



# **Creative Europe Programme (CREA)**

## **Call for proposals**

NEWS - Journalism Partnerships  
(CREA-CROSS-2024-JOURPART)

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## EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

EACEA.B – Creativity, Citizens, EU Values and Joint Operations  
**EACEA.B.2 – MEDIA**

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of the Cross Sectoral Strand under the **Creative Europe Programme**.

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (Creative Europe Regulation [2021/818](#)<sup>1</sup>).

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

 Please note that this call is subject to the final adoption of the budget by the EU budgetary authority. In case there are substantial changes, we may have to modify the call (or even cancel it).

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **CREA-CROSS-2024-JOURPART-COLLABORATIONS**  
**“NEWS – Journalism Partnerships - Collaborations”**
- **CREA-CROSS-2024-JOURPART-PLURALISM**  
**“NEWS – Journalism Partnerships – Pluralism”**

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic, must submit a separate proposal under each topic. 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](#).

<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027) (OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 34).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2023)6084 of 14/09/2023 amending Implementing Decision C(2021)3563 on the financing of the Creative Europe Programme for 2021-2025 and the adoption of the work programmes for 2021, 2022, and 2023.

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)
  - 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 [Creative Europe Project Results](#) website to consult the list of projects funded previously.

## 1. Background

Creative Europe brings together actions supporting the European cultural and creative sectors.

The general objectives of the Programme are:

- to safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage;
- to increase the competitiveness and the economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audiovisual sector.

These goals are pursued through the following specific objectives:

- enhancing artistic and cultural cooperation at the European level, in order to support the creation of European works and strengthen the economic, social and external dimensions and innovation and mobility in Europe's cultural and creative sectors (**CULTURE strand**);
- promoting the competitiveness, scalability, cooperation, innovation, and sustainability, including through mobility in the European audiovisual sector (**MEDIA strand**);

- promoting policy cooperation and innovative actions supporting all strands of the Programme, promoting a diverse, independent and pluralistic media environment, and media literacy, thereby fostering freedom of artistic expression, intercultural dialogue and social inclusion (**CROSS SECTORAL strand**).

The general and specific objectives of the Programme take into account the dual nature of the cultural and creative sectors, recognising, on the one hand, the intrinsic and artistic value of culture and, on the other, the economic value of those sectors, including their broader contribution to growth and competitiveness, creativity and innovation. The objectives are pursued in a way that encourages inclusion, equality, diversity and participation, including, where appropriate, specific incentives that encourage the active participation in the cultural and creative sectors of people with disabilities, people belonging to minorities and people belonging to socially marginalised groups, including both the creative process and audience development; and gender equality, in particular as a driver of economic growth, innovation and creativity.

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

### Objectives

Within the specific objective to promote policy cooperation and innovative actions supporting all strands of the Programme and to promote a diverse, independent and pluralistic media environment and media literacy, thereby fostering freedom of artistic expression, intercultural dialogue and social inclusion, the priorities of the cross-sectoral strand shall include:

- to promote cross-sectoral activities that aim at adjusting to the structural and technological changes faced by the media, including enhancing a free, diverse, and pluralistic media environment, quality journalism and media literacy including in the digital environment.

### Themes and priorities (scope)

The Cross Sectoral Strand shall provide support to cross-cutting actions that support the news media sector, which shall:

- address the structural and technological changes faced by the media sector by promoting an independent and pluralistic media environment, including by supporting independent monitoring for assessing risks and challenges to media pluralism and freedom, and by supporting awareness-raising activities;
- support high-quality media production standards by fostering cooperation, digital skills, cross-border collaborative journalism, and quality content, thereby contributing to professional ethics in journalism.

The European news media sectors play a crucial and valuable role in Europe. Yet, they are facing multiple challenges. Partially as a result of the digital shift, with readers shifting to online sources and traditional news outlets losing advertising revenues, the economic sustainability of professional journalism has come under pressure. Many media at the local level as well as those putting their public interest mission before profits, have had to close down, weakening media pluralism and posing risks for the good functioning of democracy.

This call therefore addresses media challenges and opportunities of a trans-national nature by supporting projects that address one of the following two topics:

**Topic 1. “Journalism Partnerships - Collaborations”** aims to help the wider European news media sector become more sustainable and resilient, specifically by supporting cross-border media collaborations. This support shall foster media transformation, trustworthy reporting and skills for news media professionals, for instance by developing media production standards and new business models.

**Topic 2. “Journalism Partnerships - Pluralism”.** Besides a purely economic aspect, independent media play a crucial and valuable role in societies and contribute to upholding the essential principles of media freedom and pluralism. This support seeks to protect news media sectors of special relevance to democracy and civic participation, such as local and regional media, community media, investigative journalism and organisations delivering public interest news. Support will target organisations with experience in media to put in cascading grants (i.e. regranting / support to third parties).

*Activities that can be funded (scope)*

**Topic 1: CREA-CROSS-2024-JOURPART— COLLABORATIONS**

**“NEWS – Journalism Partnerships - Collaborations”**

This topic seeks to help the wider European news media sector become more sustainable and resilient, including small media. Support is foreseen for collaborative projects in and between any news media (sub)sector and/or genre that aim to enhance cooperation, help media adapt to new economic and consumption realities and instil systemic change across that sector.

The proposed activities should be clearly justified and based on the needs of the chosen (sub)sector(s).

Activities can be diverse, as long as their relevance is backed up by a solid needs analysis of the targeted sector(s), and helping the chosen (sub)sector(s) address identified challenges.

Projects must focus on ways to develop collaborative transformation, from a business, technological and/or content point of view.

Projects can aim to develop, inter alia, better revenue and monetisation models, new approaches to audience development, community-building and marketing, development of common professional/technical standards, new types of newsrooms, syndication networks or other models to exchange content/data between news media across the EU, or provide assistance to small media organisations. Content-wise, they can aim to increase efficiency and the quality of reporting through innovative journalistic collaborations. Projects can test innovative production methods and formats, or contribute to high-quality media production standards in other collaborative ways. Projects can aim to increase exchanges of best practices among journalists and optimise workflows for those journalism genres requiring more time and resources.

Proposals may address one or more of the priorities outlined above, if relevant and based on the needs analysis.

To this end, projects can include events, online trainings and workshops for media professionals, exchange programmes, mentoring schemes, mapping of best practices, sector-wide development of technical standards, development of guidelines and editorial standards, production of practical guidebooks, development and testing of

platforms and technical solutions to exchange ideas and best practices, promotional activities, or other activities that aim to uphold the viability of the sector. Sharing of best practices between operators in media markets/countries/regions with different and diverse characteristics (in terms of languages, production volumes, sizes, digitalisation levels etc.) is encouraged, to promote mutual learning. Applicants are encouraged to consider activities supporting media sectors lacking the means of adapting to the digital environment.

Financial support to third parties will be accepted in projects which foresee exchange programmes for journalists and other media professionals, support to attend trainings or events, support to journalists and media outlets for collaborative journalistic projects, support for legal advice, support for the acquisition, development or maintenance of technical tools for collaborative journalism, support for events in these fields and/or prizes for collaboration or innovation. In such cases, applicants must define the terms under which this financial support to third parties would take place and ensure a fair and transparent process. (please also refer to Section “Eligible activities”)

In all cases, projects must include concrete deliverables and set clear, objectively verifiable and quantifiable performance indicators for the mid-term and the end of the project. The estimated reach must be more precise than the sum of available distribution channels, and should be substantiated by a detailed outreach plan as well as proof of interest from the target groups.

All projects need to respect widely accepted professional media standards. The chosen standards should be indicated in the proposal and confirmed with a signed Declaration on Standards & Independence (Annexed to the Application form; please refer to Section 5 “Admissibility and Documents”). Partnerships involving editorial work must operate with full editorial independence.

All Partnerships should consider the ecological footprint of the activities they propose, and where relevant, describe the strategies to ensure a more sustainable and environmentally-respectful media sectors.

## **Topic 2: CREA-CROSS-2024-JOURPART— PLURALISM**

### **“NEWS – Journalism Partnerships - Pluralism”**

This topic covers media sectors that are particularly relevant for democracy. Certain sectors having an important role for democratic debate lack the means to adapt to the digital environment, and phenomena such as shrinking newsrooms or media deserts can lead to a deterioration of pluralism. Support is thus needed for them to improve their position, adapt their methods, continue providing a first-hand source of original reporting to citizens, help keep decision-makers accountable and ultimately contribute to a more diverse and independent sector. Proposals must put in place funding schemes for news media entities and independent journalism. Accompanying activities may be proposed. Applicant organisations should be in a position to set up funding schemes (support to third parties) targeting news media outlets, organisations and, if needed, professionals, and in ways that enhance pluralistic media landscapes across the European Union. Non-profit and civil society organisations are particularly encouraged to apply.

The proposed activities must focus on news media sectors of special relevance to democracy and civic participation, i.e. the role they play in enhancing democracy, shaping the public debate and bringing benefits to their audiences and communities, instead of focusing just on profit. For the purpose of this call, these sectors are in particular:



- Local and regional media
- Independent and investigative journalism
- Organisations delivering public interest news/public service journalism (such as community, legal and civic journalism and media, news increasing transparency about the media)

Applicants must present, develop and implement a fund for independent media and organisations primarily active in one or more of these sectors. The funding schemes shall take the form of financial support to third parties. They will cover as many areas and news media organisations as possible.

These funding schemes shall focus on activities that contribute to sustaining, improving or transforming the work of the targeted parties. Activities can among others consist of:

- Innovations in editorial production (e.g. formats, content), coverage and revenue models
- The improvement of distribution and dissemination of news
- The development and engagement of audiences and community-building strategies
- The development of technical tools applying to the above topics
- Training on the above topics

In addition to funding schemes, accompanying activities to the fund can be proposed (e.g. development of deontological and governance standards, budgetary readiness, development of criteria and indicators framing their support, repositories of knowledge, legal advice or trainings).

While putting in place a fund is compulsory, accompanying activities are optional, if relevant and based on the needs analysis.

A majority of the budget must be spent in the European union and activities must take place in a minimum of four (4) European Union countries. Proposals should focus on areas with low provision of the specific news described above or in media markets where media pluralism is strained. The needs of smaller newsrooms may also be addressed.

Activities must include concrete deliverables and set clear, objectively verifiable and quantifiable performance indicators for the mid-term and the end of the project. The estimated reach must be more precise than the sum of available distribution channels, and should be substantiated by a detailed outreach plan as well as proof of interest from the target groups.

All projects need to respect widely accepted professional media standards. The chosen standards and criteria should be indicated in the proposal and confirmed with a signed Declaration on Standards & Independence (Annexed to the Application form; please refer to Section 5 "Admissibility and Documents". In cases of support given to editorial work, third parties need to operate with full editorial independence.

All Partnerships should consider the ecological footprint of the activities they propose, and where relevant, describe the strategies to ensure a more sustainable and environmentally-respectful media sectors.

#### Expected impact

- Increased innovation and creativity in business models, journalistic production processes and distribution processes;

- Increased interest in journalism, among various social groups, language groups and age groups;
- Increased viability of professionally produced journalistic content.

#### Specific for Topic 1

- Increased media collaboration.
- Sector-wide networks for the exchange of best practices among news media professionals;
- Knowledge-hubs for sub-sectors around technical formats (written/online press, radio/podcasts, TV, etc.) and/or journalistic genres (data journalism, general topics, specialised journalism, etc.);
- Acquisition and improvement of professional skills by journalists as well as media business professionals.

#### Specific for Topic 2

- Increased resilience, pluralism and editorial independence of media sectors at European level, such as local, regional and community media, investigative media or media specialised in public interest topics.
- Increased resilience of organisations active in the news media sectors and protection of the news media landscape.
- Improved uptake of new technologies across the targeted media sectors in as much this contributes to media pluralism and a diverse media landscape.
- Fostering repositories of knowledge about media sectors delivering public interest news (e.g. by detecting areas with low provision of high-quality content and/or in which media pluralism is strained).

### 3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 11 000 000**.

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

Topic	Topic budget
1 — NEWS – Journalism Partnerships - Collaborations	<b>EUR 6 000 000</b>
2 — NEWS – Journalism Partnerships - Pluralism	<b>EUR 5 000 000</b>

The availability of the call budget still depends on the adoption of the budget 2024 by the EU budgetary authority.

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

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	26 October 2023
Deadline for submission:	<u>14 February 2024 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	February-June 2024
Information on evaluation results:	August 2024
GA signature:	November 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*)
- Part C (*to be filled in directly online*) containing additional project data
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
  - Declaration on Standards and Independence (from coordinator and all partners) (*template available in the Submission System*)


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). 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

Applications will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds wholly (or at least in part) to the topic description for which it is submitted.

### *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.:
  - Creative Europe Participating Countries:
    - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
    - non-EU countries:
      - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Creative Europe Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))

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 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 persons<sup>3</sup>.

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>4</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).

Creative Europe Desks (CEDs) — The host organisations of Creative Europe Desks are eligible as coordinator or beneficiary in open calls, if they have procedures to segregate the project management and the information provision functions and if they are able to demonstrate cost separation (i.e. that their project grants do not cover any costs which are covered by their other grant). This requires the following:

- use of analytical accounting which allows for a cost accounting management with cost allocation keys and cost accounting codes AND application of these keys and codes to identify and separate the costs (i.e. to allocate them to either one of the two grants)
- recording of all real costs incurred for the activities that are covered by the two grants (including the indirect costs)
- allocation of the costs in a way that leads to a fair, objective and realistic result.

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (*see list 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).

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>5</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>6</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).

- ① For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Consortium composition

#### **For Topic 1 "NEWS – Journalism Partnerships - Collaborations":**

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least three applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

<sup>3</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>4</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>5</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>6</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).

- at least three independent entities from a minimum of three different countries participating in the Creative Europe Programme

Consortia may include non-profit, public and private media outlets (incl. written/online press, radio/podcasts, TV, etc) as well as other organisations focusing on news media (incl. media associations, NGOs, journalistic funds and training organisations focusing on media professionals, etc).

***For Topic 2 “NEWS – Journalism Partnerships - Pluralism”:***

Proposals must be submitted either by single applicants or by a consortium of at least two applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities).

The call is open to organisations which are active in the news media sector (incl. media associations, NGOs, non-profit organisations, civil society organisations, public authorities, international organisations, universities, research centres, journalistic funds and training organisations focusing on media professionals, profitmaking entities, foundations, etc).

*Eligible activities*

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

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities.

Financial support to third parties is allowed for grants and prizes 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 remain open for at least two months;
- 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.

Financial support to third parties will be accepted in projects which foresee exchange programmes for journalists and other media professionals, support to attend trainings or events, support to journalists and media outlets for collaborative journalistic productions, support for legal advice, support for the acquisition, development or maintenance of technical tools for collaborative journalism, support for events in these fields and/or prizes for collaboration or innovation (topic 1) and which put in place funding schemes for news media entities and independent journalism (topic 2).

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.

*Duration*

Projects should not normally exceed 24 months.

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

### Ethics

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards and
- applicable EU, international and national law.

They may not include pornographic or racist material or advocate violence.

## **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 coordinators, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations;
- entities active in cultural and creative sectors that have received over 50% of their annual revenue from public sources over the last two years;
- if the project 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.

**i** 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 'Project Management' 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:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants

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

Public bodies, Member State organisations, international organisations and entities active in cultural and creative sectors that have received over 50% of their annual revenue from public sources over the last two years 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 participate<sup>7</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)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>8</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,

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<sup>7</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>8</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.



- 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 that<sup>9</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** (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) 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:

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 'Dissemination'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Quality of content and activities'.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; 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

<sup>9</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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:

### Relevance (35)

- The relevance of the project and the proposed activities vis-à-vis the objectives of the Call and targeted projects, including its European dimension, the number of countries and languages covered. **(20 points)**
- The relevance and innovation of the proposed activities vis-à-vis the needs analysis of the chosen (sub)sector, mapping of already existing initiatives and expected results. **(10 points)**
- Adequacy of the strategies to ensure gender balance, inclusion, diversity and representativeness, either in the project or in the way of managing the activity. **(5 points)**

### Quality of the content and activities (35)

- Adequacy of the proposed methodologies to reach the objectives of the Call, including methods for implementing the proposal. **(10 points)**
- Clarity of mechanisms to ensure impartiality and editorial independence. **(10 points)**
- Effective and efficient use of financial resources. **(15 points)**

### Project management (10)

- The composition and experience of the team, the efficiency and clarity of work packages and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), allocation of responsibilities and corresponding budgets, the quality of the proposed coordination mechanisms, quality control systems and arrangements to manage risks. **(10 points)**

### Dissemination (20)

- Quality of the strategies to build and/or exchange knowledge and ensure sustainable transferability of activities and results among as many stakeholders as possible. **(10 points)**
- The impact at local, regional, national and/or European levels, beyond those directly involved in the project and beyond the project's lifetime. **(10 points)**

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	N/A	35
Quality of content and activities	N/A	35
Project management	N/A	10
Dissemination	N/A	20
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: not applicable

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass 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.

Project duration: *see section 6 above*.

### 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 project activities must be organised in the following work packages:

- WP 1 – Project management (mandatory)
- WP 2 – Activity 1(mandatory)
- WP 3 – Activity 2 (if applicable)
- WP 4 – Dissemination (mandatory)

Additional work packages may be added.

*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): for Topic 1: EUR 2.000.000 per project; for Topic 2: EUR 3.000.000 per project.

The grant will be a budget-based (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 at **80%** for Topic 1 and at **90%** for Topic 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, art 6 and Annex 2*).

*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
- E. Indirect costs

*Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>10</sup>: Yes

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<sup>10</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)7115).

- volunteers unit cost<sup>11</sup>: No
- travel and subsistence unit cost<sup>12</sup>: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: allowed for grants and prizes; maximum amount per third party EUR 60 000, 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
  - indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
  - 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)
  - divers:
    - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. 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
    - other ineligible costs: No

### 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 **70%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be no interim 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*).

<sup>11</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646).

<sup>12</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).

Please also 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 to 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

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

- different rights of use of the granting authority on materials, documents and information received for policy, information, communication, dissemination and

publicity purposes: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes
- special logos: Yes

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

#### 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 4 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
- Part C containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online.
- 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 should be sent to the following email address: [FACEA-CREATIVE-EUROPE-JOURNALISM-PARTNERSHIPS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:FACEA-CREATIVE-EUROPE-JOURNALISM-PARTNERSHIPS@ec.europa.eu)

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 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. 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](#).