



# Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

## Call for proposals

CEF 2 Digital - Backbone connectivity for Digital Global Gateways

(CEF-DIG-2021-GATEWAYS)

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## HEALTH AND DIGITAL EXECUTIVE AGENCY (HaDEA)

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

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of “Backbone connectivity for Digital Global Gateways” under the Digital strand of the **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)**.

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act ([CEF Regulation 2021/1153](#)<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the [2021-2025 Work Programme](#)<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the European Health & Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) (hereafter ‘the Agency’).

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **CEF-DIG-2021-GATEWAYS-WORKS - Backbone connectivity for Digital Global Gateways - Works**
- **CEF-DIG-2021-GATEWAYS-STUDIES - Backbone connectivity for Digital Global Gateways - Studies**

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic, must submit a separate proposal under each topic.

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

<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (OJ L 249, 14.7.2021, p. 38–81).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 9463 final of 16 December 2021 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2023 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

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

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

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement the successful applicants will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc.*).

## 1. Background

In her State of the EU speech on 15 September 2021, Commission's President Ursula von der Leyen stated that the European Union will provide strategic connectivity for all territories of the Union through Global Gateway partnerships.

It is of utmost importance to ensure that the European Union is connected with "*quality infrastructure, connecting goods, people and services around the world*". By offering transparency and efficient governance, the Union has therefore the ambition to provide trusted digital connectivity to Member States and to its partners worldwide.

In line with article 9.4. (d) of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153, this call will support the deployment of backbone networks, including submarine cables, within and between Member States and between the Union and third countries.

This will directly contribute substantially to the increased performance, capacity and resilience of the backbone networks concerned and indirectly of the networks located inside the territory of Member States that rely on such backbone capacity.

This backbone connectivity can be provided with the technology best suited, including submarine cables and satellite ground stations. In addition, support may also concern the inter-connection of backbones with networks located inside the supported territories.

Backbone connectivity plays an essential role in ensuring very high capacity and performance (in terms of resilience, security, redundancy and latency) of digital connectivity throughout the EU, in particular for islands and Member States with coastlines, including the Outermost Regions (ORs<sup>3</sup>) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs<sup>4</sup>). They are also crucial in providing efficient international connectivity of strategic importance such as linking the EU with its trading and research partners around the globe.

The capacity and resilience of this overall network of backbone infrastructure benefit all users – even those in landlocked Member States benefit from the routing of traffic via international submarine cable systems. It is therefore necessary for the EU to secure the competitive availability, reliability and resilience of such vital infrastructures. In particular, EU support is needed to address market failures and contribute to making specific projects possible, which would not be possible to achieve by market forces alone.

CEF Digital will support the deployment of backbone networks addressing connectivity needs, such as:

- (1) Connecting all territories of the EU including its Outermost Regions.
- (2) Supporting the specific needs of Member States which are islands themselves, or have islands as part of their territory.
- (3) Intermeshing backbones interconnecting major points of connectivity in the EU.
- (4) Addressing the specific needs of Overseas Countries and Territories in the EU.
- (5) Ensuring international connectivity to EU partners worldwide as a basis for European digital autonomy.
- (6) Promoting synergy projects addressing other objectives of CEF Digital, including sector specific considerations encompassing the connectivity of large-scale digital capacities such as HPC or cloud.

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

### **2.1 CEF-DIG-2021-GATEWAYS-WORKS – Backbone connectivity for Digital Global Gateways - Works**

#### Objectives

The objective of this call is to support the deployment of strategic networks as part of the Digital Global Gateway Strategy of the EU, contributing to strengthen the quality of connectivity within the Union as well as with third countries. The deployment may include submarine cables systems, satellite infrastructures and connectivity to internet exchange points under this call.

By supporting the targeted deployment of such connectivity, CEF Digital will have a positive impact not only on strengthening the connectivity capacity, but also on stimulating commercial offers of connectivity.

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<sup>3</sup> Outermost Regions [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/themes/outermost-regions/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/outermost-regions/)

<sup>4</sup> Overseas Countries and Territories [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/where-we-work/overseas-countries-and-territories\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/where-we-work/overseas-countries-and-territories_en)

Access to backbone connectivity in EU Member States differs significantly. In certain regions lack of adequate backbone connectivity may have an impact on the development and service provided by access networks and contribute to generate imbalances in the prices of services, both for network operators in these regions, as well as for their inhabitants.

In particular the connectivity situation for Member States that are themselves islands and/or have islands as part of their territory differs significantly from other Member States. For remote territories such as islands, Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories, the commercial prices and other conditions of backbone connectivity may hinder the full participation of citizens and enterprises in the digital European economy.

In such areas, market forces alone may not provide answers to all of these challenges. As a result, certain areas may remain underserved or experience higher prices in terms of access to backbone connectivity.

### Scope

This topic will support the deployment of backbone connectivity for routes within Member States, between Member States, and between the EU and third countries, including to remote territories:

- (1) where there is a lack of redundancy on a route. This is typically the case of routes which are not served by at least two present or credibly planned backbone infrastructures; or
- (2) where existing or credibly planned backbone infrastructure cannot satisfy the demand, taking into account if necessary any increase in the demand linked to ongoing or credibly planned investments in the upgrade of access networks in the territories concerned. The level of use of existing capacity as well as the expected life of backbone networks are among the elements that can be taken into account to justify such a market failure; or
- (3) where despite the presence of a backbone infrastructure providing sufficient capacity and guaranteeing the necessary redundancy, in the absence of credible plans from alternative operators to enter the market, the users in the served territories suffer (or could suffer in the absence of adequate regulatory remedies) from suboptimal services or prices compared to those offered in more competitive but otherwise comparable areas or routes. This could be the case for instance if the backbone infrastructure or a substantial part of it is in the hands of an operator which according to a competent national regulatory authority has market power in the form of a significant market position in the relevant market.

CEF Digital will not support projects that concern routes served already by at least two present or credibly planned submarine cables, as it is presumed that redundancy is addressed by the two infrastructures. Only in projects concerning territories (e.g. small islands or territories with limited population density) where backbone connectivity needs can be served using satellite infrastructure, will the presence of such infrastructure be taken into account when assessing the lack of redundancy.

In case of co-funding from national funds (including Cohesion Funds and the RRF) State aid rules apply (see section 10 of the Work Programme for details<sup>5</sup>).

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<sup>5</sup> In particular, Article 52b.4.d of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (OJ L 187 26.6.2014, p. 1) declares compatible under certain conditions, without the need of a notification and Decision from the Commission, the co-financing with State aid of certain cross-border sections of a submarine cable network financed under this call or awarded a Seal of Excellence as described in Section 8.

Proposals under this topic shall address works, with the possibility to include studies:

- For Works, the total project costs required to construct and deliver the described networking solution for the foreseen system lifetime, from end to end, including cable landing stations and the connectivity towards them will be covered under this call. In the case of satellite backbone solutions, only the costs linked to the construction of satellite ground stations and their interconnection with local networks are within the scope of the call. Any costs for operating the infrastructure during its lifetime and extra components at the landing sites not required for the basic end-to-end connectivity such as data centres, hosting facilities and other services will be excluded under the call.
- For Studies, all preparatory work required prior to signing a contract with a supplier, such as marine ground surveys for submarine cables and application for required permits, will be covered under this call.

The evaluation of proposals shall prioritise those offering the higher level of wholesale access to third parties. Proposals must therefore include a description of whether or how they intend to provide wholesale access to third parties. Amongst others, this description may indicate the range of access products, the duration of the access, the method to determine access prices and the business model implemented (wholesale only or others). These elements will be taken into account in the evaluation of the proposal, in particular to assess its expected impact on competition.

Beneficiaries can take the form of consortia, including (local) operators, utilities, (local) authorities, investors and vendors.

All proposals must describe the ownership of the supported infrastructure after completion of the project and describe the mechanism that will be used to provide services, including business models. In particular, any arrangements foreseen to guarantee the provision of services on a non-discriminatory basis to access seekers, as well as the operational relationship(s) between the different participants in the value chain for providing services should be elaborated in the proposal.

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

### *Digital security requirements*

The proposals under this topic are subject to strict exclusion of non-EU controlled entities, under the Article 11.4 of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153<sup>6</sup>. The assessment of the foreign (non-EU) control will be addressed during the eligibility phase of the evaluation of proposals. Participants will be requested to submit an ownership control questionnaire for this purpose to determine their control status. They will also be requested to submit supporting documents in order for the Commission to determine that the entities are not controlled by a third country.

The proposals for works submitted to this topic must include security declarations by the participating entities. The declarations should demonstrate that the network

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<sup>6</sup> Art. 11 (4) of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153 states: "*The work programmes may provide that legal entities established in third countries associated to the CEF in accordance with Article 5, and legal entities established in the Union but directly or indirectly controlled by third countries or nationals of third countries or by entities established in third countries, are not eligible to participate in all or some of the actions under the specific objectives set out in Article 3(2), point (c), for duly justified security reasons. In such cases, calls for proposals and calls for tenders shall be restricted to entities established, or deemed to be established, in Member States and directly or indirectly controlled by Member States or by nationals of Member States.*"



technologies and equipment (including software and services) funded by the project will comply with this call security requirements, in accordance with the applicable EU law, national law, and EU guidance in on cybersecurity<sup>7</sup> and indicate that no equipment or services deployed or used within the proposal will be procured from third country suppliers<sup>89</sup>, and that effective measures are in place to address underlying security issues, including, wherever relevant, measures to avoid falling under foreign jurisdiction obligations, or third country influence.

Proposals for this topic, in the digital security section in the application form, must address the following risk scenarios and mitigating measures as described in the [5G networks EU Toolbox of risk mitigating measures](#)<sup>10</sup>:

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

Concerning infrastructures connecting the EU with **third countries**, legal entities established in third countries should exceptionally be eligible to receive Union financial support under the CEF where this is indispensable for the achievement of the objectives of a given project of common interest and conditional on submitting a declaration, approved by the connected third country, providing guarantees that certify that the involved legal entity:

- a) Exercises full control over its corporate structure and decision-making process in a manner that does not restrain or restrict in any way its ability to perform and complete the action and is not subject to foreign jurisdiction obligations that may undermine the security of the Union;
- b) Effectively prevents access by non-eligible third countries or by non-eligible third country entities to classified and non-classified sensitive information relating to the action;
- c) Ensures that the results of the CEF funded action shall remain within the beneficiary/beneficiaries and shall not be subject to control or restrictions by

<sup>7</sup> Such as: the Commission Recommendation (EU) 2019/534 of 26 March 2019 Cybersecurity of 5G networks, C/2019/2335; the Report on EU Coordinated Risk Assessment of the Cybersecurity of 5G Networks of 9 October, 2019; the Council Conclusions on the Significance of 5G to the European Economy and the Need to Mitigate Security Risks Linked to 5G of 3 December, 2019; the Cybersecurity of 5G networks - EU Toolbox of Risk Mitigating Measures of 29 January, 2020; and COM(2020)50 of 29 January 2020 on Secure 5G deployment in the EU – implementing the toolbox.

<sup>8</sup> According to the EU coordinated risk assessment, the risk profiles of individual suppliers can be assessed based on several factors. These factors include the likelihood of interference from a third country. This is one of the key factors specified in paragraph 2.37 of the EU coordinated assessment.

<sup>9</sup> In particular, telecom operators may rely on third party entities to perform certain tasks, such as the maintenance and upgrade of the networks and software, as well as other outsourced managed services, in addition to the supply of network equipment. This may constitute a source of security risk. Thus, a thorough security assessment may also be required of the risk profile of the suppliers tasked with these services, in particular when these tasks are not performed in the EU.

<sup>10</sup> Principles underlined in the 5G toolbox and the related measures apply mutatis-mutandis to backbone infrastructures.

the exceptionally eligible third countries, or other non-eligible third country entities during the action, and for a justified period after its completion (typically the expected lifetime of the infrastructure), as defined in these call conditions;

- d) Ensures that the involved legal entity fulfils the cybersecurity requirements set out in the 5G security toolbox.

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

It is also expected that proposals under this topic will be developed in the context of agreements between the EU and the concerned third countries being connected to the EU.

For further background on security requirements, please see sections 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 as well as sections 2 (paragraph "Strengthen cybersecurity and resilience") and section 3.2.3 of the CEF Digital Work Programme.

### Expected impact

The expected benefits go beyond those directly related to supported projects and contribute to bridging the digital divide and ensuring widespread access to Gigabit networks for all EU citizens and businesses. Moreover, this connectivity infrastructure can cross-facilitate the implementation of other topics supported under CEF Digital, such as the availability of HPC-related facilities, etc.

Key performance indicators for this topic will include: i) the total length of the backbone or (for wireless solutions) the distance between transmission/reception stations, and ii) the additional (significant) transmission capacity created as a result of the projects supported by CEF. For submarine cables the number of fibre pairs, the current capacity per fibre pair, as well as the technology chosen and whether the system is repeated or unrepeated should be mentioned in the proposal, too.

## **2.2 CEF-DIG-2021-GATEWAYS-STUDIES – Backbone connectivity for Digital Global Gateways - Studies**

### Objectives

The objective of this topic is to deploy strategic networks as part of the Digital Global Gateway Strategy of the EU, contributing to strengthen the quality of connectivity within the Union as well as with third countries. It specifically includes submarine cables systems, satellite infrastructures and connectivity to internet exchange points.

By supporting the targeted deployment of such connectivity, CEF Digital will have a positive impact not only on strengthening the connectivity capacity, but also on stimulating commercial offers of connectivity.

### Scope

This topic will support studies for the deployment of backbone connectivity for routes within Member States, between Member States, and between the EU and third countries, including to remote territories which can fit within the scope described in Section 2.1 (CEF-DIG-2021-GATEWAYS-WORKS).

Proposals under this call shall address studies, including all preparatory work required prior to signing a contract with a supplier is covered under this call. Efforts specifically include tasks, such as marine ground surveys for submarine cables and application for required permits.

Beneficiaries can be (local) operators, utilities, (local) authorities, investors and vendors, or consortia of the before mentioned groups.

### Digital security requirements

The proposals under this topic are subject to strict exclusion of non-EU controlled entities, under the Article 11.4 of the CEF Regulation<sup>11</sup>. The assessment of the foreign (non-EU) control will be addressed during the eligibility phase of the evaluation of proposals. Participants will be requested to submit an ownership control questionnaire for this purpose to determine their control status. They will also be requested to submit supporting documents in order for the Commission to determine that the entities are not controlled by a third country.

Concerning infrastructures connecting the EU with **third countries**, legal entities established in third countries should exceptionally be eligible to receive Union financial support under the CEF where this is indispensable for the achievement of the objectives of a given project of common interest and conditional on submitting a declaration, approved by the connected third country, providing guarantees that certify that the involved legal entity:

- a) Exercises full control over its corporate structure and decision-making process in a manner that does not restrain or restrict in any way its ability to perform and complete the action and is not subject to foreign jurisdiction obligations that may undermine the security of the Union;
- b) Effectively prevents access by non-eligible third countries or by non-eligible third country entities to classified and non-classified sensitive information relating to the action;
- c) Ensures that the results of the CEF funded action shall remain within the beneficiary/beneficiaries and shall not be subject to control or restrictions by the exceptionally eligible third countries, or other non-eligible third country entities during the action, and for a justified period after its completion (typically the expected lifetime of the infrastructure), as defined in these call conditions.


It is also expected that proposals under this topic will be developed in the context of agreements between the EU and the concerned third countries being connected to the EU.

### Expected impact

The expected benefits go beyond those directly related to supported projects and contribute to bridging the digital divide, and ensuring widespread access to gigabit networks for everybody in the EU and all businesses. Moreover, this connectivity infrastructure can cross-facilitate the implementation of other topics supported under CEF Digital, such as the take-up of 5G use cases, and the availability of HPC-related facilities, etc.

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<sup>11</sup> Art. 11 (4) of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153 states: "The work programmes may provide that legal entities established in third countries associated to the CEF in accordance with Article 5, and legal entities established in the Union but directly or indirectly controlled by third countries or nationals of third countries or by entities established in third countries, are not eligible to participate in all or some of the actions under the specific objectives set out in Article 3(2), point (c), for duly justified security reasons. In such cases, calls for proposals and calls for tenders shall be restricted to entities established, or deemed to be established, in Member States and directly or indirectly controlled by Member States or by nationals of Member States."

 For more information about the call, see [https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/calls-proposals\\_en](https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/calls-proposals_en).

### 3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 40 000 000**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20% of the budget of the multiannual plan.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below

Topic	Topic budget
CEF-DIG-2021-GATEWAYS-WORKS	<b>EUR 30 000 000</b>
CEF-DIG-2021-GATEWAYS-STUDIES	<b>EUR 10 000 000</b>

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


### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	12 January 2022
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>22 March 2022 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	April-July 2022
Information on evaluation results:	August 2022
GA signature:	November-December 2022

### 5. Admissibility and documents

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

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

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, then assembled, and re-uploaded*)
- Part C (*to be filled in directly online, for Works topic only*) containing additional project data
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):
  - detailed budget table per WP (*template available in the Submission System*)
  - activity reports of last year (unless exempted from operational capacity check; *see section 7*)
  - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*)
  - timetable/Gantt chart (*template available in the Submission System*)
  - letters of support (MS agreement) (*template available in the Submission System*)
  - ownership control questionnaire (*template available in the Submission System*)
  - security declaration (*for proposals for works, to be uploaded in the Submission System in "Other annexes"*)
  - security guarantees, in case of third-country entities participation (*to be uploaded in the Submission System in "Other annexes"*)
  - declaration from the coordinator, on behalf of the consortium, that the planned backbone infrastructure addresses a market failure in terms of lack of redundancy, capacity or another type of market failure as described in section 2.1. (*for proposals for works, to be uploaded in the Submission System in "Other annexes"*)
  - other annexes.

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

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

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **120 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

## 6. Eligibility

### *Eligible participants (eligible countries)*

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

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, *i.e.* EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs)).

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

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

Please note however that this call is subject to restrictions due to security reasons. This means that only the EU Member States are eligible countries and entities must not be directly or indirectly controlled from a country that is not an eligible country.

Moreover:

- participation in any capacity (as beneficiary, affiliated entity, associated partner, subcontractor or recipient of financial support to third parties) is limited to entities from eligible countries
- project activities (included subcontracted work) must take place in eligible countries (*see section geographic location below and section 10*)
- the Grant Agreement may provide for IPR restrictions (*see section 10*).

### *Specific cases*

*Exceptional funding* — Entities from other countries (not listed above) are exceptionally eligible for projects of common interest in the field of transport, energy and digital and for cross-border projects in the field of renewable energy, if the granting authority considers their participation essential for the implementation of the action.

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

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

*Entities without legal personality* — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>12</sup>.

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

*Countries currently negotiating association agreements* — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (*see above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

*EU restrictive measures* — Special rules apply for certain entities (e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)<sup>13</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>14</sup>). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

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

#### [Consortium composition](#)

n/a

#### [Eligible activities](#)

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

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

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc.*).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

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

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

#### [Duration](#)

Projects should normally range up to 36 months for works projects and 12 months for studies (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

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<sup>12</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>13</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>14</sup> Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).



### Project budget

Project budgets (maximum grant amount) are expected to be up to EUR 10 000 000 per works project.

## **7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion**

### Financial capacity

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

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

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

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

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

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

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

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

### Operational capacity

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

### Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>15</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>16</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decisionmaking- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decisionmaking- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decisionmaking- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

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<sup>15</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>16</sup> Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>17</sup>:

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

## 8. Evaluation and award procedure


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>17</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

## 9. Award criteria

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

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

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

Maximum points: 25 points.

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

Overall threshold: 15 points.

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

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

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

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

### Starting date and project duration

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

Project duration: up to 31.12.2026 (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

### Milestones and deliverables


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

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

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

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

Project budget (maximum grant amount): projects of any budget are admitted. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

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

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

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rates fixed in the Grant Agreement (maximum **50%** for the costs of studies, maximum **70%** for the costs of works in outermost regions, and maximum **30%** for all other costs categories ('project funding rate')).

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

- strong cross-border dimension: maximum 50%.

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

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

#### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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

*Budget categories for this call:*

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

*Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:
  - average personnel costs (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>18</sup>: Yes
- subcontracting costs:
  - country restrictions for subcontracting costs: Yes, subcontracted work must be performed in the eligible countries or target countries
- travel and subsistence unit cost<sup>19</sup>: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs: full cost
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
  - studies: Yes
  - synergetic elements: Yes (only for 'Works' Actions, not for 'Studies')
  - works in outermost regions: Yes
  - land purchases: No
- indirect cost flat-rate :0%of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs, if any)
- VAT: VAT is NOT eligible
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible
  - eligible cost country restrictions: Yes, only costs for activities carried out in eligible countries or target countries are eligible
  - other ineligible costs: Yes, costs related to purchase of land

*Reporting and payment arrangements*

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

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

<sup>18</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).


<sup>19</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

There will be **no interim payments** for studies. There will be **one or more interim payments** (with detailed cost reporting) for works projects.

In addition, for Works topic, you will be expected to submit one or more progress reports not linked to payments.

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

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

### Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc.*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

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

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

### Certificates

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

### Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up*

to their maximum grant amount

- unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*

or

- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts.*

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

### Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

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

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

- Member State information: Yes
- specific rules for digital infrastructure projects: Yes
- durability: Yes
- specific rules for blending operations: No
- special obligations linked to restrictions due to security
  - implementation in case of restrictions due to security: Yes

### Other specificities

n/a

### Non-compliance and breach of contract

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



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

## **11. How to submit an application**

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

Submission is a 2-step process:



### a) **create a user account and register your organisation**

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

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

### b) **submit the proposal**

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

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **12. Help**

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

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

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

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

#### *Contact*

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: HADEA-CEF-DIGITAL-CALLS@ec.europa.eu.

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

## 13. Important

### IMPORTANT

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

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding).

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

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

Organisations may participate in several proposals.

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

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

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

This includes:

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

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

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