



Contracting Authority: European Commission

EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the
Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023 (IPA III)

Multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and
Türkiye for 2024 (IPA III)

*Support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations
(CSOs); Regional networks promoting independent pluralistic media
and freedom of expression; and EU Award for Roma Integration*

Guidelines for grant applicants

Budget line(s): 15.020101.01

Reference:

EuropeAid/179703/DH/ACT/Multi

Deadline for submission¹ of concept notes:

29/12/2023 at 14:00 (Brussels date and time)

(in order to convert to local time click [here](#)²)

¹ Online submission via PROSPECT is mandatory for this call for proposals (see Section 2.2.2). In PROSPECT all dates and times are expressed in Brussels time. Applicants should note that the IT support is open Monday to Friday from 08:30 to 18:30 Brussels time (except during European Commission public holidays in Belgium as published in the Official Journal). Applicants should take note of the weekly maintenance hours mentioned in the PROSPECT user manual.

² An example of a time converter tool available online: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>

NOTICE

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 14,400,000 of which EUR 14,000,000 to be financed under 2023 budget (concerning Lots from 1 to 11) and EUR 400,000 to be financed under 2024 budget (concerning Lot 12 – “EU Award for Roma Integration”), subject to the approval of the relevant 2024 financing decision.

The awarding of grant contracts financed under 2024 budget under this call for proposals is subject to the condition of the prior adoption of the relevant 2024 financing decision. This does not modify the elements of the call for proposals (this will be the case, for instance, if the budget initially foreseen is different or if the timeframe, the nature or the condition of the implementation is altered).

If the precedent condition is not met the contracting authority will either abandon the procurement or cancel the award procedure related to the funds under 2024 budget without the candidates or applicants being entitled to claim any compensation.

This is a restricted call for proposals. In the first instance, only concept notes (Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note) must be submitted for evaluation. Thereafter, lead applicants who have been pre-selected will be invited to submit a full application (Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed ‘declaration by the lead applicant’ sent together with the full application.

To apply to this call for proposals organisations must register in PADOR and submit their application in PROSPECT (see section 2.2.2 of the guidelines). The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations through a new panel of functionalities such as the on-line submission and the possibility to follow up online the status of their application.

Preparation: Online Information sessions on 23/11/2023 (please consult ‘*Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations (TACSO 3) in the Western Balkans and Turkey*’ project website – www.tacso.eu - for further information) and user manuals.

To help applicants familiarise themselves with the system before the online submission, online information sessions will be organised on 23/11/2023. Should you be interested in these sessions, please consult TACSO 3 project website – www.tacso.eu - for further information on the registration modalities to attend the information sessions. No costs incurred by the applicants for attending these information sessions are reimbursable.

All organisations may find more information regarding PROSPECT in the [user's manual](#) and the [e-learning videos](#). You may also contact our technical support team via the online support form in PROSPECT³.

³ If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via email: INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu

Table of contents

1. SUPPORT TO REGIONAL THEMATIC NETWORKS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOS); REGIONAL NETWORKS PROMOTING INDEPENDENT PLURALISTIC MEDIA AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION; AND EU AWARD FOR ROMA INTEGRATION FEHLER! TEXTMARKE NICHT DEFINIERT.	
1.1. Background.....	4
1.2. Objectives of the programme and priority issues	6
1.3. Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority	6
2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS	10
2.1. Eligibility criteria.....	10
2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s)).....	10
2.1.2. Associates and contractors	14
2.1.3. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made.....	144
2.1.4. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included	22
2.1.5. Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct	255
2.2. How to apply and the procedures to follow	266
2.2.1. Concept note content.....	277
2.2.2. Where and how to send concept notes	277
2.2.3. Deadline for submission of concept notes.....	288
2.2.4. Further information about concept notes.....	288
2.2.5. Full applications	288
2.2.6. Where and how to send full applications	31
2.2.7. Deadline for submission of full applications.....	31
2.2.8. Further information about full applications.....	31
2.3. Evaluation and selection of applications	32
2.4. Submission of supporting documents	399
2.5. Notification of the Contracting Authority's decision	399
2.5.1. Content of the decision.....	399
2.5.2. Indicative timetable.....	40
2.6. Conditions for implementation after the contracting authority's decision.....	40
3. LIST OF ANNEXES	42

1. SUPPORT TO REGIONAL THEMATIC NETWORKS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSO); REGIONAL NETWORKS PROMOTING INDEPENDENT PLURALISTIC MEDIA AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION; AND EU AWARD FOR ROMA INTEGRATION

1.1. BACKGROUND

An active civil society is a critical component of democratic systems and an important player in reform processes taking place in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. An empowered and active civil society is an essential component of any democracy. Civil society organisations (CSOs)⁴ can contribute to addressing many societal challenges, by engaging in the policy debates – also involving authorities, proposing innovative, sustainable and inclusive solutions and monitoring the results of reform processes at beneficiary, regional and local level. CSOs in the Western Balkans and Türkiye need to engage in a range of challenges faced by their societies, including in fields such as rule of law, economy, overcoming political polarisation, social cohesion and environmental protection.

A free and pluralistic media serves to reveal the multifaceted nature of society and thereby promotes civic development of the societies as well as dialogue and tolerance. Critical scrutiny by media of the political processes guarantees their transparency and ensures that governments adhere to predictable policies – free from the interests of narrow pressure groups.

EU support to CSOs aims at building stronger democracies, improving accountability systems and ultimately achieving better governed, more inclusive, and sustainable economic and social development. It seeks to empower civil society to play the following key roles:

- Helping to reinforce wide and inclusive citizens' engagement and participation in public policy processes and encouraging civic activism across all areas.
- Being professional and reliable partners in the policymaking and reform process through evidence-based advocacy across all sectors and close monitoring of reforms.
- Contributing to enhancing responsible and inclusive leadership in the political, economic and social spheres by calling leaders and institutions to account.
- Assisting in societal innovation, by helping to develop, test and promote innovative perspectives and solutions to sustainable development challenges across all thematic areas.
- Promoting freedom of expression and supporting development of free and pluralistic media landscapes.

This Call for Proposals is launched in the framework of the *EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023* (CSF). In an overall vision of enhanced regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and reconciliation, the overall objective of the CSF is to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration and approximation process in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, through a strengthened contribution by civil society and media.

⁴ Civil society is highly heterogeneous and encompasses a wide range of actors and aims. The EU considers civil society organisations to embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not-for-profit, independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic or related to health [...]" They include, but are not limited to: Nongovernmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, women's and youth organisations, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations, the not-for-profit media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations.

This definition is established in the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations - Multi Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027. **It should be noted that more specific eligibility criteria apply for this call, as outlined in section 2.1.**

Under this Call for Proposals, a number of long-term grants will be awarded to create and/or support regional thematic networks of CSOs in a range of thematic priorities. The networks financed will help improve coalition and capacity building for an increased impact of CSOs on relevant sector reforms. Financial support to third parties (“sub-granting”) will enable participation of grassroots organisations across the region in the networks.

The priorities of the call are aligned with those identified in the IPA III Programming Framework⁵ and in the 2020 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on *"An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans"*⁶ (hereafter the EIP).

The Call for Proposals is aligned with the *"DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the enlargement region 2021-2027"*⁷. The Guidelines outline the results towards which EU support to civil society will aspire in the period 2021 – 2027, which are identified by three main priority areas:

1. A conducive environment for civil society to carry out its activities.
2. Strengthened cooperation and partnership between CSOs and public institutions.
3. Reinforced CSO capacity and resilience to carry out their activities effectively.

The Guidelines offer a concrete results' framework for support to Civil Society, containing outcomes to be achieved as well as indicators to monitor progress.

The Call for Proposals reflects as a background the recent legislative realities in the EU, e.g., Digital Service Act⁸, 2022 Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation⁹, etc. and is formulated in the context of upcoming EU legislation such as the European Media Freedom Act¹⁰ and the Anti-SLAPP Directive¹¹.

In line with the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III)¹² and the Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action¹³, strategic attention to gender equality and youth issues is encouraged throughout the thematic areas of the call.

The call envisages partnerships primarily between different CSOs and CSO networks, but also in some instances where appropriate (e.g., in the case of media outlets) between CSOs and profit-making/revenue-generating organisations (depending on the lots and actions). The specific eligibility criteria of lead applicants and co-applicants are set out in Section 2.1 of the Guidelines.

Based on the provisions of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III), the IPA III beneficiaries taken into consideration for the present call for proposals are: the Republic of Albania, Bosnia

⁵ COM(2021) 8914 final, 10.12.2021. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 10.12.2021 adopting the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/C_2021_8914_COMMISSION_IMPLEMENTING_DECISION_EN.pdf

⁶ COM(2020) 641 final. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans.

⁷ [DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021-2027 \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/nea/nea-guidelines-for-eu-support-to-civil-society-in-the-enlargement-region-2021-2027)

⁸ [EUR-Lex - 32022R2065 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj)

⁹ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/2022-strengthened-code-practice-disinformation>

¹⁰ Commission Proposal: [EUR-Lex - 52022PC0457 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/457/oj)

¹¹ Commission Proposal: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0177>

¹² JOIN(2020) 17 final, 25.11.2020. JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL EU GENDER ACTION PLAN (GAP) III – AN AMBITIOUS AGENDA FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN EU EXTERNAL ACTION. [join-2020-17-final_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/nea/nea-guidelines-for-eu-support-to-civil-society-in-the-enlargement-region-2021-2027)

¹³ [JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Youth Action Plan \(YAP\) in EU external action 2022 – 2027 Promoting meaningful youth participation and empowerment in EU external action for sustainable development, equality and peace - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/nea/nea-guidelines-for-eu-support-to-civil-society-in-the-enlargement-region-2021-2027)

and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Serbia (hereafter ‘Western Balkans’), and the Republic of Türkiye.

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is, in an overall vision of enhanced regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and reconciliation, to **strengthen participatory democracies and the EU approximation process** in the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

The **specific objective(s)** of this call for proposals are:

1. Strengthened CSO capacities and engagement opportunities in policy- and decision-making across various thematic areas, including those addressed by the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans.
2. Enhanced professional capacity of journalists, media outlets and media institutions to exercise the right to freedom of expression and access to information and to promote media pluralism.
3. Increased equality, inclusion, and active participation of Roma in the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

All applicants are encouraged to pay due attention to gender and youth issues, by ensuring that proposals explicitly integrate results of gender and youth analysis through foreseen activities and specific indicators as relevant. Links to the GAP III, the YAP and their specific thematic priorities, objectives and indicators are strongly encouraged. The way that gender equality and youth issues are addressed will be considered and taken into account during the evaluation process. A collection of gender analysis that applicants may want to consult is available on the TACSO 3 website (www.tacso.eu). Applicants will also find there relevant ‘Country Level Implementation Plans’ (CLIPs), which explain the strategic engagement of the EU for Gender Equality in each IPA beneficiary. The YAP also provides the principles, priorities and objectives that guide the EU action in favour of young people as well as an indicative list of EU initiatives.

1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 14,400,000. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Indicative allocation of funds by lot:

No.	Lots	Budget in M€
1	Good governance and economic development	1
2	Reconciliation	1
3	Gender Equality	1
4	LGBTIQ¹⁴ Equality	1
5	Roma Inclusion	1
6	Disability Inclusion	1

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

¹⁴ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, non-binary, Intersex and Queer

7	CSO regional engagement in the implementation of the Green Agenda	0.75
8	Digital Transition	0.75
9	CSO enabling environment and civic participation	1
10	Fostering Jewish Life and Jewish cultural heritage	1.5
11	Freedom of Expression and Media	4
12	EU Award for Roma Integration	0.4
	Total	14.4

If the allocation indicated for Lots from 1 to 11 cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to another of these lots.

Size of grants

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts, and represent an EU contribution falling between the following minimum and maximum percentages of the total eligible costs of the action:

Lot 1 - Good governance and economic development

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,000,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 2 - Reconciliation

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,000,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 3 - Gender Equality

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,000,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 4 - LGBTIQ Equality

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,000,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 5 - Roma Inclusion

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,000,000.00.

- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 6 – Disability Inclusion

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,000,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 7 - CSO regional engagement in the implementation of the Green Agenda

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 750,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 8 - Digital Transition

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 750,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 9 - CSO enabling environment and civic participation

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,000,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 10 - Fostering Jewish Life and Jewish cultural heritage

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,500,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 11 - Media Freedom and Freedom of Expression

- Minimum grant amount: EUR 700,000.00; Maximum grant amount: EUR 1,300,000.00.
- Minimum EU contribution: 51% of the total eligible costs of the action; Maximum EU contribution: 90% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Lot 12 - EU Award for Roma Integration

- Grant amount: EUR 400,000.00.
- EU contribution: 100% of the total eligible costs of the action.

The balance (i.e., the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union or the European Development Fund¹⁵.

For all lots – except for Lot 12 – it is compulsory to allocate no less than 30% of the action's total eligible costs to financial support to third parties, with the purpose of reaching, and building capacities of, such organisations active at local level and enabling them to participate in the regional networks.

¹⁵ Where a grant is financed by the European Development Fund, any mention of European Union financing must be understood as referring to European Development Fund financing.

The size of the financial support should be adapted to the level of capacities of beneficiaries and to the type of activities to be supported.

When defining the financial support to third parties, applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the guide “*Enhanced Outreach to Civil Society Organisations: a Collection of Good Practices of Financial Support to Third Parties in the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Countries*”¹⁶.

¹⁶ <https://www.tacso.eu/enhanced-outreach-to-civil-society-organizations/>

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>).¹⁷

2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

(1) the actors (2.1.1.):

- The **‘lead applicant’**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
- if any, its **co-applicant(s) (where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as ‘applicant(s)’)**;
- and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s);

(2) the actions (2.1.3.):

- actions for which a grant may be awarded;

(3) the costs (2.1.4.):

- types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant.

2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))

Lead applicant

(1) In order to be eligible for a grant, the lead applicant must:

- be a legal person **and**
- be non-profit-making **and**
- be a civil society organisation¹⁸ (CSO) or a representative network of CSOs¹⁹ working on one or more thematic areas of relevance to this Call for Proposals (see Section 2.1.3 of these Guidelines) **and**

¹⁷ Note that a lead applicant (i.e. a coordinator) whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission and who is awarded a grant will not sign the standard grant contract published with these guidelines but a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. All references in these guidelines and other documents related to this call to the standard grant contract shall in this case be understood as referring to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement template.

¹⁸ As defined in the NDICI Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations - Multi Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 “Civil society is highly heterogeneous and encompasses a wide range of actors and aims. The EU considers civil society organisations to embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not-for-profit, independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic or related to health [...]” They include, but are not limited to: Nongovernmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, women's and youth organisations, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations, the not-for-profit media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations.

- be established²⁰ in an IPA III Beneficiary under the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance - the IPA III Beneficiaries taken into consideration for the present call for proposals are: The Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, The Republic of North Macedonia, The Republic of Serbia, The Republic of Türkiye²¹ **and**
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with their co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary **and**
- have as a minimum two years (i.e. 24 months) experience in the field of the lot under which the concept note/full application is submitted. In case the lead applicant is a network of CSOs, this applies also to its members **and**
- be registered since at least November 2021. In case the lead applicant is a network of CSOs, at least two members of the network must be registered since at least November 2021.

Organisations being Coordinators/lead-applicants of ongoing grant contracts awarded as a result of the Call for Proposals ref. no. EuropeAid/174154/DH/ACT/Multi are not eligible as lead applicants under this Call for Proposals. They may participate as co-applicants in maximum one project proposal, provided that the proposal submitted clearly demonstrates the value added and the difference in focus of the proposed activities as compared to those currently financed. In no case may it represent a duplication of/overlapping with the ongoing action.

- (2) Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide.

Lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entities and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant, the co-applicants and the affiliated entities are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion according to Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract. In this respect, provisionally selected lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities or those placed in the reserve list are obliged to declare that they are not in one of the exclusion situations through a signed declaration on honour (PRAG Annex A14). For grants of EUR 15 000 or less, no declaration on honour is required. See section 2.4.

In Annex A.1 Section 2 and Annex A.2 Section 5 ('declaration(s) by the lead applicant'), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself, the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies) are not in any of these situations.

With the exception of Lot 11, the lead applicant must act with co-applicant(s) as specified hereafter. For Lot 11, the involvement of co-applicants is optional.

If awarded the grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in Annex G (special conditions). The coordinator is the sole interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

¹⁹ A network with legal personality must submit an application under the name of the network.

²⁰ To be determined on the basis of the organisation's statutes, which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a 'Memorandum of Understanding' has been concluded.

²¹ Based on the provisions of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III).

Co-applicant(s)

Co-applicants participate in designing and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant.

Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant him/herself.

As an exception, for Lots from 1 to 11, actors established in an EU Member State can be involved as optional co-applicants, in addition to (and not in replacement of) the mandatory co-applicants, as specified below.

Co-applicants must sign the mandate in Annex A.2 Section 5.

Mandatory co-applicants:

For the actions submitted under all the Lots except Lots 10 and 12: co-applicants must represent CSOs or CSOs networks from a minimum of four (4) different IPA III Beneficiaries, different from the IPA III Beneficiary where the Lead Applicant is located. The proposed consortium (including both Lead Applicant and Co-applicants) must thus represent a minimum of **five (5) organisations, established in five (5) different IPA III beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Türkiye (i.e., minimum one lead-applicant and four co-applicants). Networks covering all IPA beneficiaries are encouraged.**

For the proposals submitted under Lot 10: co-applicants must represent CSOs or CSOs networks from a minimum of one (1) IPA III Beneficiary, different from the IPA III Beneficiary where the Lead Applicant is located. The proposed consortium (including both Lead Applicant and Co-applicants) must thus represent a minimum of **two (2) organisations, established in two (2) different IPA III beneficiaries (i.e. minimum one lead-applicant and one co-applicant).**

For the proposals submitted under Lot 12: the involvement of co-applicants is optional.

For the proposals submitted under Lot 11: As an exception to the requirement of being non-profit-making and exclusively for actions under Lot 11, profit-making media outlets are eligible as co-applicants as long as those align with the state aid and competition rules in the given country (e.g., *de minimis* aid²²). Additionally, all products, which resulted from the project activities, should be disseminated for public use free of charge.

For the proposals submitted under Lot 11: both lead applicant and co-applicants (if they produce media content) are encouraged to subject themselves to the self-regulation in place in the given country (e.g., members of the press council).

Optional co-applicants:

The participation of CSOs or CSO networks established in an EU Member State is encouraged as appropriate. Such optional co-applicants from EU Member States must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant him/herself, with the exception of being established in an IPA III Beneficiary under the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance.

If awarded the grant contract, the co-applicant(s) (if any) will become beneficiary(ies) in the action (together with the coordinator)

²² EU rules on *de minimis* aid: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1407>

- (3) In addition, please note that contracts cannot be awarded to, or signed with, applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG).

Affiliated entities

The lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) may act with affiliated entity(ies).

Only the following entities may be considered as affiliated entities to the lead applicant and/or to co-applicant(s):

Only entities having a structural link with the applicants (i.e., the lead applicant or a co-applicant), in particular a legal or capital link.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

- (i) Control, as defined in Directive 2013/34/EU on the annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements and related reports of certain types of undertakings:

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

- Entities directly or indirectly controlled by the applicant (daughter companies or first-tier subsidiaries). They may also be entities controlled by an entity controlled by the applicant (granddaughter companies or second-tier subsidiaries) and the same applies to further tiers of control.
 - Entities directly or indirectly controlling the applicant (parent companies). Likewise, they may be entities controlling an entity controlling the applicant.
 - Entities under the same direct or indirect control as the applicant (sister companies).
- (ii) Membership, i.e., the applicant is legally defined as a e.g., network, federation, association in which the proposed affiliated entities also participate, or the applicant participates in the same entity (e.g. network, federation, association...) as the proposed affiliated entities.

The structural link shall as a general rule be neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation. This means that the link would exist independently of the award of the grant; it should exist before the call for proposals and remain valid after the end of the action.

By way of exception, an entity may be considered as affiliated to an applicant even if it has a structural link specifically established for the sole purpose of the implementation of the action in the case of so-called 'sole applicants' or 'sole beneficiaries'. A sole applicant or a sole beneficiary is a legal entity formed by several entities (a group of entities) which together comply with the criteria for being awarded the grant. For example, an association is formed by its members.

What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

- Entities that have entered into a (procurement) contract or subcontract with an applicant, act as concessionaires or delegates for public services for an applicant,
- Entities that receive financial support from the applicant,
- Entities that cooperate on a regular basis with an applicant on the basis of a memorandum of understanding or share some assets,
- Entities that have signed a consortium agreement under the grant contract (unless this consortium agreement leads to the creation of a 'sole applicant' as described above).

How to verify the existence of the required link with an applicant?

The affiliation resulting from control may in particular be proved on the basis of the consolidated accounts of the group of entities the applicant and its proposed affiliates belong to.

The affiliation resulting from membership may in particular be proved on the basis of the statutes or equivalent act establishing the entity (network, federation, association) which the applicant constitutes or in which the applicant participates.

If the applicants are awarded a grant contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become beneficiary(ies) of the action and signatory(ies) of the grant contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the implementation of the action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for implementation contracts and financial support to third parties and subcontractors) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the beneficiary(ies) under the grant contract.

Affiliated entity(ies) must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as the lead applicant and the co-applicant(s). They must sign the affiliated entity(ies) statement in Annex A.2 Section 5.

2.1.2. Associates and contractors

The following entities are not applicants nor affiliated entities and do not have to sign the ‘mandate for co-applicant(s)’ or ‘affiliated entities’ statement:

- Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Annex A.2 Section 4 — ‘Associates participating in the action’.

CSOs/CSO Networks from Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine can be associates in the proposed actions.

Moreover, the participation of central and local public authorities and bodies as associates is welcomed across the Call, when this can reinforce the impact of the action.

- Contractors

The beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are permitted to award contracts. Associates or affiliated entity(ies) cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

2.1.3. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

For all lots, the implementation of the actions must start before 17/12/2024.

Lot 1 - Good governance and economic development

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 2 - Reconciliation

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 3 - Gender Equality

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 4 - LGBTIQ Equality

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 5 - Roma Inclusion

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 6 - Disability Inclusion

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 7 - CSO regional engagement in the implementation of the Green Agenda

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 8 - Digital Transition

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 9 - CSO enabling environment and civic participation

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 10 - Fostering Jewish Life and Jewish cultural heritage

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 11 - Freedom of Expression and Media

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 30 months nor exceed 36 months.

Lot 12 - EU Award for Roma Integration

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 15 months nor exceed 24 months.

Sectors or themes

Lot 1. Good governance and economic development, including but not limited to:

- Supporting an enabling business environment.
- Human Capital Development.
- Common Regional Market.
- Public Administration Reform

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 1 million

Lot 2. Reconciliation, including but not limited to:

- Promoting reconciliation, peacebuilding, inter-cultural dialogue and transitional justice.
- Countering social and political polarisation.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 1 million

Lot 3: Gender Equality, including but not limited to:

- Fighting gender stereotypes and supporting women's participation in the public sphere.
- Fighting gender-based violence, including specific activities engaging men and boys.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 1 million

Lot 4. LGBTIQ Equality, including but not limited to:

- Social and economic inclusion of LGBTIQ community, and participation in the public sphere.
- Supporting LGBTIQ children and youth and strengthening the capacities of teachers and other professionals to prevent bullying and recognise students at risk due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 1 million

Lot 5. Roma Inclusion, including but not limited to:

- Economic empowerment of Roma communities, including Roma women and Roma youth.
- Social integration of Roma communities, including Roma women and Roma youth, and participation in the public sphere.
- Fighting antigypsyism and contributing to the positive image of the Roma community.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 1 million

Lot 6. Disability Inclusion, including but not limited to:

- Social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, and support to de-institutionalisation.
- Fighting discrimination and stereotypes.
- Support regional cooperation of organisations of persons with disabilities.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 1 million

Lot 7. CSO regional engagement in the implementation of the Green Agenda, including but not limited to:

- Monitoring the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and related action plans.
- Communication on and improving the understanding of the green transition challenges and opportunities in the region among the public, civil society, policymakers at all levels (from local authorities to national governments), media and private sector.
- Involvement of youth and marginalised groups (including Roma communities) and fighting against energy poverty.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 0.75 million

Lot 8. Digital Transition, including but not limited to:

- Promotion/development of e-government services and digitalisation of public administration.

- Digital literacy, digital skills development and access to digital tools by marginalised groups (including Roma communities).

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 0.75 million

Lot 9. CSO enabling environment and civic participation, including but not limited to:

- Regional exchange and regional cooperation in support of the implementation of legal frameworks promoting a conducive environment for civil society, as defined in the DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021-2027.
- Fostering systematic and meaningful participation of CSOs and citizens in policy- and decision-making processes, including youth.
- Promoting broader civic participation and access in EU accession mechanisms (as applicable).

NB. The proposed actions should not overlap in any form with the activities carried out by the ‘*Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations (TACSO 3) in the Western Balkans and Turkey*’ project, in particular with the assessments against the standards and indicators included in the DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society produced, and by the EU National Resource Centres active in every IPA III Beneficiary.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 1 million

Lot 10. Fostering Jewish Life and Jewish cultural heritage, including but not limited to:

- Cultural heritage, holocaust remembrance and cultural activities.
- Fighting antisemitism and radicalisation.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 1.5 million

Lot 11 - Freedom of Expression and Media, including but not limited to:

- Addressing challenges of media environment (e.g., safety of journalists, media and information literacy, resilience of the society, disinformation, hate speech based on ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, trust in media, rights-based regulation of digital platforms and social media)
- Addressing issues of internal governance of media outlets (e.g., economic sustainability, competitiveness, audience measurement and engagement, labour rights of journalist, including equal opportunities for women journalists, youth/traineeship opportunities),
- Supporting professional standards for quality content production (e.g., self-regulation, ethical standards)
- Supporting collaborative and innovative media, tools, formats and practices (e.g., media hubs, media support networks, media resource centres, solution-based journalism, slow news, constructive journalism).

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 4 million

Lot 12. EU Award for Roma Integration:

The EU Award for Roma Integration in the Western Balkans and Türkiye aims to highlight the importance of Roma integration in the EU enlargement process, provide visibility, and boost political commitment and

support for Roma inclusion in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. The award distinguishes individuals, activists, CSOs, and public and private institutions that have achieved significant progress in the inclusion of Roma, including in the fight against antigypsyism.

The Award ceremony takes place in Brussels during [the European Parliament Roma Week](#). Participants of the ceremony include the awardees, relevant stakeholders from the EU institutions, and representatives from the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

The Award is celebrated every two years focusing on a relevant subject for Roma inclusion. The subject is different in each edition:

- The [first](#) edition, organised in 2014, recognised the important role played by civil society organisations working for Roma inclusion.
- The [second](#) edition, organised in 2017, recognised the work undertaken for the inclusion and empowerment of the Roma youth.
- The [third](#) edition, organised in 2019, recognised Roma women who had improved the social integration of Roma or brought positive change to their communities.
- The [fourth](#) edition, organised in 2021, recognised the work undertaken to promote equality through employment.
- The [fifth](#) edition, organised in 2023, recognised initiatives working for the inclusion of Roma in the green and digital agendas.

The purpose of this lot is to organise the sixth edition of the Award, which shall focus on **positive achievements for Roma inclusion in the sector of education** (pre-school, primary and secondary levels).

The selected applicant will organise:

1. Delivery of 2 prizes per IPA beneficiary (14 prizes in total). The prizes shall take the form of:

Monetary Awards: **The total allocation shall be no less than 25% of the total eligible costs of the contract.**

Only CSOs, individuals and activists are eligible for monetary awards. In the case of public and private sector initiatives and representatives, symbolic recognition should be given instead in the form of:

Non-monetary awards, such as a trophy, a diploma or similar.

2. Appointment and facilitation of the work of an award jury. The applicant will propose the criteria for the selection and composition of an independent jury. The jury should be composed of experts on Roma inclusion and the procedures shall ensure impartiality, integrity and independence.
3. The award ceremony, which shall be held in Brussels in the spring of 2025 and chaired by the European Commission. In the same week of the ceremony, the applicant should organise a study programme for awardees in Brussels to enhance exchanges between the Roma integration movement in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, and the Roma integration movement in the European Union.
4. Promotion and awareness raising campaigns to inform about the award, the ceremony, and the awardees.

Indicative allocated amount: EUR 0.4 million

Location

For all Lots except Lot 10 and 12, actions must take place in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and must cover a minimum of 5 of these IPA III beneficiaries.

For Lot 10, actions must take place in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and must cover a minimum of 2 of these IPA III beneficiaries.

For Lot 12, actions must focus on the Western Balkans and Türkiye and must cover all 7 IPA III beneficiaries. The core activities (organisation of the award) must take place in Belgium.

A limited number of activities – strictly related to dissemination, promotion and exchange purposes (such as conferences, seminars, study visits) - could take place in EU Member States. The exception being Lot 12, which will mostly take place in Belgium.

Types of action

The following types of action are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses.
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses.
- actions concerned only or mainly with “one-off” conferences, and similar events.
- actions concerned only or mainly with academic research and/or feasibility studies.
- actions linked to political parties or of political/partisan or religious nature.
- actions that fall within the general activities of competent state institutions or state administration services, including local government.
- actions in relation to: the tobacco industry (CAEN code 16), production of alcoholic distilled beverages (CAEN code 1591), arms and munitions (CAEN code 296).
- Capital investments.
- actions that are proven to generate or promote mis- or disinformation in the society.

Types of activity

Types of activities that may be financed under this call include (the list is not exhaustive):

- Education, public awareness campaigns.
- Desk research (but research cannot be the main purpose of the action), baseline studies.
- Activities aimed at ensuring outreach towards grassroots and other types of local non-governmental organisations, citizens and volunteers.
- Monitoring and watchdog actions of CSOs relating to the implementation of public policies and reforms, including in the context of the EU integration process.
- Monitoring of international commitments, publication of monitoring and shadow reports.
- Enabling CSOs’ participation in the reform and policy making process.
- Advocacy for the revision of existing legislation and adoption of new legislation in accordance with EU standards and requirements as well as with the Council of Europe standards and the ECtHR case law.

- Promotion of the implementation of adopted laws and regulations.
- Facilitation of contacts, consultations and discussions between different stakeholders.
- Networking and coalition building, and experience/knowledge sharing activities.
- Organisation of conferences, roundtables, workshops and seminars (**a limited and well justified number of days and events per proposed action**).
- Cooperation with public bodies of relevance for the thematic areas in focus (e.g., Ombudsman, Equality Bodies, etc).
- Youth exchange programs or other non-formal education activities promoting cultural diversity, reconciliation, gender equality.
- Training and capacity development actions, study visits, field trips and internships.
- Production of free-of-charge news and media products as far as they contain Public Media Content.
- Publication of online leaflets and manuals on best practice.
- Testing of innovative approaches and pilots.
- Concrete activities to respond to needs of targeted stakeholder groups.
- Citizens-centric approaches to delivering public services, development of community-based integrated services.
- Pilot income generating activities aimed at ensuring continuity of the action beyond the end of the contract.
- Development of green, social and sustainable entrepreneurship and setting up of start-ups – with the exclusion of capital investments.
- Testing and implementation of business plans and business sustainability strategies.

Integrated and holistic approaches combining different types of activities are encouraged.

Financial support to third parties²³

Under this call, financial support to third parties is considered essential to achieve the objective of the action.

Therefore, except for Lot 12, Applicants shall propose financial support to third parties in order to help achieving the objectives of the action. Not less than 30% of the action total eligible costs should be dedicated to providing financial support to third parties.

The maximum amount of financial support per third party is EUR 60,000 except where achieving the objectives of the actions would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult, in which case this threshold can be exceeded. A threshold below EUR 60,000 can be set if appropriate.

This support should in particular strengthen the participation of grassroots CSOs and small/local/”mission” media in regional networks and carry out activities linked to the overall objective of the action. To do so, the grantees of this Call should mentor third parties in the implementation of their own activities and share methodologies and knowledge with them.

²³ These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

In compliance with the present guidelines and notably of any conditions or restrictions in this Section, **the lead applicant should define mandatorily in Section 2.1.1 of Annex A.2 (Grant application form – Full application):**

- (i) the overall objectives, the specific objective(s) and the outputs²⁴ (i.e., the results) to be achieved with the financial support.
- (ii) the different types of activities eligible for financial support, on the basis of a fixed list.
- (iii) the types of persons or categories of persons which may receive financial support.
- (iv) the criteria for selecting these entities and giving the financial support.
- (v) the criteria for determining the exact amount of financial support for each third entity.
- (vi) the maximum amount which may be given.

In all events, the mandatory conditions set above for giving financial support (points (i) to (vi)) have to be strictly defined in the grant contract as to avoid any exercise of discretion.]

In addition to the criteria related to the Financial Support, the Applicants are required to provide the following:

- (vii) the rules that will be applied to avoid mismanagement in the selection of proposals.
- (viii) a full explanation of the mentoring, monitoring and evaluation of the third parties receiving the Financial Support.

Applicants must provide information in the concept note concerning at least points (i), (ii) and (iii) and must provide information in the full application concerning all points from (i) to (viii).

The procedure for selecting beneficiaries of financial support to third parties should comply with the principles of transparency, equal treatment and fair competition, and adequate measures should be foreseen to prevent any situation which could give rise to conflict of interests.

In the context of the Financial Support, the Beneficiary(ies) of the grant contracts may be asked by the European Commission to provide a summary of the application in English. All contracts between the Coordinator and third parties shall be in the local language with an English copy provided by the Coordinator.

The lead applicant should present internal project monitoring arrangements to follow up the implementation of the activities of third parties financed with EU funds.

The lead applicant should coordinate to the best possible extent the activities implemented by third parties in order to ensure synergies with other actions/events managed by the EU and with any other relevant projects in the region.

Specific conditions or restrictions apply for financial support to third parties, as follows:

- All the types of activities that may be financed under this call are also eligible for financial support to third parties (see above). Special consideration shall be given to capacity building measures to support the third parties (grantees) in implementing their activities as well as their professional development in accordance with their needs. The activities that are ineligible under this call are also ineligible for financial support to third parties (see above).

Compulsory in case of financial support to third parties:

²⁴ As per OECD DAC definition, the term ‘results’ includes: ‘impact’ (overall objective), ‘outcome(s)’ (specific objective(s) and ‘output(s)’.

Applicants proposing financial support must foresee trainings and mentoring activities for the entities covering at least the following topics:

- Project management, including financial and operational aspects.
- Visibility of EU-funded actions, in line with the 2022 Visibility Guidelines (more details below).
- The thematic area targeted by the network.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission. If applicable, communication activities may be undertaken to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

All measures and activities relating to visibility and, if applicable, communication, must comply with the latest Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU-funded external action, laid down and published by the European Commission [Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions | International Partnerships \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/visibility-requirements).

The grantees shall collaborate with the EU-funded TACSO project and with the Delegations/Offices of the European Union to the IPA III Beneficiaries, to provide information about the project and ensure overall coordination.

Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

The lead applicant may not submit more than one application (as lead applicant) under this Call for Proposals.

The lead applicant may not be awarded (as lead applicant) more than one grant under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in another application at the same time **provided that it concerns another lot.**

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may not be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in more than one application under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may not be awarded more than one grant under this call for proposals.

In other words, the same one organisation can participate in maximum two submitted applications – one as main applicant, one as co-applicant, under two different lots, with the exception of the organisations being Coordinators/lead-applicants of ongoing grant contracts awarded as a result of the Call for Proposals ref. no. [EuropeAid/174154/DH/ACT/Multi](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/174154/DH/ACT/Multi) that can only participate as co-applicants in one application only (as specified above). **If this rule is not respected, all concerned applications will be rejected.**

The lead applicant must be able to provide proof of the consent of the co-applicants and affiliated entities to be included in the proposed application, already at the concept note stage.

2.1.4. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Union contribution under this call for proposals take the following form(s):

- Reimbursement of eligible costs that may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:
 - (i) actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);

(ii) one or more simplified cost options (see below).

Only 'eligible costs' can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for 'eligible costs'.

Simplified cost options may take the form of:

- **unit costs:** covering all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by reference to an amount per unit.
- **lump sums:** covering in global terms all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance.
- **flat-rate financing:** covering specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by applying a percentage fixed ex ante.

Simplified costs options (SCOs) which can be proposed are the following:

"output or result based SCOs": they include costs linked to outputs, results, activities, deliverables in the framework of a specific project (for example the determination of a lump sum for the organization of a conference, or for the realisation of a determined output/activity). Where possible and appropriate, lump sums or unit costs shall be determined in such a way to allow their payment upon achievement of concrete outputs and/or results. This type of SCO can be proposed by the beneficiary (no threshold is applicable) at proposal's stage (in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). In case the evaluation committee is not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

Refer to Annex K for the details of the procedure to be followed depending on the type and amount of the costs to be declared as SCO.

Applicants proposing this form of reimbursement, must clearly indicate in worksheet no.1 of Annex B, each heading/item of eligible costs concerned by this type of financing, i.e. add the reference in capital letters to 'UNIT COST', 'LUMPSUM' in the Unit column (see example in Annex K).

Additionally in Annex B, in the second column of worksheet no.2, 'Justification of the estimated costs' per each of the corresponding budget item or heading applicants must:

- describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of unit costs and/or lump sums, to which costs they refer, etc for output or result based SCO;
- clearly explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount for output or result based SCO.

In case of output or result based SCOs the evaluation committee decides whether to accept the proposed amounts or rates on the basis of the provisional budget submitted by the applicants, by analysing factual data of grants carried out by the applicants or of similar actions. In case the evaluation committee is not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

No threshold is set ex-ante for the total amount of financing that can be authorised by the contracting authority on the basis of simplified cost options.

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant contract do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the contracting authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant or the percentage of EU co-financing as a result of these corrections.

It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

The grant may take the form of a single lump-sum covering the entire eligible costs of an action or a work programme.

Single lump sums may be determined on the basis of the estimated budget, which should comply with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Compliance with these principles shall be verified ex ante at the time of evaluation of the grant application.

When authorising single lump sums the authorising officer responsible shall comply with the conditions applicable to output or result based SCOs.

When using this form of financing, the description of the action shall include detailed information on the essential conditions triggering the payment, including, where applicable, the achievement of outputs and/or results.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines).

Salary costs of the personnel of national administrations may be eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the action were not undertaken.

Contingency reserve

The budget may include a contingency reserve not exceeding 5% of the estimated direct eligible costs. It can only be used with the **prior written authorisation** of the contracting authority.

Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed 7% of the estimated total eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the special conditions of the grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

If any of the applicants or affiliated entity(ies) is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU, it may not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the action.

Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to beneficiaries or affiliated entities free of charge by a third party. As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for beneficiaries or affiliated entities, they are not eligible costs (except for personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or operating grant if so authorised).

Contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing.

However, if the description of the action as proposed includes contributions in kind, the contributions have to be made.

Other co-financing shall be based on estimates provided by the applicant.

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest).
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities.
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant.
- purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred in accordance with Article 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action.
- currency exchange losses.
- in kind contributions.
- bonuses included in costs of staff.
- negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions.
- credit to third parties.
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations.

2.1.5. Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment:

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

Applicants (and affiliated entities) other than (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies whose application has been pre-selected or placed in a reserve list, shall assess their internal policy against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) through a self-evaluation questionnaire (Annex L). For grants of EUR 60 000 or less no self-evaluation is

required. Such self-evaluation questionnaire is not part of the evaluation of the full application by the contracting authority but is an administrative requirement. See section 2.5.6 of the PRAG.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, ‘corrupt practices’ are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

d) Unusual commercial expenses

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

e) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to substantial breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If substantial breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

To apply for this call for proposals the lead applicants need to:

- I. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action. To this end, lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities must register in PADOR. Lead applicants must register at the concept note step. Co-applicants and affiliated entities must register at the full application step; lead applicants must make sure that their PADOR profile is up to date. Please note that the registration of this data in **PADOR is obligatory** for this call for proposals:

PADOR is an on-line database in which organisations register and update information concerning their entity. Organisations registered in PADOR get a unique ID (EuropeAid ID) which they **must mention** in their application. PADOR is accessible via the website: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/pador>

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, lead applicants, co-applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) must complete the ‘PADOR registration form’²⁵ attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent **together with the full application**, by the submission deadline (see section 2.2.5).

- II. Provide information about the action in the documents listed under sections 2.2.2 (Where and how to send concept notes) and 2.2.5 (Full applications). Please note that online submission via **PROSPECT is obligatory** for this call.

²⁵ Which corresponds to Annex F – PADOR off-line form (PRAG annex e13).

It is strongly recommended to register in PADOR well in advance and not to wait until the last minute before the deadline to submit your application in PROSPECT.

Before starting using PADOR and PROSPECT, please read the user guides available on the website. All technical questions related to the use of these systems should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu via the online support form in PROSPECT.

2.2.1. Concept note content

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the concept note instructions in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the concept note and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order, **respecting the maximum acceptable length of each section, as indicated in the template**. Applications that do not comply with the above-mentioned requirements may be rejected.

Applicants must apply in English.

Please note that:

1. In the concept note, lead applicants must only provide an estimate of the requested EU contribution as well as an indicative percentage of that contribution in relation to the eligible costs of the action. A detailed budget is to be submitted only by the lead applicants invited to submit a full application in the second phase. 2. The elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application, except for the changes described below:

- The EU contribution may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%. Lead applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these guidelines in Section 1.3.
- The lead applicant may add, remove or replace one or more co-applicant(s) or affiliated entity (ies) only in duly justified cases.
- The lead applicant may adjust the duration of the action if unforeseen circumstances outside the scope of the applicants have taken place following the submission of the concept note and require such adaptation (risk of action not being carried out). In such cases, the duration must remain within the limits imposed by the guidelines for applicants. Own contributions by the applicants can be replaced by other donors' contributions at any time.

An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in Annex A.2 – Instructions for drafting the Full Application, section 2.1.1, point viii. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.

Only the concept note form will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that this document contains ALL relevant information concerning the action. No additional annexes should be sent.

Please complete the concept note carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the concept note instructions may lead to the rejection of the concept note.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

2.2.2. Where and how to send concept notes

The concept note together with the declaration by the lead applicant (Annex A.1 section 2) **must be submitted online via PROSPECT** <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT user manual.

Upon submission of a concept note online, the lead applicant will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in its PROSPECT profile.

Please note that incomplete concept notes may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their concept note is complete by using the checklist for concept note (Annex A.1, Instructions).

2.2.3. Deadline for submission of concept notes

The deadline for the submission of concept notes is 29/12/2023 at 14:00 (Brussels date and time). In order to convert this deadline to local time you can use any online time converter tool that takes into account timezones and winter/summer time changes (example available [here](#)) **The lead applicant is strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit** its concept note, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The contracting authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

Any concept note submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.4. Further information about concept notes

An online information session on this call for proposals will be held on 23/11/2023 (please consult TACSO 3 project website – www.tacso.eu - for further information).

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of concept notes to the address(es) below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: **NEAR-CSF-applications@ec.europa.eu**

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for submission of concept notes.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure will be published on the website where the call was published: website of DG International Partnerships https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>, as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website(s) regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT**: Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English French and Spanish. Therefore users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

Please note that the contracting authority may decide to cancel the call for proposals procedure at any stage according to the conditions set out in Section 6.5.9 of the PRAG.

2.2.5. Full applications

Lead applicants invited to submit a full application following pre-selection of their concept note must do so using the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order, **respecting the maximum acceptable length of each section, as**

indicated in the template. Applications that do not comply with the above-mentioned requirements may be rejected.

The elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application, except for the changes described below:

- The EU contribution may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%. Lead applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these guidelines in Section 1.3.
- The lead applicant may add, remove or replace one or more co-applicant(s) or affiliated entity(ies) only in duly justified cases.
- The lead applicant may adjust the duration of the action if unforeseen circumstances outside the scope of the applicants have taken place following the submission of the concept note and require such adaptation (risk of action not being carried out). In such cases, the duration must remain within the limits imposed by the guidelines for applicants.

An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in Annex A.2 – Instructions for drafting the Full Application, section 2.1.1, point viii. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.

Lead applicants must submit their full applications in the same language as their concept notes.

Please complete the full application form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

Any error related to the points listed in the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions) or any major inconsistency in the full application (e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is unclear and thus prevents the contracting authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Please note that only the full application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be transmitted to the evaluators (and assessors, if used). It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, **the lead applicant has to submit with the full application the completed PADOR form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each (if any) co-applicants and each (if any) affiliated entities²⁶.**

Please note that the following documents²⁷ shall be uploaded in PADOR by the full application deadline or submitted together with the PADOR registration form with the full application form:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity. Where the contracting authority has recognised the lead applicant's, or the co-applicant(s)'s, or their affiliated entity(ies)'s eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it should be submitted, instead of the statutes or articles of association, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred

²⁶ Natural persons who apply for a grant (if so allowed in the guidelines for applicants) do not have to provide an organisation data form. In this case, the information included in the grant application form is sufficient.

in the meantime. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.

2. Legal entity form (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and by each co-applicant, if any), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the contracting authority, instead of the legal entity form and supporting documents, the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.
3. A financial identification form of the lead applicant (not from co-applicant(s)) conforming to the model attached as Annex E of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the lead applicant is established. If the lead applicant has already submitted a financial identification form in the past for a contract where the European Commission was in charge of the payments and intends to use the same bank account, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead.

In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted²⁸:

1. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants exceeding EUR 100 000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

In all other cases, the lead applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by an applicant to the contracting authority in any one financial year.

The external audit report as well as the self-declaration certifying the validity of the accounts are not required from the co-applicant(s) or affiliated entities (if any).

2. A copy of the lead applicant's latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed)²⁹. A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) (if any) nor from affiliated entity(ies) (if any).

The requested supporting documents (uploaded in PADOR or sent together with the PADOR offline form) must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals. Originals should be kept on file for controls.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union, a translation into English of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, must be attached for the purpose of analysing the application.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than English, it is strongly recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, into English.

Applicants have to take into consideration the time necessary to obtain official documents from national competent authorities and to translate such documents in the authorised languages while registering their data in PADOR.

²⁸ No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000.

²⁹ This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received a scholarship or that are in most need of direct support, nor to public bodies and to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to Section 2.2.5, point 1.

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided by the deadline for the submission of the full application, the application may be rejected.

No additional annexes should be sent.

2.2.6. Where and how to send full applications

Full applications (i.e. the full application form, PADOR registration form (where applicable), the budget, the logical framework, and the declaration by the lead applicant) must be submitted online via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT users' manual.

Upon submission of the full application online, the lead applicants will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in their PROSPECT profile.

Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions).

2.2.7. Deadline for submission of full applications

The deadline for the submission of full applications will be indicated in the letter sent to the lead applicants whose application has been pre-selected. This letter will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

Lead applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their full applications, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The Contacting Authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.8. Further information about full applications

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of full applications to the addresses listed below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: **NEAR-CSF-applications@ec.europa.eu**

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the submission of full applications.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), or an action.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure, will be published on the website of DG International Partnerships: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr, as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT**. Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English French and Spanish. Therefore users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

(1) STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Annex A.1, Instructions of the grant application form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The concept notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note, which can be found in Annex A.1.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Relevance of the action	20
1.1. How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (in particular section 1.2 and 2.1.3)?	5
1.2. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target region and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and other EU-funded initiatives in the region such as other CSF-funded actions, Creative Europe and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights – EIDHR/Human Rights and Democracy Programme - and avoidance of duplication)?	5
1.3. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? Is there evidence of gender and youth analyses having been carried out and informing the proposal?	5
1.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices, constructive partnerships with public central and local authorities, relevant bodies and economic stakeholders) and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2., 2.1.1 and 2.1.3 of the guidelines for applicants?	5
2. Design of the action	30
2.1. How coherent is the overall design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results?	5x2**
2.2. Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5
2.3. Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions) and include	5

plans to adapt to such risks materialising, or assumptions not being fulfilled?	
2.4. Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic?	5
2.5. To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of persons with disabilities, rights of minorities (including Roma communities), youth, outreach to grassroots and citizens?	5
Maximum total score	50

****:** this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

Once all concept notes have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

Firstly, only the concept notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the number of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to 200% of the available budget for this call for proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot, where relevant.

Lead applicants will receive a letter indicating the reference number of their application and the respective results. This letter will automatically appear online in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications.

(2) STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

- If the submission deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will automatically be rejected.
- If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions). This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The full applications that pass this check will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

The selection criteria help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s operational capacity and the lead applicant's financial capacity and are used to verify that they:

- have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding (this only applies to lead applicants);
- have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This applies to applicants and any affiliated entity(ies).

For the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, lead applicants must ensure that the relevant information and documents (i.e. accounts of the latest financial year and external audit report, where applicable) are up to date either in their PADOR profile or when submitting the requested documents with PADOR registration form. If the information and documents requested are outdated and do not allow for a proper evaluation of the financial capacity, the application may be rejected.

The award criteria help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

Scoring:

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Financial and operational capacity	20
1.1. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house experience of project management?	5
1.2. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical in-house expertise (especially knowledge and experience of the issues to be addressed)?	5
1.3. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management in-house capacity (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action, including in relation to support to third parties)?	5
1.4. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance and does its turnover/annual budget indicate a capacity to deal with a grant of the size requested under the call?	5
2. Relevance of the action	20
<i>Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation</i>	
3. Design of the action	15
3.1. How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s) (including the modalities chosen for FSTP)? Are gender issues adequately addressed?	5
3.2. Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification? If not, is a baseline study foreseen (and is the study budgeted appropriately in the proposal)?	5
3.3. Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5
4. Implementation approach	15
4.1. Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic?	5
4.2. Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)?	5
4.3. Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	5
5. Sustainability of the action	15
5.1. Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5
5.2. Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing?	5

5.3. Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable?- Financially (e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs)- Institutionally (will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local ‘ownership’ of the results of the action?)- At policy level (where applicable) (what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods) - Environmentally (if applicable) (will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?)	5
6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	15
6.1. Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	5
6.2. Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?	5x2**
Maximum total score	100

****:** this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the lead applicant applies without co-applicants or affiliated entities the score for point 4.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of co-applicants or affiliated entities is mandatory according to these guidelines for applicants.

Provisional selection

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

(3) STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS AND AFFILIATED ENTITY(IES)

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.4). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

- The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 5 of Annex A.2) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of applicants and the affiliated entity(ies) will be verified according to the criteria set out in Section 2.1.1.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals.

2.4. SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The lead applicant shall submit the documents listed in section 2.2.5.

In addition, a lead applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents via PROSPECT:

1. Declaration on honour: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in and sign the declaration on honour certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.6.10.1 of the PRAG) where the amount of the grant exceeds EUR 15 000. Please note that the declaration on honour should be submitted via PROSPECT.
2. Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in the self-evaluation questionnaire assessing the organisation's internal policy and procedure against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) (Annex L) where the amount of grant exceeds EUR 60 000 (see Section 2.5.6 of the PRAG)³⁰. Please note that the self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H should be submitted via PADOR.

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

NB: In the eventuality that the contracting authority is not satisfied with the strength, solidity, and guarantee offered by the structural link between one of the applicants and its affiliated entity, it can require the submission of the missing documents allowing for its conversion into co-applicant. If all the missing documents for co-applicants are submitted, and provided all necessary eligibility criteria are fulfilled, the above mentioned entity becomes a co-applicant for all purposes. The lead applicant has to submit the application form revised accordingly.

2.5. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

2.5.1. Content of the decision

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the Contracting Authority's decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. This letter will be sent by e-mail and will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the user who submitted the application. Therefore, please check regularly your PROSPECT profile, taking into account the indicative timetable below. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See further Section 2.12 of the practical guide.

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract. For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm

³⁰ Applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities who are (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies do not have to submit the self-evaluation questionnaire.

2.5.2. Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME
1. Information meeting (if any)	23/11/2023	Further information on TACSO (www.tacso.eu) website
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	8/12/2023	14.00
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	18/12/2023	-
4. Deadline for submission of concept notes	29/12/2023	14.00
5. Information to lead applicants on administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)	March 2024	-
6. Invitations to submit full applications	March 2024	-
7. Deadline for submission of full applications	April 2024	-
8. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)	July 2024	-
9. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)	August 2024	-
10. Contract signature	October 2024	-

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site where the call was published: website of DG International Partnerships https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>.

2.6. CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AFTER THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION TO AWARD A GRANT

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract. Where the coordinator is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed, it will sign a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. In this case, references to provisions of the standard grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the grant contract shall be understood as references to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement.

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the beneficiary(ies) and its affiliated entity(ies) (if any) to award procurement contracts, those contracts must be awarded in accordance with Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

In this context, a distinction should be made between awarding implementation contracts and subcontracting parts of the action described in the proposal, i.e. the description of the action annexed to the grant contract, such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

Awarding implementation contracts: implementation contracts relate to the acquisition by beneficiaries of routine services and/or necessary goods and equipment as part of their project management; they do not cover any outsourcing of tasks forming part of the action that are described in the proposal, i.e. in the description of the action annexed to the grant contract .

Subcontracting: Subcontracting is the implementation, by a third party with which one or more beneficiaries have concluded a procurement contract, of specific tasks forming part of the action as described in annex to the grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

Annex A: Grant application form (Word format)

A.1 – Concept note

A.2 – Full application form

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical framework

Annex D: Legal entity sheet

Annex E: Financial identification form

Annex F: PADOR registration form

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION³¹

Annex G: Standard grant contract

- Annex II: general conditions

- Annex IV: contract award rules

- Annex V: standard request for payment

- Annex VI: model narrative and financial report

- Annex VII: model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action

[-Annex VIII: model financial guarantee]

- Annex IX: standard template for transfer of ownership of assets

Annex H: Declaration on Honour

Annex I: Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en

Annex J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.

Annex K: Guidelines for assessing simplified cost options.

Annex L: Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H

Annex M: Overview of the eligibility criteria per lots

Useful links:

Project Cycle Management Guidelines

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en

The implementation of grant contracts

A Users' Guide

<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=48169235>

³¹ These documents should also be published by the contracting authority.

Financial Toolkit

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en

Please note: the toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

Enhanced Outreach to Civil Society Organisations: a Collection of Good Practices of Financial Support to Third Parties in the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Countries

<https://www.tacso.eu/enhanced-outreach-to-civil-society-organizations/>

A collection of **gender analysis** that applicants may want to consult is available on the TACSO 3 website (www.tacso.eu).

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