



Hercule III Programme

Call for Proposals

Training, Conferences and Staff Exchange 2020

HERCULE-TC-AG-2020

Version 1.0
18 February 2020

HISTORY OF CHANGES

Version	Date	Change	Page
1.0	18.02.2020	▪ Initial version (linked to EU grants MGA v4.0)	



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Anti-Fraud Office

Directorate D: Policy
Unit D1: Policy Development & Hercule

HERCULE III

Training, Conferences and Staff Exchange 2020

HERCULE-TC-AG-2020

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1. Background

This is an EU call for proposals in the policy area "fight against fraud" under the Hercule III Programme.

On 26 February 2014, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted Regulation (EU) No 250/2014¹ establishing a programme to promote activities against fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities affecting the financial interests of the Union (Hercule III Programme, hereinafter referred to as "the Programme").

The European Anti-Fraud Office of the European Commission (OLAF) implements this programme, which entered into force on 21 March 2014.

The Annual Work Programme 2020² (AWP 2020) provides that the Commission launches a specific call for proposals for the following training, conference and staff exchange actions aimed at preventing and combatting fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities affecting the financial interests of the Union:

1. further foster better understanding of Union and national mechanisms;
2. exchange experience and best practices between the relevant authorities in the participating countries, including specialised law enforcement services, as well as representatives of international organisations;
3. coordinate the activities of participating countries, and representatives of international organisations;
4. disseminate knowledge, particularly on better identification of risk for investigative purposes.

This call for proposals is entitled: "*Training, Conference and Staff Exchange 2020*".

2. Objectives — Themes & priorities — Projects that can be funded — Expected results

Objectives

The general objective³ of the Programme "shall be to protect the financial interests of the Union thus enhancing the competitiveness of the Union's economy and ensuring the protection of the taxpayers' money". The specific objective⁴ shall be to prevent and combat fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities affecting the financial interests of the Union.

The operational objectives⁵ of the Programme are listed below:

- a) to improve the prevention and investigation of fraud and other illegal activities beyond current levels by enhancing transnational and multi-disciplinary cooperation;
- b) to increase the protection of the financial interests of the Union against fraud, facilitating the exchange of information, experience and best practices, including staff exchanges;
- c) to strengthen the fight against fraud and other illegal activities providing technical and operational support to national investigation and in particular, customs and law enforcement authorities;

¹ [Regulation \(EU\) No 250/2014](#) of 26 February 2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a programme to promote activities in the field of the protection of the financial interests of the European Union ("Hercule III" Programme) and repealing Decision No. 804/2004/EC, OJ L 84 of 20 March 2014.

² C(2020)28 final of 16 January 2020, in particular section 2.2 thereof.

³ Article 3 of [Regulation \(EU\) No 250/2014](#).

⁴ Article 4 of [Regulation \(EU\) No 250/2014](#).

⁵ Article 5 of [Regulation \(EU\) No 250/2014](#).

- d) to limit the currently known exposure of the financial interests of the Union to fraud, corruption and other illegal activities with a view to reducing the development of an illegal economy in key risk areas such as organised fraud, including cigarette smuggling and counterfeiting;
- e) to enhance the degree of development of the specific legal and judicial protection of the financial interests of the Union against fraud by promoting comparative law analysis.

This call for proposals concerns mainly the operational objectives a, b and d.

Themes & priority topics

The projects must aim at the protection of the **financial interests of the Union** by **preventing and combatting** fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities **affecting the financial interests of the Union**.

This call for proposals encourages projects having a strong European transnational aspect.

The priority themes for the 2020 call for proposals are as follows:

- a) The risks and vulnerabilities the Union's financial interests are exposed to;
- b) Investigation practices;
- c) Prevention activities;
- d) The role of the Member States' Anti-fraud coordination services (AFCOS);
- e) Customs data analysis and usage of commercial databases;
- f) Risk analysis practices and methods in the different areas of expenditure of the EU budget;
- g) New challenges in revenue fraud;
- h) The fight against fraud in areas concerning climate, the environment and food security (Green Deal policies).

The applicant may explore other relevant themes.

Projects that the European Commission (OLAF) can fund

Under this call, the European Commission (OLAF) invites national and regional administrations as well as research and educational institutes and other non-profit-making entities to submit applications for projects under the following three topics⁶:

1. Specialised training sessions (topic 1)

Developing **specialised training** sessions to improve investigation abilities through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge of specialised methodologies and techniques.

2. Conferences, workshops and seminars (topic 2)

Organising **conferences, workshops and seminars** and creating networks and structural platforms between Member States, candidate countries, other third countries and international public organisations:

- a) to facilitate the exchange of information, experience and best practices;
- b) to create networks and structural platforms between Member States, candidate countries, other third countries and international public organisations.

3. Staff exchanges (topic 3)

Organising **Staff exchanges** between national and regional administrations (including (potential) candidates and neighbouring countries) to contribute to the further development, improvement and update of staff's skills and competences in the protection

⁶ Section 2.2.1 "Training actions" of the AWP 2020.

of the Union’s financial interests.

Applicants are required to choose one main topic, and should be aware that an application may also incorporate elements of other topics.

Expected results

The applicant shall demonstrate that the results of the project contribute to the achievement of the general, specific and operational objectives of the Hercule III Programme (*see section 2 above*). The applicant shall explain how it will measure the achievement of the expected results and shall pay special attention to the following:

1. Improved investigation, forensic and analytical abilities of law enforcement officials and auditors involved in the protection of the Union’s financial interests through the acquisition of new skills, knowledge of specialised methodologies and techniques;
2. Increased awareness of fraud risk indicators and the Union’s anti-fraud policy priorities.

These results will be measured, inter alia, by the number, origin and professional experience of participants and target audiences, the number of anti-fraud publications distributed to target audiences, the overall level of satisfaction of participants with each event⁷ and the post-event survey⁸ assessing the overall medium-term practical impact of the project on participants.

The above-mentioned list of results is not exhaustive and the applicants may add other results it considers relevant.

3. Timetable & available call budget

Timetable

Timing (indicative)	
Call publication:	18 February 2020
Opening date:	25 February 2020
Deadline for applications:	30 April 2020 – 17:00 CET
Evaluation:	May-July 2020
Information on evaluation result:	October 2020
Grant agreement signature:	October-November 2020
Maximum duration of a project ⁹	15 months
Latest date to end a project	31 December 2022

Call budget

The **available call budget** is EUR 750 000.

The EU reserves the right not to award all available funds.

⁷ On the last day of each event, the beneficiary will ensure that each participant carefully fill in an event-evaluation-form, the template of which is available on the [Funding & tender portal](#).

⁸ Five months after the end date of the project, the recipient will ensure that participants in project events receive and carefully complete the post-event survey forms available on the portal [Funding & tender portal](#).

⁹ The duration of the projects detailed in the applications will not exceed 15 months. A subsequent grant agreement will not be extended beyond a maximum duration of 15 months, unless in case of an unpredictable event with serious consequences that will be properly justified at least one month before the end date of the grant agreement. In addition, the end date will **never** exceed the latest date mentioned in the timetable.

4. Admissibility criteria

Admissibility

Applications must be submitted before the call deadline (*see timetable section 3*).

Applications must be submitted electronically via the Participant Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Call Topic page in the [Funding Opportunities](#) section).

Paper submissions are no longer possible.

Applications (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided inside the Electronic Submission System.

Your application must be readable, accessible and printable. It must also contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents (*see section 10*).

5. Eligibility criteria

Participants The bodies eligible to receive grants under this call¹⁰ are:

- National or regional administrations of a Member State which promote the strengthening of action at Union level to protect the financial interests of the Union; and
- Research and educational institutes and non-profit-making entities provided that they have been established and have been operating for at least one year, in a Member State and promote the strengthening of action at Union level to protect the financial interests of the Union.

Applications from third countries are subject to the conditions in Article 7 (2) of the [Hercule III Regulation](#)¹¹.

To prove eligibility, all applicants must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before the call deadline — and upload the necessary documents showing legal status and origin.

Only applications by single applicants are allowed.

For UK applicants: Please be aware that following the entry into force of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement¹² on 1 February 2020 and in particular Articles 127(6), 137 and 138, the references to natural or legal persons residing or established in a Member State of the European Union are to be understood as including natural or legal persons residing or established in the United Kingdom. UK residents and entities are therefore eligible to participate under this call.

Budget

The minimum threshold for the total budget of a project submitted in an application has been set at **EUR 40 000**. The application will be discarded if the total budget proposed is lower than **EUR 40 000**.

Actions

Eligible actions are set out in section 2.

Duration

The duration of the project will not exceed **15** months following the signature of the grant agreement by both parties.

¹⁰ Article 6 of [Regulation \(EU\) No 250/2014](#): "Bodies eligible for funding".

¹¹ Article 7 (2) of [Regulation \(EU\) No 250/2014](#) determines the conditions under which applicants from the third countries referred to in that Article may submit applications. Currently, applicants from the non-EU countries referred to in that Article cannot submit applications.

¹² Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community.

6. Award criteria

The Commission will evaluate and rank the admissible and eligible applications according to the following award criteria:

1. **Added value:** its added value for the protection of the Union’s financial interests (**40 points**);
2. **Conformity** with one or more of the Programme’s operational objectives listed in section 2 above (in particular enhancing transnational and multi-disciplinary cooperation as indicated in objective (a) as well as the relevance of the issues addressed and complementarity with other Union activities) (**20 points**);
3. **Quality:** originality, accuracy and coherence of the proposed methodology, the organisation of the work, the allocation of resources, the consistency and feasibility of planning and monitoring arrangements, and the appropriateness of the activities (**20 points**);
4. **Value for money:** the proposed budget is sufficient/appropriate for proper implementation; best value for money (provisional budget, expected results and deliverables) (**20 points**)

Each application will be scored on a 10 points scale for each criterion. The individual scores for each criterion will be multiplied by the applicable weight factor and added. The minimum score for each criterion shall at least be 50% of the theoretical maximum score. The minimum score for the overall score shall be 60% of the theoretical maximum score. An application that does not obtain these minimum scores will be discarded. The applications obtaining a score equal or higher than 60% of the maximum score will be ranked based on their score and will be recommended for a grant, subject to the availability of sufficient financial resources.

Award criteria	Points	Weight	Individual thresholds (minimum score)	Maximum score
Added value	1-10	4	20	40
Conformity	1-10	2	10	20
Quality	1-10	2	10	20
Value for Money	1-10	2	10	20
				100
Overall threshold: 60				

Applications that pass the individual threshold AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget.

The Commission will reject the other applications.

7. Selection criteria

In accordance with Article 198 of the EU Financial Regulation No [2018/1046](#), the Commission will examine each application on the basis of:

Financial capacity

The applicant must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the proposed project. Organisations participating in several concomitant projects must have sufficient capacity to implement them simultaneously.

The Commission will check the financial capacity based on the documents that the applicant will upload in the Beneficiary Register (profit and loss account and balance sheet for the last closed financial year).

This requirement does not apply to national and regional administrations.

Operational capacity

The applicant shall demonstrate that it has the operational resources (technical, management) and that the staff has the professional skills, competences and qualifications needed to implement the proposed project successfully. The applicant's staff must have a confirmed experience in the domain for which it proposes the project.

The applicant shall provide the following information in the relevant sections of the application form:

- a short description of the applicant's main activities including an organisation chart;
- an exhaustive list of EU grants awarded during the last 3 years (2017-2019);
- a short description of the team that will implement the project, the allocation of tasks within the team and a description of the **competences** of the team members **relevant for the project**;
- a list of projects carried out by the applicant that relate to the Programme's objectives (if applicable).

Exclusion

Applicants that are subject to an EU administrative sanction (i.e. exclusion or financial penalty decision)¹³ or in one of the following situations¹⁴ are excluded from receiving EU grants and will automatically be rejected:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures under national law (including persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- declared in breach of social security or tax obligations by a final judgment or decision (including persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- found guilty of grave professional misconduct¹⁵ by a final judgment or decision (including persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control);
- convicted of fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control);

¹³ See Article 136(1) EU [Financial Regulation No 2018/1046](#).

¹⁴ See Articles 136(1) and 141(1) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹⁵ Professional misconduct includes violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement or grant decision (including persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control);
- found guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control).

Applicants will be rejected if it is discovered during the grant award procedure that they¹⁶:

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

IMPORTANT

- **Subcontractors** — Subcontracting is allowed, but subject to strict limits (*see section 9*).
- **Registration** — All applicants must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before the call deadline — and upload the necessary documents showing legal status and origin.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Applications for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; applications 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 proposal submission).
- **Balanced budget** — Applicants must ensure a balanced budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the project, financial contributions from third parties*). You may be requested to lower the estimated costs in the detailed budget table, if they are ineligible or excessive.
- **Low value grant** — Grant lower than or equal to EUR 60 000.
- **Profit** — Surplus, calculated at the payment of the balance, of receipts over the eligible costs of the action, where receipts are limited to the Union grant and the revenue generated by that action.
- **Non-profit rule** — Grants must NOT produce a profit. This rule is not applicable to low-value grants and/or grants awarded to non-profit organisations, which are not public bodies. The Commission will check this by the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — Any given project may receive only one grant from the EU budget. The project must therefore NOT receive any financial support under any other EU funding programme (including EU funding managed by authorities in EU Member States or other funding bodies, *e.g. Regional Funds, Agricultural Funds, EIB loans, etc.*). Cost items may NOT be declared twice under different EU projects

¹⁶ See Article 141(1) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⚠ IMPORTANT

- **Multiple applications** — Applicants may submit more than one application for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a grant for them).

BUT: if there are several applications for the *same/very similar* project, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).

- **Language** — you can submit your proposal in any official EU language. However, for reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English. If you need the call document in another official EU language, please be aware that, depending on the language requested, it could take between 1 to 3 weeks to obtain a translation of the call documents. The deadline for submission will not be extended. Please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 10*).

8. Evaluation & award procedure

This call is subject to the standard submission and evaluation procedure (one-stage submission and one-step evaluation).

Applications will be checked by us for formal requirements (admissibility and eligibility) and will be evaluated by an evaluation committee according to the operational capacity and award criteria.

The evaluation committee will adopt a list of applicants recommended for the award of a grant.

Once this list is established, the Commission will verify the compliance with the exclusion criteria and the financial capacity set out in the selection criteria.

If an application does not successfully pass the examination of a set of criteria, the Commission will discard it and inform the applicant accordingly.

The Commission will invite successful applicants for grant preparation.

The Commission may ask an applicant to provide additional information or to clarify the supporting documents submitted in connection with the application, in particular in the case of manifest material errors.

⚠ IMPORTANT

- **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.

9. Legal & financial set-up of the grants

If your proposal is selected for funding, you will be invited to prepare the grant, which should be signed by both parties.

This grant agreement will set the framework for your project, its terms and conditions, and in particular, provisions on deliverables, reporting and payments.

Starting date & duration

The project's **starting date and duration** will be fixed in your grant agreement (art. 3). Normally, the starting date will be after the signature of the grant. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Maximum duration: 15 months.Maximum grant amount, reimbursement of eligible costs & funding rate

All grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs etc.) will be fixed in your grant agreement (art. 5).

Maximum budget: No limit.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a reimbursement of actual costs. This means that it will reimburse **ONLY** certain types of costs (eligible costs) and **ONLY** those costs you *actually* incurred for your project (**NOT** the *budgeted* costs).

The eligible costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the grant agreement (maximum 80%).

Where the non-profit rule is applicable, grants may **NOT** have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the beneficiary. The amount of the will then be deducted from the final payment.

The final grant amount paid will depend on various elements (*actual costs incurred and income; eligibility; compliance with the provisions of the grant agreement, etc.*).

Cost eligibility rules

For the **cost eligibility rules**, see the model grant agreement (art. 6) and the guide for applicants.

Cost eligibility rules specific for this call:

- 7% fixed flat-rate for indirect costs

Warning: *If the beneficiary also receives an operational grant, the Commission will decrease the flat-rate based on the implementation periods of the two grants (action and operational) prior to the signature of the grant as follows: the flat-rate for indirect costs will vary **from 0% to 7%** by decreasing the 7% rate proportionally to the duration of the action grant overlapping the duration of the operational grant;*

- financial support to third parties is not allowed;
- subcontracting must be approved by us (either as part of your proposal or in a periodic/final report) and are subject to special rules (art.10 of the grant agreement);
- VAT is not eligible.

Deliverables

Standard and other **deliverables** will be listed in the grant agreement (art. 14). The project's specific deliverables will be listed in Annex 1.

Standard deliverables to submit progressively in the course of the action:

- Final agenda of each event
- Signed list of participants to each event
- Event Evaluation forms filled-in by the participants on the last day of an event
- Summary of scores from participants' feedback

(Spreadsheet: 'Event feedback form')

Standard deliverables not supporting the final report

- Post-event survey is composed of two types of documents:

Note: to submit 6 months after the end of the action to evaluate the medium-term impact of the action on the participants.

- i. Post-event forms

Note: The beneficiary will send the post-event forms to the participants 5 months after the end date of the action.

- ii. Post-event table

Note: The beneficiary will send the post-event forms to the participants 5 months after the end date of the action.

The reporting templates are available in section "*Reference Documents*" of the Hercule III Programme in the [Participant Portal](#).

Reporting & payment arrangements

The **reporting and payment** arrangements will be fixed in the grant agreement (art. 15 and 16).

After grant signature, we will provide you with a pre-financing of 50% of the maximum grant amount.

There will be no interim payments.

At the end of the project, the Commission will pay the balance following receipt and approval of the final technical report and the final financial report. The applicant will draft these reports based on the templates provided. If the total pre-financing payment is higher than the final grant amount, we will require the beneficiary to pay back the difference (recovery).

Special provisions

Intellectual property rights (IPR): see model grant agreement (art. 19)

Promotion & visibility of EU funding: see model grant agreement (art. 22)

Cost rejection, grant reduction, recovery, suspension & termination

The grant agreement (chapter 6) provides for the measures we may take in case of **breach of contract** (and other violations of law).

10. How to submit an application?

All applications must be submitted electronically via the Participant Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Call Topic page in the [Funding Opportunities](#) section). Paper submissions are no longer possible.

The **submission process** is explained in the [Participant Portal Online Manual](#) (together with detailed instructions for the IT tool).

The application form is composed of three parts (Part A, Part B and Annexes to Part B).

Part A of the application form must be filled-in **on-line** via the Participant Portal Electronic Submission System.

In addition, Part B [*TAI*] of the application form (description and justification of the project, timetable) and the following mandatory **annexe(s)** must be downloaded from the Submission System, filled-in carefully, scanned and **uploaded as .pdf documents**:

- [TA2] agenda of the event(s)
- [Annex 2] Budget form to be filled in the template spreadsheet file¹⁷, with a detailed breakdown of forecasted expenditure and income. The expenditure forecasts shall be justified on the basis of direct quotes from suppliers or copies taken from suppliers' (internet) catalogues.

You are also requested to send the Word (.docx) version of your application documents (Part B), as well as the Excel version (.xlsx, not locked) of the Annex 2 – Budget form to OLAF-ANTI-FRAUD-TRAINING@ec.europa.eu.

Contact

For questions on the Participant Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: OLAF-ANTI-FRAUD-TRAINING@ec.europa.eu.

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call for proposals (*see call document cover page*).

IMPORTANT

- **Consult** the call page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call.
- **Avoid last minute submissions.**

Questions received later than 7 days before the call deadline cannot be answered.

We strongly advise you to complete your proposal sufficiently in advance of the deadline, to avoid any last minute technical problems. Any problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be at your risk. The call deadline will NOT be extended.
- Before submitting a proposal, all applicants must be **registered** in the [Participant Register](#) and obtain a participant identification code (PIC) (one for each applicant).
- By submitting their proposal, all applicants **accept**:
 - the terms and conditions of this call (as described in this call document and the documents it refers to)
 - to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Participant Portal Terms & Conditions](#).

¹⁷ The template is available in a spreadsheet file that can be downloaded from the Participant Portal.

⚠ IMPORTANT

- After the call deadline, the proposal is locked and can no longer be changed.
- You may be contacted later on if there is a need to **clarify** certain aspects of your **proposal** or for the correction of clerical mistakes.
- You may be asked to submit **additional documents** later on (*e.g. for the legal entity validation, LEAR appointment and financial capacity check*).
- The EU is committed to **transparency**. Each year, information about the grants awarded is published on the [Europa website](#). This includes:
 - the beneficiaries' names
 - the beneficiaries' 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 the rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data privacy** — The submission of an application under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). This data will be processed in accordance with [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1725](#). It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal (and subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication). Details are available in the [Participant Portal Privacy Statement](#).