



# Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)

## Call for proposals

Buy social: business to business market  
(SMP-COSME-2022-BUYSOCIALB2BMARKET)

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## EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL AND SMEs EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EISMEA)

Innovation ecosystems, SMP/Entrepreneurship and Consumers  
**SMP/COSME Pillar**

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of the proximity and social economy ecosystem under the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs strand of the **Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)**.

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (SMP Regulation (EU) [2021/690](#)<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2022 SMP Work Programme<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **SMP-COSME-2022-BUYSOCIALB2BMARKET — Buy social: business to business market**

Applicants cannot submit and cannot participate in more than one proposal under this call.

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

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

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 99/2013, (EU) No 1287/2013, (EU) No 254/2014 and (EU) No 652/2014 (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 1-47).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2022) 724 of 17 February 2022 on the financing of the Programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including SMEs, the area of plants, animals, food and feed and European Statistics and the adoption of the work programme for 2022 as amended by the Commission Implementing Decision C(2022) 5587 final of 10 August 2022 and in particular Annex 2 of the latter.

- the Online Manual outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

You are also encouraged to visit the [EISMEA](#) website to consult the list of projects funded previously.

## 1. Background

In December 2021, the European Commission adopted the Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP)<sup>3</sup> which aims to develop appropriate conditions (e.g., legal framework, private funding and public procurement, etc.) to exploit the full potential of social economy, enhancing social innovation and ensuring that social economy (SE) entities are equipped with the appropriate tools and skills to further scale up.

The Action plan for the Social Economy highlights that “interactions with mainstream businesses help social economy entities develop and grow and such cooperation has increased. However, there is scope for more systematic integration in mainstream businesses’ value chains and partnering with them to bid jointly for public procurement, also through piloting new projects within the Single Market Programme”.

Hence, the Action Plan announced to “launch a new initiative under the Single Market Programme in 2022 supporting the creation of local and regional partnerships between social economy entities and mainstream businesses, enabling a **Buy social: business to business market**”, hereafter referred as “Buy social: B2B market”.

Moreover, the Commission Staff Working Document<sup>4</sup> “Scenarios towards co-creation of a transition pathway for a more resilient, sustainable and digital Proximity and Social Economy industrial ecosystem” accompanying the Action Plan, stresses the “lack of incentives for private procurement from social enterprises” as well as “the need for strategic support and joint action to support access to markets and new sectoral value chains, especially at local and regional level”.

In this context, market opportunities can be fostered between mainstream business and social enterprises by establishing trade partnerships and value chain integration. Several drivers can be identified for such cooperation: achieving social and/or environmental goals, generating greater overall impact, having more solid economic performance and securing future orientations of business activity, business scaling perspectives and consolidation.

Pressing socio-economic trends such as labour market shortage, scarcity of materials and resources as well as the need to converge towards a green and sustainable economy and increasing investors’ and consumers’ expectations for corporate responsibility and sustainability can motivate companies to engage more with social economy.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/47854>.

Social enterprises have for example excellent expertise in employing persons with a distance to the labour market or offering local and alternative materials and resources (e.g. circular materials). Social enterprises offer an alternative model in terms of green business innovation, as well from an operational as product and service perspective. Those trends and demands are positioning social enterprises as an attractive strategic partner offering skilled workforce and diversity at the workplace, alternative supply chain solutions with strong links within the local economy, sustainable processes and conducts in diverse sectors (i.e. textiles, repair and reuse, energy, education and training).

Moreover, interactions with mainstream businesses can help social economy entrepreneurs develop and grow and such cooperation has also been increasing in several Members States during the past years. However, there is scope for more systematic cooperation and integration in mainstream businesses' value chains.

The 2018 European Commission report<sup>5</sup> on "Co-operation between social economy enterprises and traditional enterprises" identifies 4 areas of potential partnerships:



This call for proposals focusses mainly on the transactional cooperation such as outsourcing of certain processes or services and buying of services and products. Establishment of such solid trade relationships (through B2B markets) can potentially evolve into more integrated and longer-term partnerships.

Still in developing B2B markets, both parties face numerous challenges such as lack of mutual understanding, cultural barriers, different working methods and processes.

<sup>5</sup> Social Business Initiative (SBI) follow up: Co-operation between social economy enterprises and traditional enterprises, Final report <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/36684>.

This also leads to a lack of information (business, sectoral, offer, etc.) and access to relevant networks for both parties.

This call for proposals aims at addressing these challenges and fostering necessary tools and guidelines to ease the cooperation, value chain integration and spill overs and enable “Buy Social: B2B market”.

The development of a “Buy Social movement” over the last years has seen public authorities, businesses and consumers increasingly seeking out opportunities to buy from social enterprises.

Pioneering public authorities have – besides looking at their own purchasing policies - supported local B2B buy social markets by facilitating, promoting and acting as a matchmaker. In this context, it is important to enhance the capacity of social economy enterprises and SMEs and facilitate their access to ‘private procurement’ or buy social engagements. In particular, there is a need for further systematic integration in mainstream businesses’ value chains and development of structured partnerships (e.g. bid jointly for public procurement calls, piloting new projects, joint R&D, skills programs).

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

### **SMP-COSME-2022-BUYSOCIALB2BMARKET — Buy social: business to business market**

#### Objectives

The main objective for this call for proposals is to enable local, regional or national “Buy Social: B2B market” in the context of the proximity and SE (social economy) ecosystem by building partnerships (local, regional or national) and facilitating trade relationships between SE entities and mainstream businesses (B2B). The partnerships shall develop a series of actions to boost such as markets.

In particular, these partnerships will aim at helping mainstream businesses to engage with a range of SE suppliers and embed sustainability and diversity into their core operations, purchasing policy and value chains. This will also help social enterprises to grow their revenues, scale their potential and consequently increase their impact by tapping into corporate purchasing power.

Focus on creating a reliable supply side will help in the establishment of long-term business partnerships. In some cases, SE entities need to adapt or improve their processes (e.g. digitalisation), workforce skills, ability to increase in volume as well as overall organisational performances.

#### Themes and priorities (scope)

This call for proposals aims to support actions that enhance an information flow, mutual understanding and learning perspectives between ‘regular’ and SE enterprises, and promote local, regional or national partnerships engaging SE representatives and mainstream business representatives (such as federations, sector federations or similar supporting organisations) and public authorities to foster the creation of “buy social” B2B markets at local, regional, national or cross-border level.

Where needed, the partnerships will support the enhancement of “trade readiness”, meaning empowering SE entities to improve or adapt their capacities (e.g., skills, communication, certification, process, products) and enhance their purchasing attractiveness for mainstream business.

Besides strengthening the business capacity of SE entities, this call aims to develop facilitation, matchmaking, and communication, fostering “buy social” B2B practices in local, regional or national markets. The partnerships will need to create initiatives and actions to bring mainstream business and SE closer together. Market knowledge will be crucial as well as matchmaking functions.

### Activities that can be funded (scope)

The action will support partnerships at local, regional or national level to boost the integration of SE entities into mainstream business supply chains and create “buy social” B2B markets.

The following types of activities (the list is non-exhaustive) can be implemented by consortia on local, regional, national or cross-border level:

- Provide branding of SE towards corporate buyers in specific local contexts. The branding should focus on raising the profile of concrete SE operating in the proximity and social economy ecosystem. The aim is to showcase and communicate the added value of engaging with SE actors.
- Setting up a centralised “buy social” (online) platform that makes it possible to make the offer of social enterprises known. This can be developed from very basic to very advanced functionalities. For example, mapping sectoral, product or service offer, partnerships such as for public procurement, or conducting market analysis.
- Provide matchmaking and facilitation services. The matchmaking between SE and regular businesses mostly occurs on local or regional level. Fostering a high degree of market knowledge, trends and the functioning of intermediary market is therefore essential in the partnerships.
- Dialogues between local mainstream businesses and SE entities to promote B2B cooperation.
- Awareness raising towards mainstream business about the SE added value (e.g., events, showcases, networking, communication, PR support).
- Setup sector or activity specific events to pitch SE offer and exchange business needs (e.g., retail, agri-food packaging, catering, pharma, construction, cleaning, landscaping, maintenance, manufacturing).
- Support in obtaining various types of certifications and standards necessary to engage as supplier as well as various forms of verification services (e.g., reliability, governance, products requirement).
- Capacity building and advisory (such as improving processes, product and service offer, financial and legal advice, communicating and branding, IT and digitalisation).
- Coaching and mentoring recruitment services, up-skilling, and reskilling of employees.
- Collaboration and experience sharing between more advanced and less advanced members of a consortium (e.g., transfer of knowledge from more experienced local communities, regions or countries to less experienced local communities, regions or countries).

The following types of activities (the list is non-exhaustive) can be implemented by consortia on EU level (collaboration between awarded consortia, facilitated by the Agency and agreed during the kick-off meeting at the start of implementation):



- Exchange events on how B2B cooperation and trade are facilitated in the different partnerships (peer learning, visits, testimonies, etc.).
- Exchange of practices on buy social campaigns, matchmaking support and readiness / capacity building.
- Setup training and advisory activities.
- Showcasing examples with good practices:
  - Local B2B facilitation and matchmaking,
  - B2B trade cases.

### Expected impact

The consortia have to deliver the following direct outcomes:

- Examples with good practices for online publication
- A recommendation report for further development of local, regional, national and an EU buy social market.
- Viable “buy social” B2B partnerships in participating Member States

The proposals submitted to this call for proposals foresee the following direct impacts (the consortia must quantify the expected direct impacts in their proposals):

- Increased local and regional B2B sales and potentially more integrated long-term business cooperation between SE entities and mainstream businesses.
- Increased branding of SE on local, regional and national level (business and consumer awareness).
- Improved skills and capacity building of SE entities to better adapt and integrate into the mainstream business supply chain strategies.

The proposals submitted to this call for proposals foresee the following long-term impacts (the consortia must explain in the proposals how the expected long-term impacts will be expected to be reached):

- More sustainable conducts, business processes and offer of products and services in the local markets.
- Increased SE value to overcome current business challenges such as the green transition, labour market shortage and affordable resource and material scarcity.
- Fostered cross-sectorial cooperation and knowledge transfer between SE SMEs and start-ups, mainstream businesses, consultancies, business support centres.
- Evidence-based integration of innovative and sustainable processes by SE entities boosting their competitiveness and creating potential new market opportunities.
- Increased investments in SE in strengthening sustainable performance of mainstream businesses mainstream business’ sustainability
- Enhanced “social and ecological footprint” of businesses.

- Enhanced knowledge by public authorities and business federations or intermediaries on the creation of “buy social” markets.

### 3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 1 300 000**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

The maximum budget per project is **EUR 325 000**. The expected number of projects to be funded is 4.

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

### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	29 September 2022
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>7 December 2022 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	December 2022 – February 2023
Information on evaluation results:	February 2023
GA signature:	April 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/calculator (*template "Tpl\_Detailed Budget Table (SMP COSME GFS 90).xism" available in the Submission System*)
- CVs (short outlines) of core project team
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Application Form Part B and to be uploaded as Part B file*)
- declaration of social economy organisation(s) on their social economy status with description of SE activities (*to be uploaded in the Submission System under Other annexes*).

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

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

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

Proposals are limited to maximum **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 (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
  - non-EU countries:
    - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Single Market Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#)).

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*

Exceptional funding — Entities from other countries (not listed above) are exceptionally eligible if the granting authority considers their participation essential for the implementation of the action.

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

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

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>6</sup>.

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'<sup>7</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 (*see above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*<sup>8</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>9</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 a consortium of applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- Minimum 5 and maximum 10 participants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities) from at least 3 different eligible countries, out of which:

<sup>6</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>7</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>8</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>9</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).

- Minimum 1 social economy organisation per eligible country (the eligibility of an organisation applying as social economy organisation must be verifiable by declaration on their social economy status with description of SE activities (*see section 5*))
  - Minimum 1 social economy network, association, sector federation or support organisation working on EU level.
- One applicant must be appointed as coordinator of the consortium.

### Eligible activities

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

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

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

Financial support to third parties is allowed under the following conditions:

- Applications can provide financial support to third parties for participants that are not beneficiaries' personnel for participation in the events organised by beneficiaries as specified in section 2, to cover the travel, accommodation and subsistence costs necessary for their participation in the events, as indicated in the description of the action;
- Such financial support to third parties must be part of the project costs and must be included under the corresponding cost heading;

Your project application must clearly specify how financial support to third parties will be managed.

### Geographic location (target countries)

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

### Duration

Projects should have a duration of **18 months**, as from **1 May 2023** (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

### Project budget

Project budgets (maximum grant amount) are expected to be **maximum EUR 325 000 per project**.

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

### Financial capacity

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

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an*

*approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc).* The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Operational capacity

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

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

If the evaluation of 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:

- profiles (qualifications and experience) 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.

### 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>10</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>11</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- 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>12</sup>:

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

## **8. Evaluation and award procedure**

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

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<sup>10</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>11</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>12</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).


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

For proposals with the same score (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. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

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 for proposals 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; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context; European/trans-national dimension; impact/interest for a number of countries (EU or eligible non-EU countries); possibility to use the results in other countries; potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation (**30 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); feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money) **(30 points)**
  - **Project team and cooperation arrangements:** quality of the consortium and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium **(30 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 **(10 points)**.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	16	30
Quality — Project design and implementation	16	30
Quality — Project team and cooperation arrangements	16	30
Impact	6	10
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 16/30, 16/30, 16/30 and 6/10 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](#).

### 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.

Activities should start on **1 May 2023**.

Projects duration will be **18 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.

### 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 rates fixed in the Grant Agreement (**100%** for the costs for providing financial support to third parties and **90%** for all other costs categories).

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

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

### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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

*Budget categories for this call:*

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence

- C.2 Equipment
- C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.1 Financial support to third parties
- E. Indirect costs

*Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>13</sup>: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost<sup>14</sup>: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: maximum amount per third party EUR 60 000, unless a higher amount is required because the objective of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to achieve and this is duly justified in the Application Form
- 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)
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - kick off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
  - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible
  - other ineligible costs: No

***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 **70%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

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<sup>13</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>14</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

There will be no **interim payments**.

**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 one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
- unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*

or

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

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

### Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

- list of background: No
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: Yes

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

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- 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 PPI Grants for Procurement: 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 EU Login 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).

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 **by 30 November 2022 December 2022, 17:00 CET Brussels time** to the following email address: [EISMEA-SMP-COSME-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EISMEA-SMP-COSME-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu).

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

## 13. Important



### IMPORTANT

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

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

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



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