



**Contracting Authority:** European Commission

Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy 2023

### **Guidelines for grant applicants**

Budget lines: **BGUE-B2024-14.020211-C8-INTPA>NEAR and  
BGUE-B2024-14.020211-C8-INTPA>NEAR CUSHION**

Reference:

EuropeAid/180625/DD/ACT/ME

Deadline for submission<sup>1</sup> of full application:

**28/05/2024 at 16:00 (Brussels date and time)**

(in order to convert to local time click [here](#)<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

# NOTICE

This is an open call for proposals, where all documents are submitted together: concept note (Annex A.1- Grant application form - Concept note) and full application (Annex A.2 - Grant application form - Full application). In the first instance, only the concept notes will be evaluated. Thereafter, for the lead applicants who have been pre-selected, the full applications will be evaluated. 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.

## Online submission via PROSPECT

**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:** Information session on 27 March 2024 at 11 am in Europe House, trg Argentina 4, Podgorica; and user manuals.

To help applicants familiarise themselves with the system before the online submission, an information session will be organised on 27 March 2024 at 11 am in Europe House, trg Argentina 4, Podgorica. Should you be interested in this session, please send an email by 25 March 2024 to [delegation-montenegro-fcs@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:delegation-montenegro-fcs@eeas.europa.eu) indicating: name, surname, nationality and email address of the persons who are going to participate as well as their organisation (max. two participants per organisation). No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session 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 PROSPECT<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via email: [INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu](mailto:INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu).

## Table of contents

<b>1. «THEMATIC PROGRAMME ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY 2023»</b>	<b>FEHLER!</b>
TEXTMARKE NICHT DEFINIERT.	
1.1. Background.....	4
1.2. Objectives of the programme and priority issues .....	4
1.3. Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority .....	5
<b>2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. Eligibility criteria.....	6
2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s)) .....	7
2.1.2. Associates and contractors .....	9
2.1.3. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made .....	10
2.1.4. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included .....	15
2.1.5. Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct .....	18
2.2. How to apply and the procedures to follow .....	19
2.2.1. Application forms .....	20
2.2.2. Where and how to send applications.....	22
2.2.3. Deadline for submission of applications.....	22
2.2.4. Further information about applications.....	23
2.3. Evaluation and selection of applications .....	23
2.4. Submission of supporting documents .....	30
2.5. Notification of the Contracting Authority's decision .....	30
2.5.1. Content of the decision .....	30
2.5.2. Indicative timetable.....	31
2.6. Conditions for implementation after the contracting authority's decision to award a grant.....	31
<b>3. LIST OF ANNEXES</b>	<b>33</b>

# 1. THEMATIC PROGRAMME ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY 2023

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

Human rights and democracy are founding values of the European Union and a cornerstone of the EU external action. The international human rights framework sets norms and standards for everyone in all cultures, with no exception. Human rights and democracy is also a precondition for sustainable development and for building more inclusive, open and resilient societies.

The EU launched the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme in 2021. This programme steps up EU support in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law and the work of civil society organisations and human rights defenders around the world during the period 2021-2027. The programme will promote and protect the universality of human rights, strengthen the rule of law and accountability for human rights violations and abuses and defend the full and effective exercise of fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression, supporting independent journalism and media, while seizing the opportunities and countering risk associated with digital and new technologies.

The Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) Global Europe – Human Rights and Democracy (HR&D) Thematic Programme (2021-2027) is the EU's main tool to support civil society to become an effective force for defence of human rights and promotion of democracy worldwide. It complements the Civil Society Facility of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), which is focussed specifically on civil society in the enlargement region. The actions to be financed under the HR&D call should contribute to the achievement of the 5 overarching priorities of the EU Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights, namely: (1) Protecting and empowering individuals (2) Building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies (3) Promoting a global system for human rights and democracy (4) Harnessing the opportunities and addressing challenges of new technologies and (5) Delivering by working together.

At country level, support under the Programme is aligned to country-specific human rights and democracy challenges, identified through consultations with a number of relevant stakeholders such as civil society organisations (CSOs), EU Member States and other donors, as well as international organisations active in the field of human rights and democratic governance. **This call for proposals seeks to support the work of civil society organisations on promotion and protection of human rights and democracy with a specific focus on the protection of social, economic and cultural rights, especially for groups particularly vulnerable to discrimination.** It also seeks to support activities aimed at harnessing the opportunities and addressing the challenges of digital communication technologies.

The European Commission 2023 Enlargement Report indicates that Montenegro's legislative and institutional framework on fundamental rights is largely in place and that Montenegro continues to largely meet its international obligations on human rights. However, additional efforts are needed to fully implement this framework. Some legislative changes are also needed, in particular in the area of non-discrimination. The reporting period was marked by societal polarisation and division. The most vulnerable groups in society (including Roma and Egyptians, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ persons) continue to be subjected to discrimination, hate speech and hate crime. Additional efforts are needed to ensure access to justice and enforcement of rights in administrative and judicial proceedings, in particular for vulnerable groups.

In the context of the pre-accession process, the focus of the Thematic Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy is on the role of the CSOs with an emphasis on areas linked to the Copenhagen political criteria. By doing so, the Thematic Instrument complements support provided under other instruments.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is to empower CSOs and to support their efforts to promote, advance and defend human rights and democracy in Montenegro.

The **specific objective(s)** of this call for proposals are threefold: firstly, to support CSOs working in the area of protection of **social, economic and cultural rights**, especially for groups particularly vulnerable to discrimination. Secondly, it will support CSOs in promoting **active citizenship** in public and political life and in fostering the role of civil society in oversight and accountability mechanisms in the area of justice and rule of law. Thirdly, it also seeks for the proposals aimed at **harnessing the opportunities and addressing the challenges of digital communication technologies**, taking into account the fact that such technologies can empower people, widen access to information and knowledge, but at the same time, can also be used in ways that violate human rights.

This call for proposals is divided in three lots, each with its own specific objectives and priorities, as indicated under 2.1.3. Within the general objective in each lot, the proposed actions may address one or more of the specific objectives of the lot.

Proposals should be developed using the human rights-based approach ([HRBA methodology](#)<sup>4</sup>): The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) is the methodology that ensures that the EU's external action is designed and implemented to contribute directly or indirectly to the realisation for human rights for all. The HRBA is in line with the principles of aid effectiveness and its integration will be fully taken into account when evaluating proposals. Make specific reference to gender mainstreaming and the Gender Action Plan III: Gender mainstreaming remains the primary means to achieve gender equality. Its purpose is to ensure that all policies and programmes maximise their benefits for all and contribute to stop the perpetuation of inequality. The new EU Gender Action Plan for 2021-2025 (GAP III) calls on making gender equality a crosscutting priority in EU external action. Whenever possible, GAP III gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated indicators and gender-analyses to inform the design of future actions shall be developed for all target groups. This priority will be taken into consideration when evaluating proposals.

### **1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY**

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 1,045,000. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

#### **Indicative allocation of funds by lot/geographical distribution:**

**Lot 1: Protection of social, economic and cultural rights, especially for groups particularly vulnerable to discrimination: EUR 570,000**

**Lot 2: Active citizenship in public and political life: EUR 220,000**

**Lot 3: Harnessing the opportunities and addressing the challenges of digital and new technologies: EUR 255,000**

If the allocation indicated for a specific lot cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to (an)other lot(s).

#### Size of grants

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

#### **Lot 1:**

- **minimum amount: EUR 500,000**
- **maximum amount: EUR 570,000**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://rise.articulate.com/share/vFKXJeiJ67uApEIEQDrAIRrYFFa1i-me#/>

## Lot 2:

- **minimum amount: EUR 200,000**
- **maximum amount: EUR 220,000**

## Lot 3:

- **minimum amount: EUR 200,000**
- **maximum amount: EUR 255,000**

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum percentages of total eligible costs of the action for all three lots:

- Minimum percentage: 60 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.4)
- Maximum percentage: 95 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.4).

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 Fund<sup>5</sup>.

The grant may cover the entire eligible costs of the action if this is deemed essential to carry it out. If that is the case, the lead applicant must justify full financing in Section 2.1 of Annex A.2. The validity of the justification provided will be examined during the evaluation procedure. The absence of any justification may lead to the rejection of the application.

## 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> ).<sup>6</sup>

### 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);

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

(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 established in Montenegro<sup>7</sup> or a Member State of the European Union<sup>8</sup>, or any country, as all are eligible for participation in contracts financed under this Instrument, without prejudice to the limitations inherent in the nature and objectives of the action<sup>9</sup> **and**
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary **and**
- in case the lead applicant is not established in Montenegro, it must act with at least one co-applicant that is established in Montenegro **and**
- be registered at least 24 months prior the deadline for submission of project proposals.

(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

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<sup>7</sup> Registered under at least one of the following laws: Law on Non-governmental Organisations (Official Gazette of Montenegro 27/99, 09, 30/02, 39/11), Labour Law (OG of Montenegro 43/03, 79/04, 49/08, 26/08, 88/09, 26/10, 59/11), Law on Representation of Trade Unions (OG of Montenegro 26/2010), the Bylaw on the representation of employers' organisations (OG of Montenegro, 34/05), the Law on the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro (OG of Montenegro, 42/98), Law on Red Cross of Montenegro (OG of Montenegro, 28/06).

<sup>8</sup> To be determined on the basis of the organisation's statutes that 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.

<sup>9</sup> Pursuant to Regulation (EU) No.2021/947 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL – Article 28 "Without prejudice to the limitations inherent to the nature and objectives of the action, participation in procurement, grant and prize award procedures for actions financed under the Human Rights and Democracy thematic programme and the Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention thematic programme as well as rapid response actions, shall be open without limitations."

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.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.

**The lead applicant must act with co-applicant(s) as specified hereafter.**

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.

**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 himself.

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

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

- (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’.

- 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 Lot 1 (Protection of social, economic and cultural rights, especially for groups particularly vulnerable to discrimination): The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 36 months nor exceed 40 months.

For Lot 2 (Active citizenship in public and political life); and Lot 3 (Addressing the challenges of digital and new technologies):

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 24 months nor exceed 36 months.

Sectors or themes (non-exhaustive list):

- ✓ Local democracy, decision making and political participation
- ✓ Access to quality local public services and policies for groups at risk of vulnerability and discrimination
- ✓ Human Rights (persons with disabilities, Roma, children, LGBTIQ, minorities, elderly, non-discrimination, freedoms etc.)
- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Justice, rule of law
- ✓ Transparency, accountability.

Types of action (only indicative):

#### **Lot 1: Protection of social, economic and cultural rights, especially for groups particularly vulnerable to discrimination:**

- Supporting access to public services (employment, health, education, etc.) by vulnerable, marginalised, exposed or discriminated groups (ex. Persons with disabilities, Roma, LGBTIQ, minorities, women and children victims of violence)
- Fostering development of competences and skills through non formal learning; digital literacy, intercultural learning, vocational education, critical thinking, the respect of diversity, and the values of solidarity, equal opportunities and human rights among others
- Creating partnerships between local/regional public institutions and civil society organisations on development of tailor-made employment measures for disadvantaged groups
- Creating opportunities for self-employment of vulnerable, marginalised, exposed or discriminated groups
- Supporting national and local institutions and actors in protecting and promoting social, economic and cultural rights of the most vulnerable, marginalised, exposed or discriminated groups
- Enhancing the inclusion into all aspects of societal life of people belonging to minorities and/or people being in marginalised situations, such as people belonging to ethnic or sexual minorities; people marginalised by poverty and/or lacking educational opportunities; people being in vulnerable situations; victims of social discrimination; migrants and refugees
- Addressing social inclusion, by: reducing inequalities; fighting discrimination; combating hate speech; promoting rights' awareness; promoting digital skills.

**NB: For all activities indicated above, proposals should demonstrate their value added in relation to existing state services (social services, employment, education etc.), either enhancing access to them, or innovating upon them. Activities undertaken under the project should be considered as pilots**

**generating experiences that should also be analysed and shared as part of project activities, in search for potential further innovation and inclusion into relevant sector reforms.**

**Lot 2: Promoting active citizenship in public and political life:**

- Enhancing citizen participation in public consultations through greater involvement of CSOs with the aim to engage the public and CSOs in the formulation of public policies
- Encouraging innovative citizen-led initiatives to improve governance, transparency, integrity efficiency, inclusiveness and service orientation of public administration
- Facilitating the creation of mechanisms for citizens' active monitoring of policies, services and reporting (e.g. cases of maladministration, corruption etc.) as well as policy dialogue through effective enjoyment of public consultations rights
- Strengthening advocacy/lobbying by community-based organisations
- Raising awareness among citizens on key EU accession-related reforms, also through civic and legal education
- Support activities, projects and ideas of informal groups, networks and activists, particularly at local level on key EU-related reforms in the area of rule of law and justice
- Promoting the establishment of networks involving youth, women and vulnerable groups

**Lot 3: Harnessing the opportunities and addressing the challenges of digital communication technologies, to avoid violation of human rights:**

- Contributing to counter disinformation, interference in democratic processes and hate speech, while safeguarding the full exercise of fundamental freedoms
- Supporting civil society actions that foster online media literacy and digital skills, promoting open, free and secure internet equally accessible to all
- Enhancing general knowledge and understanding of new media/communication technologies and their impacts on human rights
- Helping young people understand the value and risks of the open internet; make informed choices while using the internet and digital technologies; and understand and counteract its possible abuses in the form of hate speech, fake news, cyber-harassment
- Disseminating knowledge, building or reinforcing skills, including on digital security matters, for their strategic use at grassroot level and promoting close collaboration with experts to anticipate and counter harmful effects in terms of personal data protection, privacy and security.
- Supporting partnerships with and support the work of bloggers, film makers, photographers, artists and other communication specialists on key reform policy areas in order to create positive behavioural changes in society in the areas addressed by this lot.

Location

Actions must take place in Montenegro.

Types of action

Types of action which may be financed under this call, which are eligible and may be financed under this call, are those directly contributing to the achievement of the objectives as per section 1.2 and 2.1.3 of the guidelines above.

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 study visits or participation in international forums;
- infrastructure projects or projects essentially focused on the purchase of equipment;

- purchase and/or renovation of buildings or offices;
- activities undertaken before signature of the contract;
- actions aimed at profit making activities;
- actions related to charitable donations;
- actions already funded by other Community programmes;
- actions discriminating against individuals or groups of people on grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack of them, or their ethnical origin;
- actions supporting individual political parties;
- actions aimed at supporting political activities or political parties.

### Types of activity

The types of activity which are eligible and may be financed under this call are those directly contributing to the achievement of the objectives as per section 1.2 and 2.1.3 above.

Indicative types of activities eligible under this call include (but are not limited to):

- Monitoring the implementation of central and local public policies, strategies, action plans and indicators;
- Capacity building of civil society organisations and other stakeholders to monitor policies;
- Activities to mobilise and empower vulnerable groups;
- Strengthening of existing civil society platforms, networks or coalitions, campaigning and cooperation on issues linked to the call;
- Exchange of information, know-how and experience;
- Organisation of training events and implementation of training programmes;
- Organisation of discussion fora to improve dialogue and networking between civil society and decision makers on the issues and priorities of this call;
- Advocacy, lobbying and development of strategies by civil society organisations to promote relevant legal reform, influence policy-making, or to counter restrictions imposed by state on CSOs and other non-state actors;
- Pilot activities to test and document the result of new approaches for enhanced access to or innovation of services for the groups targeted by this call
- Legal advice/assistance
- Facilitating dialogue processes and mediation activities (such as inter-community dialogues);
- Documenting and reporting on cases of human rights violations;
- Monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the international human rights instruments that the country has ratified and human rights policy implementation at central and local level, including advocacy;
- Supporting the collection of appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable governments to formulate and implement policies;
- Capacity-building through trainings of civil society organisations active in the human rights/democracy field and of human rights defenders;
- Awareness-raising and communication campaigns to inform on specific democracy/human rights issues;
- Supporting access to remedy for victims, accountability and prosecution of perpetrators;
- Promoting inclusive and strategic partnerships, networking and cooperation with CSOs and other relevant stakeholders or among CSOs in the region and the EU;
- Promoting greater contact and cooperation between civic and political actors, including fostering of structured dialogue mechanisms;
- Awareness-raising on the topics of the call
- Visibility activities: all applicants should include a communication and visibility strategic plan both in the Full Application and the budget in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Actions. The applicants may plan some of the visibility activities in the following non-exhaustive list: publishing and disseminating promotional material, distributing public announcements on project activities and results, organise press conferences and public events, promote concrete project activities in print and electronic media through interviews/reportages/articles/clips, etc.

## Financial support to third parties<sup>10</sup>

### **All lots:**

Applicants must propose financial support to third parties (FSTP) in order to help achieve the objectives of the action – however, different minimum requirements apply to different lots.

Lot 1: Minimum 70% of the budget should be dedicated to FSTP

Lot 2: Minimum 50% of the budget should be dedicated to FSTP

Lot 3: Minimum 30% of the budget should be dedicated to FSTP

**Financial support to third parties should be preferably provided to entities operating outside of the capital Podgorica with equal distribution of the support across the country.**

**Beneficiaries, which have signed contract under this call for proposals are not eligible applicants under the financial support to third parties.**

**It is not allowed to request co-financing from third parties. For the financial support to third parties, 100% of financing must be provided.**

Please note that all provisions under 2.1.3 and the entries sectors and themes, location, types of actions, types of activities, ineligible actions and number of applications and grants per applicant **must also be applied to the financial support to third parties**. The only exception to this provision will be the duration of the implementation of actions financed under support to third parties. Activities should fall within the span of the contract implementation.

**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 the grant application form:**

- (i) the overall objectives, the specific objective(s) and the outputs<sup>[1]</sup> (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, and
- (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.

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<sup>10</sup> These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

<sup>[1]</sup> As per OECD DAC definition, the term ‘results’ includes: ‘impact’ (overall objective), ‘outcome(s)’ (specific objective(s) and ‘output(s)’.

When launching calls for proposals for the award of financial support to third parties, beneficiaries may use their own procedures provided these procedures comply with the principles of proportionality, sound financial management, equal treatment and non-discrimination, ensure transparency with adequate publication of calls for proposals and prevent conflict of interests throughout the entire award procedure.

**NB: Entities applying for FSTP can apply in Montenegrin language.**

**Financial Support to Third Parties<sup>11</sup>** is a financial mechanism whereby the EU provides funding to one organisation as a grant applicant, which, in turn, re-grants funding to a number of smaller CSOs, grassroots, or community-based organisations, even individuals.

- Before awarding the grant, the contracting authority will verify that the grant beneficiary offers appropriate guarantees as regards the recovery of amounts due to the European Commission. This is because the grant beneficiaries remain financially responsible vis-à-vis the contracting authority for the correct use of the financial support.
- **The third parties receiving financial support from the beneficiaries are not subject to the same eligibility criteria as those applicable to beneficiaries and affiliated entities under the call for proposals.**
- FSTP should be conceived in such a way as to be an **efficient and easy tool** for the achievement of the purpose of the action.

The implementing partners have certain flexibility to define **what type of supporting documents the FSTP beneficiaries need to submit, such as receipts or reports**. The implementing partners are allowed to propose to the Contracting Authority which documents are considered essential, as well as who will keep them. Auditors will turn solely to the implementing partner for proof and documentation, not to the FSTP beneficiary.

Output-based reporting is allowed by the EU to the extent that there is no need for proof of expenses but rather for documents proving that the activity has taken place in accordance with what was required, and the related outputs were produced.

**The maximum amount of financial support per third party is EUR ≤ 20 000.**

The persons or categories of persons as third parties eligible for financial support are the following:

- be legal persons or an entity without legal personality<sup>12</sup> **and**
- be non-profit making **and**
- be civil society organizations<sup>13</sup> **and**

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<sup>11</sup> Article 204 of the Financial Regulation

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&from=EN>

Chapter 6.9.2 of the PRAG8, Chapter 19.2.10.3 in the (previously DEVCO, now INTPA)Companion9, and Art. 10.5-10.9 of the General Conditions (Annex II of the grant contract<sup>10</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> Grant applications may be eligible if submitted by entities which do not have legal personality under the applicable national law, on the condition that the representatives of that applicant can prove that they have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on behalf of the applicant, and that they offer financial and operational guarantees equivalent to those provided by legal persons.

<sup>13</sup> The broadest possible understanding about civil society organisations is applied under this call for proposals, as defined in 1999 by the European Economic and Social Committee (CES/1999/851) and further detailed by both the EESC (CES/1999/851,CES/2000/81) and the EC (com/2002/0704.final, COM/2005/0290.final).

- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action

**The description of the action(s) must propose a clear programme of capacity building and mentoring to recipients of FSTP. This should cover both project management, and, where possible, the substance of the activities carried out under the FSTP. It is mandatory to ensure support also to the consolidation and sharing of experiences made with the FSTP.**

Financial support to third parties should preferably be done by Calls for proposals remaining open for applications by third parties (organisations or initiatives) throughout the period of implementation of the project subject to a deadline allowing the implementation of the initiatives needing financial support.

### 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://europea.eu).

### Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

The lead applicant **may not** submit more than one application under this call for proposals. The lead applicant **may not** be awarded more than one grant under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in another application of another Lot at the same time.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in maximum 2 applications under this call for proposals (maximum one per lot).

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be awarded maximum 2 grants under this call for proposals.

### ***2.1.4. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included***

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

- Financing not linked to costs of the relevant operations based on<sup>14</sup>:

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<sup>14</sup> Such performance-based financing is not subject to other sub-articles of Article 14 of the General Conditions to the grant contract. The relevant results and the means to measure their achievement shall be clearly described in Annex I to the contract.

The amount to be paid per achieved result shall be set out in Annex III. The method to determine the amount to be paid per achieved result shall be clearly described in Annex I, take into account the principle of sound financial management and avoid double-financing of costs. The beneficiary shall not be obliged to report on costs linked to the achievement of

(i) either the fulfilment of conditions set out in sector specific legislation or Commission Decisions;  
or

(ii) the achievement of results measured by reference to the previously set milestones or through performance indicators;]

- 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 and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

Please 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, for output or result based SCO;

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results. However, it shall submit any necessary supporting documents, including where relevant accounting documents, to prove that the results triggering the payment as defined in Annex I and III have been achieved.

Articles 15(1) (schedule of payment), 15(7) (expenditure verification), 17(3) (no profit) of the General Conditions do not apply to the part of the action supported by way of result-based financing.



- 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 and the contracting authority decide 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 and the contracting authority are 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).

### 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 an 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 (except for volunteers' work);
- 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 provisionally 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 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, lead applicants need to:

- I. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action. To this end, lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities should register in PADOR<sup>15</sup> and the 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**.

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'<sup>16</sup> attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent **together with the application**, by the submission deadline (see section 2.2.2.).

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

**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](mailto:INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu) via the online support form in PROSPECT.

### **2.2.1. Application forms**

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions on the concept note and the full applications in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

Applicants must apply in English.

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

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the instructions on the concept note or any major inconsistency in the 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 the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment. Please note that only the grant application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be evaluated. 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 application the completed PADOR registration form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each co-applicant (if any) and each affiliated entity (if any).**

Please note that the following documents<sup>17</sup> shall be uploaded in PADOR by the application deadline or submitted together with the PADOR registration form with the application form:

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<sup>15</sup> Natural persons who apply for a grant (if so allowed in the guidelines) do not have to register in PADOR. In this case, the information included in PROSPECT and in the concept note is sufficient.

<sup>16</sup> Which corresponds to Annex F – PADOR Off-line form (PRAG annex e13).

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 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 sheet 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.

Entities without legal personality must, to the extent possible, submit the documentation listed above. In addition, a letter must be provided by the legal representative certifying his/her capacity to undertake legal obligations on behalf of the entity.

In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted<sup>18</sup>:

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)<sup>19</sup>. A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) (if any) nor from affiliated entity(ies) (if any).

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<sup>18</sup> No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000.

<sup>19</sup> 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 2.2.1 point 1.

The requested supporting documents (uploaded in PADOR or sent together with the PADOR registration 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 or in Montenegrin, 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.

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

No additional annexes should be sent.

### ***2.2.2. Where and how to send applications***

Applications **must be submitted online** via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT user manual.

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

**Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Annexes A.1 and A.2, Instructions).**

### ***2.2.3. Deadline for submission of applications***

The deadline for the submission of applications is **28/05/2024 at 16:00** (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](#))<sup>20</sup>.

**Lead applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their 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 aforementioned difficulties.

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

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<sup>20</sup> For example: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>.

#### **2.2.4. Further information about applications**

An information session on this call for proposals will be held on 27 March 2024 at 11 am in Europe House, trg Argentina 4, Podgorica. Questions may be sent by e-mail [or by fax] no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of applications to the below address(es), indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: [delegation-montenegro-fcs@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:delegation-montenegro-fcs@eeas.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 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), 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 DG International Partnerships [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home\\_fr](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>. 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](mailto: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.

### **2.3. 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: [OPENING<sup>21</sup> &] ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the opening and administrative check the following will be assessed:

- [If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.]
- If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in 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 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
<b>1. Relevance of the action</b>	<b>20</b>
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 (section 1.2)?	5
1.2. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives 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?	5
1.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices) ? [and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the guidelines for applicants]	5
<b>2. Design of the action</b>	<b>30</b>
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)?	5

<sup>21</sup> To be carried out only in the exceptional case of submission by post, private courier service or by hand-delivery (see section 2.2.2).



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 disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth, combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)?	5
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>50</b>

**\*\*:** 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 at least 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 evaluation committee will then proceed with the lead applicants whose proposals have been pre-selected.

## **(2) STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION**

If the applications pass the opening and administrative checks along the instructions of the Step 1: they 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 the 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
<b>1. Financial and operational capacity</b>	<b>20</b>
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 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)?	5
1.4. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?	5
<b>2. Relevance of the action</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1. 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 (section 1.2)?	5
2.2. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5
2.3. 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?	5
2.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices) ? [and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the guidelines for applicants]	5
<b>3. Design of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
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)?	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
<b>4. Implementation approach</b>	<b>15</b>
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
<b>5. Sustainability of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
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
<b>6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
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**
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>100</b>

\*\* : 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 2.2.1). 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 should submit the documents listed in section 2.2.1.

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:

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 shall 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)<sup>22</sup>. Please note that the self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H shall be submitted via PADOR.

If it is impossible for the lead applicants to supply the abovementioned documents via PROSPECT or PADOR for technical reasons, they must submit the requested supporting documents in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery to the postal address described in section 2.2.2 and according to the instructions therein.

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. Lead applicants who, in exceptional cases (see section 2.2), had to submit their application by post, private courier or hand-delivery will be informed by e-mail or by post if they did not provide any e-mail address. 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 Section 2.12 of the practical guide.

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<sup>22</sup> 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.

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](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm).

**2.5.2. Indicative timetable**

	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>
<b>1. Information meeting (if any)</b>	27/03/2024	11:00
<b>2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority</b>	07/05/2024	16:00
<b>3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority</b>	17/05/2024	16:00
<b>4. Deadline for submission of applications</b>	28/05/2024	16:00
<b>5. Information to lead applicants on [opening], administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)</b>	June 2024	-
<b>6. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)</b>	July 2024	-
<b>7. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)</b>	September 2024	-
<b>8. Contract signature</b>	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](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)

Annex A.1: Concept note

Annex A2: Full application form

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical framework (Excel format)

Annex D: Legal entity form

Annex E: Financial identification form

Annex F: PADOR registration form

#### DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION<sup>23</sup>

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](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

#### Useful links:

##### Project Cycle Management Guidelines

[https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project\\_en](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>

##### Financial Toolkit

[https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en)

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<sup>23</sup> These documents should also be published by the contracting authority.

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.

### **Sources on FSTP**

Frequently asked questions on financial support to third parties (FSTP) within EU cooperation – update June 2023: <https://library.tacso.eu/?s=FSTP>

The manual with FSTP good practice: <https://library.tacso.eu/fstp-brochure/>

TACSO FSTP Community of Practice: <https://library.tacso.eu/annual-fstp-community-of-practice-meeting-8-9-november-2023-sarajevo-bih-event-materials/>

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