



European Social Fund+ (ESF+) Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand

Call for proposals

**EaSI – National Contact Points
(ESF-2021-NCP)**

Version 1.0
08 June 2021



HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	08.06.2021	▪ Initial version (new MFF)	
		▪	
		▪	
		▪	



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION

EMPL.F – Investment
EMPL.F.03 – Programming and Planning

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction	4
1. Background.....	5
2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact	5
ESF-2021-NCP: National Contact Points for the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand of ESF+	5
Objectives (expected outcome)	5
Themes and priorities (scope)	6
Activities that can be funded (scope).....	6
Expected impact.....	7
3. Available budget	7
4. Timetable and deadlines	7
5. Admissibility and documents	7
6. Eligibility.....	8
Eligible participants (eligible countries).....	8
Consortium composition	10
Eligible activities.....	10
Geographic location (target countries).....	10
Duration	10
Project budget.....	10
7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion	10
Financial capacity	10
Operational capacity	11
Exclusion	12
8. Evaluation and award procedure	12
9. Award criteria.....	13
10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements.....	14
Milestones and deliverables.....	14
Starting date and project duration	14
Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount.....	14

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules	16
Prefinancing guarantees	17
Certificates	17
Liability regime for recoveries	17
Provisions concerning the project implementation.....	17
Other specificities	18
Non-compliance and breach of contract	18
11. How to submit an application.....	18
12. Help	19
13. Important	20

0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of employment, social policy and inclusion under the European Social Fund plus (ESF+) - Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand.

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (ESF+ Regulation¹)

The call is launched in accordance with the 2021 Work Programme² and will be managed by **the European Commission, Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL)**.

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **ESF-2021-NCP: National Contact Points for the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand of ESF+**

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 Proposal for a Regulation [COM\(2018\) 382 final](#) – pending adoption by the European Parliament and the Council.

² Commission Decision C(2021) 3917/3 final of 07/06/2021 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2021 and the financing decision for the implementation of the European Social Fund Plus and in particular its Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand.

- 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)
- 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*).

1. Background

This call for proposals is financed under the **Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") strand of the ESF+** which is a European-level financing instrument managed directly by the European Commission. It provides financial support to achieve high employment levels, fair social protection, a skilled and resilient workforce ready for the future world of work, as well as inclusive and cohesive societies aiming to eradicate poverty.

National Contact Points

Most EU-level programmes support contact points, focal points, support offices or similar, operated by, on behalf, or within the national, regional and/or local authorities. These offices promote the programme and its results in the EU Member States and other countries participating in the programme, supporting beneficiaries and in some case also assisting applicants in preparing proposals.

The Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme did not have such a support structure. The new European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) regulation includes provisions for establishing national contact points for the EaSI strand. In discussions with the former EaSI Management Committee members, EaSI participating countries welcomed the approach to establish EaSI NCPs with a set of compulsory standards tasks as well as additional optional activities, including support to capacity building for weaker performing countries in terms of participation in EaSI.

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

ESF-2021-NCP: National Contact Points for the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand of ESF+

Objectives (expected outcome)

Support national authorities in establishing and maintaining a National Contact Point to inform about the EaSI strand, its opportunities, application requirements, projects and results in their country, assist in sharing and promoting results and support (potential) beneficiaries, the public, stakeholders, and optionally support other NCPs in their tasks.

In order to achieve the expected impact regarding replication and scaling of the results as indicated below in this call, the National Contact Points shall establish seamless cooperation with the National Competence Centres for Social Innovation, which are currently supported by the EaSI programme and ESF technical assistance.

Themes and priorities (scope)

Establishing one support structure per country to promote the EaSI strand, its projects and their results.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

The financial support shall take the form of lump sum contributions for a standard package and an optional package.³

The **standard packages** (mandatory) should cover:

1. setting up and running of a helpdesk within three months from starting the implementation period, including establishing and maintaining a functional mailbox and dedicated phone number available 20 hours per week over 5 working days, maintaining a mailing list of stakeholder, answering questions from applicants and stakeholders, and interacting with the European Commission and disseminating European Commission information. Staff should be familiar with the EaSI strand and be able to communicate in English;
2. setting up and running of a functional website within three months from starting the implementation period. That website shall inform about the EaSI strand, its calls and projects, in the national language(s), contain contact details of the NCP and be updated in a timely fashion with relevant European Commission information;
3. organising and running at least two EaSI related events or webinars with a minimum of 15 participants and a minimum duration of 4 hours.

The **optional package** if any, should cover one or several of the following activities:

- a) organising and running an additional EaSI related event or webinar in the same calendar year with a minimum of 15 participants and a minimum duration of 4 hours;
- b) attending an event which brings an added value for the implementation of the ESF+ EaSI strand;
- c) visiting an EaSI related project, which brings an added value for the implementation of the ESF+ EaSI strand;
- d) translation costs of EaSI related documents from the European Commission and calls for proposals into the national language(s), to be made available on-line;
- e) sending staff member for job shadowing to another NCP, for a minimum of ten working days;
- f) receiving staff member for job shadowing from another NCP, for a minimum of ten working days.

³ Concerning amount calculation of the lump sums, detailed information is provided under section 10 (form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount).

Concerning amount calculation of the lump sums, detailed information is provided under section 10 (form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount).

Expected impact

Fully operational National Contact Points reaching out to a larger pool of potential applicants and stakeholders, supporting the submission of better quality proposals under the programme and disseminating project results, thus facilitating their replication and upscaling, in synergies with other sources of funds, notably with the ESF+ shared management strand.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 2 000 000**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

The Commission expects to fund one proposal per Member State or other country participating in the EaSI strand (see also chapter 6 'Eligibility' below).

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.

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines	
Call opening:	10 June 2021
Deadline for submission:	25 August 2021 – 17:00 CET (Brussels)
Evaluation:	September-October 2021
Information on evaluation results:	November 2021
GA signature:	December 2021

Information session: On 22/06/21 at 14:00 the European Commission intends to hold an on-line information session using MS TEAMS. Further, details will be announced on the 'what's new' section of the [EaSI landing page](#) on the Funding and Tenders portal and in the topic related FAQ of the call page.

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 as PDF in the system*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded as PDF files/included in Part B, except for the detailed budget table*):
 - detailed budget table
 - CVs (short outlines) of core project team
 - activity reports of last year: not applicable
 - list of previous projects (key projects relating to the subject of the call in the last 3 years)
 - Letter of the national authority endorsing the applicant as future National Contact Point for the ESF+ EaSI strand for its country.

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 **50 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

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

- legal entities
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member State (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))

- non-EU countries:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the ESF+ ([associated countries](#)) or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature
- public authorities (national, regional, local) or organisations (private or public) endorsed by the responsible national authority to act as the National Contact Point (NCP) for the EaSI strand for that country.

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 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 NOT eligible.

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'⁴. ⚠ Please note that if the action is implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Social partner organisations — These include notably the European social partner organisations that are consulted in accordance with Article 154 TFEU (for the list, see [List of consulted organisations](#)) as well as other European-level social partner organisations that are not included in this list, but who are for example involved in the preparation and launch of European social dialogue at sector level. Social partner organisations without legal personality are eligible provided that the conditions for entities without legal personality (*see above*) are met.

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (*see list 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)*⁵ and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)⁶). Such entities are not eligible

⁴ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁵ 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](#).

⁶ 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).

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

Applications by single applicants are allowed.

In case of consortia, proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 2 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities).

Eligible activities

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

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 have a duration of 24 months (extensions are exceptionally possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Project budget

Project budgets are expected to range between EUR 40 000 and EUR 130 000 per project, but this does not preclude the submission/selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

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 one or more participants' 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 the participants 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 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.

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 (short CVs of the proposed persons who will perform the main tasks, notably project manager and key personnel), demonstrating notably their knowledge of EaSI
- description of the consortium participants, if applicable
- list of previous projects (key projects relating to the subject of the call in the last 3 years)
- C1 level of English for the project manager of the coordinator or the single applicant
- B2 level of English for members of the help desk
- Previous experience of running a website or public events.

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

Public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations may be 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 participate⁷:

- 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 misconduct⁸ (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)
- 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 that⁹:

- 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)


⁷ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁸ 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.

⁹ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

An **evaluation committee** 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.

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 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:** clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning; extent to which they match the themes and priorities and objectives of the call; impact/interest for the country concerned (Max. 40 points)
- **Quality:**
 - **Project design and implementation:** technical quality; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, management, procedures, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation, communication); feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; best value for money) (Max. 20 points)
 - **Project team and cooperation arrangements:** quality of the consortium, if applicable, and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms; engagement with stakeholders, (co-) beneficiaries, (potential) applicants (Max. 20 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; sustainability of results after EU funding ends (Max. 20 points)

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	28	40
Quality — Project design and implementation	14	20
Quality — Project team and cooperation arrangements	14	20
Impact	14	20
Overall (pass) scores	70	100

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 28/40, 14/20, 14/20 and 14/20 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds 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](#).

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.

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: 24 months (extensions will be possible only exceptionally, for duly justified reasons and through an amendment).

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: see section 6 above. 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 maximum grant amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the variable amounts it has

prefixed and the estimated number and type of activities indicated by the applicants in their project budget.

In the application form, the standard yearly package should correspond to one work package, to be covered by one lump sum, and optional activities to separate work packages, whose combination will form the basis for calculating the other lump sum, as detailed below (see detailed budget). The project duration is 24 months (see *Starting date and project duration* above)

	Activity	Unit	Final amount in EUR	Comment
Standard package	Package of helpdesk, website and two events	<i>Per NCP, per year</i>	27 900 ¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cluster 1</i>: EUR 19 000 • <i>Cluster 2</i>: EUR 24 000 • <i>Cluster 3</i>: EUR 31 000 • <i>Cluster 4</i>: EUR 49 000 • <i>EEA members</i>: EUR 28 000 • <i>Others</i>: EUR 14 000
Optional extra activities	Organise event	<i>Per event</i>	845	
	Attend event	<i>Per event</i>	325	
	Project visit	<i>Per visit</i>	325	
	Translation	<i>Per page</i>	20	
	Send job shadowing	<i>Per sending</i>	2 350	
	Receive job shadowing	<i>Per receiving</i>	1 015	

Since the costs between member states are expected to vary according to their respective price level and the number of (potential) beneficiaries requesting their services, the amount for the standard package of EUR 27 900 is adjusted to reflect differences in their price level and population size, resulting in the following distribution:

- *Cluster 1*: Bulgaria, Lithuania, Croatia, Latvia, Hungary, Estonia, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Czech Republic
- *Cluster 2*: Greece, Portugal
- *Cluster 3*: Poland, Austria, Luxembourg, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark
- *Cluster 4*: Spain, Italy, France, Germany

To conclude, NCPs would therefore receive, based on their application, a lump sum that combines the following elements:

- (i) the lump sum for the standard package as determined by their cluster, plus
- (ii) the amount for the optional extra activities they choose to undertake (if any) as given by the respective unit costs of these activities. The applicants will detail in their application the number of optional activities they intend to implement (for example the number of translations, number of sending or receiving job shadowing occurrences, etc.).

¹⁰ Reference amount

Based on the information above, please fill the Excel calculator which is annexed to Part B of the application form (Annex 1).

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 ¹¹

Reporting and payment arrangements

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

Payment of the grant is generally made in **prefinancing** instalments and a final payment (the balance). The aim of the prefinancing is to provide the beneficiaries with a float. The prefinancing remains the property of the EU until the payment of the balance. The frequency and size of prefinancing will depend upon the project duration but may be adjusted in case of risk:

- **actions between 12 to 24 months:** prefinancing payments linked to annual reporting periods will be made as follows:
 - 40% from the entry into force of the grant agreement or after receiving the financial guarantee (if required), whichever is the latest
 - 40% after receiving an additional prefinancing report. Where the consumption of the previous prefinancing is less than 70%, the amount of the new prefinancing payment will be reduced by the difference between the 70% ceiling and the amount used

There will be no **interim payments**.

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

The final amount of the grant will be determined in view of the actual number and type of activities the beneficiaries effectively carried on during the project implementation and following the assessment of the proof that these activities actually took place.

The lump sum will be paid on receiving proof of the proper delivery of the various activities through an end-year report covering all activities and possible media coverage, including web-analytics, as well as associated deliverables as described in the Commission Decision authorising the use of lump sum contributions (see footnote 11. Further description of the type of proof that may be accepted by the Commission may be found in this decision regarding the optional activities.

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

¹¹ [Decision](#) of 31/05/2021 authorising the use of lump sums for supporting national contact points (NCPs) under the European Social Fund Plus.

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 to the prefinancing for your grant.

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

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

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

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

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

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*.

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

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

- specific rules for ESF+ actions: Yes
- specific rules for financial support to third parties: No

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 files or excel for the detailed budget.

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, ***we'd kindly ask you 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
- [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:

- general questions on ESF+: EMPL-EaSI@ec.europa.eu
- call-specific questions: EMPL-VP-2021-006@ec.europa.eu.

Questions on submission must:

- be sent at the latest 7 days before the submission deadline (*see section 4*).
- indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (*see cover page*).

Call-specific questions must:

- be sent at the latest 10 working days before the submission deadline (*see section 4*).

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](#).