



Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)

Call for proposals

Town-Twinning/Networks of Towns

(CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN: CERV-2021-TOWN-TT, CERV-2021-TOWN-NT)

Version 1.0
20 May 2021



HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	20.05.2021	▪ Initial version (MFF 2021-2027)	
		▪	
		▪	
		▪	



EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

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

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction	4
1. Background.....	5
2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact	6
Objectives	6
Themes and priorities (scope)	6
Objectives	8
Themes and priorities (scope)	8
Expected impact.....	9
3. Available budget.....	10
4. Timetable and deadlines	10
5. Admissibility and documents	10
6. Eligibility.....	12
Eligible participants (eligible countries).....	12
Consortium composition	13
Eligible activities.....	14
Geographic location (target countries).....	14
Duration.....	14
Ethics and EU values.....	14
7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion.....	15
Financial capacity	15
Operational capacity	16
Exclusion	16
8. Evaluation and award procedure	17
9. Award criteria.....	18
10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements.....	19
Starting date and project duration	19
Milestones and deliverables.....	19
Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount.....	19
Budget categories and cost eligibility rules.....	20
Reporting and payment arrangements.....	20
Prefinancing guarantees	21
Certificates	21

Liability regime for recoveries	21
Provisions concerning the project implementation	22
Other specificities	22
Non-compliance and breach of contract	22
11. How to submit an application	22
12. Help	23
13. Important	24

0. Introduction

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (CERV Regulation 2021/692¹).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2021-2022 Work Programme² and will be managed by the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT (Topic 1) — Town-Twinning**
- **CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT (Topic 2) — Networks of Towns**

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.

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)

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/692 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1381/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 (OJ L156 5 May 2021).

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)2583 final of 19/04/2021 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2022 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme.

- 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 you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

You are also encouraged to visit the [Europe for Citizens Programme Project Results website](#) to consult the list of projects previously funded.

1. Background

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme provides funding for citizens engagement, equality for all and the implementation of rights and EU values. The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (hereafter 'the programme') brings together the former Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme³ and the former Europe for Citizens programme⁴.

The programme promotes exchanges between people of different countries, reinforces mutual understanding and tolerance and gives them the opportunity to broaden their perspective and develop a sense of European belonging and identity through the town- twinning and networks of towns. While maintaining a bottom-up approach, the programme also provides, in particular to networks of towns, an opportunity to focus on EU priorities. It aims for example to improve citizens' knowledge of the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights, to contribute to a higher turnout and inclusive candidacy at the European Parliament elections, and to increase awareness of discrimination, racism and their consequences.

This Call for proposals aims to support the following policy initiatives: European democracy action plan⁵, EU Roma strategic framework on equality, inclusion and participation⁶, Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU⁷, EU Citizenship Report 2020⁸.

³ Regulation (EU) No 1381/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for the period 2014 to 2020 (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 62)

⁴ Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020 (OJ L 115, 17.4.2014, p.3)

⁵ [European Democracy Action Plan](#)

⁶ [EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation](#)

⁷ [EU Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)

⁸ [EU Citizenship Report 2020](#)

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

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town- Twinning

Objectives

- To promote exchanges between citizens of different countries;
- To give citizens the opportunity to discover the cultural diversity of the European Union and to make them aware that European values and cultural heritage constitute the foundation for a common future;
- To guarantee peaceful relations between Europeans and to ensure their active participation at the local level;
- To reinforce mutual understanding and friendship between European citizens;
- To encourage cooperation between municipalities and the exchange of best practices;
- To support good local governance and reinforce the role of local and regional authorities in the European integration process.

It is expected that Town-Twinning projects reflect on a new narrative for Europe, citizen-oriented, equality promoting, forward-looking and constructive that would be more engaging for the younger generation in particular. Projects may be based on the outcome of citizens' consultations and may lead to debates about concrete ways to create a more democratic Union, to enable citizens to re-engage with the EU and to develop a stronger sense of ownership of the European project.

Themes and priorities (scope)

- **Raising awareness on the richness of the cultural and linguistic environment in Europe**

The programme contributes to the promotion of intercultural dialogue by bringing people of different nationalities and different languages together and by giving them the opportunity to participate in common activities. In this context, Town-Twinning projects should raise awareness on the richness of the cultural and linguistic environment in Europe and promote mutual understanding and tolerance, thereby contributing to the development of a respectful, dynamic and multifaceted European identity and the respect of common values, democracy and fundamental rights.

- **Raising awareness of the importance of reinforcing the European integration process based on solidarity**

The European Union is built on solidarity: solidarity between its citizens, solidarity across borders between its Member States, and solidarity through support actions inside and outside the Union. Solidarity is a shared value which creates cohesion and responds to societal challenges. Town-Twinning projects should contribute to overcoming national perceptions by fostering mutual understanding and by creating fora where common solutions can be discussed in a constructive way. Their aim should be to raise awareness of the importance of reinforcing the European integration process based on solidarity and common values.

- **Fostering a sense of belonging to Europe by promoting the debate on the future of Europe**

Town-Twinning projects should give citizens the opportunity to express what kind of Europe they want. Debates supported under the Town-Twinning should be based on the concrete achievements of the European Union and on lessons learnt from history. Such debates should as well reflect on current trends and enable participants to

challenge Euroscepticism by suggesting possible actions that the European Union could undertake to foster a sense of belonging to Europe, to understand the benefits of the European Union and to reinforce the EU's social and political cohesion. Twinned municipalities are encouraged to respond to the objectives of the Conference on the Future of Europe⁹. Furthermore, debates should promote a culture of democratic exchange, in which all participants' views are equally valued regardless of their gender, age or ethnic background.

- **Reflecting on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local communities**

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the ways in which our democracies and civic participation function. The need to prevent the spread of the contagion led to the imposition of strong restrictions on individual and collective freedom. Town-Twinning projects are encouraged to reflect on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the life within and the functioning of local communities as well as on the forms that civic participation takes under the COVID-19 crisis.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Activities may include, among others:

- workshops, seminars, conferences, training activities, expert meetings, webinars, awareness-raising activities, data gathering and consultation, development, exchanges and dissemination of good practices amongst public authorities and civil society organisations, development of communication tools and the use of social media.

Expected impact

- To increase and encourage mutual understanding and friendship between a diverse range of citizens at a local level;
- To involve a diverse range of citizens from local communities' experience and recognise the added value the EU provides through grassroots-approach;
- To foster an increased sense of belonging to the EU.

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns

Objectives

- To promote exchanges between citizens of different countries;

⁹ [The Conference on the Future of Europe](#) is a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise for Europeans to have their say on what they expect from the European Union. It will give citizens a greater role in shaping the Union's future policies and ambitions, improving its resilience. It will do so through a multitude of Conference-events and debates organised across the Union, as well as through an interactive multilingual digital platform. Conference events, physical gatherings or in digital settings, can be organised at different levels, including the transnational and European level. Citizens' participation in these events should aim at mirroring Europe's diversity. Twinned municipalities are encouraged to participate in the Conference on the Future of Europe launched in spring 2021.

- To give citizens the opportunity to discover the cultural diversity of the European Union and to make them aware that European values and cultural heritage constitute the foundation for a common future;
- To guarantee peaceful relations between Europeans and to ensure their active participation at the local level;
- To reinforce mutual understanding and friendship between European citizens;
- To encourage cooperation between municipalities and the exchange of best practices;
- To support good local governance and reinforce the role of local and regional authorities in the European integration process.

It is expected that Networks of Towns projects reflect on a new narrative for Europe, citizen-oriented, equality promoting, forward-looking and constructive that would be more engaging for the younger generation in particular. Projects may be based on the outcome of citizens' consultations and may lead to debates about concrete ways to create a more democratic Union, to enable citizens to re-engage with the EU and to develop a stronger sense of ownership of the European project.

Networks of Towns should provide towns and municipalities the possibility to deepen and intensify their cooperation and debate in a long-term perspective, to develop sustainable networks and to outline their long-term vision for the future of European integration.

Themes and priorities (scope)

While maintaining a bottom-up approach, specific focus could be given to:

- **EU citizenship rights:** to promote awareness and build knowledge concerning EU citizenship rights and associated European common values and common democratic standards, foster the inclusion and provision of information to mobile EU citizens, including those in a precarious situation and EU citizens with a migrant background, and their family members and encourage the inclusion and democratic participation of mobile EU citizens and under-represented groups.
- **Combatting discrimination and racism:** to promote awareness, build knowledge and share best practices at local level concerning the benefits of diversity as well as effective measures on how to tackle discrimination and racism.
- **Inclusion of minorities:** to promote awareness and build knowledge concerning the role of minorities, such as people with a minority racial or ethnic background, in the European societies and their contribution to the cultural development.
- **EU Charter on Fundamental Rights:** to promote awareness and exchange of best practice at local level on the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights and its application.
- **Reflecting on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local communities:** to reflect on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the life within and the functioning of local communities as well as on the forms that civic participation takes under the COVID-19 crisis.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Activities may include, among others:

- workshops, seminars, conferences, training activities, expert meetings, webinars, awareness-raising activities, data gathering and consultation, development, exchanges and dissemination of good practices amongst public authorities and civil society organisations, development of communication tools and the use of social media.

Expected impact

- To offer towns and municipalities the opportunity to develop larger-scale projects with the aim of increasing their projects' impact and sustainability;
- To allow beneficiaries to develop more thematic and policy-related projects;
- To forge lasting links with partner organisations;
- To raise awareness of the benefits of diversity and to tackle discrimination and racism;
- To increase and encourage mutual understanding and acceptance towards European minorities, such as Roma;
- To raise awareness on the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights and its application and promote a culture of fundamental rights;
- To improve information on the rights conferred by EU citizenship and improve their implementation in Member States;
- To raise awareness and better provision of information to mobile EU citizens and their family members on their EU citizenship rights.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 6.945.135**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

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

Topic	Topic budget
1 – Town-Twinning	EUR <u>2.745.135</u>
2 – Networks of Towns	EUR <u>4.200.000</u>

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	20 May 2021
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>26 August 2021 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	September-October2021
Information on evaluation results:	November 2021
GA signature:	December 2021

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 and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- Part C (to be filled in directly online) containing additional project data including mandatory indicators
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table: not applicable
 - CVs of core project team: not applicable
 - activity reports of last year: not applicable
 - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) for participants with activities involving children: their child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#)
 - lump sum calculator
 - a letter of support signed by the Municipality (applicable to applicants and partners under the category “Non for profit organisation representing a local authority”)

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants (not applicable for Topic Town-Twinning). 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 **40 pages for Topic Town-Twinning and 70 pages for Topic Networks of Towns** (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))
 - non-EU countries:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the CERV Programme ([associated countries](#)) or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature
- be a public body or a non-profit organisation: towns/municipalities and/or other levels of local authorities or their twinning committees or other non-profit organisations representing local authorities.

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

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


Specific cases

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 persons¹⁰.

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'¹¹.  Please note that

¹⁰ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹¹ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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

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

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

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)*¹² and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)¹³). 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

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town-Twinning: Only applications by single applicants are allowed.

Town-Twinning projects must involve municipalities from at least two eligible countries of which at least one is an EU Member State.

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least five applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- entities are municipalities from at least five eligible countries of which at least three are EU Member States.

Eligible activities

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

¹² 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](#).

¹³ 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).

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.

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town-Twinning:

Town-Twinning events must involve a minimum of 50 direct participants, of which a minimum of 25 participants are "invited participants". "Invited participants" are travelling delegations from eligible project partner countries other than the country hosting a Town-Twinning event.

Geographic location (target countries)

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

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town-Twinning

Activities must take place in one of the eligible countries participating to the project.

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns

Activities must take place in at least two different eligible programme countries.

Duration

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town-Twinning

Projects should normally last up to 12 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns

Projects should normally range between 12 and 24 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Ethics and EU values

Projects must comply with:

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

Projects must seek to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming in accordance with the [Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#). Project activities should contribute to the equal empowerment of women and men in all their diversity, ensuring that they achieve their full potential and enjoy the same rights (*see [Non-discrimination mainstreaming instruments, case studies and ways forward](#)*). They should also seek to reduce levels of discrimination suffered by particular groups (as well as those at risk of multiple discrimination) and to improve equality outcomes for

individuals¹⁴. Proposals should integrate gender and non-discrimination considerations in proposals and target a gender-balanced representation in project teams and activities. It is also important that individual data collected by the beneficiaries are broken down by sex ([sex-disaggregated data](#)), disability or age whenever possible.

Applicants must show in their application that they respect ethical principles and EU values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article of the 21 EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Participants with activities involving children must moreover have a child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#). This policy must be available online and transparent to everyone who comes in contact with the organisation. It must include clear information about the recruitment of staff (including trainees and volunteers) and include background checks (vetting). It must also include clear procedures and rules to staff, including reporting rules, and continuous training.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

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

¹⁴ [Non-discrimination mainstreaming– instruments, case studies and way forwards](#)

- request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

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

Operational capacity

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

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

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

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

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants (if applicable)
- 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 participate¹⁵:

- 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 misconduct¹⁶ (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)

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

¹⁶ 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.

- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that¹⁷:

- 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 (see *sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their scores.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter).

Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

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

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

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

Maximum points: 100 points.

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

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance' AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding – within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

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

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

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

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

Starting date and project duration

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

Project duration:

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town-Twinning: up to 12 months

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns: between 12 and 24 months

(extensions will be possible only exceptionally, for duly justified reasons 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.

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):

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town-Twinning: are expected to range between EUR 1 and EUR 30 000 per project.

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns: No limit.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a lump sum grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount, based on a lump sum or financing not linked to costs. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the variable amounts it has prefixed and the estimates indicated by the beneficiaries in their project budget.

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:

- Lump sum contributions¹⁸

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town-Twinning

The lump sum calculation is based on one parameter: number of international (or 'invited') participants (number of participants travelling from eligible project countries other than the country hosting the town twinning event).

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns

The lump sum calculation is based on two parameters: number of direct participants and number of eligible countries per event (in situ or online).

An event happens within a defined timeframe and can include different types of activities (conferences, workshops, trainings, seminars, debates, webinars, exhibitions, film screenings/making, campaigns, publications, surveys, research, flashmobs, etc.).

One event corresponds to one work-package in the application form.

1 work package = 1 event = one or several activities

Specific cost eligibility rules for this call: n/a

Reporting and payment arrangements

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

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT – Town-Twinning

After grant signature, you will receive no prefinancing.

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

CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally 60% of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) – whichever is the latest.

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

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.

¹⁸ [Decision](#) of 26 March 2021 authorising the use of lump sums for actions under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027)

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

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Other specificities

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 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online.
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file.
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots; 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)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

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: FACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu.

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

13. Important



IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal 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). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **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](#).