



# **Internal Security Fund (ISF)**

## **Call for proposals**

Call for proposals on Common Operational Partnerships to prevent and  
fight against migrant smuggling with competent authorities of third  
countries  
(ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP)

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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs

HOME.E – HOME Affairs Funds  
**HOME.E.4 – Union Actions and Procurement**

## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of preventing and fighting migrant smuggling under the **Internal Security Fund (ISF)**.

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (ISF Regulation 2021/1149<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the Work Programme for 2021 and 2022 of the Internal Security Fund<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European Commission, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME)**.

The call covers the following **topics**:

- 1) **ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP — Common Operational Partnerships to prevent and fight against migrant smuggling along migratory routes towards the EU with competent authorities of third countries**
- 2) **ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP-TR — Common Operational Partnerships to prevent and fight against migrant smuggling along migratory routes towards the EU with competent authorities of Turkey**

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

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

- 3) the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (outcomes) (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)

- 4) the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund (OJ L 251 of 15 July 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 8460 final of 26 November 2021 on the financing of the components of the Thematic Facility under the Internal Security Fund and the adoption of the work programme for 2021 and 2022.

- procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
- recommendations for the preparation of the application

5) 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

Providing a strong European response to migrant smuggling inside and outside the European Union (EU) is an essential part of the comprehensive approach to migration, set out in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum<sup>3</sup>. Migrant smuggling is a cross-border criminal activity that puts the lives of migrants at risk, showing disrespect for human life and dignity in the pursuit of profit and undermines the migration management objectives of the EU.

The renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025)<sup>4</sup> sets out the key pillars and concrete actions needed to counter and prevent smuggling, and to ensure that the fundamental rights of migrants are fully protected. By contributing to the disruption of criminal businesses, it supports the objectives of the EU Security Union Strategy<sup>5</sup>, as well as the EU Strategies to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025<sup>6</sup> and on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025<sup>7</sup>.

The renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025) indicates that stepping up the response to migrant smuggling is a common challenge for the EU, its Member States and partner countries alike. It requires a whole-of-route approach which combines international cooperation and coordination to break the business model of smugglers with partner countries of origin and transit, both at bilateral and at regional level. It announces the development of tailored-made Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships, aiming to strengthen legal, policy, operational and strategic frameworks in partner countries and to increase the impact, ownership and sustainability of efforts to tackle migrant smuggling.

Strengthening cooperation along the Eastern Mediterranean / Western Balkans route, based on a whole-of-route approach that includes the Silk Route countries, and in North and West Africa will be launched as a priority, in cooperation with the partner countries or regions.

An important component of this cooperation is offering operational support to law enforcement and the judiciary to create and reinforce the capacity and ownership in partner countries, strengthening the use of modern investigation tools and techniques and facilitating coordination and cooperation among relevant national authorities. This should build on the results of and experience with the current Common Operational Partnerships and Joint Investigation Teams.

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

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<sup>3</sup> COM(2020)609 final.

<sup>4</sup> COM(2021)591 final.

<sup>5</sup> COM(2020)605 final.

<sup>6</sup> COM(2021)170 final.

<sup>7</sup> COM(2021)171 final.

## Objectives

The present call for proposals aims to support projects that enhance the prevention and fight against migrant smuggling by establishing Common Operational Partnerships (COPs)<sup>8</sup> that support structured cooperation between competent law enforcement authorities, judicial authorities and other relevant services of the participating EU Member States and third countries, with the potential involvement of international organisations.

## Scope – activities and outcomes

Project applications submitted under the present call for proposals should address the following:

- Reinforced operational cooperation through the exchange of liaison officers in EU Member States and/or third country(ies), including through the setting up or strengthening of specialised teams of investigators and magistrates, and mutual support for ongoing investigations if relevant. This may include the support for liaison magistrate posts.
- Provision of targeted capacity building and on-the-job mentoring/twinning opportunities (including training, in coordination with CEPOL) for the competent authorities in third countries on detection, investigation techniques and collecting evidence for judicial proceedings in the area of migrant smuggling. When relevant, this should include a focus on document fraud and illicit financial flows linked to migrant smuggling, as well as digital migrant smuggling.
- Support, guidance and sharing of best practice for establishing more effective inter-agency and / or inter-ministerial cooperation as well as improved procedures and organisational structures to encourage optimal allocation of resources, both at national and regional levels.
- Coordination and complementarity with on-going Common Operational Partnerships and assimilated projects throughout their implementation, including those that are funded through the external dimension instruments of the European Union (in particular those detailed in section 6).
- Cooperation and exchange of information between the participants of the Common Operational Partnership and the liaison officers of Member States, European Migration Liaison Officers and / or other EU Agency liaison officers (part of the European network of immigration liaison officers<sup>9</sup>) in the country or region, while ensuring that Europol, Frontex and Eurojust are fully involved in the exchange and analysis of information, whenever relevant and in accordance with the applicable legal frameworks, including concerning the exchange of personal data. Cooperation, complementarity and consistency between the Common Operational Partnership and actions implemented in the same country or region, funded under the biennial work programme of the European network of immigration liaison officers should also be considered.

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<sup>8</sup> The concept of Common Operational Partnerships also covers Article 19 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the EU legislation following the conclusion of the Convention by the European Union in 2004 (Council Decision 2004/579/EC) which foresees that in relation to matters that are the subject of investigation, prosecution or judicial proceedings in one or more States, the competent authorities concerned may establish joint investigation bodies.

<sup>9</sup> Set up by Regulation (EU) 2019/1240 (L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 88).

Proposals which match most closely these priorities will be evaluated as particularly relevant and will have a higher chance of being selected. Proposals consisting exclusively of studies and / or conferences, or capacity building activities and not aiming at achieving an operational outcome will not be considered for funding under this call for proposals. Applicants are therefore invited to consider carefully the links between their proposal and the scope of this call.

This call for proposals consists of two topics:

**1) ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP — Common Operational Partnerships to prevent and fight against migrant smuggling along migratory routes towards the EU with competent authorities of third countries**

For this topic priority should be given to Common Operational Partnerships along the main migratory routes, in particular, the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans route, Silk Route and North and West Africa migratory routes.

This topic supports Common Operational Partnerships with competent authorities of third countries of origin and transit along migratory routes towards the EU. Priority would be given to the main routes identified in the renewed EU Action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025).

Considering the dedicated topic 2 on Common Operational Partnerships with competent authorities of Turkey, proposals under topic 1 should include cooperation with competent authorities of Turkey only if relevant for the operational cooperation where their participation would be crucial for the development of regional cooperation with other third countries along the migratory route while ensuring that there are no overlaps with actions supported under topic 2.

**2) ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP-TR — Common Operational Partnerships to prevent and fight against migrant smuggling along migratory routes towards the EU with competent authorities of Turkey**

This topic supports Common Operational Partnerships with competent authorities of Turkey as target country, considering the importance of combatting migrant smuggling in Turkey in relation to the Eastern Mediterranean route and the Silk route towards the EU.

*Expected impact*

Projects must be aiming to achieve one or more of the following outcomes related to the prevention and fight against organised criminal networks engaged in migrant smuggling, without duplicating existing projects or structures:

- 1) Enhanced mutual trust and international, regional and national cooperation between different agencies, through assistance in developing and enhancing procedures as well as legal, administrative and statistical tools necessary to support the exchange of information between competent law enforcement and judicial authorities in tackling migrant smuggling.
- 2) Improved institutional and operational setting, including through capacity building and better equipment, as a basis for cross-border cooperation between relevant third countries and EU Member States as well as EU agencies, such as Europol, Frontex or Eurojust and international organisations such as Interpol and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime where relevant.
- 3) Improved information exchange between partner countries law enforcement agencies at national, regional and international level.



*Additional considerations applicable to this call*

The development of the project proposal should include the following preparatory steps to be undertaken before the proposal submission:

- Carry out a technical and political risk analysis of the chosen third country(ies) and its role in terms of irregular migration flows towards the EU, including its capacity to set up a Common Operational Partnership with EU Member States, e.g. through existing anti-smuggling legislation and procedures, relevant services and agencies, and possibly specialised teams of investigators and magistrates.
- Assess the capacity building and operational needs of law enforcement and judicial authorities in the third country.
- Ensure technical and political ownership and commitment from the third country(ies) through a thorough dialogue, possibly leading to a commitment in writing.
- Define and agree with the relevant third country partners the scope of the Common Operational Partnership.
- Assess the optimal partnership approach in terms of whether / which joint activities take place in EU Member States, in the third country itself or a mixture of the two.

In addition to the regular dissemination activities of the outcomes of the project, the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission would like to encourage more dialogue among individual project beneficiaries and between the community of project beneficiaries, stakeholders and Commission services. The aim is in particular to promote more interaction on innovative aspects in project outputs and to increase visibility, learning effects and synergies. Applicants are invited to reflect on how to reinforce communication, dissemination and visibility of the contents of their projects (outputs and outcomes). Applicants are therefore encouraged to earmark budget for networking activities in Brussels, as well as dissemination products supporting the communication efforts of the Commission, such as factsheets, and to plan accordingly.

### **3. Available budget**

The available call budget is **EUR 11 000 000**. Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below.

Topic	Topic budget
1 — ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP	<b>EUR 6 000 000</b>
2 — ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP-TR	<b>EUR 5 000 000</b>

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

#### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	27 January 2022
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>28 July 2022 – 17:00:00 CET</u> <u>(Brussels)</u>
Evaluation:	August – October 2022
Information on evaluation results:	November 2022 <sup>10</sup>
GA signature:	January-February 2023

#### 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*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):
  - detailed budget table: not applicable
  - CVs of core project team: not applicable
  - activity reports of last year: not applicable
  - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*).

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

<sup>10</sup> In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Commission cannot provide any information on the outcome of the call for proposals before the official announcement of the results.

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 **50 pages** (Part B without annexes). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

## 6. Eligibility

### *Eligible participants (eligible countries)*

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

- be legal entities (public bodies or, by the competent authority's mandate, a public or non-public implementing agency or body of a Member State participating in the ISF)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs), excluding Denmark<sup>11</sup>)
  - non-EU countries<sup>12</sup>: without any limitation as long as relevant for the call for proposals in view of the migratory routes towards the EU as defined in the "Scope" section above.

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.

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>13</sup>.

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

<sup>11</sup> In accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of Protocol No 22 on the position of Denmark, annexed to the TEU and to the TFEU, Denmark is not taking part in the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 and is not bound by it or subject to its application.

<sup>12</sup> A non-EU country is a country which is not an EU Member State.

<sup>13</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'<sup>14</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).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations 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>15</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>16</sup>). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

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

### Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by:

- minimum two applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from two different eligible countries
- the following entities can NOT apply:
  - non-profit making entities
- the following entities can NOT apply as coordinator:
  - legal entities established in third countries
  - international organisations<sup>17</sup>
- legal entities established in third countries can participate only as part of a consortium composed of at least two independent entities, at least one of which is established in an EU Member State.

### Eligible activities

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

Proposals consisting exclusively of studies and / or conferences, or capacity building activities and not aiming at achieving an operational outcome will not be considered as relevant for funding under this call for proposals.

### Other important considerations

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<sup>14</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>15</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>16</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).

<sup>17</sup> The term "international organisations" is used as defined in Article 156 of the FR (Euratom 2018/1046).

Projects should take into account the results and activities of projects supported by other EU funding programmes, including – but not limited to– ISF-Police, ISF-Borders<sup>18</sup>, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace<sup>19</sup>. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

The project plan must include regular reviews which enable the Commission to be engaged, including through participation in Steering Committee meetings, and when necessary and appropriate provide strategic guidance and support coordination with other EU supported actions. It is recommended to closely involve relevant EU and Member States Delegations in third countries in the implementation of a Common Operational Partnership as well as, where relevant, EU Agencies and migration-related Liaison Officers.

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.

#### Duration

Projects must have an implementation period of maximum 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

#### Project budget

Project budgets must request a minimum EU contribution of EUR 1 000 000.

#### Ethics

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.

Applications should pay appropriate attention to the effects of the project on individual rights and freedoms, and indicate the measures taken to limit or remedy such effects.

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 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Projects involving ethics issues may be made subject to specific ethics rules.

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<sup>18</sup> Instruments providing financial support under the previous Multi-annual Financial Framework (2014-2020 MFF)

<sup>19</sup> Information on ISF-Police and ISF-Borders funded operations can be found on the Funding & tender opportunities portal under 'Projects & results' <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-results>. For the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, please refer to [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index_en) and for the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, please refer to [https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/instrument-contributing-stability-and-peace-icsp\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/instrument-contributing-stability-and-peace-icsp_en).

### Overview eligibility conditions

	<b>ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP</b> <b>ISF-2022-TF1-AG-COP-TR</b>
<b>Consortium composition — minimum number of</b>	
Entities	Two
Countries (of which Member States participating in ISF)	Two (of which One)
<b>Consortium composition – participation of legal entities established in third countries as</b>	
Coordinators	No
Beneficiaries	Yes
<b>Consortium composition — participation of non-profit private organisations as</b>	
Coordinators	No
Beneficiaries	No
<b>Consortium composition — International Organisations can participate as</b>	
Coordinators	No
Beneficiaries	Yes
<b>Consortium composition — participation of for-profit organisations as</b>	
Coordinators	No
Beneficiaries	Yes (only if the for-profit organisation is a public or non-public implementing agency or body of a Member State participating in the ISF)
<b>Duration of projects (in months)</b>	
	Maximum 36
<b>Project budget — maximum grant amount</b>	
Minimum (EUR)	1 000 000
Maximum (EUR)	-

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

### Financial capacity

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

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

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

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

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

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

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
- prefinancing paid in instalments
- (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)

or

- propose no prefinancing
- request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.



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

### Operational capacity

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

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

If the evaluation of 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).

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>20</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>21</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, decisionmaking- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, 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>22</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 a **two-step evaluation procedure**.

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<sup>20</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>21</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.

<sup>22</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).



For all eligible applications, in the first step, there will be a pre-selection on the basis of the Relevance award criterion only. In the second step, the successful proposals will be assessed against the full set of award criteria.


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 (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria (*see sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their scores.

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

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

- 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 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Quality'.
- 2) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, or other factors related to the objectives of the call.
- 3) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

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 the objectives and scope of the project seen against the objectives and expected impact/outcomes (if applicable) as identified in section 2; contribution to the relevant EU strategic documents and/or action plans and legislative context; previous results in the field; European/trans-national dimension (30 points)
- **Quality:** logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed; methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, timetable, monitoring and evaluation); expertise and quality of the consortium and project teams; management structures and procedures; risks and risk management; feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; cost effectiveness and best value for money (50 points)
- **Impact:** expected short-term and long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; degree of ambition and innovation; appropriate communication strategy, including visibility of EU funding; appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; sustainability of results after EU funding ends; replicability/usability/potential for amplification of the results (20 points).

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	21	30
Quality	n/a	50
Impact	n/a	20
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds for the criterion 'Relevance': 21/30 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

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

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

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

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

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

### Starting date and project duration

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

Project duration: Maximum 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

### Milestones and deliverables

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

The following deliverable will be mandatory for all projects:

- A mid-term progress report;
- A final project report.

### 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): *see section 6 above*. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

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

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (**90%**).

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

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

### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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


*Budget categories for this call:*

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
  - A.5 Volunteers
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories: not applicable

- E. Indirect costs

*Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>23</sup>: Yes
  - volunteers unit cost<sup>24</sup>: Yes (without indirect costs)
- travel and subsistence unit cost<sup>25</sup>: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation + full cost for listed equipment
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- divers:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. cannot be declared as cost

 **Volunteers costs** — Volunteers costs are not a classic cost category. There are no costs because volunteers work for free, but they may nonetheless be added to the budget in the form of a pre-fixed unit cost (per volunteer) and thus allow you to benefit from the volunteers' work for the grant (by increasing the amount of reimbursement up to 100% of the normal costs, i.e. cost categories other than volunteers). More information is available in the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.A.5](#).

*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 **80%** 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.

There will be no **interim payments**.

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

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<sup>23</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

<sup>24</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646).

<sup>25</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

**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 and the costs declared.

### Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Certificates

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

### Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is 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

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

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes
- limited communication and visibility to protect persons involved: No

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

- EU restrictive measures: Yes
- durability: Yes
- specific rules for humanitarian actions: No
- specific rules for blending operations: 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 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 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (see *section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). 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; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Questions **received later than 7 calendar days before the deadline** for submitting applications will not be answered. In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Commission cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants or actions.

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: [HOME-ISF@ec.europa.eu](mailto:HOME-ISF@ec.europa.eu)

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



## 13. Important



### IMPORTANT

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

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

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

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc.*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be 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 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](#).