



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS CONCERNING PROJECTS OF COMMON INTEREST
UNDER THE CONNECTING EUROPE FACILITY IN THE FIELD OF
TRANS-EUROPEAN TELECOMMUNICATION NETWORKS**

CEF TELECOM CALLS 2019

**CEF-TC-2019-4: EU Student eCard
Core Service Platform**

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) was established by Regulation (EU) N° 1316/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹ (the "CEF Regulation"). In accordance with Article 17 of the CEF Regulation, the European Commission must adopt implementing acts for the annual Work Programmes of CEF Telecom.

The general context for this call for proposals is defined in section 3.3 of the 2019 CEF Telecom Work Programme² as published on the call page of the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA) website.³ The background and rationale for this call for proposals are defined in section 3.3.1 of the 2019 Work Programme.

2. PRIORITIES & OBJECTIVES

2.1 Priority outcomes

The priority outcomes of this call for proposals are defined in section 3.3.2.2 of the 2019 Work Programme.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1316/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility, amending Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 680/2007 and (EC) No 67/2010.

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2019) 1021 of 14 February 2019

³ https://ec.europa.eu/inea/sites/inea/files/cef_telecom_work_programme_2019.pdf

The objective of this call for proposals is to design, develop and roll-out a solid technical infrastructure to support European higher education institutions in offering to students a secure cross-border electronic identification and authentication as well as cross-border electronic exchange of data required by the online student services.

The future solution should integrate the eIDAS eID framework with the digital Erasmus+ infrastructure built up by the Erasmus Without Paper Network⁴, Erasmus+ Dashboard⁵, Erasmus+ Mobile App⁶, Online Learning Agreement⁷, the European Student Card project⁸ and EMREX⁹.

In order to ensure the future usability of the core service platform, proposers should be aware of the studies and projects funded by the Connecting Europe Facility and addressing student mobility (e.g. two studies on eIDAS and student mobility¹⁰, Transformation of Greek e-Gov Services to eIDAS Crossborder Services/academia services¹¹, ESMO¹²; Studies+¹³; eID4U¹⁴ and e-Signature and Erasmus Student eCard in Greece¹⁵, MyAcademicID¹⁶ and SEAL¹⁷).

The goal of the future solution is to enable European students in a cross-border mobility context to use the different academic online services (application services, campus services) as well as non-academic services for students.

Mobile students refer to Erasmus+ students, including those going on mobility as part of the Erasmus+ Digital Opportunity Traineeship scheme, as well as European students who undertake a period of learning or training in a higher education institution of another Member State or EEA country. In the future, the Core Service platform should be extendable to cater to other mobility schemes and to students who enrol for a full degree in another Member State or EEA country. For this reason, the solution should be generic by design and capable of being gradually extended in future Work Programmes to other initiatives.

⁴ <https://www.erasmuswithoutpaper.eu/ewp-network>

⁵ <https://www.erasmuswithoutpaper.eu/dashboard>

⁶ <https://erasmusapp.eu/>

⁷ <https://www.learning-agreement.eu/start/>

⁸ <https://europeanstudentcard.eu/>

⁹ <http://emrex.eu/>

¹⁰ Study on cross-border use of eID and Authentication Services to support student mobility and access to student services in Europe: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/study-cross-border-use-eid-and-authentication-services-support-student-mobility-and-access>; Study on Information Systems Architecture Solution eIDAS+ for Education: <https://ec.europa.eu/cefdigital/wiki/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=78551061>

¹¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility/cef-telecom/2015-el-ia-0083>

¹² <http://www.esmo-project.eu/>

¹³ <https://studies-plus.eu/>

¹⁴ <http://security.polito.it/eid4u/>

¹⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility/cef-telecom/2017-el-ia-0034>

¹⁶ <http://www.myacademic-id.eu/>

¹⁷ <http://project-seal.eu/>

The platform should offer a comprehensive, interoperable, sustainable and flexible solution corresponding to the needs of a highly heterogeneous academic environment which:

- enable students to identify themselves in a trusted manner, in line with the once-only-principle¹⁸;
- allow secure exchange and verification of student data and academic records;
- reduce administrative procedures;
- enable students to access to services to which they are entitled to when arriving in the host country.

The solution should re-use the eIDAS eID Digital Service Infrastructure (DSI).

- Technical activities:
 - Define and implement the necessary IT architecture and functionalities for i) a pan-European online student identification and authentication system; and ii) relevant student data exchange based on the analysis of the specific requirements of student mobility¹⁹ and of online student services;
 - Provide a set of free and open source solutions for eIDAS-enabled student identification and authentication, and for electronic exchange of academic data based on common academic attributes to be developed;
 - Provide a portal with all needed, free-of-charge information, guidelines, downloadable open source software, etc.
- Stakeholder engagement and monitoring activities:
 - Spreading awareness about the EU Student eCard DSI for current and prospective users, both in the public and in the private sectors, including national authorities and administrations
 - Informing, training and advising stakeholders in and beyond the current EU Student eCard community
 - Engaging with user groups,
- Service administration
 - Day-to-day administration, maintenance and operation of the DSI
 - Testing services for higher education institutions, including analysing user-feedback
 - Helpdesk activities; provide technical assistance; showcase how to connect to the platform

The solution should be compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation²⁰ and, if applicable, with the EU regulation on the protection of natural persons with regard to

¹⁸The once-only-principle (OOP) means that citizens and businesses provide diverse data only once in contact with public administrations, while public administration bodies take actions to internally share and reuse these data – even across borders – always in respect of data protection regulations and other constraints. There are two EU projects related to the implementation of OOP: SCOOP4C (<https://www.scoop4c.eu/>) and TOOP (www.toop.eu). SCOOP4C ended in April 2019 and its work is taken over by the TOOP project which has been extended till March 2020

¹⁹For Erasmus+ this has been done in the context of Erasmus Without Papers: <https://www.erasmuswithoutpaper.eu/sites/default/files/pages/EWP%20desk%20research%20final%20version.pdf>

²⁰Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC

the processing of personal data by the EU²¹. The European and the relevant national data protection rules and principles should be implanted into the planned future technical solution from its very first design phase, including the first version of the user requirements and technical specifications. Any personal data should not be processed for other purposes than the EU Student eCard DSI (platform development, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and service administration).

The proposal shall comprise quality indicators to be used during the project lifetime for monitoring the results stemming from its different activities. Validation of the technological components and of the integrated system shall be included among the project activities.

Concerning Service administration, it is expected that the project will maintain a list of services and people who contact the customer service desk and ensure follow-up of requests. There should be a ticketing system in place in order to record the requests and monitor progress and follow-up.

The project shall maintain a list of users and services connecting to/using the core services, and gather quantitative information on the usage of those services. The project shall also implement a feedback gathering mechanism and measure the satisfaction of the users with CEF EU Student eCard core services. Reasons for abandoning or deciding against using the services shall be documented.

Collaborations with other CEF Building Blocks and/or sector-specific DSIs should be launched.

The grant beneficiaries must plan for a handover and transfer of the intellectual property rights associated with all material part of the grant agreement's execution – i.e. software binaries, source code, project documentation, XML schemas, etc. to the receiving entity following the grant's conclusion. This entity may be the European Commission. The Commission will inform the beneficiaries on the exact modalities in this regard during the project's execution. The project partners must further ensure that the tools chosen to produce the project's artefacts should not lead to vendor lock-in and thus impede the future take-up, further development and maintenance of those artefacts. If such tools are used, clear arrangements have to be made to provide a perpetual free of charge licence for their use by the receiving organisation.

2.2 RESULTS EXPECTED FROM THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The benefits and expected outcomes of this call for proposals are defined in section 3.3.2.3 of the 2019 Work Programme.

The EU Student eCard core service platform should enable pan-European ubiquitous automatic recognition of student status and identity, secure electronic exchange of academic data, as well as secure access to online student services based on the once-only principle. Students should be able to electronically apply to and enrol in any accredited higher education institution in Europe when moving abroad for studies and traineeships

²¹Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002

without having to go physically to an office and go through all the administrative paperwork. The platform should reduce the administrative procedures for students in mobility and higher education institutions in sending and receiving students, from the nomination stage to the exchange of learning outcomes for recognition of credits earned abroad.

3. TIMETABLE

Date of publication of call for proposals	Thursday 4 July 2019
Deadline for the submission of proposals	Thursday 14 November 2019
Evaluation of proposals	December 2019 - February 2020 (indicative)
Consultation of the CEF Committee	March 2020 (indicative)
Adoption of the Selection Decision	April 2020 (indicative)
Preparation and signature of grant agreements	May-July 2020 (indicative)

4. BUDGET

The indicative total amount allocated to "EU Student eCard – Core Service Platform" is €2,5 million, with a funding rate of up to 100% of eligible costs.

It is expected that the total available funding is being attributed to one proposal. This does not preclude the submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Implementation period: The Action may not start before the date of submission of the application.

Indicative duration: The indicative duration of an Action proposed under this call is 24 months.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must be:

- submitted to the Commission on paper in one (1) original clearly identified as such and one (1) copy, accompanied by an electronic copy on USB key;
- submitted by the submission deadline (*see sections 3 on Timetable and 15.2 on Submission process*) by registered post, hand delivered or sent by courier service. (Proposals submitted by fax, telex, or e-mail will not be accepted);
- complete, i.e. include all parts of the application forms (A, B, C or D);
- duly signed by the applicant(s).

Failure to comply with any of these requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1 Eligible applicants

In accordance with the 2019 Work Programme and pursuant to Article 9 of the CEF Regulation,²² only those proposals submitted by one of the following types of applicants are eligible:

- One or more Member States;
- With the agreement of the Member State(s) or EEA countr(y)ies concerned, international organisations, Joint Undertakings,²³ or public or private undertakings or bodies established in Member States;
- **Consortium composition: proposals must be submitted by consortia consisting of a minimum of three organisations, based in three or more different Member States and/or EEA countries participating in the CEF Telecom programme.**

For British applicants: Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the *entire* duration of the grant. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the grant period without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British applicants continue to be eligible, UK applicants will cease to receive EU funding (while continuing, where possible, to participate) or be required to leave the project on the basis of Article II.16.3.1 (a) (*change of the legal situation of the beneficiary*) of the model grant agreement²⁴.

EEA countries

In accordance with section 5.3.1 of the 2019 Work Programme, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA) may participate²⁵ in the call for proposals, even when not explicitly mentioned in the Work Programme text, with the same rights, obligations and requirements as EU Member States. At the time of call publication, these conditions apply to Norway and Iceland only.²⁶

Third countries and third country entities

Where necessary to achieve the objectives of a given project of common interest and where duly motivated, third countries and entities established in third countries may participate in actions contributing to the projects of common interest. They may not receive funding under the CEF Regulation, except where it is indispensable to achieve the objectives of a given project of common interest.

²²Regulation (EU) No 1316/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility, amending Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 680/2007 and (EC) No 67/2010 Text with EEA relevance, see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1316>

²³For the purposes of this call, a Joint Undertaking means a joint undertaking established by the EU for the efficient execution of EU research, technological development and demonstration programmes, as referred to in Article 187 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012E%2FTXT>

²⁴The model grant agreement is available on the call webpage

²⁵According to article 7.2 of Regulation (EU) No 283/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on guidelines for trans-European networks in the area of telecommunications infrastructures and repealing Decision No 1336/97/EC

²⁶For the purposes of this call, Liechtenstein is considered a third country

Acceding states and candidate countries benefiting from a pre-accession strategy may also participate in the sector of the CEF covering telecommunications infrastructure in accordance with agreements signed with the EU. As at the time of call publication no such agreements have been signed, the same conditions as for third countries apply to acceding states and candidate countries.

Third countries and entities established in third countries may only participate as part of a consortium with applicants from EU/EEA countries. The application must contain the agreement of the Member State concerned by the proposed Action and a declaration from the European partner involved in the proposal on why the participation of the third country applicant is indispensable. Applicants that are entities established in a third country must also provide proof of the support of the third country authorities concerned by the action.

Applicants without legal personality

Proposals may be submitted by entities which do not have a legal personality under the applicable national law, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and offer a guarantee for the protection of the EU's financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons.

Natural persons

Proposals submitted by natural persons are not eligible.

Affiliated entities

Applicants may designate affiliated entities within the meaning of Article 187 of the Financial Regulation,²⁷ for the purpose of supporting the implementation of the action submitted for funding. Such affiliated entities must comply with the eligibility criteria for applicants.

6.2 Member State agreement

Any applicant that cannot provide the agreement of the EU Member State or EEA country concerned will not be eligible.

6.3 Eligible actions

In line with Article 7 of the CEF Regulation, only actions contributing to "projects of common interest" as identified in the Telecom Guidelines²⁸ shall be eligible for support through EU financial aid in the form of grants.

Please note that failure to comply with any of the eligibility criteria indicated above will lead to the rejection of the application.

²⁷Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, see <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046>

²⁸Regulation (EU) No 283/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on guidelines for trans-European networks in the area of telecommunications infrastructure and repealing Decision No 1336/97/EC (Text with EEA relevance) See specifically Article 4 and the Annex for more information. See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014R0283>

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1 Exclusion

An applicant shall be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- (a) the applicant 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 applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the law;
- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any 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, a grant agreement or a grant decision;
 - (ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Commission/Agency during the award procedure;
 - (v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;
- (d) it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following:
 - (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council and 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 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or 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, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;
 - (iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;

- (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing, within the meaning of Article 1 (3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
 - (v) terrorist 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 referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's 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 applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;
- (g) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
- (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);
- (i) facts for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) above, the applicant is subject to:
- (i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by the European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;
 - (ii) non-final judgments or non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;
 - (iii) facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;
 - (iv) information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;
 - (v) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of the Union's competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or
 - (vi) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

7.2 Remedial measures

If an applicant/affiliated entity declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above, it should indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability. This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines or of any taxes or social security contributions. The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (d) of section 7.1.

7.3 Rejection from the call for proposals

The authorising officer shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- a) is in an exclusion situation established in accordance with section 7.1; or
- b) has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information; or
- c) was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities. Applicants and their affiliated entities, if applicable, must certify that they are not in one of the situations listed above.

Administrative sanctions (exclusion) may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

7.4 Supporting documents

Applicants and affiliated entities must provide a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 of the Financial Regulation, by filling in application form Part B1 (for applicants) or B2 (for affiliated entities) accompanying the call for proposals and available in the "Application Forms" section of the call webpage.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection criteria are referred to in Annex 2 of the Work Programme. The financial and operational capacity of applicants and designated affiliated entities will be assessed as specified below.

The requirement to demonstrate financial and operational capacity also applies to designated affiliated entities **only where**, according to the proposal, the affiliated entity(ies) will be the only one(s) implementing the proposed Action.

Exceptions: The requirement for applicants to demonstrate their financial and operational capacity **does not** apply to Member States, public sector undertakings or bodies established in the EU/EEA countries (Norway and Iceland), third countries, international organisations, European Economic Interest Groupings (EEIG)²⁹ in which at least one member is a public sector body and Joint Undertakings.

Applicants are requested to register in the [Participant Register](#) and provide a Participant Identification Code (PIC, 9 digit number), serving as the unique identifier of their organisation. More information is available in the guidance on "Rules on Legal Entity Validation, LEAR appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment"³⁰ and in the instructions indicated in the Application Form Part B template.

8.1 Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain the proposed activities throughout the duration of the grant and to participate in its funding.

Applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the Commission services:

- a) Low value grants (\leq €60,000):
 - a declaration on their honour.

- b) Grants $>$ €60,000:
 - a declaration on their honour;
 - the profit and loss account as well as the balance sheet for the last 2 financial years for which the accounts were closed;
 - for newly created entities, the business plan might replace the above documents.

- c) Grants \geq €750,000:
 - the information and supporting documents mentioned under b) above
 - an **audit report** produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last 2 financial years available, where such an audit report is available or whenever a statutory report is required by law.
If the audit report is not available AND a statutory report is not required by law, a self-declaration signed by the applicant's authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for the last 2 financial years must be provided.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above thresholds apply by applicant.

²⁹Established in line with Council Regulation (EEC) No 2137/85 of 25 July 1985 – the European Economic Interest Grouping, see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3A126015>

³⁰http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/lev/h2020-rules-lev-lear-fvc_en.pdf

More comprehensive information on the documents to submit can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/lev/h2020-rules-lev-lear-fvc_en.pdf

In the event that the beneficiary's financial capacity is not satisfactory, the pre-financing payment may be subject to the receipt of a financial guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing payment to be made.

8.2 Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies and appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed Action for which the grant is sought. To assess this capacity, applicants must provide the following documents:

- description of the profiles of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the action (e.g. accompanied by a *curriculum vitae*);
- the organisation's activity reports for at least the last year;
- a list of previous actions and activities carried out in equivalent actions in related fields

If compliant with the above-mentioned requirements, information submitted by applicants who have benefited from CEF Telecom support since 2014 may be taken into account in the evaluation of their operational capacity.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated against the following award criteria, which are defined in Annex 2 of the 2019 Work Programme. These three criteria are **Relevance, Quality and efficiency of the implementation** and **Impact and sustainability** and are described below:

Relevance

- Alignment with the objectives and activities required for the deployment of the Digital Service Infrastructure described in Chapter 3 of the Work Programme and priorities set in section 2 of the call text.
- Alignment and synergies with relevant policies, strategies and activities at European and national level.

Quality and efficiency of the implementation

- Maturity of the proposed solution (e.g. in terms of contribution towards interoperability, connectivity, sustainable deployment, operation, upgrading of trans-European digital service infrastructures, use of common building blocks, coordination at European level) and/or integration with existing components of the DSI.
- Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources.

- Quality and relevant experience of the individual participants and, if more than one beneficiary, of the consortium as a whole (including complementarity, balance).
- Extent to which the proposal demonstrates support from national authorities, industry and NGOs (when relevant).
- Appropriate attention to security, privacy, inclusiveness and accessibility (when relevant).

Impact and sustainability

- Quality of the approach to facilitate wider deployment and take-up of the proposed Actions.
- Capability to survive, develop and scale up without European Union funding after the end of the project with a view to achieving long-term sustainability, where appropriate through funding sources other than CEF.

A score will be applied to each of the three award criteria on a scale from 0 (insufficient) to 5 (excellent). The threshold for individual criteria is 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, is 10. Only proposals with a score on or above these thresholds (individual and overall) may be recommended for funding.

Ranking list

At the end of the evaluation by independent experts, all evaluated proposals will be ranked, according to the scores obtained for each of the award criteria as indicated above.

If necessary, a priority order for proposals which have obtained the same score within a ranked list will be determined. The following approach will be applied successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals³¹ requiring prioritisation, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:

- i. Proposals submitted by organisations established in an eligible country which is not otherwise covered by more highly-ranked proposals, will be considered to have the highest priority (geographical coverage).
- ii. Proposals identified under (i), if any, will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the Relevance criterion. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for the Impact and Sustainability criterion.

If a distinction still cannot be made, further prioritisation may be done by considering how to enhance the quality of the project portfolio through synergies between proposals, or other factors related to the objectives of the call or to the CEF Work Programme in general. These factors will be documented in the evaluation report.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, the applicant(s) will be invited by the Commission to sign a grant agreement drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of CEF funding, as well as the information on the procedure to formalise the agreement of the parties. The standard model grant agreement, available on the Call webpage, is not negotiable and will be signed in English.

³¹Proposals with the same overall score

Submitting an application implies the acceptance of the terms and conditions of the model grant agreement. Applicants are recommended to carefully read this document and its annexes before submitting an application.

A coordinator must be designated for multi-beneficiary Actions. The coordinator will be the contact point for the Commission and will have, inter alia, the responsibility for receiving the payment(s) and coordinating the reporting exercise(s). It is strongly recommended that beneficiaries sign an internal cooperation agreement regarding their operation and coordination, including all internal aspects related to the management of the beneficiaries and the implementation of the Action.

Two copies of the original agreement must be signed first by the beneficiary in case of mono-beneficiary grants or the coordinator on behalf of the consortium and returned to the Commission immediately.

In accordance with Article 23 of the CEF Regulation, only Actions in conformity with EU law, in particular in the area of public procurement, and which are in line with the relevant EU policies in the area of telecommunications infrastructure shall be financed.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1 Form of the grant

11.1.1 Reimbursement of costs actually incurred³²

The grant will be defined by applying a maximum co-financing rate of 100% to the eligible costs and which are:

- (a) actually incurred and declared by the beneficiary and its affiliated entities.
- (b) a flat rate of 7 % of the eligible direct costs ('reimbursement of flat-rate costs') for the following categories of costs: indirect costs minus subcontracting costs within the meaning of Article II.10 and costs of financial support to third parties within the meaning of Article II.11 ("reimbursement of flat-rate costs").

For details on eligibility of costs, please refer to section 11.2.

11.2 Eligible costs

Eligible costs are costs actually incurred and declared by the beneficiary of a grant, which meet all the criteria laid down in Article 186 of the Financial Regulation.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

³²Notwithstanding the form of grant, personnel costs may be declared on the basis of average costs calculated in accordance with the beneficiary's usual costs accounting practices, in compliance with the conditions laid down in Commission Implementing Decision C(2016)478 on the reimbursement of personnel costs of beneficiaries of the Connecting Europe Facility.

The same criteria apply to the costs incurred by designated affiliated entities and implementing bodies.

Applicants' attention is drawn to points (3) to (8) of Article 8 of the CEF Regulation concerning the eligibility of costs. The full costs of purchase of equipment and infrastructure which are treated as capital expenditure are eligible under this call.

Costs may be eligible at the earliest from the date on which an application is submitted.

VAT

In line with the first subparagraph of Article 8(7) of the CEF Regulation and Article 186(4) (c) of the Financial Regulation, VAT paid by beneficiaries of grants awarded following this call for proposals is eligible except:

- deductible VAT (VAT paid by the beneficiary for the implementation of taxed activities or exempt activities with right of deduction);
- VAT paid for the implementation of activities engaged in as a public authority by the beneficiary where it is a Member State, regional or local government authority of a Member State or another body governed by public law of a Member State.

Financial support to third parties

The applications may not envisage provision of financial support to third parties.

Detailed information on eligible and ineligible costs is included in Article II.19 of the model grant agreement, which is available on the call webpage.

11.3 Reporting and payment arrangements

Actions will be eligible to receive a pre-financing of up to 60% of the maximum grant amount awarded that will be made within 30 days after the last party signs the grant agreement. One interim payment will be made.

In the event that the beneficiary's financial capacity is not satisfactory, the pre-financing payment may be subject to the receipt of a financial guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing payment to be made.

The financial guarantee, in euro, must be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the EU Member States. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the Commission may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if the bank or financial institution is considered to offer equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts will not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint or several guarantees provided by third parties or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action that are parties to the same grant agreement. The guarantee will be released when the pre-financing is cleared against the

interim payment, if applicable, and/or the balance of payment(s) made, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the Action, upon approval of the request for payment including, where applicable, the supporting documents as described in the model grant agreement.

11.4 Other financial conditions

a) Non-cumulative award

An Action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

To ensure this, applicants must indicate in the application the sources and amounts of EU funding received or applied for the same Action or part of the Action, as well as any other funding received or applied for the same Action.

In this respect, any proposed Action or part(s) thereof that receives or has received EU funding under the CEF or other EU Programmes (e.g. European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), Horizon 2020, etc.) will not be funded under this call.

b) Non- retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for Actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an Action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate in the grant application the need to start the Action before the grant agreement is signed.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

c) No-profit

In accordance with Article 192 of the Financial Regulation, grants shall not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the Action. Where a profit is made, the Commission will be entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the EU contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to carry out the Action.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1 By the beneficiary

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 Commission and the reference to the CEF Programme on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

12.2 By the Commission

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.

13. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the Commission.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046. For more information see the Privacy Statement on the Call webpage.

14. GRANT AGREEMENT

Applicant(s) will be invited by the European Commission to sign a grant agreement if the proposal is selected for funding. The standard model grant agreement, available on the call page, is not negotiable and will be signed in English.

Submitting an application implies the acceptance of the terms and conditions of the model grant agreement. Applicants are recommended to carefully read this document and its annexes before submitting an application.

15. PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

All practical information on this call for proposals and the evaluation process is detailed in the Guide for Applicants. It is available, together with the application forms, the model grant agreement, the 2019 Work Programme, and other relevant documents on the Call webpage: <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility/cef-telecom/apply-funding/2019-EU-student-ecard-CSP>

Applicants are requested to carefully read all call-related documents, including the instructions given in the Guide for Applicants on how to complete their applications as well as other guidance documents and information available on the call webpage.

15.1 Application forms

Proposals must be submitted using the application forms provided on the call webpage at the link above. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications in English.

Proposals must be signed by the applicant(s) or its duly authorized representative and must be perfectly legible so that there can be no doubt as to words and figures.

The applicant(s) specified in application form part A will automatically be considered as the beneficiary(ies) if the proposal is selected for funding. If applicants designate affiliated entities within the meaning of Article 187 of the Financial Regulation to support the implementation of the submitted action, information on these affiliated entities must be encoded in application form part A, and any relevant supporting documents must be provided.

For multi-applicant proposals, a coordinating applicant must be designated.

15.2 Submission process

Proposals must be submitted in paper to the Commission before the call deadline on **14 November 2019, 17:00 CET**.

The submission package must include one (1) original clearly identified as such and one (1) paper copy, accompanied by an electronic copy on USB key.

The application forms - parts A, B, C and D - must be downloaded from the call webpage, duly completed and included in the submission package. The same applies to any other annexes or supporting documents accompanying the proposal.

Applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that for all documents only the version in the submission package will be taken into account for the evaluation and that updates at a later stage cannot be accepted.

However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant during the evaluation process.

Any parts of the application that require signatures of applicants or relevant authorities must be scanned and included in the submission package. Applicants must be able to provide the original documents and send them to the Commission services upon request.

Advanced electronic signatures based on a qualified certificate³³ as defined by the eIDAS Regulation³⁴ and which comply with the signature formats specified in Commission Implementing Decision 2015/1506 will be accepted. If a document is e-signed, a printable version of the document must be included in the submission package.

Applications must be submitted in the correct form, duly completed, dated, and signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation.

Applicants have two options for sending their proposals.

³³For a list of trusted certificate providers please see <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/eu-trusted-lists-trust-service-providers>

³⁴Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC, see http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2014.257.01.0073.01.ENG

- **By post or private courier to the following address:**

European Commission
Mikolt Csap
Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
Unit G.2 – Interactive Technologies, Digital for Culture and Education
EUFO 01/286
L-2920 Luxembourg

In this case, the postmark or the date on the deposit slip serves as proof of timely submission.

- **By delivery to the premises of the Commission**, either directly or by any agent of the applicant. For security reasons, deliveries are to be made to the central mail department of the Commission:

European Commission
Office des Publications
2, rue Mercier
L-2985 Luxembourg

In this case, proof of submission of the proposal will take the form of a receipt signed and dated by the official of the Commission's central mail department, which takes delivery of the documents. The department is open from 08.00 to 16.00 on Mondays to Fridays. It is closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Commission holidays.

16. INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

Further information or clarifications on the call for proposals are published on the call webpage. Please refer to all of the following documents, available on the call webpage, when preparing the application:

- 2019-2020 Work Programme
- CEF Regulation
- Telecom Guidelines
- Application form (Parts A, B, C and D)
- Guide for Applicants
- Q&As specific to the call
- Model grant agreement
- Proposal checklist
- EU Financial Regulation and Rules of application
- Commission Decision on the reimbursement of personnel costs

Applicants are recommended to consult the webpage regularly until the deadline for submission of proposals.

Questions related to this call must be addressed to the call helpdesk: cnect-g2@ec.europa.eu

The answers to submitted questions will be published in a Q&A list accessible via the call webpage, to ensure equal treatment of all potential applicants. Questions related to the call should be submitted at the latest by 3 November 2019 to ensure sufficient time for the last update of the Q&As by 8 November 2019.

Questions which are specific to a particular proposal and for which the answer would provide a comparative advantage to the applicant will not be answered.

Please note that proposals must not be sent to the helpdesk.