



Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)

Call for proposals

Call for proposals to promote civil society organisations' awareness
of, capacity building and implementation of the EU Charter of
Fundamental Rights
(CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI)

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EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

EACEA.B – Creativity, Citizenship and Joint Operations
EACEA.B.3 – Europe for Citizens

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of EU Values under the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)**. The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))¹
- the basic act (CERV Regulation [2021/692](#))².

The call is launched in accordance with the 2023 – 2025 Work Programme³ and will be managed by the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topic**:

CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI: Call for proposals to promote civil society organisations' awareness of, capacity building on and implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

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

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

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

¹ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024).

² Regulation (EU) 2021/692 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (OJ L 156, 5.5.2021, p. 1).

³ [Commission Implementing Decision C/2024/4922 final of 18.07.2024](#) concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2025 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme.

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

You are also encouraged to visit the [Europe for Citizens Programme Project Results website](#) and the [Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously in the framework of the calls CERV-2022-CHAR-LITI, CERV-2023-CHAR-LITI and CERV-2024-CHAR-LITI.

1. Background

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ('the Charter') brings together a broad range of fundamental rights and reaffirms that the EU is built on the values of fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law. Its binding nature has enabled the EU legal order to develop into a beacon of fundamental rights protection.

To improve the application of the Charter and increase the public's knowledge about it, the European Commission presented in 2020 the Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights ('Charter Strategy'⁴). In the Charter Strategy, the Commission set out measures to support the application of the Charter in cooperation with key stakeholders: national, local and regional authorities, civil society organisations and human rights defenders, National Human Rights Institutions, equality bodies and ombudspersons, justice practitioners, EU institutions and general public.

The Commission confirmed its intention to support the use and awareness of the Charter through the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme. It noted that capacity building is central for better assisting people in using and benefitting from their fundamental rights. Moreover, the Commission invited Member States to promote people's awareness of their fundamental rights, and of where to turn when their rights are breached, in particular by empowering local actors.

As part of the Charter strategy, the Commission committed to supporting an enabling environment for civil society actors, including by stepping up its efforts regarding funding opportunities. Pursuant to the 2022 Annual report on the application of the Charter, focused on "A thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU"⁵, the Commission held a series of policy dialogues involving civil society and national authorities. The 2023 Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy making processes⁶ further stresses the importance of national authorities creating an enabling environment for civil society and human rights defenders.

The role of civil society organisations in upholding fundamental rights in the EU is crucial also in the area of combating hate speech and hate crime. Hate speech and hate crime have been growing at an alarming rate in recent years in the EU. The

⁴ COM/2020/711

⁵ COM/2022/716

⁶ C(2023) 8627 final

COVID pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and, more recently, the conflict in Gaza have contributed to further polarisation and the spread of racist, xenophobic, antisemitic, and intolerant speech fuelled by conspiracy theories. There is often a continuum between hateful speech, in particular online, and hate motivated attacks and violence in real life. Civil society organisations engaged in the fight against hate speech and hate crime are often severely exposed to threats and attacks, in particular online. Measures to enhance their cyber resilience are of particular urgency. Addressing hate speech and hate crime by enhancing the cooperation between civil society and public authorities and other stakeholders is key to protecting fundamental rights (right to freedom of expression, right to dignity and to non-discrimination) and to safeguarding healthy and pluralistic democracies. Participatory initiatives involving civil society and citizens in public panels and debates about hatred in society can also contribute to enhance mutual understanding and reduce polarisation.

Civil society is also an important actor in supporting the correct implementation of Directive 1937/2019 on the protection of persons reporting breaches of Union law ('the Whistleblowing Directive'). Whistleblowers' reports enhance transparency and accountability and are a key component of the enforcement chain of Union and national law, as they feed authorities with information, leading to effective detection, investigation and prosecution of breaches. When reporting breaches of the law, whistleblowers make use of their right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 11 of the Charter. Civil society organisations can play an important role in ensuring that potential whistleblowers can report without fear of retaliation, that persons in charge of handling whistleblowers' reports are trained adequately, and public awareness is raised, and they can provide advice and support to whistleblowers.

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

Objectives

Protecting, promoting and raising awareness of fundamental rights by providing financial support to civil society organisations active at local, regional, national and transnational level in promoting and cultivating those rights, thereby also strengthening the protection and promotion of Union values and respect for the rule of law and contributing to the construction of a more democratic Union, democratic dialogue, transparency and good governance.

This call for proposals will support several EU policy initiatives, including: the Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU, the European democracy action plan, the EU citizenship Package (Report on progress towards effective EU citizenship 2020-2023, Guide to EU citizenship, Guidance on the right of free movement of EU citizens and their families, Guide of good electoral practices in Member States addressing the participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process, Compendium of e-voting and other ICT practices, Proposal to amend EU consular protection rules), the 2023 Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy making processes, the Joint Communication "No Place for Hate: a Europe united against hatred", the Communication on "A more inclusive and protective Europe: extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime", the Commission Communication on Strengthening whistleblower protection at EU level and the Report on implementation and application of Directive (EU) 2019/1937, the Rule of law reports, Annual reports on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the Commission Recommendation on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public

participation').

Themes and priorities (scope)

This call for proposals will promote the founding rights and values of the Union by building primarily civil society organisations' awareness on and capacity to apply the Charter and to carry out activities to ensure that the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter are upheld. Projects can be national or transnational. Transnational projects are particularly encouraged.

Each project application under this call must address only one of the following priorities. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one priority must submit a separate proposal under each priority.

1. Capacity building and awareness raising on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

The Charter strategy underlines the importance of strengthening the application of the Charter through awareness raising and capacity building initiatives. Accordingly, projects under this priority are intended to raise the fundamental rights knowledge of relevant actors. While building on the central role of civil society organisations and human rights defenders, funded projects could involve national, regional and local authorities as partners (co-applicants), with the aim of supporting joint capacity building and awareness raising efforts.

The projects funded under this priority should address the capacity building and awareness raising needs on the Charter. In particular, relevant projects should focus on raising awareness and building capacity on at least one of the following topics: the Charter in general and/or the contents of an individual Charter right or several of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter; the Charter's scope of application⁷; the remedies available in cases of breaches of the Charter rights⁸. In accordance with its Article 51, the Charter is applicable to Member States only when they are implementing EU law. Given the specific scope of application of this instrument, unlike that of international human rights agreements, and considering the increasing number of references to the Charter in the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU, there is a specific need to promote an understanding of when the Charter applies, i.e. when EU law is being implemented, and of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter.

2. Promoting rights and values by empowering the civic space

In line with the Charter Strategy and following up to the Charter Report 2022 on a thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU, as well as the [findings of the 2023 seminars and concluding conference](#), projects under this priority should promote rights and values by empowering civil society actors to work together at the local, regional and national levels in the fields covered by the programme. Projects should also help to create or strengthen channels of communication with the EU level, to report on the state of the civic space in their countries and voice their concerns.

More specifically, projects could create a systematic and comprehensive monitoring system to regularly and consistently monitor the environment in which civil society

⁷ Projects addressing Article 45 may cover 'Freedom of movement and of residence', as grandfathered in the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community.

⁸ Reflecting the findings of the 2023 Annual report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Effective legal protection and access to justice, [COM/2023/786 final](#).

organisations work in the national contexts. Such projects should build on and align as closely as possible to existing monitoring activities. For instance, the Fundamental Rights Agency indicators about the shrinking civic space⁹ and international organisations' data¹⁰, as well as existing monitoring systems in the national contexts, to ensure comparability of data. Monitoring should focus in particular on breaches of civil society organisations and human rights defenders' fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of association. In addition to the existing indicators, projects may also include monitoring of emerging issues, such as digital threats or transnational repression of civil society organisations and human rights defenders within the EU.

Projects could also support and enhance the protection of civil society organisations, their members and human rights defenders working to protect and promote EU values under attack, including by facilitating access to dedicated support services. Such services could include facilitating access to special reporting channels, referral to appropriate victim support, or training members in relevant legal issues.

Threats faced by these actors may take various forms and come from a range of actors, including legal and administrative issues, verbal or physical threats, including online, or smear campaigns by public or private actors.

As such, projects could also contribute to strengthening the resilience of civil society actors to respond to attacks, including cyber threats and harassment, such as cyber-intimidation, smear campaigns, digital surveillance or other cybersecurity threats targeting these actors. Projects could also contribute to strengthening their capacity to fully exploit the possibilities of the converged media to carry out effective, visible and impactful advocacy activities in the digital environment, and on capacity-building in the area of digital and cyber-security. Projects could also aim to provide an overview of existing protection mechanisms at national level or create platforms or tools to centralise information for relevant support services, including support services for the digital and cyber threats experienced by civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

Projects may focus only on monitoring, or protection, or resilience, or propose actions addressing activities falling under all these areas. Transnational partnerships with mutual learning possibilities for partners in several EU Member States are particularly encouraged to apply, as well as networks of relevant actors at national level such as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), equality bodies, Ombuds institutions, and the national Charter Focal Points.

3. Strategic litigation

Strategic litigation involving the rights enshrined in the Charter contributes to a more coherent implementation and application of EU law and to the enforcement of individuals' fundamental rights.

Strategic litigators are key to fostering the promotion and protection of Charter rights and support should be given to strengthening their capacity and specialised knowledge on the Charter and on how to develop a strategic approach to cases. In this context, the support and assistance to victims provided by civil society organisations, NHRIs and equality bodies and Ombuds institutions is instrumental.

⁹ In particular, the indicators used in FRA's annual update on civic space. See here: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/themes/civil-society>.

¹⁰ <https://monitor.civicus.org/>.

Projects under this priority should, through training, knowledge sharing and exchange of good practices, strengthen the knowledge and ability of civil society organisations and human rights defenders as well as of practitioners, legal professionals and independent human rights bodies, to effectively engage in litigation practices at national and European level and to improve access to justice and enforcement of rights under EU law, including the Charter. Projects could have a specific focus on procedures before the Court of Justice of the European Union, including on applicable admissibility requirements for direct actions brought by a natural or legal person (under Article 263 TFEU) and the functioning of the preliminary ruling mechanism on the interpretation of EU law and on the validity of acts of the institutions (under Article 267 TFEU).

Projects under this priority can also include a focus on countering manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings against journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation (Strategic lawsuits against public participation).

4. Protecting EU values and rights by combating hate speech and hate crime

All forms and manifestations of hatred are incompatible with the EU values and the fundamental rights enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty and the Charter. Hatred affects the individual victims and the groups they belong to, generates societal polarisation and silences wide sectors of the population, weakening pluralism and undermining respectful public democratic debates. The online world has amplified the negative effects of hate speech. Hate crimes are a direct violation of the victims' fundamental right to dignity, to equality and non-discrimination. Combating hate speech and hate crime is therefore a key part of the Commission's action to promote EU values and to ensure that the Charter is upheld.

At EU level, the 2008 Council Framework Decision requires the criminalisation of certain forms of hate speech and hate crimes. Also, the Commission adopted a Communication in December 2021 inviting the Council of the European Union to extend the legal basis for EU-level criminalisation to other forms of hate speech and hate crime beyond the racist and xenophobic grounds already covered by the Framework Decision.

Recently, the EU has been experiencing an alarming increase in hate speech and hate crime, including physical and online attacks targeting in particular the Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe. The Joint Communication on "No Place for Hate: a **Europe united against hatred**"¹¹ confirms a strong commitment to step up EU efforts to fight hatred in all its forms, by reinforcing action across a variety of policies.

The 2024 EU Citizens Panel on Tackling hatred in society, and a wide range of the 21 recommendations adopted by the 150 randomly selected citizens representing all EU Member States, highlighted the importance of training for public authorities in the area of hate speech and non-violent communication; of awareness raising campaigns involving a different a range of stakeholders, communication experts and influencers; of activities, including participatory debates, to foster empathy, inclusion, and acceptance of different groups and individuals with different backgrounds; and of tools to better detect hatred online.

Projects under this priority could establish mechanisms of cooperation between civil society organisations and public authorities, in particular to support the reporting and

¹¹ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. No place for hate: a Europe united against hatred - JOIN(2023)51

recording of episodes of hate crime and hate speech; and to ensure support to victims of hate speech and hate crime. Projects could also support law enforcement and justice professionals, including through training or data collection methodologies and tools. Projects could also focus on participatory initiatives involving citizens and stakeholders in public spaces, as well as students in school contexts; on activities to tackle hate speech online, including reporting content to IT companies; tools for detection of hate speech on social media; and to design effective awareness raising campaigns and educational activities to address the societal challenges of hate speech online.

5. Supporting an enabling environment for the protection of whistleblowers

A Union of values and rights is also based on effective law enforcement and the effective detection, investigation and prosecution of breaches of Union law. Support will be given to creating an enabling environment for reporting on breaches of Union law, in particular by building capacity on the effective application of the [Directive on whistleblower protection \(Directive \(EU\) 2019/1937\)](#).

This Directive provides for an obligation on private and public entities to establish internal and external reporting channels, providing follow-up to the reports and feedback to whistleblowers, a strict obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the reporting person, as well as for high standards of protection from retaliation and legal remedies for whistleblowers who report on breaches of EU law in a wide range of key policy areas. The Directive thus promotes the fundamental values of the rule of law and democracy as well as the right to freedom of expression, enshrined in Article 11 of the Charter.

Civil society organisations play a crucial role to help ensuring an effective implementation of these legal standards.

As stated by the Commission in its 2024 [Report on the implementation and application of the Directive \(EU\) 2019/1937](#), people should be able to fully understand the extent of their rights and the conditions for protection, to take informed decisions about whether and how to report or make a public disclosure, without running the risk of 'falling between the cracks'.

Projects under this priority should thus aim at building the capacity of civil society organisations to contribute to creating a favourable environment for whistleblowers, in particular by providing advice and support to whistleblowers, and by cooperating with private companies, national authorities and legal practitioners to ensure the effective operation of existing reporting channels and provision of adequate legal remedies to whistleblowers.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

The following activities can be covered:

1. Capacity-building and awareness raising on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

- Awareness raising and capacity building activities aiming to increase the knowledge of civil society organisations in particular, but also human rights defenders and other key partners, on the use of the Charter, especially on its scope of application, the fundamental rights it contains and the remedies available in cases of breaches.

Activities could also contain the following elements:

- Facilitating cooperation between civil society organisations and other key actors on enforcing the Charter, such as NHRIs, equality bodies, Ombuds institutions and Member State authorities (at national, regional and local level);
- Training and train-the-trainer activities for professionals (such as experts, lawyers and legal advisers, communicators, policy and advocacy advisers, professionals from national, regional and local authorities), including through operational guidance and learning tools;
- Mutual learning, exchange of good practices, development of working and learning methods, including mentoring programmes that may be transferable to other countries;
- Development of methods for fundamental rights impact assessments and for stakeholder consultation;
- Analytical activities, such as sex-disaggregated data collection and research, and the creation of tools or databases on fundamental rights (e.g. databases of jurisprudence);
- Communication activities, including dissemination of information and awareness raising about the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter and redress mechanisms, relevant to the priorities of the call.

2. Promoting rights and values by empowering the civic space

- Analytical activities and creation of a methodology, based on existing indicators where possible, to monitor the civic space in EU Member States, including activities to: encourage and facilitate cooperation and coordination between all actors potentially involved in such monitoring activities; enhance the capacity of staff – in particular within civil society organisations – to carry out monitoring activities, to inform of the results of the monitoring results at EU level;
- Mutual learning, exchange of good practices, including those that may be transferable to other countries;
- Communication activities, including dissemination of information and awareness raising about the state of play on civic space, including towards the EU level;
- Capacity building for civil society organisations on monitoring the civic space, including developments of tools, including IT and digital tools, and services to:
 - Support and protect civil society organisations, their members as well as human rights defenders working to protect and promote EU values, facing threats and under attack;
 - Facilitate access to special procedures or channels to report threats and attacks, and document and analyse the environment in which civil society organisations work;
 - Ensure that existing victim support services and emergency helplines are available and tailored to individuals working for civil society organisations and persons close to them when their safety is under a credible actual or potential risk due to their work.
- Development of synergies and protocols of cooperation among the actors working to protect the civic space at local, regional, national and European

level and between them and the national and European authorities.

3. Strategic litigation

- Activities to increase the ability of civil society organisations, including legal practitioners working for them, NHRIs, Equality bodies and Ombuds institutions and other rights defenders to develop skills and capacity in the area of strategic litigation on fundamental rights under the Charter, including by deepening their knowledge about the preliminary ruling mechanism (under Article 267 TFEU) and the opportunities of legal protection available under EU law;
- Analytical activities, such as data collection and research, and the creation of tools or databases (e.g. thematic databases of jurisprudence);
- Communication activities, including dissemination of information and awareness raising about rights, redress mechanisms, and strategic cases;
- Capacity building and awareness raising activities to counter manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings against journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation (Strategic lawsuits against public participation).

Please note that under this priority, **the litigation fees will not be funded.**

4. Protecting EU values and rights by combating hate speech and hate crime

- Activities to increase the general awareness of the societal consequences of hatred and polarisation, and to address their root causes, particularly in the fields of citizens engagement or involvement of students in the school environment through participatory methods and non-violent communication education;
- Activities to enable civil society organisations to work in synergy with competent authorities to support the reporting and recording of episodes of hate, including with a focus on specific grounds, and to contribute to the creation of data collection methodologies and mechanisms;
- Activities to promote the set-up of services to support victims of hate speech and hate crime, encouraging reporting, providing practical help in seeking redress and gender-sensitive and psycho-social support;
- Activities to support the enforcement of existing legislation prohibiting hate speech and hate crime, including through training for public officials, law enforcement and justice professionals;
- Activities to elaborate national or local coalitions or action plans against hate speech and hate crime, and to establish or reinforce mechanisms of structured cooperation, particularly between civil society organisations and public authorities in the area of tackling hate crime and hate speech, including to support investigation and prosecution and to protect victims;
- Activities to enhance the resilience of civil society organisations working on combating racism, antisemitism, hate speech and hate crime in all its forms, against threats and in particular cyber-attacks;
- Activities to tackle hate speech online, in particular to detect and monitor the prevalence of hate speech on social media and the "ecosystems" of hatred online, to report hate speech content to IT companies, and to design effective

initiatives to prevent and combat hate speech. These can include awareness raising campaigns or educational activities to address the societal challenges of hate speech online.

5. Supporting an enabling environment for the protection of whistleblowers

- Capacity building activities to enhance the effective implementation of the national laws in force transposing the Directive on Whistleblower protection. This may include activities aimed at building the capacity of civil society organisations active in this field, for example by enhancing their capacity to provide advice to (potential) whistleblowers, and/or, the capacity of national, regional, or local public authorities, legal practitioners and private organisations working in partnership with civil society organisations, including by developing guidance or training materials tailored to the specific needs of private companies and/or public organisations or train-the-trainer programmes at national level;
- Activities and tools to promote awareness raising and communication activities to increase the public's knowledge and understanding of the national laws transposing the Directive on Whistleblower protection, of the existing internal and external reporting channels and the legal remedies and measures of protection available in case retaliation occurs;
- Analytical activities, such as data collection on whistleblower reports and claims of retaliation and the follow-up given, development of indicators to effectively record cases and research, in particular on caselaw, and the creation of tools or other databases (e.g. on the collection of the data mentioned above and thematic databases of jurisprudence);
- Mutual learning activities and activities aimed at exchange of good practices on the effective implementation of the Directive on Whistleblower protection, in particular as regards the establishment of internal or external reporting channels, handling of whistleblowing reports, effective measures to ensure confidentiality and the application of adequate legal remedies for the protection of whistleblowers against retaliation and of support measures for whistleblowers or activities whose aim is to support national competent authorities in the review of the procedures launched every 3 years, as established under Article 14 of the Directive;
- Activities enhancing and facilitating cooperation between national, regional or local authorities and civil society organisations, including by elaborating national, regional or local protocols on whistleblower protection
- This priority will not include activities aimed at generally assessing the legal shortcomings of national laws transposing the Directive, as this assessment has already been carried out by the Commission through its [Report on the implementation and application of Directive \(EU\) 2019/1937](#).
- This priority will not include activities aimed at creating reporting channels which would run in parallel to the internal and external reporting channels established under national laws transposing the Directive, as reporting information through such parallel channels could risk undermining the protection afforded under the national laws transposing the Directive.

For all topics the projects' design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are expected to mainstream fundamental rights as enshrined in the Charter, including freedom of expression, (gender) equality and non-discrimination, rights of the child, or right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial. The proposal should explain how

and why specific rights enshrined in the Charter need to be mainstreamed in relation to the goals pursued in the project. The assessment should be aligned with the project's scope and tailored to its target group. It should include a reflection on the activities' potential impacts on fundamental rights, as relevant. The proposals are expected to clarify how they intend to address any unintended negative effects of the intervention on e.g. specific groups at risk of discrimination, with a particular attention to the underrepresented sex or to children (do no harm approach). Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should include indicators that facilitate tracking the project's contribution to the fundamental rights mainstreamed in the proposal. Contributions to fundamental rights mainstreaming should be realistic and proportionate to the project's scope and size.

Expected impact

1. Capacity building and awareness raising on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

- Increased awareness on the Charter and the fundamental rights it enshrines by CSOs, NHRIs, equality bodies, Ombuds institutions, other human rights defenders, and other relevant partners, including authorities at national, regional and local levels;
- Increased capacity of the above actors to apply the Charter and the fundamental rights that the Charter enshrines in their daily work, including for instance through fundamental rights impact assessments and participatory mechanisms to strengthen the application of fundamental rights;
- Improved cooperation between CSOs, NHRIs, equality bodies, Ombuds institutions, other human rights defenders and authorities at national, regional and local levels on fundamental rights issues;
- Increased prevention of fundamental rights breaches and improved knowledge of available redress mechanisms, including - where relevant - the preliminary ruling mechanism under national and EU law, and how they can be used for the benefit of various rights holders and rights holder groups, including people and groups in vulnerable situations.

2. Promoting rights and values by empowering the civic space

- Increased awareness about the situation of civic space in the EU Member States based on sound evidence and comparable indicators;
- Strengthened relations and creation of networks among the actors protecting the civic space at local, national and European level, and between them and the national and European authorities;
- Increased dialogue about the civic space, and increased public attention to the topic, and developed positive narratives towards CSOs and rights defenders protecting and promoting fundamental rights, rule of law and democracy;
- More protected CSOs, their members and rights defenders working in a safe environment, including an increase in recourse to existing support services;
- Increased reporting of attacks faced by the targeted actors and more prompt and targeted response;
- Increased resilience of civil society organisations and human rights defenders against threats and attacks, including online.

3. Strategic litigation

- Increased awareness and knowledge by legal professionals and practitioners in CSOs, NHRIs, Equality bodies, Ombuds institutions and other human rights defenders about EU law, including the Charter and its principles and articles and existing remedies and redress mechanisms to enforce them at national and European level;
- Increased awareness and knowledge by the general public of their rights under EU law, including the Charter, existing remedies and redress mechanisms to enforce them at national and European level as well as awareness and knowledge of available support by legal professionals and practitioners;
- Increased ability of CSOs, NHRIs, equality bodies and Ombuds institutions and other rights defenders to develop a litigation strategy and communicate and advocate around it and to bring strategic litigation cases before national courts and the European Court of Justice;
- Strengthened abilities of legal professionals and practitioners in CSOs, NHRIs, Equality bodies, Ombuds institutions and other rights defenders to cooperate and engage in litigation practices to assist individuals in making effective use of available remedies to enforce their rights under EU law, including the Charter, before national and European courts;
- Increased awareness on the use of manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings against journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation (Strategic lawsuits against public participation - SLAPP);
- Improved knowledge of safeguards and strategic protection against manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings for journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation.

4. Protecting EU values and rights by combating hate speech and hate crime

- Increased awareness about the societal effects of hate speech and hate crime, including more effective outreach to individuals and groups at risk of hate victimisation, thereby raising awareness of their rights, including through schools and educational activities;
- Increased knowledge of EU and national hate crime and hate speech legislation;
- Strengthened national or local actions to enhance the capacity of authorities, in particular law enforcement agencies, to detect bias indicators and to effectively investigate and prosecute offences, including through multi-stakeholder cooperation;
- Enhanced hate crime recording and data collection methodologies;
- More effective mechanisms to report hate speech and hate crimes and to empower victims and witnesses to come forward;
- Enhanced assistance to victims to access specialist support, providing both victims and witnesses with emotional support, practical help and information;
- Increased knowledge on the prevalence and "ecosystems" of hatred on the different online platforms, in the various national and linguistic contexts;
- Increased effectiveness of notice and action mechanisms by online platforms

to enable a prompt assessment and removal of hate speech content;

- Increased awareness among the general population about hate speech online, its "ecosystems" and its negative effects on democracy and pluralism;
- Increased involvement of citizens and students in collective debates about how to tackle hatred in society, through participatory methods.
- Enhanced resilience of civil society organisations to carry out their work against hateful groups and greater capacity to respond to attacks.

5. Supporting an enabling environment for the protection of whistleblowers

- Increased awareness and understanding by the general public and by potential whistleblowers of the existing reporting channels and procedures, as well as of the rights provided under the Directive on whistleblower protection, thus fostering an increased and effective implementation of the national laws transposing the Directive;
- Increased capacity and knowledge of civil society and, where relevant, of other representatives, such as compliance officers, national authorities or practitioners active in the field of whistleblowing protection, to correctly apply the Directive's rules addressed to private organisations and public entities;
- Improved effectiveness and coherence of the Directive's application, including through improved cooperation between national, regional or local authorities and civil society;
- Enhanced data collection on whistleblower reports and cases of retaliation and enhanced capacity of the national systems to record whistleblower reports and cases and to assess the effectiveness of the national laws transposing the Directive;
- Greater capacity to correctly apply the Directive's rules for the private organisations and public entities concerned and for civil society organisations involved in the Directive's implementation;
- Improved effectiveness and coherence of the Directive's application;
- Improved cooperation between national authorities and CSOs, and between national authorities, in applying the Directive.

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 18 000 000**.

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

Call Priority	Budget
1 - CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-CHARTER	EUR 3 600 000
2 - CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-CIVIC	EUR 3 500 000

3 - CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-LITIGATION	EUR 2 400 000
4 - CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-SPEECH	EUR 6 000 000
5 - CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-WHISTLE	EUR 2 500 000
Total Call Budget	EUR 18 000 000

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	27 May 2025
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>18 September 2025 – 17:00:00 CET</u> <u>(Brussels)</u>
Evaluation:	October 2025 – February 2026
Information on evaluation results:	March 2026
GA signature:	June 2026

5. Admissibility and documents

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


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

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*)
- Part C (KPI tool) — contains additional project data regarding the project's contribution to EU programme key performance indicators (*to be filled in directly online; all sections to be completed*)

- **Mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*templates to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table/calculator: not applicable
 - CVs (standard) of core project team
 - activity reports of last year, (n/a for newly established organisations)
 - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*), (n/a for newly established organisations)
 - for participants with activities involving children (below the age of 18): child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#) (for private bodies: copy of their policy; for public bodies: child protection policy declaration)

 Please note that an annual activity report is NOT a financial audit report or balance sheet, but a report highlighting the activities and projects of your organisation.

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

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable** (please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded).

Proposals are limited to maximum **70 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (lead applicants 'Coordinator', co-applicants and affiliated entities) must:

- For lead applicants (i.e. the 'Coordinator'): be non-profit legal entities (private bodies);
- For co-applicants: be non-profit or for profit legal entities (public or private bodies). Organisations which are for profit may apply only in partnership with private non-profit organisations;
- Be formally established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))

Other eligibility conditions:

- Activities must take place in any of the eligible countries (EU Member States);
- The EU grant applied for cannot be lower than EUR 75 000;
- The project can be either national or transnational; the application may involve one or more organisations (lead applicant and co-applicants).

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

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

Specific cases and definitions

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

International organisations — International organisations are eligible. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons¹².

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

Programme Contact Points — Are eligible as coordinator or beneficiary in this call, if they have procedures to segregate the project management and the information provision functions and if they are able to demonstrate cost separation (i.e. that their project grants do not cover any costs which are covered by their other grant). This requires the following:

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'¹³. ⚠ Please note that

¹² See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹³ For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)¹⁴. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092¹⁵. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc.). Currently such measures are in place for example for Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 16 December 2022).

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

[Consortium composition](#)

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 1 applicant (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities).

[Eligible activities](#)

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

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

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

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc*). Projects must also respect EU values and European Commission policy regarding reputational matters (*e.g. activities involving capacity building, policy support, awareness raising, communication, dissemination, etc*)¹⁶.

Financial support to third parties is not allowed

[Geographic location \(target countries\)](#)

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

¹⁴ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

¹⁵ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

¹⁶ See, for instance, [Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy](#).

Duration

Projects should normally range between 12 and 24 months.

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

Project budget

The EU grant applied for cannot be lower than EUR 75 000.

Project budgets (maximum grant amount): No limit.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

Ethics and EU values

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards
- EU values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and
- other applicable EU, international and national law (including the General Data Protection Regulation [2016/679](#)).

Projects must seek to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming in accordance with the [Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#). Project activities should contribute to the equal empowerment of women and men in all their diversity, ensuring that they achieve their full potential and enjoy the same rights. They should also seek to reduce levels of discrimination suffered by particular groups (as well as those at risk of multiple discrimination) and to improve equality outcomes for individuals. Proposals should integrate gender and non-discrimination considerations and target a gender-balanced representation in project teams and activities. It is also important that individual data collected by the beneficiaries are broken down by sex ([sex-disaggregated data](#)), disability or age whenever possible.

Applicants must show in their application that they respect ethical principles and EU values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Participants with activities involving children must moreover have a child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#). This policy must be available online and transparent to everyone who comes in contact with the organisation. It must include clear information about the recruitment of staff (including trainees and volunteers) and include background checks (vetting). It must also include clear procedures and rules to staff, including reporting rules, and continuous training.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

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

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

account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for coordinators, except:

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

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

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

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

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

Operational capacity

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

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

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

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

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- applicants' activity reports of last year, (n/a for newly established organisations)
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*), (n/a for newly established organisations)

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

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

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate¹⁷:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct¹⁸ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted¹⁹ an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

¹⁷ See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

¹⁸ 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

¹⁹ 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that²⁰:

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

8. Evaluation and award procedure

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


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

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

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

- 1) The *ex aequo* proposals within the same priority will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Quality'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'.

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

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

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

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

²⁰ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

9. Award criteria

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

- 1. Relevance:** extent to which the proposal matches the priorities and objectives of the call; clearly defined needs and robust needs assessment; clearly defined target group, with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context; European/trans-national dimension; impact/interest for a number of countries (EU or eligible non-EU countries); possibility to use the results in other countries (potential for transfer of good practices); potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation, building synergies and avoiding duplication with previous projects (40 points)
- 2. Quality:** clarity and consistency of project; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account (organisation of work, timetable, allocation of resources and distribution of tasks between partners, risks & risk management, monitoring and evaluation); ethical issues and measures/policies to guarantee compliance with EU values are addressed; feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; financial feasibility (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; cost-effectiveness (best value for money) (40 points)
- 3. Impact:** ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; potential for a positive multiplier effect; sustainability of results after EU funding ends (20 points)

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	25	40
Quality	n/a	40
Impact	n/a	20
Overall (pass) scores	70	100

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance': 25/40 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance' AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

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

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

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

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

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). The starting date should be after grant signature (normally within 6 months). A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: *see section 6 above*.

Milestones and deliverables

Activities must be grouped into work packages which are major sub-divisions of the project (*e.g. Project Management and Coordination, Communication and Dissemination, etc*). The coordination and management costs of WP1 should not be higher than 10% of the total cost of the proposal.

For each work package, an objective and lists of tasks/activities, milestones and deliverables must be defined. The deliverables and milestones must be quantifiable and measurable. Their structure should be logical and guided by identifiable outputs with clear indicators.

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

Beneficiaries will have to ask attendees in events to participate in the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values. This survey allows the granting authority to closely monitor training, mutual learning and awareness-raising events. The beneficiaries will receive a weblink to the survey, to be forwarded to the attendees. They will have access to the survey results for their project and can use it for their project evaluation. The granting authority will aggregate the results of all the projects financed under the CERV programme.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

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

Project budget (requested grant amount): *see section 6 above*.

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

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (**90%**).

Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

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

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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

Budget categories for this call:

- A. Personnel costs
 - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
 - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
 - A.5 Volunteers
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
 - C.1 Travel and subsistence
 - C.2 Equipment
 - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost²¹ Yes
 - volunteers unit cost²²: Yes (without indirect costs)
- travel and subsistence unit cost²³: Yes²⁴
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible/non-refundable VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:


²¹ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7115).

²² Commission [Decision](#) of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646).

²³ Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

²⁴ See [EU Grants AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#), art 6 on eligible costs: travel and subsistence costs must be declared using the unit cost according to Annex 2a of the grant agreement. If a particular instance of travel, accommodation or subsistence in the action is not covered by one of the unit costs mentioned in Decision C(2021)35 the actual costs may be used.

- in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
- kick-off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
- project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible
- other ineligible costs: No

 **Volunteers costs** — Volunteers costs are not a classic cost category. There are no costs because volunteers work for free, but they may nonetheless be added to the budget in the form of a prefixed unit cost (per volunteer) and thus allow you to benefit from the volunteers' work for the grant (by increasing the amount of reimbursement up to 100% of the normal costs, i.e. cost categories other than volunteers). More information is available in the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.A.5](#).


Reporting and payment arrangements

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

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **80%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees are normally requested from the coordinator, for the consortium. They must be provided during grant preparation, in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

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

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement (*art 23*).

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

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

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Other specificities

Consortium agreement: Yes

Non-compliance and breach of contract

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



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

11. How to submit an application

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

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

a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

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

b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners²⁵) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Part C containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online.
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

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

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

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

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

²⁵ See section 13 for more information on consortium roles and the roles of coordinator, affiliated entities and associated partners.

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

Guidance on the use of generative AI tools for the preparation of the proposal

When considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised. Specifically, applicants are required to:

- Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.
- Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations, including those generated by the AI tool.
- Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.
- Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarizing someone else's work.
- Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge.

12. Help

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

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

Please also consult the Call and Topic pages regularly, since we will use them to publish call updates, including an invitation to the info session for applicants after the opening of the call (if any).

Contact

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the [CERV National Contact Point](#) of your country (if established) or otherwise to the following email address: EACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu

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

13. Important



IMPORTANT

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

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

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

- **Balanced project budget**— Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule**— Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding**— It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants; projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants**— Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them).

Organisations may participate in several proposals.

BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).

- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be rejected. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).

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

This includes:

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

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

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