



# **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)**

## Call for proposals

CEF Digital – Operational digital platforms  
(CEF-DIG-2025-PLATFORMS)

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## HEALTH AND DIGITAL EXECUTIVE AGENCY (HaDEA)

**HaDEA B - Digital, Industry and Space**  
**HaDEA B1 - Connecting Europe Facility – Digital**

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## O. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU action grants **in the field of “Operational digital platforms” under the Digital strand of the** Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

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

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))<sup>1</sup>
- the basic act (CEF Regulation [2021/1153](#))<sup>2</sup>.

This call is launched in accordance with the [2024-2027 Work Programme](#)<sup>3</sup> and will be managed by the European Health & Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) (**hereafter ‘the Agency’**) **on behalf of the European Commission.**

The call covers the following topic:

### CEF-DIG-2025-PLATFORMS-WORKS – Operational Digital Platforms - Works<sup>4</sup>

**NOTE: The term ‘project’ used in the call documentation is synonymous to the term ‘action’ used in the CEF Regulation 2021/1153.**

We invite you to carefully read the call documentation on the Funding & Tenders Portal Topic page, 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:

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (OJ L 249, 14.7.2021, p. 38).

<sup>3</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2024) 6891 final of 9 October 2024 on the financing of the Connecting Europe Facility – Digital sector and the adoption of the multiannual work programme for 2024-2027.

<sup>4</sup> Legal base: art. 8.4.e and 9.4.e of the CEF Regulation

- 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*).

## 1. Background

In the face of mounting global competition, shifting geopolitical landscapes, and urgent climate commitments, the EU is confronting an unprecedented energy crisis characterised by rapidly growing electricity demand from data centres, electric vehicles charging, and heating and cooling, combined with supply disruptions and heightened risk of blackouts. This crisis poses significant threats to industrial stability, economic competitiveness, and consumer affordability.

Central to addressing these challenges are the Operational Digital Platforms (ODPs) – critical digital infrastructures that aim to **strengthen Europe's technological leadership** by enabling secure and resilient cross-border digital services in the energy and transport sectors.

ODPs consist of integrated physical and virtual information communication technology systems that facilitate the efficient flow, storage, processing and analysis of data for transport or energy infrastructure, or both. Designed for seamless integration with existing and emerging digital platforms, data exchange frameworks, and EU-supported initiatives, ODPs leverage European data, cloud technologies, edge computing, and 5G networks deployed along strategic corridors and within smart communities. These platforms encompass hardware (sensors, actuators, servers, storage subsystems) and networking devices (such as switches, routers and firewalls), alongside software solutions (e.g. databases, analytics, artificial intelligence algorithms, simulation, data management, cybersecurity tools, software platforms).

Due to fragmented national and regional activities in the energy and transport sectors, the market has struggled to develop the necessary infrastructure for cross-border real-time data exchange across the EU. To address this challenge, CEF Digital follows a two-phase approach. Phase 1<sup>5</sup>, currently underway, supports a Coordination and Support Action (CSA) designed to identify and prepare interventions to address market gaps and create significant impact. Phase 2, which is the subject of the current call for proposals, focuses on deploying the use cases identified and developed in Phase 1.

This call for proposals therefore builds on the results of the Coordination and Support Action awarded in Phase 1, in particular, the project named **"Enabling the Internet of Energy and Optimized Transport through Cross-Border Digital Platforms"** ([2022-EU-DIG-BEGONIA](#)), which identified potentially deployable ODP use cases based on technical feasibility, regulatory maturity, and cross-border relevance. Three synergetic and complementary use cases have been shortlisted, unified by common architectural principles. The implementation of the ODPs enabling these shortlisted use cases is the focus of this call. Where relevant, proposals shall further build on previous EU funded research and infrastructure projects.

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<sup>5</sup> Funded from previous Work Programme 2021-2025 under the Call 2022 Coordination and Support Actions (CEF-DIG-2022-TA)

## 2. Objectives — Scope (including digital security requirements) — Expected impact

### Objectives

Operational Digital Platforms aim to support EU environmental and energy targets, improve the competitiveness of the EU industry and address the ongoing energy crisis, by providing both technologies and connectivity to enable a cyber-secure Internet of Energy and an optimised transport system along the major European paths.

**They are dedicated to “retro-fitting” the existing energy and/or transport infrastructures with the required cross-border digital infrastructure.** ODPs will optimise energy use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and reduce the environmental impact, while increasing the benefits enabled by ICT.

ODPs will build on and integrate with existing and emerging European data, cloud and edge computing and connectivity infrastructures, in particular those supported in other parts of the CEF Digital programme, the Digital Europe Programme, and the Horizon Europe programme.

The ODPs will contribute to the achievement of EU technological sovereignty and to the security and resilience of energy supply and transports in the EU. This support contributes to the [Digital Decade goals](#) such as the deployment of 10,000 climate neutral highly secure edge nodes, etc.

Projects funded under this call should include specific deliverables, milestones and KPIs related to:

- Deploying fully functional, cross-border ODPs in line with the description in the scope section;
- **Delivering quantifiable results in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, energy savings, and grid flexibility;**
- Providing open, standards-based architectures suitable for replication in other Member States, also in line with the vision for an AI-enabled [digital spine](#) of the energy and e-mobility system and other EU initiatives;
- Strengthening collaboration across sectors (energy, transport, ICT) and across borders;
- Creating new business models for distributed energy resources, smart mobility, and sustainable infrastructure;
- Improving consumer empowerment, data transparency, and system efficiency.

### Scope

The projects supported by this call are expected to deploy cross-border digital infrastructure implementing an AI-Driven Operational Digital Platform (ODP) for Electricity Consumers and Integration of electric vehicles (EV), electric trucks (ET), renewable energy sources (RES) into the Grid.

Firstly (based on Use case 1 from BEGONIA - ELECTRICITY CUSTOMER CENTRIC ODP), the platform would leverage AI, internet of things and advanced edge computing to bring to the centre of the grid the energy consumers, who are increasingly equipped with digital tools, such as smart meters, app monitoring their rooftop solar panels, heat pumps, and electric vehicles. It would enable them not just

to consume, but to contribute to balance supply and demand, trade their flexibility or surplus power, and make informed decisions based on real-time data and AI-driven recommendations.

The platform would create a digital space where households, businesses, aggregators, and energy suppliers interact transparently and in real-time. It would build on existing smart infrastructure, integrates with local energy markets, and respects national and EU regulatory frameworks. It would contribute to consumer empowerment in the energy system while delivering tangible benefits like cost savings, increased renewable usage, and improved grid stability. The platform would be designed to place consumers at the centre of the energy ecosystem by enabling smarter energy management, market participation, and seamless integration with RES. Its deployment is also expected to support grid operators by activating distributed flexibility, thereby reducing peak loads and improving system reliability.

Secondly (based on Use case 2 from BEGONIA - AI-DRIVEN ODP FOR INTEGRATION OF EVS, ETS, RES AND GRID), the AI-driven platform aims to synchronise EV and ET charging with real-time electricity generation, grid capacity, and traffic conditions. It would allow fleet operators to plan charging around both logistics needs and energy constraints, while grid operators could anticipate demand and activate local flexibility, if needed. Additionally, the platform would provide a shared digital layer where energy and mobility actors could interact predictively and securely, for their mutual benefit. The deployment is expected to enable clean transport along key European corridors. It will link public and private charging stations, logistics hubs, and energy market actors, while supporting services that optimise cost, reduce losses, and enhance energy system reliability.

Moreover (based on Use case 3 from BEGONIA - DIGITALIZATION OF DATA CENTERS), the proposed platform could positively impact critical digital infrastructure such as data centres, which are among the fastest growing energy consumers in Europe. It could help data centres to shift non-critical workloads to times or locations where energy is greener or cheaper and participate in grid services, acting as flexible loads that can ramp up or down to support balancing.

The platform must include the maximum number of the following key functionalities:

- **Real-time monitoring and feedback** for consumers on energy rate use, carbon footprint, and tariff optimisation;
- **AI-based advisory services**, helping users to adjust their behaviours or schedules to match renewable availability.
- **Participation in virtual energy communities (VECs)**, allowing local prosumers to trade surplus energy or flexibility;
- **Integration of controllable assets** such as EV chargers, heat pumps, or batteries to provide demand response;
- **AI-powered charging optimisation**, based on traffic, weather, grid conditions, and fleet schedules;
- **Dynamic pricing and congestion signals**, ensuring grid-aware energy consumption and EV charging;
- **Smart routing tools for logistics managers**, integrating vehicle range, charging station status, and energy prices;
- **Integration of renewable generation** (e.g. solar, wind) into vehicle charging plans;

- **Support for vehicle-to-grid (V2G) operations**, where EVs can return energy to the grid during peak demand.

Optional functionalities may include:

- **Participation of data centres in flexibility markets**, via dynamic load shifting or reserve services;
- **Data centres workload migration tools**, allowing computing tasks to be routed across borders to greener data centres.

The evaluation of proposals shall prioritise those offering the higher number of functionalities, as they will be considered as having a higher impact. Such impact will **be taken into account when evaluating the proposals under the “Impact” award criterion**.

The platform should follow a layered digital architecture, for example:

- **Perception Layer which connects devices and assets that generate, consume, or store electricity** and integrates data from vehicle systems, grid sensors, and weather/traffic APIs;
- **Middleware Layer which manages secure and interoperable data exchange** across jurisdictions and national and operator-specific systems as well as connects energy markets, building systems, and cloud orchestration software;
- **Service Layer that delivers analytics, automation, and local market functionality**; offers intelligent charging coordination, predictive energy demand, and fleet management tools; manages optimisation logic, flexibility bids, and load migration;
- **Business Layer that supports consumer engagement, regulatory reporting, and value distribution**. includes user interfaces for charging point operators (CPO), distribution system operators (DSO), logistics companies, and public authorities. delivers dashboards, sustainability reporting, and regulatory compliance tools.

The proposed ODP should push the boundaries of energy operations by providing private and industrial players with robust digital tools for cross-border trading, monitoring and ownership management. It should be designed to manage European transport in increasingly automated and sustainable way bringing digitalisation and electrification of the sector to a new level. Its strong focus on AI-driven charging and route planning will provide a transport domain benchmarking. By creating transparency and real-time coordination across sectors, the platform is expected to enable more efficient use of both energy and transport infrastructure. The proposed ODP is not only expected to improve the sustainability of a high-impact sector due to increase energy demand because of the new AI tools, but also to open new opportunities for data centre operators to participate in energy markets and contribute to local energy resilience.

The ODP should follow the **BEGONIA project’s guidelines related to the architecture, governance and implementation of ODPs**, and other preparation materials for delivering the functionalities.

The platform should also ensure GDPR-compliant data governance and align with the [Electricity Market Directive](#), the [Data Act](#), and the [AI Act](#).

More detailed information about the three shortlisted use cases of BEGONIA can be found [here](#) (tab “3° STAGE”).



Proposals should foresee cooperation with the BEGONIA Coordination and Support Action. The CSA will engage in knowledge transfer and dedicated activities to support the selected works action(s), including presentation of the main results, takeaways, and recommendations of the BEGONIA project. Such cooperation must be included as part of Project Management work packages, with the corresponding estimated costs.

Beneficiaries can include technology providers and system integrators, electricity consumers, RES providers (solar and wind farms), EV (electric vehicle) and ET (electric truck) users and/or owners, fleet operators, aggregators, electricity grid operators, electricity retailers, data management entities, charging point operators, data centre operators and energy managers, AI and cloud technology providers that are essential for the performance of the action.

Proposals funded under this call may include synergetic (ancillary) elements relating to another sector of the CEF programme, i.e. energy and transport, if these synergetic elements allow to significantly improve the socio-economic, climate or environmental benefits of the action. CEF co-funding may be provided as long as the cost of these synergetic elements does not exceed 20% of the total eligible costs of the action. (Art. 10 (2) of CEF Regulation).

All the proposals should define post-project ownership and describe the mechanism(s) set in place for long term cooperation and sustainability. The functional and operational relationship(s) between the different participants in the value chain for the provision of digital services should be clearly defined.

#### Digital security requirements

In addition to the criteria set out in Article 200 of the Financial Regulation, Article 11 of the CEF Regulation sets out eligibility conditions for CEF-Digital activities and includes the possibility to restrict participation based on security or ownership and control reasons.<sup>6</sup>

Legal entities established, or deemed to be established, in Member States and directly or indirectly controlled by Member States or by nationals of Member States will be eligible to receive funding under this topic.

The ownership and control assessment of participating entities will be addressed in principle during the evaluation of proposals and at the latest during the grant agreement preparation. Participants will be requested to submit an ownership control questionnaire for this purpose to determine their ownership and control status. They will also be requested to submit supporting documents in order for the Commission to determine whether the entities are controlled by third countries or nationals of third countries or by entities established in third countries.

In case the ownership and control assessment concludes that an entity established in the EU is not controlled by an EU Member State, this entity will be notified the outcome of the assessment and shall only be eligible to participate under the condition that the entity provides a security guarantee, approved by the Member State of establishment, within 30 working days of the receipt of the notification.

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<sup>6</sup> **Art. 11 (4) of the CEF Regulation** "The work programmes may provide that legal entities established in third countries associated to the CEF in accordance with Article 5, and legal entities established in the Union but directly or indirectly controlled by third countries or nationals of third countries or by entities established in third countries, are not eligible to participate in all or some of the actions under the specific objectives set out in Article 3(2), point (c), for duly justified security reasons. In such cases, calls for proposals and calls for tenders shall be restricted to entities established, or deemed to be established, in Member States and directly or indirectly controlled by Member States or by nationals of Member States."

Legal entities established in associated countries, will exceptionally be eligible to participate where this is indispensable for the achievement of the objectives of a given PCI<sup>7</sup> and on the condition that those entities provide security guarantees, approved, on the basis of national law, by the country in which they are established.

The above-mentioned security guarantees shall certify that the legal entity:

- a) Exercises full control over its corporate structure and decision-making process in a manner that does not restrain or restrict in any way its ability to perform and complete the action;
- b) Is not subject to non-eligible third country jurisdiction obligations that may undermine the security of the Union;
- c) Ensures that the results of the CEF funded action shall remain within the beneficiary/beneficiaries and shall not be subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible third countries or non-eligible third country entities during the action and for 3 years after its completion.

**Concerning eligible legal entities established in third countries, the “non-eligible third countries” mentioned above under points (b) and (c) should be understood as any third country other than the country of establishment.**

Where entities established in an associated country are EU-controlled, security guarantees are not necessary.

All the proposals submitted to this topic must include security declarations by the participating entities<sup>8</sup> receiving funding for the deployment of equipment and technologies. The declarations should demonstrate that the subcontractors or suppliers of network technologies and equipment (including software and services) **funded by the project will comply with this call’s security requirements, in accordance** with the applicable EU law, national law, and EU guidance in place on cybersecurity.<sup>9</sup> In addition, where the project provides that network technologies and equipment funded under the project could interconnect (or are part of the same network) with other network technologies and equipment not funded under the project, in a way that could undermine the security of the networks, the requirement to comply with the security requirements of this call shall apply also to any subcontractor or supplier of network technology and equipment that would represent a risk as regards the security of networks.

Furthermore, the declarations will ensure that effective measures are in place to address underlying security issues, including, wherever relevant, measures to avoid falling under non-eligible third country jurisdiction obligations, or influence. The project should also comply with the strictest cybersecurity requirements, imposed by national law, in accordance with the 5G cybersecurity toolbox (where applicable) and other relevant EU guidance, of all the eligible countries where the infrastructure is deployed. Finally, the declaration will ensure that the results of the CEF funded action shall remain within the beneficiary during the action and for 3 years after its completion.

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<sup>7</sup> Article 11(5) of the CEF Regulation, *ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> In line with Council Decision (EU) 2021/1764 of 5 October 2021, persons and entities established in overseas countries and Territories (OCTs) are eligible for funding subject to the rules and objectives of the CEF and possible arrangements applicable to the Member State to which the relevant overseas country or territory is linked.

<sup>9</sup> Such as: the Commission Recommendation (EU) 2019/534 of 26 March 2019 Cybersecurity of 5G networks, C/2019/2335; the Report on EU Coordinated Risk Assessment of the Cybersecurity of 5G Networks of 9 October, 2019; the Council Conclusions on the Significance of 5G to the European Economy and the Need to Mitigate Security Risks Linked to 5G of 3 December, 2019; the Cybersecurity of 5G networks - EU Toolbox of Risk Mitigating Measures of 29 January, 2020; and COM(2020)50 of 29 January 2020 on Secure 5G deployment in the EU – implementing the toolbox, and Communication on implementing the 5G cybersecurity Toolbox C(2023)4049 of 15 June 2023.

The content of the declarations and commitments in the project proposal will be assessed during the evaluation phase.

Proposals under this topic, in the digital security section in the application form, must address the following risk scenarios and mitigating measures as described in the [5G networks EU Toolbox of risk mitigating measures](#):

- involvement of high risk suppliers (as defined in the [EU coordinated risk assessment on cybersecurity of 5G networks](#) and addressed by [Commission communication on the implementation of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox](#))<sup>10</sup>; restrictions applied against such suppliers for critical and sensitive key assets, and measures to avoid dependency on such high risk suppliers;
- measures to promote supply chain resilience and strategic autonomy (in line with the [5G networks EU Toolbox of risk mitigating measures](#))<sup>11</sup>;
- security requirements for the involved network operators (e.g. strict access controls, rules on secure operation and monitoring, limitations on outsourcing of specific functions, etc.);
- measures adopted to prevent unsolicited transfer to, or access by third parties to data (personal or non-personal) stored or transported via the project infrastructure.

Based on the security declaration in the proposal, as well as the evaluation carried out by independent experts, the Commission or funding body, where appropriate, may **carry out a security assessment, including the beneficiaries' suppliers and sub-contractors**. Funding for actions which do not comply with the conditions related to security issues may be suspended, terminated, or reduced at any time in accordance with the Financial Regulation.

For further background on security requirements, please see sections 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 **as well as sections 2.2 (paragraph "Strengthen cybersecurity and resilience") of the CEF Digital Work Programme**.

### Expected impact

The project is expected to deploy cross-border digital infrastructure that will accelerate the digitalisation of the energy/mobility sector by enhancing interoperability and standardisation and trigger a public-private partnership virtuous circle of investment. To the extent possible, this infrastructure will build on and integrate with existing and emerging European data, cloud and edge computing and connectivity infrastructures. The project should lead to a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) and improvement in the energy and environmental performance of the European energy, transport and digital infrastructures thus addressing and easing the current energy and climate crisis and avoiding blackouts.

<sup>10</sup> As provided in paragraph 8.2 of the Work Programme, "Cross-border and internal member state infrastructures funded under CEF must comply with the highest security standards because they underpin the entire economy and society and vulnerabilities of those infrastructures can undermine public order and security within the Union". The Second report on Member States' Progress in implementing the EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity, published in June 2023 concluded that there is a "clear risk of persisting dependency on high-risk suppliers in the internal market with potentially serious negative impacts on security for users and companies across the EU and the EU's critical infrastructure. A lack of swift actions by Member States regarding high-risk suppliers could also affect over time the EU consumers and companies' trust in the internal market, and increase the risk of spill-over in case of cyber-attacks, especially where MNOs provide cross-border services and in case it affects critical 5G use cases or other sectors dependent on telecoms.". For these reasons, the Communication on the implementation of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox should apply in this call.

<sup>11</sup> Principles underlined in the 5G cybersecurity toolbox and the related measures apply mutatis-mutandis to backbone infrastructures.

The key performance indicators for the topic will include the number of connected operators supporting cross-border exchange of data and services, the number of interconnected cross border energy and/or transport systems, the amount of energy saved and the percentage of GHG emission decrease due to cross-border energy and/or transport exchange, as well as the degree of integration with the European data, computing, and connectivity infrastructure both for leveraging digital infrastructure and optimising its energy and environmental performance.

### 3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is EUR 20 000 000. It is expected that one project will be supported.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

This budget might be increased provided that the total additional budget cumulatively allocated to the topics across all calls of the work programme is lower than 20% of the total budget of the multiannual plan.

### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	26 June 2025
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>16 October 2025 – 17:00:00 CET</u>
Evaluation:	Q4 2025 – Q1 2026
Information on evaluation results:	Q1 2026
GA signature:	Q2 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 [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*)
- mandatory annexes and supporting documents (*to be uploaded*):

- detailed budget table per Work Package (*template available in the Submission System*)
- activity reports of last year (unless exempted from operational capacity check; *see section 7*)
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*)
- timetable/Gantt chart (*template available in the Submission System*)
- letters of support from all MS benefitting from the project<sup>12</sup> (MS agreement) (*template available in the Submission System*)
- ownership control questionnaire, including for subcontractors and associated partners<sup>13</sup> (*template available in the Submission System*)
- security declarations signed by the participating entities (*template available in the Submission System*)
- other annexes.

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

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the mandate to act for all applicants. Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that 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 120 pages (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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



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

## 6. Eligibility

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 participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

<sup>12</sup> The list of the national contact points can be found here: [National Contact Points \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> If not provided at submission stage, the ownership control questionnaire for subcontractors will be requested later during the grant agreement implementation in order to perform the ownership control assessment.

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e. EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs)).
  - non-EU countries (except for topics with restrictions; see Digital Security Requirements section above and see below):
    - countries associated to the CEF programme ([list of participating countries](#))

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

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

Please note however that this call is subject to restrictions due to security reasons. This means:

- for topic CEF-DIG-2025-PLATFORMS-WORKS – Operational Digital Platforms – Works, only the following countries are eligible: EU Member States

Moreover:

- participation in any capacity (as beneficiary, affiliated entity, associated partner, subcontractor or recipient of financial support to third parties) is limited to entities from eligible countries
- entities must not be directly or indirectly controlled from a country that is not an eligible country (ownership control status restriction)
- project activities (included subcontracted work) must take place in eligible countries (*see section geographic location below and section 10*)
- the Grant Agreement may provide for IPR restrictions (*see section 10*).

 For restrictions limiting participation to specific eligible countries:

The condition must in principle be fulfilled already at proposal submission stage (call deadline); you cannot change status during GAP — unless agreed by the granting authority.

Beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners and subcontractors will be checked by the EU; other participants must be checked by the consortium.

For the EU checks, the participants must register in the [Participant Register](#) (i.e. have at least a draft PIC). For beneficiaries and affiliated entities, the checks will be done on the basis of the validated PIC data. For other participants, the checks will be done on the basis of publicly available information.

 For ownership control status restrictions:

**‘Control’ means the possibility to exercise decisive influence on the participant, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediate entities, ‘de jure’ or ‘de facto’.** This includes not only ownership of more than 50% (shareholding), but also any other elements and/or rights that can amount to control.

The condition must in principle be fulfilled already at proposal submission stage (call deadline); you cannot change status during GAP — unless agreed by the granting authority.

Beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners and subcontractors will be checked by the EU; other participants must be checked by the consortium.

For the EU checks, the participants must register in the [Participant Register](#) (i.e. have at least a draft PIC). They will be required to fill in and submit an ownership control declaration as part of the proposal (and later on be requested to submit supporting documents). Where guarantees are allowed, ineligible entities will be requested to fill in the guarantee template, have it approved by the competent authority of their country of establishment, and submit it to the granting authority which will assess their validity.

For more information, see [Guidance on participation in EU restricted calls with ownership and control restrictions](#)\*.

### *Specific cases and definitions*

*Exceptional funding* — Entities from countries associated to the CEF programme are exceptionally eligible for projects of common interest in the field of transport, energy and digital and for cross-border projects in the field of renewable energy, if the granting authority considers their participation essential for the implementation of the action.

*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<sup>14</sup> are eligible. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

*Entities without legal personality* — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>15</sup>.

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

*Countries currently negotiating association agreements* — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations for participating in the programme (*see list of participating countries above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature and if the association covers the call (i.e. is retroactive and covers both the part of the programme and the year when the call was launched).

*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

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<sup>14</sup> An 'international organisation' means an intergovernmental organisation (other than the EU) with legal personality under international public law (including specialised agencies — with or without legal personality — set up by international organisations and referred to in Article 159(1) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

<sup>15</sup> See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).



of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)<sup>16</sup>. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

*EU conditionality measures* — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092<sup>17</sup>. 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 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:

- minimum 6 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 4 different eligible countries

### *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 the CEF-Digital programme and 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*).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

### *Geographic location (target countries)*

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

### *Duration*

Projects should normally be up to 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

### *Project budget*

The maximum requested grant amount is expected to be up to EUR 20 000 000.

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<sup>16</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>17</sup> 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).



The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

## 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 all beneficiaries, except:

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

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

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

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

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

### Operational capacity

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

**This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Quality' award criterion (see Section 9 – Award criteria), 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 this award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

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

- description of the consortium participants
- **applicants' activity reports of last year**
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

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

Public bodies, Member State organisations 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 participate<sup>18</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including **procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts**)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with **unlimited liability for the applicant's debts**)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>19</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, 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 Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>20</sup>:

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<sup>18</sup> See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

<sup>19</sup> Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

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

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

## 8. Evaluation and award procedure


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

An evaluation committee (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated for each topic against the operational capacity (see section 7) and award criteria (see section 9). The award criteria are evaluated in 3 phases: individual evaluation, consensus phase and panel review and proposals are then ranked according to their scores.

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

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

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (evaluation result letter). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected. Proposals that are below the budget threshold (i.e. passed, but not ranked high enough to receive funding) will be awarded a Seal of Excellence.

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

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

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

## 9. Award criteria

The award criteria for this call are as follows:

1. **Priority and urgency:** evaluating correspondence of the proposal with the sectoral policy objectives and priorities, measuring its EU-added value and, where applicable, assessing the possible synergies with other sectors or CEF Digital topics and, where applicable, ensuring a geographical balance of the CEF digital support in the respective area. (5 points)
2. **Maturity:** assessing the maturity of the action in the project development. The criterion will measure, among others, i) the readiness and ability of the project to start by the proposed start date and to complete by the proposed end date, ii) the status and planning of the contracting procedures and of the necessary permits, and iii) information on the financial availability needed to complement the CEF investment. (5 points)
3. **Quality:** evaluating the soundness of the implementation plan proposed, both from the technical and financial point of view, the architecture and design approach, the organisational structures put in place (or foreseen) for the implementation, the risk analysis, the control procedures and quality management and the communication strategy of the applicant. Moreover, when applicable, it will also assess the information related to the operations/maintenance strategy proposed for the completed project. (5 points)
4. **Impact:** assessing, when applicable, the economic, social, competition and environmental impact, including the climate impact, and other relevant externalities. This criterion may be substantiated by a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), in which case the evaluation will look at the soundness, comprehensiveness, and transparency of the analysis as well as proposed means to monitor its impact. The criterion will also assess, where applicable, the safety, security, cybersecurity of electronic communication networks, interoperability and accessibility aspects of the proposal, innovation and digitalisation, its cross-border dimension, and contribution to network integration and territorial accessibility, including in particular for Outermost Regions and islands. Moreover, the criterion will assess, where applicable, potential complementarities with other public funding programmes. (5 points)
5. **Catalytic effect:** evaluating the effect of the EU financial assistance on the realisation of the project, for instance by i) overcoming a financial gap generated by insufficient commercial viability and high upfront costs; or ii) increasing the capacity to mobilise differentiated investments sources and address the lack of market finance; or iii) improving the quality or the scope/size of the project; or iv) accelerating the overall investment plan. (5 points)

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

Maximum points: 25 points.

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

Overall threshold: 15 points.

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

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

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

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

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

### Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: See Section 6 above.

### Milestones and deliverables

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

Beneficiaries will also be invited to check and update information about output indicators.

### Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

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

Project budget (maximum grant amount): *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 rates fixed in the Grant Agreement and following the rules set out in Article 15(4) of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153:

- maximum 70% for the costs of works in outermost regions, and
- maximum 30% **for all other costs categories ('project funding rate'))**.

You can apply for a higher project funding rate if your project concerns:

- strong cross-border dimension: maximum 50% .

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

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

#### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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


*Budget categories for this call:*


- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees,
  - A.2 Natural persons under direct contract,
  - A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.1 Financial support to third parties
  - D.2 Studies
  - D.3 Synergetic elements
  - D.4 Works in outermost regions
- E. Indirect costs

*Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:

- average personnel costs (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
- SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>21</sup>: Yes
- subcontracting costs:
  - country restrictions for subcontracting costs: Yes, subcontracted work must be performed in the eligible countries or target countries
- travel and subsistence unit cost<sup>22</sup>: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs: full cost
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
  - studies: No
  - synergetic elements: Yes
  - works in outermost regions: Yes
  - land purchases: No
- indirect cost flat-rate :0% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs, if any)
- VAT: VAT is NOT eligible
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - 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
  - eligible cost country restrictions: Yes, only costs for activities carried out in eligible countries or target countries are eligible
  - other ineligible costs: Yes, costs related to purchase of land

 Please be aware that in case of significant changes to the circumstances that have an impact on the project budget, you may be asked to request an amendment to reduce the maximum grant amount. If you do not comply with this request, we may have to terminate the grant and reduce it from our side (*see art 28 and 32*).

 Similarly, you may be asked to request an amendment to reduce the maximum grant amount, if your project encounters major delays during the project implementation. If you do not comply with this request, we may have to terminate the grant (*see art 28 and 32*).

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<sup>21</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

<sup>22</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

### 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. The amount will be established based on the grant type or estimated project duration at the time of grant signature and will be up to 30% of the maximum grant amount. The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required — whichever is the latest).

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

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

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.



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

Please 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

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

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

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

- Member State information: Yes
- specific rules for digital infrastructure projects: Yes
- durability: Yes
- specific rules for blending operations: No
- special obligations linked to restrictions due to security:
  - implementation in case of restrictions due to security: 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 EULogin account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) submit the proposal

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [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 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the 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
- 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).

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

## 12. Help

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

- [Online Manual](#)
- 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).
- call information on the [HaDEA website](#).

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

### Contact

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: [HADEA-CEF-DIGITAL-CALLS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:HADEA-CEF-DIGITAL-CALLS@ec.europa.eu). Please submit your questions<sup>23</sup> no later than 10 days before the submission deadline. Questions received after 6 October 2025 may not be answered.

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

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<sup>23</sup> Interested applicants are invited to see first if a question is already answered from the existing Topic Q&A published on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

### 13. Important



#### IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait** until the end — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute technical problems. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- Consult the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System — By submitting the application, all participants accept to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- Registration — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- Consortium roles — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.  
  
The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as beneficiaries or affiliated entities; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. Associated partners and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding).
- Coordinator — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- Affiliated entities — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any). 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. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, 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 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](#).