneficiaries of grants under CEF 1 and 2 are not required to submit this annex.

¹² Letters of support are signed by the Member State benefitting from the project.

¹³ If the key steps for the EIA (i.e. an environmental impact assessment report prepared by the project promoter and consultations carried out under the EIA Directive) have been completed before 18 January 2023, it is not required to provide information on the climate proofing process of the infrastructure. It is however recommended to use such Guidance where possible. If the key steps for the EIA have been completed after 18 January 2023, the applications are under the obligation to submit the information on the climate proofing process, taking into account the Commission Notice: [Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027, C\(2021\)5430 of 29 July 2021](#).

Proposals are limited to maximum **120 pages** (Part B). 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.:
 - be established in one of the Member States eligible for funding from the Cohesion Fund¹⁴

Project applications located in associated third countries are eligible for funding in the present calls under the conditions set out in Article 8(1) of the TEN-T Regulation (EU) N° 1315/2013 and Articles 5(2) and 9(2) of the CEF Regulation (EU) 2021/1153.

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

Exceptional funding – Entities from other countries (not listed above) are exceptionally eligible for projects of common interest in the field of transport if the granting authority considers their participation essential for the implementation of the project.

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 eligible. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

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 persons¹⁵.

EU bodies – EU bodies can NOT be part of the consortium.

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)*¹⁶ and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)¹⁷). Such entities are not eligible

¹⁴ Only applicants from countries that are eligible to the Cohesion Fund according to Annex IV of the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1130 are eligible to submit proposals under this call for proposals.

¹⁵ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹⁶ 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](#).

¹⁷ 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).

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

Not applicable

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).

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 not allowed.

Geographic location (target countries)

Proposals must relate to activities taking place in the eligible countries (*see above*).

Duration

See section 10.

Project budget

Project budgets (maximum grant amount) of any amount are admitted.

In order to ensure efficiency in EU funding interventions, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications for projects with a total requested EU contribution to the eligible costs of no less than EUR 1 000 000. Where possible, related projects should be grouped and submitted as one proposal.

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 'Quality' 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 capacity via the following information:

- description of the consortium participants (in the application form part B), if applicable
- applicants' activity reports of last year
- 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.

Public bodies, Member State organisations, international organisations and current CEF1 and CEF2 beneficiaries are exempted from the operational capacity check.

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 participate¹⁸:

¹⁸ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- 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)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct¹⁹ (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 EU Regulation [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 rejected if it turns out that²⁰:

- 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** (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 against the operational capacity and award criteria and then ranked according to their scores (*see sections 7 and 9*).


¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

For proposals with the same score a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:

1. Score obtained under the 'Priority and urgency' criterion
2. Score obtained under the 'Maturity' criterion
3. Score obtained under the 'Catalytic effect' criterion
4. Score obtained under the 'Impact' criterion
5. Score obtained under the 'Quality' criterion.

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 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 will be 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:

- 1. Priority and urgency:** evaluating correspondence of the proposal with the sectoral policy objectives and priorities, measuring its EU added-value and where applicable assessing the possible synergies with other sectors (5 points)
- 2. Maturity:** assessing the maturity of the project in the project development. The criterion will measure, among others: the readiness/ability of the project to start by the proposed start date and to complete by the proposed end date, the status of the contracting procedures and of the necessary permits, and information on the financial availability needed to complement the CEF investment (5 points)
- 3. Quality:** evaluating the soundness of the implementation plan proposed, both from the technical and financial point of view, the architecture and design approach, the organisational structures put in place (or foreseen) for the implementation, the risk analysis, the control procedures and quality management and the communication strategy. Moreover, when applicable, it will also assess the information related to the maintenance strategy proposed for the completed project (5 points)
- 4. Impact:** assessing, when applicable, the economic, social and environmental impact, including the climate impact, and other relevant externalities. This

criterion may be substantiated by a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) or, in the absence of such tool, other forecast of end-user take-up, in which case the evaluation will look at the soundness, comprehensiveness, and transparency of the analysis as well as proposed means to monitor its impact. Moreover, when applicable, the criterion will assess, among others, the innovation and digitalisation, safety and interoperability and accessibility aspects of the proposal, as well as its cross-border dimension effect/contribution to the network territorial accessibility (5 points)

- 5. Catalytic effect:** evaluating the effect of the EU financial assistance on the realisation of the project, for instance by overcoming a financial gap generated by insufficient commercial viability, high upfront costs or the lack of market finance, increasing the capacity to mobilise differentiated investments sources, improving the quality of the project or accelerating the overall investment plan (5 points).

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Priority and urgency	3	5
Maturity	3	5
Quality	3	5
Impact	3	5
Catalytic effect	3	5
Overall (pass) scores	15	25

Maximum points: 25 points.

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

Overall threshold: 15 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). 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. A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

The foreseen duration of the works and mixed²¹ projects should be 4-5 years maximum. For studies projects it should be 2-3 years maximum. In both cases, the end date set in the Grant Agreement will not be later than 31.12.2028.

During implementation of the projects, if duly justified, extensions may be granted through an amendment to the Grant Agreement.

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.

Beneficiaries will also be invited to check and update information from the MAP-IT tool regarding network allocation and output indicators.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant will be a unit grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount per unit, based on unit costs, unit contributions or financing not linked to costs.

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3, art 6 and Annex 2*).

Budget categories for this call²²:

- A. Contributions for on-board ERTMS
 - A.1 Retrofitting
 - A.2 Upgrade
 - A.3 Fitment
- B. Contributions for track-side ERTMS
 - B.1 Deployment
 - B.2 Upgrade

Specific cost eligibility rules for this call:

- the unit grant amount must be calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the unit decision and using the calculator provided (if any)
- eligible cost country restrictions: Yes, only costs/contributions for activities carried out in eligible countries or target countries are 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 **pre-financing** to start working on the project. The amount will be established based on the grant type or estimated project duration at the time of grant signature and will vary between 25% and 50%.

²¹ The total duration for mixed proposals should not be longer than 4-5 years whilst the study components within these projects should be completed within 2-3 years.

²² [Decision](#) of 22 July 2021 authorising the use of unit contributions to support the deployment of ERTMS, electric vehicles recharging infrastructure and the retrofitting of noisy wagons under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) – Transport Sector.


The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required – whichever is the latest).

There may be one or more **interim payments** (with detailed cost reporting).

In addition, you will be expected to submit one or more progress reports not linked to payments.

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 be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us – in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (*see art 22*).

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs/units 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)*

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5):*

- communication and dissemination plan: No
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

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

- Member State information: Yes
- specific rules for digital infrastructure projects: No
- specific rules for ATM common projects: No
- durability: Yes
- 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 EULogin 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 project) 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
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions)
- call information on the [CINEA website](#).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates.

Contact

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: CINEA-CEF-TRANSPORT-CALLS@ec.europa.eu. Please submit your questions²³ no later than two weeks before the submission deadline. Questions received after 16 January 2024 will not be answered.

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

²³ Interested applicants are invited to see first if a question is already answered from the existing FAQs published on the [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](#) portal.

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).

- **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 produce 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 action). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be 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 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.

- **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](#).