



# **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)**

## **Call for proposals**

to foster Citizens' engagement and participation  
(CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV)

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## EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

EACEA.B – Creativity, Citizenship and Joint Operations  
**EACEA.B.3 – Citizens and EU Values**

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** 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 [2021/692](#)<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2023-2024 Work Programme<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV — Citizens' engagement and participation**

We invite you to read the **call documentation** 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

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/692 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (OJ L 156, 5.5.2021, p. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C/2022/8588 of 01/12/2022 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2024 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme.

- 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 [Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal](#) to consult the list of projects previously funded under the call **CERV-2022-CITIZENS-CIV** and the [Europe for Citizens Programme Project Results website](#), to consult the list of projects funded under related previous Programme.

## 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. Its general objective is to protect and promote the rights and values enshrined in the Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in the applicable international human rights conventions. The programme does this in particular by supporting civil society organisations and other stakeholders active at local, regional, national and transnational level, and by encouraging civic and democratic participation, in order to sustain and further develop open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law. It pays particular attention to encouraging the participation of regional and local civil society organisations.

It is important to give citizens the opportunity to take part in the debate on Europe and its past and to play an active role in advancing the EU integration project. Through the 'Citizens' engagement and participation' strand, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme helps people make their voices heard and increase inclusion and democratic participation, in line with the Commission's political priorities (particularly, 'A new push for European democracy' priority).

For citizen participation, activities will focus in particular on debating the future of Europe, on citizens' societal engagement, independent election observation, including monitoring by citizens, post-elections evaluation, transparent and ethical interest representation activities<sup>3</sup> and innovative approaches and tools to help citizens make their voices heard and publicly exchange views on all areas of EU action. The programme will particularly encourage projects that collect citizens' views but also ensure a practical link with the policymaking process, thus showing citizens how to engage in practice. The June 2022 Commission Communication on the follow up measures to the Conference on the Future of Europe could be a starting point for relevant activities. In particular, the Commission announced that it would consider new areas of actions such as making European citizenship more tangible to citizens, including by reinforcing the rights attached to it and by providing reliable and easily accessible information about it.

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

### Objectives

Promoting citizens' and representative associations' participation in and contribution to the democratic and civic life of the Union including by making known and publicly exchanging their views in all areas on Union action.

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<sup>3</sup> That is, activities with the objective of influencing the formulation or implementation of policy or legislation, or decision-making processes

This call for proposals will support several EU policy initiatives, including:

- [European democracy action plan](#)
- [EU Citizenship report 2020](#)
- [Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU](#)
- [Commission Recommendation on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings \("Strategic lawsuits against public participation"\)](#)
- [Communication of 25 November 2021 on protecting election integrity and promoting democratic participation](#)
- Forthcoming Defence of Democracy package

### ***Themes and priorities (scope)***

This call aims to support projects promoted by transnational partnerships and networks directly involving citizens. These projects will gather a diverse range of people from different backgrounds and genders in activities directly linked to EU policies, giving them an opportunity to actively participate in the EU policymaking process and thus contribute to the democratic and civic life of the Union. The projects will encourage citizens', including young persons, understanding of the policymaking process, showing in practice how to engage in the democratic life of the EU and enabling them to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.

The call provides an opportunity to broadly cover a variety of policy areas and contribute to the promotion of EU values, the rule of law, gender equality, fundamental rights and democracy.

Projects should support democratic participation, including by stimulating and organising reflection, debates or other activities. They should also propose practical solutions that can be implemented through cooperation or coordination at European level, support the sharing of good practices, and ensure a practical link with the policymaking process.

While maintaining a bottom-up approach, there will be a specific focus on the priorities outlined below:

#### **1. Promoting democratic participation through debating the future of Europe**

Under this priority, citizens will be given an opportunity to express what kind of Europe they want and to outline their long term vision for the future of European integration. The ultimate aim of the projects will be to **promote a greater sense of belonging to the European Union and of Union values**. The outcome of the [Conference on future of Europe](#) and the collection of people's ideas discussed and shared across Europe could be a starting point for activities under this priority.

**What:** Citizens are invited to take part in this debate through projects or through their active engagement to reflect on a new narrative for Europe, citizen-oriented, forward-looking and constructive, that would be more engaging for the younger generation in particular.

**How:** The aim of this priority is to boost citizens' empowerment to get involved in decision-making from local to EU levels by identifying ways to further enhance the European dimension and the democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process, including through more transparent and ethical interest representation activities. Projects should show to participating citizens how to make their voices

heard by the relevant political authorities and decision makers, thus helping them make an impact in practice. This could be achieved through exchanges of citizens' views using existing democratic participation tools (social platforms, forums, public conferences). But it could also be achieved through the exchange of practices between Member States as well as mutual learning about the tools and strategies to be deployed to bring about the change (i.e. how to campaign on the issue, how to maximise the impact of the decisions to be taken).

Projects may also address the question of how to reach voters (including first time/young voters) and support their participation in elections, including at local level. This includes increasing voter turnout and supporting accessibility for people with disabilities and underrepresented groups, such as women or voters living in remote areas, and building a momentum for their active democratic participation in the EU at all levels. The projects could also support citizen engagement in supporting free and fair elections<sup>4</sup> and a fair democratic debate, independent election observation (covering also on-line), including monitoring by citizens, and post-elections evaluation. They could also raise awareness about and support the European democracy action plan, the forthcoming Defence of Democracy package and the EU Citizenship Reports, and raise awareness of the democracy package of November 2021, which includes the transparency of political advertising and the rights of EU mobile citizens.

Projects developing innovative democratic approaches and tools (notably digital 'e-democracy' tools) to help citizens make their voices heard and publicly exchange views on all areas of EU action are also encouraged.

## **2. Engaging citizens and communities in discussions and action related to our climate and environment**

This priority should boost citizens' and communities' engagement in discussions and action related to our climate and environment. Switching to a 'green' way of living can only work if citizens are fully involved in designing the new policies. People are concerned about jobs, heating their homes and making ends meet. Therefore, they have to be able to engage in the policymaking process if the Green Deal is to succeed and deliver lasting change.

Civil society and associations should promote citizens' dialogues that bring together citizens of all genders in all their diversity to discuss climate and green issues and propose solutions to decision makers.

## **3. Engaging citizens and communities in discussions and action related to solidarity**

The European Union is built on solidarity: solidarity between people, solidarity across borders between its Member States, and solidarity through support actions in and beyond the Union. Solidarity is a shared value which creates cohesion and responds to societal challenges such as recent mass influxes of refugees and other migrants. It opens a door to more citizens' engagement in society and ultimately to their active involvement in the democratic life of the Union, including those who may not have actively taken part before.

Under this priority, projects will give citizens the opportunity to discuss the topic of solidarity in response to societal challenges (i.e. refugee crises, the fight against poverty and social exclusion) and explore existing solidarity mechanisms in the EU.

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<sup>4</sup> Also in the context of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament



People in need of solidarity and suffering from vulnerable situations shall be part of the discussion. In view to boost citizens participation in the solidarity activities, projects will reflect on policy areas where such common mechanisms could be useful and developed while considering other possible channels of European solidarity like volunteering, donations, foundations, civil society organisations, charities, crowdfunding, etc. Projects are expected to promote solidarity work carried out by civil society sector directly involving citizens in the reflection and activities addressing current societal challenges and to encourage exchange of the best practices.

#### **4. Countering disinformation and other forms of interference in the democratic debate and promoting media literacy**

Citizens should be able to access a variety of verifiable information in order to be able to participate in an informed way in public debates and express their will through free and fair democratic processes. The spread of online disinformation and misinformation can have a range of consequences, such as threatening our democracies, polarising debates, and putting the health, security and environment of EU citizens at risk. The EU is tackling the spread of online disinformation and misinformation to ensure the protection of European values and democratic systems<sup>47</sup>.

The aim of this priority is to fund projects tackling disinformation and other forms of interference in the democratic debate, empowering citizens to make informed decisions by helping them to identify disinformation and promoting media literacy, raising awareness and informing on how to safeguard the free formation of opinion and fundamental freedoms, and contributing to identify, prevent and mitigate risks of interference on sovereignty, values and interests of Member States and the EU. These will also help fight against fake news, hate speech, including gender-based hate such as misogyny, and populist discourse in media, including social media. Projects include dedicated activities for young people (current and future voters).

**This list of priorities is not exhaustive. Applicants may address other priorities in all areas of Union action as long as these priorities are in line with the call objective to promote citizens engagement and participation.**

Each project can address several of the priorities above. Projects which not only collect citizens' views but also ensure they are known and are impactful are particularly encouraged.

#### *Activities that can be funded (scope)*

Projects should gather people from different countries and different backgrounds in activities directly linked to EU policies. The projects should provide an opportunity for direct participation in the policymaking process and thus create the conditions for a stronger bottom-up approach and a more inclusive policymaking process, fostering civic and democratic engagement.

Projects are expected to:

- have diversified partnerships, with the civil society sector playing a prominent role;
- include different organisation types (i.e. non-profit organisations, including civil society organisations, educational, cultural or research institutions, public local/ regional authorities or universities); and
- include events such as debates, conferences, seminars, campaigns, workshops and cultural activities.

This call for proposals supports activities that help to foster democracy, inclusion and democratic participation in the EU. These are activities that include, for example:

- (i) promoting societal engagement through debates, campaigns, awareness-raising, conferences, workshops etc. on the themes relevant to call priorities and providing a link to the European political agenda and policy making process;
- (ii) gathering the opinions of individuals through a bottom-up approach (including use of social networks, webinars etc.) and media literacy;
- (iii) promoting exchanges between EU citizens on EU-related topics to foster a better understanding of different perspectives; and
- (iv) identifying possible solutions and recommendations to be submitted to the relevant local political authorities and decision makers;

**Activities that support specific political parties will not be funded, regardless of their grounds for applying or their objectives.**

Projects' design and implementation are expected to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming. This includes a gender analysis, mapping potential different needs of and impact on women and men as well as integrating a gender equality perspective in the design of the activities. To this end, applicants are encouraged to consult the key questions listed on the [EIGE website](#) when conducting their gender analysis. Unintended negative effects of the intervention on either gender should be avoided (do no harm approach). Applicants are expected to design and implement their communication and dissemination activities in a gender-sensitive way. This includes in particular usage of gender-sensitive language. The same applies to the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities. Proposals that integrate a gender-perspective across all their activities will be considered of higher quality.

#### Expected impact

- Boosting citizens' awareness of their rights and EU values and increasing their engagement in society and with the EU;
- Enabling people to deepen their knowledge of EU institutions and policies and better understand the EU's achievements and benefits;
- Strengthening democratic participation, with a special focus on inclusion of younger and older people, women in all their diversity, voters living in remote areas, mobile EU citizens and people with disabilities;
- Reaching those citizens not active in civic participation in their everyday life
- Making it possible for citizens to communicate their views and concerns to policy makers at all levels.

### **3. Available budget**

The available call budget is **EUR 25 400 000**.

The availability of the call budget still depends on the adoption of the budget 2024 by the EU budgetary authority.

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:	04 April 2023
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>05 September 2023 – 17:00:00 CET</u> <u>(Brussels)</u>
Evaluation:	September – January 2024
Information on evaluation results:	February – March 2024
GA signature:	June 2024

#### 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 mandatory annexes:

- 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** (*to be uploaded*):

- lump-sum budget calculator (*template available in the Submission System*)

##### **Supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):

- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*) (*N/A for newly established organisations*)
- for any participant organisation implementing activities involving children (persons under the age of 18): their child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#)

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 **70 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 (lead applicants (Coordinator), co-applicants and affiliated entities) must:

- Lead applicants (i.e. "Coordinator") must be non-profit private legal entities or public universities
- Co-applicants must be non-profit legal entities (public or private bodies) or an international organisation
- Be formally established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
  - non-EU countries:
    - countries associated to the CERV Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))

Other eligibility conditions

- Activities must take place in any of the eligible countries
- The EU grant applied for cannot be lower than **EUR 75 000**
- The project must be transnational; the application must involve at least **two applicants** (lead applicant and at least one co-applicant not being affiliated entity or associated partner) from **two different eligible countries**

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

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


### 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 persons<sup>5</sup>.

**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'<sup>6</sup>.  Please note that 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 co-applicant 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)*<sup>7</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>8</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).

<sup>5</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>6</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>7</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>8</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).



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

### *Consortium composition*

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of minimum 2 applicants (lead applicant and at least one co-applicant not being affiliated entity or associated partner) from 2 different eligible countries.

### *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 between 12 and 24 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

### *Project budget*

Minimum grant amount: EUR 75 000.

Maximum grant amount: No limit.

### *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. 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 individuals. 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.

Participant organisations 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 coordinators, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the project 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 the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their 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
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years – *template available in Part B*) (N/A for newly established organisations).

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>9</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>10</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

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<sup>9</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>10</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.



- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>11</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 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, 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:

- 1) 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.*

**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

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<sup>11</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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/trans-national 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
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

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 maximum 6 months after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: between 12 and 24 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

### Work packages

Projects should be built around the organisation of several **events** gathering citizens.

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, surveys, research, flashmobs, etc).

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

1 work package = 1 event = one or several activities.

### Milestones and deliverables

Milestones are optional.

The following deliverable will be mandatory for every event/ lump-sum:

- Report on the implementation of events, one report for each event (template available on the [Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal](#), section Project reporting templates, file name "[Event description sheet](#) (CERV REM, CIV and NETW"))

In addition, other deliverables may be linked to Work packages, such as: policy recommendations, training materials, event conclusions, publications, analyses, audio-visual materials, dissemination materials.

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 have to ask attendees in events to participate in the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values. This survey allows the granting authority to closely monitor training, mutual learning and awareness-raising events. The beneficiaries will receive a weblink to the survey, to be forwarded to the attendees. They will have access to the survey results for their project and can use it for their project evaluation. The granting authority will aggregate the results of all the projects financed under the CERV programme.

### 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): 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 contributions**<sup>12</sup>

The lump sum amount must be calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the lump sum decision and using the budget calculator provided.

The lump sum calculation is based on two parameters: *number of direct participants* and *number of eligible countries of participants per event*. Events can take place either *in situ* or *online*.


### 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 (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 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 also 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.

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.

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<sup>12</sup> Decision of 30/09/2022 authorising the use of lump sums for actions under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).

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 EU Login user account](#).

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

### b) submit the proposal

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [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). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

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

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal 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.

### 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: [EACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu), please include Call ID in the subject line "CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV".

You could also contact the [CERV Contact Points](#) in your country.

## 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** (coordinators, co-applicants) 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](#).