



Consumer Programme

Invitation and Guide for applicants

2018-2021 Framework Partnership Agreements
for establishing a cooperation between the EC/CHAFEA and
the bodies hosting the European Consumer Centre Network

CHAFEA/2017/CP/FPA/ECCNET

Version 1.0
27 April 2017



Contents

A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND PARTICIPANTS	5
1. Background	5
1.1. The Consumer Programme 2014-2020.....	5
1.2. The ECC network	5
1.3. The Commission’s annual work programme for 2017	6
1.4. Host organisations and ECCs	6
2. Scope and Objectives of the present invitation	6
3. Eligible activities.....	7
4. Timetable.....	11
4.1. Implementation period.....	11
4.2. Indicative timetable.....	11
5. Role and responsibility of partners	11
6. Financial aspects	11
B. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS	12
7. Preparing for the submission of your application	12
7.1. Create a user account on the Participant Portal – your ECAS Account	13
7.2. Register your organisation - Beneficiary Register.....	13
7.3. Submission process overview of the FPA proposals	15
7.4. Deadline, acknowledgement of receipt, rejection of a proposal and complaints	15
7.5. Publicity and communication – code of conduct.....	16
7.6. Data protection.....	16
8. Content of the Application	17
8.1. Project application form: Part A – Administrative part of the applicant organisation	17
9. Helpdesk.....	20
10. List of annexes and supporting documents	20
C. EVALUATION	20
11. Exclusion criteria.....	20
11.1. Exclusion from participation.....	20
11.2. Exclusion from award:	22
12. Selection criteria	22
12.1. Financial capacity.....	22
12.2. Operational capacity.....	23
13. Award criteria	24
13.1. Framework Partnership Agreement	24

14.	Legal commitments	24
14.1.	Types of agreements	24
14.2.	Successive agreements of framework partnership	25
14.3.	Affiliated bodies	25

Part A: Legal framework and participants

This section describes the legal terms and general conditions for participating in this invitation to submit proposals for the conclusion of the ECC NET Framework Partnership Agreements.

Part B: Submission of proposals - preparing the application

This section describes the entire process of submission of proposals and has two sub-sections:

The first sub-section refers to the necessary preparatory steps. This includes: (1) reference to the background documents that you need to consult prior to preparing a proposal; (2) instructions on the process for creating a user account or an EU login (ECAS) account (more on the EU login (ECAS) account is presented in the IT Help Guide for the submission of proposals, Chapter 2); (3) the registration of the applicant organisation at the European Commission's Beneficiary Register (more on the Beneficiary Register is presented under paragraph 1.3); and (4) general recommendations on how to best prepare your proposal.

The second sub-section guides you through the different steps of the application process itself: it covers the registration process for the participating legal entities; and the actual submission process itself, namely completing the so-called Part A (administrative information and budget of the proposal) and Part B (technical and financial content) of the Electronic Submission System.

Part C: Evaluation process of the applications

This section describes the evaluation process and criteria when reviewing and evaluating the submitted proposals. It also provides information on issues arising from the evaluation, as well as the process following a recommendation for funding.

In case of further questions the following options are at your disposal:

- For information on how to register or related enquiries please look on the Participant Portal:
<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/index.html>
- IT helpdesk – you can contact the Participant Portal IT helpdesk for questions only related to the online submission tool such as forgotten passwords, access rights and roles, technical aspects of submission of proposals, etc. Requests must be submitted via the Research Enquiry Service,
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=enquiries>
- For non-IT related questions, the Chafea Helpdesk is available via email:
CHAFFEA-ECCnet@ec.europa.eu

Please do not contact the Chafea Helpdesk before having tried to find the information in the documentation that is provided to you. Please ensure you have exhausted all the options before contacting the Chafea Helpdesk.

Chafea Consumer Unit Team

A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND PARTICIPANTS

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The Consumer Programme 2014-2020

On 26 February 2014, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a Regulation establishing a programme of Community action in the field of consumer policy (2014-2020)¹ (the Consumer Programme). It is intended to complement, support and monitor the policies of the Member States and to contribute to protecting the health, safety and economic and legal interests of consumers, as well as to promote their right to information, to education and to organise themselves in order to safeguard their interests, supporting the integration of such consumer interests into other policy areas.

Its specific objectives are:

- (a) Safety: to consolidate and enhance product safety
- (b) Consumer information and education and support to consumer organisations
- (c) Rights and redress: to develop and reinforce consumer rights
- (d) Enforcement: to support enforcement of consumer rights

1.2. The ECC network

The European financing of the European Consumer Centres Network aims to contribute to the objectives of the Consumer Programme 2014-2020, and in particular to specific Objective IV: Enforcement: to support enforcement of consumer rights by strengthening cooperation between national enforcement bodies and by supporting consumers with advice.

Indeed, the main objective of the ECC Network is providing information and assistance to consumers to help them exercise their rights and obtain access to appropriate dispute resolution, including out of court online resolution schemes as described in its Vademecum 9 objectives:

- Providing consumers with information
- Assisting consumers with a complaint
- Assisting consumers with a dispute
- Organising promotional activities
- Contributing to ADR/ODR activities
- Networking and feedback
- Cooperating with enforcement authorities
- Collaborating with traders (associations or professional bodies)
- Ensuring a uniformly high quality standardised services

¹ REGULATION (EU) No 254/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 26 February 2014 on a multiannual consumer programme for the years 2014-20 and repealing Decision No 1926/2006/EC

According to Article 3 of the Consumer Programme, on objectives and indicators, the attainment of Objective IV will be measured in particular through the activity of the European Consumer Centres and how well known they are to consumers. The following specific indicators are fixed in the Annex II of this programme:

- **Number of contacts with consumers handled by the European Consumer Centres (ECCs)** Long term target: increase of 50% by 2020 compared to 2010
- **Number of visits to the websites of the ECCs**
Long term target: increase of 70% by 2020 compared to 2010

Both these indicators have already been achieved or are very close to being achieved.

1.3. The Commission's annual work programme for 2017

On 28.11.2016 the Commission adopted a Decision² (7610 final) concerning the adoption of the annual work programme in the area of consumer policy for 2017. It sets out details of the financing mechanisms and of the priority areas for actions in implementing the Consumer Programme with the 2017 credits.

1.4. Host organisations and ECCs

ECCs are embedded in host organisations that will account significantly for the support needed to implement the proposed actions. Host organisations must coordinate their core tasks with the proposed Network activities in order to contribute to the excellence of the Network and the services to be delivered.

A strong positioning of European Consumer Network within the host structure is essential. The host structure should demonstrate its interest in the action and highlight how existing host organisation activities can be linked to the ECC Network services to achieve synergies and added value for consumers.

2. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT INVITATION

This invitation is limited to one centre per EU country, Norway and Iceland and addressed to the bodies which have been duly designated by the government of their State according to the invitation sent by the European Commission on 13 December 2016.

The purpose of this invitation is to conclude Framework partnership agreements for a duration of four years covering the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 in order to establish a long term cooperation (partnership) between Chafea and the bodies designated to host the European Consumer Centres in the 28 EU Member States, Norway and Iceland.

The Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) sets out the conditions governing grants to partners for carrying out activities, on the basis of a multi-annual work programme and jointly agreed general objectives. The FPA proposal will describe an Implementation Strategy covering the period from 2018 to 2021 (4 years). It should define the broad

² Commission Implementing Decision of 28.11.2016 on the adoption of the work programme for 2017 and on financing of the Consumer Programme.

strategic approach and explain how the specific objectives and operational requirements laid down in the present invitation will be addressed.

Following an evaluation process, applicants will be invited to sign the FPA covering that period. At that stage, signing for an FPA will not result in a grant providing funding to the applicant's selected FPA proposal; it will be a legal commitment, serving as the basis for the partnership established between the successful applicant and Chafea for the next 4 years.

3. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The implementation of the 9 objectives described in the Vademecum is mandatory: every ECC shall guarantee that the full range of activities is provided in the FPA and subsequent SGA (Specific Grant Agreement) proposals.

A. Information

ECCs are required to provide general information services on EU subjects that are relevant to consumers. It is expected that the majority of these services will be delivered electronically.

Network partners shall use the most adequate technological solution to increasingly enable clients to benefit from highly customisable (automatic) electronic information services. Information services should attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Applicants should foresee to promote and participate in European campaigns on EU policies, legislation and actions. Potential activities include media relations, awards, information campaigns and events and will be based on annual priorities established by the European Commission.

Dissemination channels to be used by the network include:

- ECC website. The centres should make extensive use of their websites. The applicants should foresee the development/maintenance and continuous improvement of an own website where consumers shall be provided with easy access to information about the centre's services and the network
- Other suitable media/tools (for example newsletters, e-mails, social media, radio, TV, etc.)
- Answers to general questions on EU matters from consumers
- Provision of documentation to consumers about relevant EU topics relating to consumer policy
- Cooperation with other information multipliers and stakeholder networks
- Events and other local/national actions drawing a large audience.

B. Case handling

Case handling is the core activity of the ECC network. Quality case handling and accurate data encoding are essential if the consumer satisfaction with the ECC-Net services is to be ensured. Elements such as productivity and case handling time, accuracy

and relevance of advice, and proportion of positive outcomes must be taken into consideration when reflecting on the mid-term strategy.

C. Visibility and promotion of the European Consumer Network

The ECC Network has the potential to reach a wide audience of consumers. Each ECC must enhance the visibility of the Network, highlighting the quality and the added value to consumers of its services, and the successful results and impacts.

It is furthermore recommended to make use of cost-effective promotional activities, including social media and online services. Communication partnerships, for example with the media, representative organisations with a wide reach into the consumers community or with organisations in charge of important events for consumers are encouraged.

All Network partners are expected to develop a solid communication strategy and to contribute to the promotion of the Network's services, quality, brand and common identity. They are furthermore required to take part in the ECC network activities and to coordinate communication activities at national and network level.

Network partners should promote the Network and its services through the organisation of:

- Joint promotion activities with key local/national partners. Network partners must coordinate their communication activities in order to attract the widest number of potential consumers in their country.
- Participation in EU-wide activities reinforcing the visibility of the Network as a whole. Information and promotion campaigns designed by the European Commission to promote EU consumer rights or organized by the network itself shall be actively relayed by the Network members.

Success stories

In order to facilitate promotional activities for the entire Network, all ECCs should contribute to the collection of success stories, promotional tools and data on the visibility of the Network.

D. ADR/ODR development

ECC members need to build their activities in support of making redress work in reality for consumers. They are therefore expected to carry out actions to support ADR/ODR development in their respective Member States (e.g. promoting the use of ADR entities and the ODR platform amongst consumers and traders; or by mapping their national landscape of the ADR entities).

ECC-Net members are expected to develop a strategy with regard to such actions.

It is recommended to align the ADR/ODR development activities with the activities aimed to enhance the visibility and promotion of the ECC Net itself.

ECCs should support the national authorities in their Member States in promoting the use of ADR/ODR.

E. Networking and feedback

Network building and reinforcing the network interactive support between ECCs is a key factor for the quality and success of the Network as a whole. Therefore, ECCs should dedicate significant and sufficient resources to collaborating with other network members.

Every Centre is expected to actively participate in the **ECC-Net networking activities** and to contribute to the overall performance of the network. The centres are expected to share a common vision and aims for the success of the network. They should share between each other key information on consumer policy, success stories and good practices in case handling, internal management and other matters like:

- **Participation in Network activities**

All ECCs must provide adequate resources for participating in network meetings, training sessions, groups addressing specific interests within the Network, conferences and other events.

This includes an active participation and direct, swift and professional collaboration with other network members.

- **Participation in Network training activities**

Participation in training programmes of the Network is considered essential for maintaining high quality service levels and activities of the Network. Chafea has currently in place a training programme, in which active participation is required from all partners. Activities carried out in this context include training events in Brussels and other locations where the network is present. E-learning opportunities could also be used (e.g. e-learning modules available at the Consumer champion platform).

Network staff members should attend training events reflecting their professional orientation within the Network.

- **EU Dimension activities**

Additional services addressing internal network needs, that require a strong contribution and significant involvement of an individual ECC, will be considered as having an EU dimension, and therefore eligible for extra funding.

All centres are encouraged to propose actions that provide a substantial contribution to the operation and quality of the network.

- **Leading Joint projects.**

Joint projects should focus on activities aimed at increasing the network's impact.

The main topics and/or objectives of the annual Joint projects will be defined in the relevant invitation for submitting proposals for specific grants.

European ECC two-yearly conference

The European ECC two-yearly conference must be a key ECC event that brings together ECC partners, representatives from European institutions and key external stakeholders.

The conference should offer an opportunity for ECC partners to discuss shared plans, celebrate successes and achievements for consumer policies and prepare future ambition.

The event could cover sessions to widen contacts, plenary sessions, workshops and working meetings. In order to use this opportunity to promote the ECC network, dissemination activities, such as press conference and a media briefing should be foreseen.

The Joint project proposal for the organisation of this conference can be presented by a maximum of three ECCs, who, in cooperation, will organize the event and will be eligible for extra funding.

- **Undertaking the development and management of shared tools**

Non exhaustive list of activities to be proposed:

- an online document repository
- knowledge sharing system
- FAQ
- newsletter
- quality monitoring system
- case encoding system
- legal advice centre

- **Mentoring schemes**

Mentoring schemes aimed at developing legal and assistance capacities of the network (including of potential new members and/or centres with lower human resources).

F. Cooperation with stakeholders

The ECC network is encouraged to work closely with representatives of other European networks in their country and to liaise with them on a regular basis in order to provide a coherent European support service to citizens.

Mutual agreements to lead citizens to the most suitable service provider should be considered where appropriate.

The EU Representations are also useful interlocutors for the ECC Network and may help ensure the coherence of different European initiatives in the Member States.

The ECC-Net should establish and maintain effective working relationships with key stakeholders (e.g. enforcement authorities, traders/traders' associations, EU or national networks). In carrying out these activities, the centres should be impartial and defend consumers' interest at first.

As ECC deal more and more with complaints relating to internet based scams and other fraudulent activities such as counterfeit goods, much stronger relationships with traders will be necessary, in order to reach out to reluctant businesses in co-operation with national authorities, especially enforcement authorities. This deserves close attention in

view of recent market developments. ECCs should explicitly propose how they intend to deal with this issue in the FPA.

G. Quality

The ECC-Net should strive to be a network of excellence. As laid down in the Vademecum, ECCs shall provide **uniform quality standardised services to consumers**. Consequently, all ECCs are expected to perform to the highest quality standards, both in terms of their delivery of services to consumers and in terms of their compliance with internal procedures and workflows of the Network. All centres should respect the agreed case handling protocol when encoding their cases in the IT-tool.

In order to monitor and assess compliance with the set of quality principles, ECCs will carry out annual satisfaction surveys in a manner to be agreed upon with the European Commission and Chafea, and submit their results together with each final report. The results will become a basis for a dialogue focusing on opportunities for improvement for individual ECCs.

4. TIMETABLE

4.1. Implementation period

The FPA shall enter into force on 1 January 2018.

4.2. Indicative timetable

	Stages	Date/period
a)	Launch of the present invitation	27/4/2017
b)	Deadline for the submission of applications for the FPA	22/6/2017
c)	Evaluation of FPA applications	July 2017
d)	Notification of evaluation results of FPAs	August 2017
e)	Conclusion of FPAs	September 2017

5. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PARTNERS

The role and responsibility of the partners are described in detail in the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA).

6. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Applicants need to conform to the principles and rules as set out by the EU Financial Regulation, i.e. the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and the related rules of application of the financial regulation.

The general aspects of financial management of grants, general principles of EU- co-funding and other financial information such as payment arrangements are described

under point 6 of the Invitation and guide to submit proposals for the submission of 2018 specific grants.

B. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The formal applications for the 2018-2021 Framework partnership agreements shall be submitted to Chafea via the online application tools developed under the Horizon 2020 Research programmes.

More information on how to access the online application tool will be available in the call section of the Chafea website:

http://ec.europa.eu/chafea/consumers/consumers_calls.html

The online submission system is composed of a two-step process:

- (1) Registration of the applicant organisation through a specific procedure;
- (2) Submission of the proposal itself, also broken down into three parts, as follows:

Part A: includes administrative information of the applicant organisation for the needs of the signature of the future FPA, and is to be completed directly online. It comprises of fields of information, checklists and declarations to be filled by your organisation via the online submission tool.

Note:

In order to complete part A:

- in case of multi-beneficiary grants, all beneficiaries must be registered in the [Beneficiary Register](#) and communicate the PIC to the coordinator
- all beneficiaries must have performed a [Financial Viability Self-Check](#). The financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies or to low value grants (equal or below EUR 6.000,00)
- the coordinator must have the project budget per partner

Part B1: includes the technical content of the proposed Implementation Strategy. Part B1 is a blank word file which, when completed, must be uploaded directly as a PDF file into the on-line submission system.

Annexes: These annexes are necessary documents to support evidence for checking the applicant organisation compliance with the exclusion, selection and award criteria. Similarly to Part A, these documents must be uploaded as PDF files directly into the online submission tool.

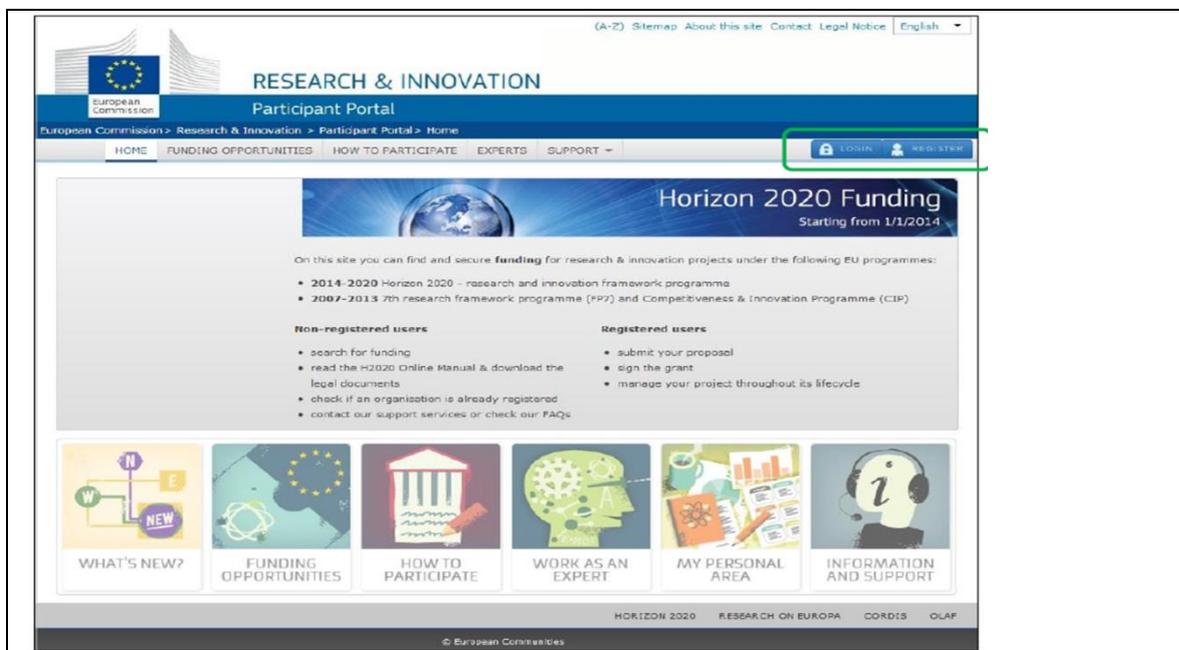
7. PREPARING FOR THE SUBMISSION OF YOUR APPLICATION

There are several stages to observe when preparing for the submission of your application: sign up to your possibly already existing ECAS account for registered users or create a new ECAS account for new users; and register your organisation in the "Beneficiary Register".

7.1. Create a user account on the Participant Portal – your ECAS Account

Applications in response to this invitation are only possible via the online system. You first need to create a user account, the so-called ECAS account, to fill in the required forms and submit them electronically to Chafea.

To do so, you simply need to access the Participant Portal here: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/home.html>



You can see in the screen shot above that the homepage refers to registered and non-registered users.

- If you do not already have a user account for the Participant Portal, you simply click on 'REGISTER' (in the upper right corner next to 'LOGIN') and register online.;
- If you already have a user account for the Participant Portal, you can log in (click on 'LOGIN' in the upper right corner) and start entering the required information.

7.2. Register your organisation - Beneficiary Register

With the ECAS account at hand, you can proceed to the next step, which is to register your organisation; this is done through the European Commission's Beneficiary Register.

- The European Commission has an online register of the organisations participating in various EU programmes called the Beneficiary Register. This allows consistent handling of different organisations' official data and avoids multiple requests of the same information. However, check first on the Beneficiary Register page if your organisation is already registered at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/organisations/register.html>

The screenshot shows the 'Beneficiary Register' page on the RESEARCH & INNOVATION Participant Portal. The page title is 'Beneficiary Register' and it includes a 'H2020 ONLINE MANUAL' link. The main content area explains that the Commission has an online register of beneficiaries and provides instructions on how to register. A 'SEARCH' button is highlighted with a callout box that says: 'Click to organisation Search page and check if your organisation and/or your Partners' organisations are already registered.' Below this, there is a section titled 'Is your organisation already registered? Search PIC' with a 'SEARCH' button. Further down, there is a 'REGISTER ORGANISATION' button highlighted with another callout box that says: 'Click to initiate the organisation registration process – this action will open in a new window the Registration Wizard in the Unique Registrator Facility.'

- If you do not find your organisation there, and only in this case, you should start the registration process by clicking on 'Register your organisation'.
- To complete this registration process, you will need to provide information about your entity legal status and its finances.
- You do not need to complete the registration process in a single session. You can enter some information, save it and continue later on the My Organisations page of the "My Area" section. Incomplete draft registrations are automatically deleted after one year.
- Once your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC number). This PIC number will need to be quoted in your proposal and in any correspondence with Chafea.
- The person who registers the organisation, called 'self-registrant', can submit updates and corrections (with corresponding supporting documents) on the My Organisations page of the My Area section.
- Please note that in case if the registered organisation receives EU funding, the 'self-registrant' will be replaced by the appointed representative LEAR (Legal Entity

Appointed Representative). This person will then be will be the only person able to provide further updates.

7.3. Submission process overview of the FPA proposals

Once you have completed Part A - Proposal Submission Forms and validated it, you will be transferred to Part B and Annexes where you can download the **Template B1 "Technical content of the proposed Implementation Strategy for the years 2018-2021"** (for the FPA proposal). At this point you can then move on to working and preparing the content of your proposals on a blank Word document following the provided structure in the **templates**.

Note:

It is extremely important to upload the proper documents (only PDF documents can be uploaded) under the corresponding heading as you may jeopardize your entire application and will be considered as inadmissible! Please before closing the application procedure or logging of, double-check if the content of your PDF documents match with the given headings in the online submission tool. It is your responsibility that you have uploaded the proper documents.

7.4. Deadline, acknowledgement of receipt, rejection of a proposal and complaints

- **Submission deadline**

The proposals **must** be submitted via the online submission tool and before the set deadline.

The deadline for submission is **22 June 17:00:00 Hs.(Brussels local time)**.

Before the set deadline, the applicants may replace or update their proposals. After the deadline, changes or additions are no longer possible.

Note:

Please do not send your proposal via the Electronic Submission System AND by post / e-mail to Chafea, please use only the Electronic Submission System.

Chafea does not manage the submission process via the Electronic Submission System. Hence, please contact the Helpdesk of the Participant Portal and not Chafea for any submission related questions.

- **Acknowledgement of receipt**

After submitting your proposal by the deadline, you will receive an acknowledgement of receipt email with the date and time of the submission of the application.

If you do not receive an email with the acknowledgement of receipt, it is because the proposal has not been submitted successfully. If you miss the deadline, your proposal will be disregarded by the system and cannot be considered as submitted.

The online system will carry out basic verification checks for completeness of the proposal, internal data consistency, virus infection file types, size limitations etc.

Once the proposal is submitted, the applicant will not hear from Chafea until the proposal is evaluated, unless:

- Chafea needs to contact the applicant to clarify matters or to request additional information;
- Chafea needs more information, or supporting documents;

- **How to file a complaint**

If you believe that submission failed due to a fault in the Electronic Submission System, the applicant should immediately file a complaint via the Helpdesk on the Participant Portal, explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal. The method of filing a complaint over other aspects of submission is explained in the information you receive via the electronic exchange system (in ‘My Area’ section of the Participant Portal).

7.5. Publicity and communication – code of conduct

A. By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union’s contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Union and the network logo on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed action. Furthermore, the beneficiaries shall show their membership in the ECC-Net by placing the network logo in an easily and publicly visible place outside their premises.

B. By Chafea

All information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded. Chafea will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary;
- address of the beneficiary;
- subject of the grant;
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

7.6. Data protection

The reply to any call for proposals (invitation) involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to

the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. The personal data requested in the context of this call (invitation) will be processed with the sole aim of evaluating the application and will not be used for any other purpose. It will be treated in accordance with the privacy statement published at:

http://ec.europa.eu/chafea/documents/about/Privacy_statement_grants_27_08_2010_final.pdf

Personal data may be registered in the Early Warning System (EWS) only or both in the EWS and Central Exclusion Database (CED) by the Accounting Officer of the European Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision 2008/969 of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (for more information see the Privacy Statement at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:344:0125:0138:EN:PDF>);

or

- -the Commission Regulation 2008/1302 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (for more information see the Privacy Statement at http://www.cc.cec/budg/imp/ced/_doc/_pdf/guide-ced-annex4-5-privacy-statement.pdf).

8. CONTENT OF THE APPLICATION

As already mentioned above, the ECC NET application consists of the following:

- **Part A:** General information, Participants & contact details.
- **Part B.1 - *Template proposal B.1:*** Technical content of the Implementation Strategy (FPA proposal)
- **Annexes**, which concern the documents to be uploaded in PDF in support of the compliance with the exclusion, selection and award criteria as specified in the invitation.

8.1. Application form: Part A – Administrative part of the applicant organisation

In this part, you will have to provide general information, Participants & contacts.

Part A comprises of fields of required information, checklists and declarations to be filled and must be completed directly via the Electronic Submission System; it is structured in four sections, as follows:

- Section 1: General information
- Section 2: Participants and contacts (with sub-sections)

Please note that Part A follows a common template and is applicable to all funding programmes and all financial instruments, regardless of the specificities of each.

Figure 1: Screen shot of the Table of Contents of Part A

Section	Title	Action
1	General Information	
2	Participants and Contacts	

Section 1: General information

The second page of this section contains a certain number of self-declarations to be made by the applicant, by clicking in the corresponding boxes. These declarations are valid both for the FPA and the SGA.

Figure 2: Print screen of the *Declarations*

Declarations

1) The applicant declares that the information contained in this proposal is correct and complete.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) This proposal complies with ethical principles (including the highest standards of integrity — as set out, for instance, in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity — and including, in particular, avoiding fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other misconduct).	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) The applicant confirms that:	
- he/she has carried out for its organisation a financial capacity self-check at: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal4/desktop/en/organisations/lfv.html . The applicant organisation confirms to be aware that a guarantee may be requested in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the EU (Art. 134 FR); or	<input type="checkbox"/>
- is exempt from the financial capacity check being a public body	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) The applicant hereby declares that:	
- it is fully compliant with the exclusion criteria set out in the specific call for proposals; and	<input type="checkbox"/>
- it has the financial and operational capacity to carry out the action proposed in this specific grant application; and in particular:	<input type="checkbox"/>
- has the relevant operational resources, skills and professional experience	<input type="checkbox"/>
- has stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their proposed programme	<input type="checkbox"/>
The applicant is responsible for the correctness of the information relating to his/her own organisation. If the proposal is to be retained for a framework partnership agreement, the applicant will be required to present a formal declaration in this respect.	

† According to Article 131 of the Financial Regulation of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (Official Journal L 298 of 26.10.2012, p. 1) and Article 145 of its Rules of Application (Official Journal L 362, 31.12.2012, p.1) applicants found guilty of misrepresentation may be subject to administrative and financial penalties under certain conditions.

Note:

The only reason you are requested to run a self-check on your financial capacity and tick the box under "3) the applicant confirms that: he/she has carried out for its organisation a financial capacity self-check at <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal4/desktop/en/organisations/lfv.html> " is to warn you that in the case you are awarded the grant and your financial standing is weak, the EC may need to take specific measures and may ask you to

provide a bank guarantee. By no means should this discourage you from submitting an application with the FPA. The verification of the financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies or to low value grants (equal or below EUR 60.000,00).

For the selection criteria:

Financial capacity:

- the applicant's organisation as well as every other applicant for its own organisation has performed the [self-check of the financial capacity](#) of the organisation (or are exempt as they are public bodies);

If an applicant is receiving an operating grant from any EU programme, the following shall apply: the requirements for a combination of partial operating grants and action grants (with indirect costs) are:

- the organisation uses analytical accounting allowing for a cost accounting management with cost allocation keys and cost accounting codes
- the organisation records:
 - all costs incurred for the operating grant (i.e. personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the WP) and
 - all costs incurred for the action grants (including the indirect costs linked to the action)
- the organisation uses allocation keys and cost accounting codes to identify and separate the costs (i.e. to allocate them to either the action grant or the operating grant)
- the allocation of the costs must be done in a way that leads to a fair, objective, realistic result

Full operating grants (100% of beneficiaries annual budget) are subject to a stricter regime: no indirect costs.

- applicants have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the activity is being carried out and to participate in its co-financing.

Operational capacity:

- the applicants must have the necessary operational resources, skills and professional experience to carry out the proposed activities to be funded. see also 12.2 of this document. If you do not click on each appropriate box, you may prevent the application from being submitted.

Section 2: Participants & contacts

The first page of the section "Participants & contacts" refers to the administrative data of the applicant organisation.

Part of the administrative data will be automatically filled in after encoding of the relevant [PIC code](#). The remaining set of administrative data will need to be entered directly by the applicant.

On the second and third page you need to provide administrative information concerning the specific department(s) of the applicant organisation carrying out the proposed work, as well as those of the person in charge of the proposal.

9. HELPDESK

For problems with the online submission tool please contact the IT helpdesk set-up for this purpose via the participant portal web-site.

For other questions concerning the content of the invitation letter and the application, Chafea can be contacted via e-mail:

Chafea-ECCnet@ec.europa.eu.

Once the electronic exchange system allocated a proposal ID, the applicant must use this number in all subsequent correspondence.

10. LIST OF ANNEXES AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Annexes are necessary documents to support evidence for checking the applicant organisation's compliance with the criteria specified in the invitation. Annexes must be uploaded directly into the Electronic Submission system.

The following annexes need to be provided with the application:

Annex	Document	Format
Part B1	2018-2021 implementation strategy	template
Annex IV	Job description of the project's staff members	template
	CV of the Director (project leader)	free
	CV of the Lawyer	free
	CV of the Communication officer	free
	Full set of accounts for the 2 last available financial years 2015-2016 / 2016-2017	free

C. EVALUATION

All proposals received by Chafea via the Electronic Submission System go through a multi-level process of evaluation with regards to several categories of criteria: the exclusion, selection and award criteria. The evaluation of proposals is carried out in the **strictest confidence**.

11. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

11.1. Exclusion from participation

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the direct grant invitation procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- (a) the economic operator is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, where its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, where it is in an arrangement with creditors, where its business activities are suspended, or where it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under national laws or regulations;
- (b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the economic operator is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the law of the country in which it is established, with those of the country in which the contracting authority is located or those of the country of the performance of the contract;
- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the economic operator is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the economic operator belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful conduct which has an impact on its professional credibility where such conduct denotes wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:
 - (i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of selection criteria or in the performance of a contract;
 - (ii) entering into agreement with other economic operators with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the contracting authority during the procurement procedure;
 - (v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the procurement procedure;
- (d) it has been established by a final judgment that the economic operator is guilty of any of the following:
 - (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - (ii) corruption, as defined in Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, and in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, as well as corruption as defined in the law of the country where the contracting authority is located, the country in which the economic operator is established or the country of the performance of the contract;
 - (iii) participation in a criminal organisation, as defined in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing, as defined in Article 1 of Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council;
 - (v) terrorist-related offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;

- (vi) child labour or other forms of trafficking in human beings as defined in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the economic operator has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract financed by the budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;
- (f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the economic operator has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95.

11.2. Exclusion from award:

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the European Commission/Chafea as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure or fail to supply this information;
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in section 11.1.

Administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, who are guilty of misrepresentation

Applicants shall certify by declaration of honour that they are not in one of the situation referred to above.

Such certification shall not be required in case of low value grants (grants below EUR 60.000,00)

12. SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection refers to the operational and financial capacity of the applicant organisation to carry out their multiannual Implementation Strategy. Financial and operational resources will be checked against the same criteria both for the entire four-year period covered by the FPA proposal.

12.1. Financial capacity

Applicants are expected to have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity and ensure their own share of co-financing.

If an organisation is not a public body or applies for a low value grant (equal or below EUR 60.000,00 which would exempt it from the financial capacity-check) it needs to complete the financial viability self-check and tick the appropriate box in the system. This assessment will be performed based on the documents the applicants provided when

registering in the Beneficiary Registry. Applicant may be contacted if more information is needed in order to complete this assessment.

The verification of the financial capacity for the partnership agreement will be carried out on the basis of the following supporting documents:

Type of body	Supporting documents
Non-public bodies	Full set of accounts for the 2 last available financial year (if possible 2016 and 2017)
Public bodies	N/A
	External audit report (if EU funding is above EUR 750.000,00)

12.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications to complete the proposed implementation strategy and work plan.

The operational capacity will be assessed on the basis of the capacity of the ECC team to perform the activities to be co-funded. The ECC team should be composed, at least, of a full time employed director, a lawyer and a communication officer. Only in exceptional cases (due to the size of the centre) part time staff will be accepted. The minimum team composition, as described below, should be ensured over the four years of implementation.

Minimum requirement for the ECC team:

- **Full time Director:** he/she may not have any other professional activity unless agreed by Chafea. Past experience in staff management and consumer protection and/or communication and public relations is desirable. He/she should have a very good knowledge of the English language, in order to ensure communication with fellow network members, foreign consumers, the European Commission and Chafea.

NB: The Director shall have overall responsibility for the efficient running of the centre and for its administration, finances and policy. He/she shall be provided with the powers and instruments necessary to carry out these responsibilities.

- **Full time Lawyer:** University degree in law and either experience or in-depth knowledge of EU and national legislation affecting consumers. Good working knowledge of the English language is required.
- **Communication officer:** He/she should have experience in promotional activities, communication and PR activities. He/she should have an good working knowledge of the English language.

Supporting document

Curriculum vitae of the proposed director, lawyer and communication officer
Job description of the project's staff members

13. AWARD CRITERIA

13.1. Framework Partnership Agreement

Award criteria for the framework partnership agreement (weighting of 100 points)

One partnership per country concerned will be agreed with the public body or non-profit making body designated by the respective country under its responsibility, when all the following elements are positively assessed:

- (1) Quality of the 4 year work programme, organisation and description of activities and targets, in particular as regards: Description of the mid-term promotional strategy (aiming, among others, at increasing the awareness of consumers on EU consumer legislation and policies and the visibility of the centre) (max 20 points);
- (2) Description of the mid-term case-handling strategy (including a description on how the Centre will contribute to identify infringements to consumer rules and to report these infringements to national and EU authorities (max 20 points);
- (3) Description of the mid-term strategy envisaged towards strengthening the impact of the network (max 20 points);
- (4) Description of the mid-term strategy envisaged towards strengthening links with EU and national stakeholders (max 20 points);
- (5) Consistency of the objectives and targets, suitability for achieving the desired results, consistency of proposed evaluation mechanism and monitoring indicators (max 20 points).

Proposals obtaining 60 points or more will be accepted and will be awarded with a FPA.

14. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

ECC grants are managed by Chafea under powers delegated by the European Commission.

14.1. Types of agreements

A framework partnership agreement (FPA) covering a period of four years (2018-2021) will be signed with the successful partners. It will lay down the general rules of the contractual relationship between the Chafea and the partners and will include in an annex the implementation strategy;

14.2. Successive agreements of framework partnership

Grant agreements for the operation of European Consumer Centres in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 may be concluded with each FPA partner in accordance with the procedures and conditions specified in the framework partnership agreement and according to the Commission's financial Decision covering the implementation of the Consumer Programme during the above mentioned years. It is to be noted that about the same level of funds have been earmarked in the Consumer Programme for the funding of the ECC-Net during the subsequent years.

14.3. Affiliated bodies

In principle, ECC grants are mono-beneficiary grants, meaning that only one body is designated as host in each Member State/EEA, this body submits the application and appears as single beneficiary once the grant is awarded. However, in the past some Member States/EEA countries have supported applications where more than one beneficiary was designated per country.

The 2018-2021 FPA and the successive specific grants will foresee the possibility of accepting two types of affiliated entities which may take part in the action alongside beneficiaries and declare eligible costs under certain conditions:

(a) several legal entities forming together one legal entity or 'sole beneficiary' which may, or may not, have been specifically established for carrying out the action.

In this case, the application may be submitted by one applicant, whether established specifically or not for the action, provided that it is formed of several legal entities complying with the eligibility, non-exclusion and selection criteria set out in the invitation and implementing together the proposed action.

(b) legal entities having a legal or capital link with a beneficiary or co-beneficiary, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation.

In both of the above cases, the respective entities (i.e. affiliated entities):

- shall be identified in the application;
- shall provide the supporting documents allowing the verification of their compliance with the eligibility, non-exclusion and selection criteria;
- shall be entitled to declare eligible costs.