



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Social Affairs
Disability and Inclusion

EU PROGRAMME FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION ("EaSI")

**Call for proposals for the establishment of
4-years framework partnership agreements to support EU-level
NGO networks active in the areas of social inclusion and
poverty reduction or microfinance and social enterprise
finance
&
Operating grants for 2018**

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

VP/2017/015

Any questions should be sent by email to:
empl-vp-2017-015@ec.europa.eu

To ensure a rapid response to requests for information, applicants are invited
to send their queries in English, where possible

This text is available in English

Applicants are invited to read the present document in conjunction with the Financial Guidelines for Applicants and the model Framework Partnership Agreement and Specific grant agreement published with this call as well as the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and their rules of application:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations_en.cfm

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Legal base

This call for proposals for the establishment of four year Framework Partnership Agreements and the first annual operating grant for 2018 is published under Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on a European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI")¹ and amending Decision No 283/2010/EU establishing a European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion.

The **European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" 2014-2020**² is a European-level financing instrument managed directly by the European Commission to contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, by providing financial support for the Union's objectives in terms of promoting a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions.

The EaSI Programme shall, in all its axes and actions, aim to:

- (a) pay particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as young people;
- (b) promote equality between women and men,
- (c) combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
- (d) promote a high-level of quality and sustainable employment, guarantee adequate and decent social protection, combat long-term unemployment and fight against poverty and social exclusion.

Hence, in designing, implementing and reporting on the activity, beneficiaries must address the issues noted above and will be required to provide detail, in the final activity report on the steps and achievements made towards addressing those aims.

This call aims at implementing the respective activities set out in the 2017 Annual Work Programme for the EaSI programme adopted on 8 February 2017³, and at funding proposals with EU added value.

1.2. Policy and economic background

a) Promotion of social inclusion and poverty reduction in the European Union

As outlined in the agenda for "Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change"⁴ and confirmed repeatedly by various Annual Growth Surveys (AGS)⁵, modernising social protection

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0238:0252:EN:PDF>

² <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1081>]

³ [Commission Implementing Decision C\(2017\) 742 final, of 8.2.2017](#), amending Commission Implementing Decision C(2016) 7874 concerning the adoption of the 2017 annual work programme for grants and procurement for the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI"), serving as financing decision.

⁴ See [President Juncker's Political Guidelines of 15 July 2014](#) – "A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change".

systems and supporting the development of adequate social inclusion and protection schemes throughout Europe is, and will continue to be, among the key priorities in the area of social policies in the foreseeable future. Social protection systems should be modernised to efficiently respond to risks throughout the lifecycle, to confront poverty and social exclusion, while remaining fiscally sustainable in view of the upcoming demographic challenges and preserving incentives to work.

Focus also has to be put on the monitoring of social progress, the impact of reforms over time and the reinforcement of the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), as clearly established in the recently adopted initiative on the European Pillar of Social Rights⁶.

The Europe 2020 Strategy set ambitious goals in order to cope with the long term challenges of globalisation, resource allocation efficiency, and demographic and technological change. The economic crisis triggered an ongoing social crisis, and the slow recovery is hampering efforts to reduce the high levels of unemployment and to lift people out of poverty and social exclusion. The European Union (EU) and its Member States must deal with a range of long-term trends affecting strongly the employment and social situation of many European citizens. The UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) with its ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has in the interim created a new strategy horizon, to which the EU is seeking to re-align. Technological and demographic changes, together with digitalisation, have led to the emergence of forms of employment other than standard. Accessible, transferable and transparent social protection would have positive effect on people in employment and contribute to prevent and alleviate poverty.

The primary responsibility for delivering on the Europe 2020 targets is in the hands of the Member States; however, in the field of social protection, social inclusion and social investment, the EU supports and complements the activities of the Member States in the form of policy guidance, knowledge sharing, exchange of best practices, capacity building, expertise, data and analysis, and financial support.

The European Semester is the main policy process to coordinate European and national policies and efforts to reach the Europe 2020 targets. It allows for integrated monitoring of progress on priority structural reforms leading towards the "2020 targets" and offers both EU-wide and country-specific guidance, in the form of Country Specific Recommendations (CSR). Introducing employment and social indicators into the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP) allows for a better understanding of the labour market, social developments and risks, and increases its relevance in the European Semester process. The reinforced link between the European Semester and the EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) in the funding period 2014-2020 also helps Member States in addressing major employment and social problems.

Involvement and close association of parliaments, social partners and representatives of civil society is essential to ensure ownership and facilitate implementation of common initiative, such as the Europe 2020 Strategy, and the Social Investment Package (SIP)⁷ and, more recently,

⁵ The latest one is the 2017 AGS ([COM\(2016\) 725 final of 16.11.2016](#)).

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en

⁷ The Social Investment Package comprises a Communication on "Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion" ([COM\(2013\)83 final of 20.02.2013](#)), a Recommendation on "Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage" ([C\(2013\)778 of 20.02.2013](#)), and staff working documents covering different areas of social policy. The Social Investment Package (SIP) supports MS in their implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and achievement of its targets and gives guidance on making their social policies more efficient and

the European Pillar of Social Rights, which are supported the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

In particular, the networks of social non-governmental organisations (NGO) have the potential to support active inclusion and modernisation of social protection, both at national and local level, while also shedding light on social developments and policy challenges in the different countries. Member States are also invited to involve more closely national parliaments, social partners and representatives of organised civil society in the implementation of the European Semester, by means of the preparation of the National Reform Programmes (NRP), the application of CSR and the follow up on the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as in the implementation of ESIF.

b) Promotion of access to finance in the European Union: microfinance and social enterprise finance

Boosting jobs, growth and investment is one of the main priorities of the Juncker Commission. In line with this goal, entrepreneurship and self-employment can be powerful tools in getting Europe growing again and increase the number of jobs without creating new debt. Access to finance, however, remains one of the most important problems faced by business starters across Europe, in particular from vulnerable groups.

The Commission is intensifying its efforts to promote access to microfinance and as such is responsible for multiple related activities including the provision of funding under the EaSI Financial Instruments and the EaSI Technical Assistance to microcredit providers. The Code of Good Conduct developed by the Commission aims at setting out good practice guidelines to raise the quality standards of the European microfinance sector.

The mission of many social enterprises is to contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU agenda for growth and jobs for the current decade. Therefore, in its "Start-up and Scale-up" initiative, the Commission has in particular recognised the potential of social enterprises for innovation and their positive impact in economy and society at large.

Social enterprises develop innovative approaches, models or practices for resolving societal challenges in an entrepreneurial way to promote inclusive, socially fair and environmentally sustainable economic development and social change. Their economic operations cover a broad spectrum of activities (including, in particular, social and economic integration of the disadvantaged and excluded, social assistance and care services of general interest, education and training, community development, reducing emissions and waste, or producing renewable energy).

To improve access to finance for social enterprises, the Commission is launching and supporting, under the 3rd axis of the EaSI Programme, financial instruments in the form of a guarantee scheme, a capacity building instrument aimed at social enterprise finance providers and funded instruments. In addition, a set of social equity instruments was launched in 2016 under the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), including a facility for financial intermediaries linked to incubators, accelerators, and/or that provide incubation services and a Business Angel Facility.

effective in response to the significant challenges they currently face. The Communication sets out a policy framework, concrete actions to be taken by Member States and the Commission, and guidance on the use of EU funds to support reforms.

Networks active on the supply side are key in supporting social finance providers to make best use of the instruments available at EU level, while networks active on the demand side are essential to enhance cooperation between support organisations and address the insufficient capacity of these organisations in helping social enterprises to become investment ready.

1.3. Main Purposes

The implementation of the EU 2020 policy priorities and the delivery on the related targets require stakeholders to coordinate their actions in order to meet the agreed objectives. This entails pulling together resources and experience from the NGO sector, social partners, social enterprise as well as the private sector in order to best support the public bodies to implement the adequate reform measures.

The importance of improving current partnerships between EU institutions, Member States and other European and national stakeholders is highlighted by the re-launched dialogue with the organised civil society⁸ which also proposes extending the dialogue to new actors.

This Call for proposals aims to establish four-year Framework Partnership Agreements (2018-2021) to provide for long-term cooperation between the European Commission and European level networks/non-governmental organisations active in the promotion of one of the following areas:

- Area 1: Social inclusion and poverty reduction
- Area 2: Access to finance (demand and supply side of microfinance and social enterprise finance markets)

Applicants must choose only one of these areas.

The operating grants will enhance the capacities of the networks to contribute actively to the development and implementation of all relevant policies. The grants will fund operating costs and those activities of the networks which have EU added value and which contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the EaSI Programme for the year 2018.

1.4. Overview of the selection procedure

The proposals submitted under this Call will be selected as follows:

Submitted proposals must contain the following: 1) **a four-year strategic plan including an overview of the four-year budget** outlining the estimated costs necessary to implement the strategic plan 2018-2021 and; 2) **the annual work programme for 2018 together with the corresponding detailed budget.**

The selection process will be carried out in two phases:

- First phase: the Commission will assess all the 4-year strategic plans for 2018-2021, and select a number of EU-level networks which will be invited to sign a 4-year framework partnership agreement⁹.

⁸ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-5751_en.htm

- Second phase: the Commission will assess the annual work programme for 2018 and corresponding annual budget **only of those organisations selected in the first phase** (see above). If approved, and subject to the availability of budgetary credits, the organisation will sign an annual specific grant agreement with the Commission¹⁰.

It should be noted; therefore, that the award of a Framework Partnership Agreement may not necessarily be followed by the award of an annual operating grant for 2018.

2. OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES, TYPES OF ACTIONS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Objectives and priorities

The objective of the call is to promote and create the ground for collaboration with the European Commission and other stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the related European policy initiatives in the fields covered by the EaSI Programme.

More specifically, the activities of the applicant should contribute to the following **priorities**, which are common to Areas 1 and 2:

- Supporting the Commission in its outreaching activities and its mission at EU, national and local level in order to ensure awareness and an easier implementation of EU policies in the two areas covered by the call.
- Reinforcing the capacity of the selected EU networks active in relevant area covered by the call to support EU objectives and Europe 2020 priorities.
- Providing the Commission with input for policy design in the two areas of the call.
- Enabling the networks to integrate cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender, poverty, disability, non-discrimination and job-creation) in their day-to-day work.
- Reinforcing the cooperation with other EU level networks, with national, regional and local authorities and with and between the national social stakeholders.

Applicant organisations should focus, in their selected area, on the following **objectives**:

a) Area 1: European level networks active in promoting social inclusion and poverty reduction

- Support the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives undertaken towards the policy objectives of, among others, the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Social Investment Package, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Political Guidelines of the Commission. Support the development and the dissemination of innovative policies and helping their implementation.

⁹ For more detailed information on this selection procedure, see sections 4.

¹⁰ For more detailed information on this selection procedure, see section 5.

- Support the main EU driven processes such as the European Semester and the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on social protection and social inclusion¹¹.
- Support stakeholders', and in particular national member organisations', involvement in the dissemination implementation of the main political EU-driven processes, and encourage cooperation with other civil society organisations and social partners' organisations both at EU, national, regional and local levels.
- Provide data and strong evidence base on policy developments and trends, as well as collection of relevant information about citizens' concerns and good practices in the social policy field in the Member States, including information on the impact of different policies on citizens and their social situation, so as to contribute to better policy making.
- Strengthen the capacity of EU-level NGO networks and their national members, including their knowledge of relevant EU matters, in order to (i) support implementation of EU priorities, and (ii) make better use of the various European funds available to support this objective (i.e., ESF, FEAD, EFSI). This also includes improving the sustainability of their work, their organisational functioning and their cooperation mechanisms.

b) Area 2: European level networks active in the promotion of access to finance on the demand and supply side of microfinance or social enterprise finance markets

- Support the Commission in its outreach activities at EU, national and local level with the aim of ensuring the implementation of European policies in the relevant area (e.g. Programme for Employment and Social Innovation, European Social Fund, Social Business Initiative, Start-up and Scale-up Initiative, etc.).

A clear link between multiple activities of the Commission in the field of access to finance shall be envisaged. In particular, the focus should be on the Commission activities in building microfinance and social investment markets in Europe (including through EaSI financial instruments and via the call on Supporting the demand and supply side of the market for social enterprise finance) and any follow-up action thereof.

- Reinforcing the capacity of the network's members, including through offering a platform for the exchange of good practices in the relevant field, and raising awareness about relevant EU policies.
- Voicing the concerns and expectations of organisations facilitating access to finance to (potential) entrepreneurs from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups / social enterprises. Focus should be put also on assessing the impact that the EaSI financial instruments have on the microfinance and/or social finance markets, in order to identify concerns and expectations for the next programming period.

¹¹ The integration of the social OMC into the Europe 2020 strategy provides a stronger basis for the EU to meet its social goals. The instruments and tools that have been developed under the Social OMC are being adapted to the governance architecture of Europe 2020, to best serve the purposes of the new strategy. The EU-level networks supported under this call would be expected to engage with the OMC and the relevant strands of the Europe2020 strategy.

- Providing data / research on developments in the field and on priority topics. Data/research should provide input for policy design in the areas of microfinance or social enterprise finance. The focus can be put on broad overviews as well as on specific niche topics related to the field. In the field of microfinance, the following areas are of particular relevance for 2018:
 - the microfinance market, funding gaps and failures,
 - migrant entrepreneurship, in particular in the context of the current refugee crisis,
 - the role of microfinance start-ups with high job creation potential,
 - the role of microfinance for start-ups and their impact on employability and skills,
 - the role of public employment services and other labour market institutions in promoting self-employment / entrepreneurship,
 - the effect of new technologies on the microfinance sector,
 - social performance / social impact in the area of microfinance,
 - non-financial business development services,
 - the role of microfinance in restructuring situations.

In the area of social entrepreneurship, the following topics are of particular interest for 2018:

- the market needs and funding gap for social enterprises,
- the development/evolution of social enterprise incubators and accelerators,
- the role of institutions leveraging private funding for social enterprises (e.g. foundations),
- the role of social enterprises in facilitating the integration of refugees/migrants into European societies/labour markets,
- social entrepreneurship as an option for young people,
- scaling the impact of social enterprises,
- the role of social enterprises in increasing employability and skills.

2.2. Description of the types of activities/actions to be funded

The types of activities which may be funded under this call for proposals include:

- **Analytical activities**, such as the collection of data and statistics; the development of common methodologies and, where appropriate, policy analyses and the development of policy recommendations, monitoring and assessment of relevant legislation, policies and practices, development of statistics and indicators or benchmarks; studies, researches, analyses and surveys; mapping projects, evaluations; the elaboration and publication of guides, reports and educational material; workshops, seminars, experts' meetings and conferences.
- **Training activities**, such as staff exchanges, workshops, seminars, capacity-building actions, train-the-trainer events and the development of online training tools or other training modules.
- **Actions aiming at the creation and improving of networks, mutual learning, cooperation, awareness-raising and dissemination activities**, such as the identification of, and exchanges on, good practices, innovative approaches and experiences; the organisation of peer reviews and mutual learning; the organisation of conferences, seminars, media campaigns, including in the online media, information campaigns, including institutional communication on the political priorities of the Union as far as they relate to the objectives of the Programme; the compilation and publication of materials to disseminate information about the Programme and its results; regular information on EU social and employment policy issues (e.g. newsletters and mailings), the development, operation and maintenance of systems and tools using information and communication technologies, development of web pages or a helpdesk for members.

2.3. Expected outputs and results

The European Commission supports an output-oriented approach, looking at the quality, relevance and sustainability of the results reached. The work plan should therefore clearly demonstrate the organisation's potential and capacity to generate concrete impacts with regard to the objectives and priorities defined in 2.1.

Applicants are invited to:

- clearly identify the main outputs and their contribution to European policy processes relevant to the area of the call (i.e., the European Semester, the future financial instruments, etc.), as well as to demonstrate the added value of their activities and their concrete contribution to policy development in the thematic areas identified by this call;
- provide a clear description of the methodology demonstrating a result-oriented approach aimed at feeding policies in the respective areas; namely, the reflection on the EU Social Policy and, in particular, on the policy initiatives mentioned in section 1.2 above;
- describe their monitoring system and the way in which they use monitoring and external evaluations in order to assess, on the one hand, their overall performance and, on the other hand, the relevance and impact of their outputs.

2.4. Monitoring

The Commission, with the support of an external contractor, will monitor regularly the EaSI Programme. Therefore, beneficiaries will have to transmit qualitative and quantitative

monitoring data on the results of the activities. These will include the extent to which the principles of equality between women and men has been applied, as well as how anti-discrimination considerations, including accessibility issues, have been addressed through the activities. Related templates are attached or will be provided.

In setting up the action, beneficiaries must foresee the necessary funding for monitoring and reporting to the Commission.

As the monitoring of the EaSI Programme involves the collection and further processing of personal data, Regulation (EC) 45/2001, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community Institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data, is applicable.

3. TIMETABLE

	Stages	Date or period
a)	Publication of the call	July 2017
b)	Deadline for submitting proposals	29 September 2017
c)	Evaluation period FPA (indicative)	October/November 2017
d)	Information to applicants FPA (indicative)	November 2017 ¹²
e)	Signature of the FPA (indicative)	December 2017 ¹³
F	Evaluation period annual operating grant (indicative)	November/December 2017
G	Information to applicants annual operating grant (indicative)	January 2018 ¹⁴
h)	Signature of the Specific grant agreement (indicative)	February 2018 ¹⁵
i)	Starting date of the action (indicative)	01 January 2018

3.1. Starting date and duration of the framework partnerships and the operating grants

The actual starting date of the action will either be the first day following the date when the last of the two parties signs the grant agreement, the first day of the month following the date when the last of the two parties signs or a date agreed between the parties.

Applicants should note that if their project is selected, they may receive the grant agreement after the start date of the action that they have indicatively set in the application form. It is therefore advisable to number the months in the work programme instead of indicating the name of the month.

¹² And in any case no later than 6 months after the submission deadline.

¹³ And in any case no later than 3 months after the date of information to applicants.

¹⁴ And in any case no later than 6 months after the submission deadline.

¹⁵ And in any case no later than 3 months after the date of information to applicants.

Any expenditure incurred before the signature of the Grant Agreement will be at the applicant's risk. No expenditure can be incurred before the date of submission of the application.

The duration of the Strategic Plan should be 48 months.

The duration of the action to be covered by the 2018 operating grant should coincide with budgetary (financial) year of the applicant (12 months).

4. AVAILABLE BUDGET

There is no allocation of funds covering the full period 2018—2021.

The indicative amount available for the annual operating grant for 2018, as defined in the 2018 Annual Work Programme of the EaSI Programme, can be found under section 7.1.1.

The funds available for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 will be defined in the corresponding Annual Work Programmes of the EaSI Programme.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be sent not later than the deadline for submission referred to in section 3

Applications (4-year strategic plan 2018-2021 including budget overview, application form including budget for 2018, annual work programme 2018) must be submitted using the electronic submission system available at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim>, and by sending a signed, printed version of the application form and the other afore-mentioned documents by post or courier service (one original dossier and two copies; see also section 10).

Failure to comply with the above requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their project proposal in English in order to facilitate the treatment of the proposals and speed up the evaluation process. It should be noted, however, that proposals in all official languages of the EU will be accepted. In this case, applications should be accompanied by an executive summary in English (see section 12, checklist point 2).

6. FOUR-YEAR FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS (FPA)

The conclusion of framework partnership agreements will help to forge strong and enriching relations with a number of key EU networks whilst affording a more stable and structured environment of mutual benefit for the Commission and the selected organisations.

The framework partnership agreement will set out the conditions governing grants to partners on the basis of a quadrennial strategic plan. The strategic plan will present the vision, the mission and the value of the organization as well as the strategic objectives the organization is committed to implement with European Union's support.

Framework partnership agreements define the respective roles and responsibilities of the Commission and the networks in implementing the partnership. They present the common objectives agreed by the networks and the Commission; the type of activities envisaged; the procedure for awarding a specific agreement for an annual operating grant; the general rights and the obligations of each party under the specific agreements.

This first-level agreement does not constitute an obligation for the Commission to award a specific agreement for an annual operating grant.

6.1. Eligibility Criteria for the Framework Partnership Agreement

6.1.1. Eligibility of the applicants¹⁶

a) Place of establishment

Legal entities properly established and registered in the following countries are eligible as applicant:

- Member States of the European Union
- Iceland and Norway, in accordance with the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement
- Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey¹⁷

Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the Framework Partnership Agreement. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the period of the Framework Partnership Agreement without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British applicants continue to be eligible, British beneficiaries will cease to receive EU funding under any specific grant agreement on the basis of Article II.17.2.2 of General Conditions to the Framework Partnership Agreement and Specific Grant Agreement.

b) Type of entities

To be eligible, applicant organisations must be European-level organisations:

- which are properly constituted and registered legal entities established in one of the EaSI participating countries for at least three years, for area 1;
- which are properly constituted and registered legal entities established in one of the EaSI participating countries, **for area 2;**
- which are non-governmental, non-profit-making, and independent of industry, commercial and business or other conflicting interests, whose members are mainly non-profit organisations;
- whose mission falls under the objectives and scope of the relevant priorities of this call for proposals, namely:

¹⁶ See section 2 of the Financial Guidelines for definitions.

¹⁷ Other candidate and potential candidate countries, would also participate in accordance with the general principles and the general terms and conditions laid down in the framework agreements concluded with them on their participation in Union programmes. However, it is not yet confirmed, therefore applicants and co-applicants from those countries should check their eligibility with the secretariat of the call.

- for **area 1**: the fight against social exclusion, the promotion of social inclusion, the promotion of access to employment and the strengthening of social protection;
- for **area 2**: the demand or supply side of microfinance or social enterprise finance markets;
- which have national member organisations in at least:
 - fifteen (15) Member States of the European Union for **area 1**;
 - twelve (12) Member States of the European Union for **area 2**;
- which are mandated by their members, through a Management Board or other administrative forum, to represent these members at the EU level and to be responsible for the activities of the network.

6.1.2. Eligible activities

Please note that the criteria under the present sub-section (Eligible activities) and under sub-section 4.3.3 (Ineligible activities) will be assessed at the same time as the evaluation of the award criteria indicated in section 4.6 below is performed.

a) Geographical Location

To be eligible, actions must be fully carried out in eligible participating EaSI countries. (see section 6.1.1)

b) Types of activities

The grant will finance inter alia the activities indicated in section 2.2

6.1.3. Ineligible activities

The following types of activities are not eligible for EU funding:

- membership fees to other networks supported by EU grants,
- financial support to third parties as defined in point 3 of the Financial Guidelines;
- sponsorships/scholarships to individuals for their participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses, training courses, etc.;
- activities supporting individual political parties;
- legal actions before national or international courts regardless of their grounds or objectives.

6.2. Exclusion Criteria

The applicant must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in articles 106(1) and 107(1)(b) and (c) of the Financial Regulation

concerning exclusion and rejection from the procedure respectively, using the relevant form attached to the application form available at:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/external/displayWelcome.do>.

6.3. Selection criteria

The selection criteria will enable the Commission to assess the applicant organisation's financial and operational capacity to complete the proposed work programme. Only organisations with the necessary financial and operational capacity may be considered for a FPA.

6.3.1. Financial capacity

Applicants must have access to solid and adequate funding to maintain their activities for the four-year period and to help finance it as necessary.

The applicant's financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents to be submitted with the application:

- a) declaration on honour (including financial capacity to carry out the activity) (see section 12, checklist point 3);
- b) annual balance sheets and profit and loss accounts and the summary balance sheet for the 2 last financial years available (see section 12, checklist point 11 and 13);
- c) for grants exceeding EUR 100 000, an audit report produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last two financial years available (see section 12, checklist point 12);
- d) for newly-established organisations which cannot provide documents b) and c) above, a business plan covering the 4-year period (only for area 2).

6.3.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have a sound administrative and financial management structure, the operational resources (technical, management,) and the professional skills and qualifications needed to successfully complete the proposed 4-year strategic plan, as well as the ability to implement it. The applicants or its members must have a strong track record of competence and experience in the field.

In particular, applicants must have:

a) For area 1:

- carried out projects relating to the subject of the call;
- the necessary operational resources (technical, management) to carry out the action.

The operational capacity of the applicant to complete the proposed action must be confirmed by the following supporting documents to be submitted together with the application:

- a list of the main projects relating to the subject of the call carried out within the last three years (see section 12, checklist point 10);

- the CVs of the proposed person(s) in charge of coordination and of the persons who will perform the main tasks, showing all their relevant professional experience (see section 12, checklist point 9);
- declaration on honour signed by the legal representative (including operational capacity to carry out the activity) (see section 12, checklist point 3).

b) For area 2:

- carried out projects relating to the subject of the call or, for newly-established organisations, the structure of the network foresees a mechanism (e.g. recruitment strategy) to transfer members' competences to the network organisation;
- the necessary operational resources (technical, management) to carry out the action.

The operational capacity of the applicant to complete the proposed action must be confirmed by the following supporting documents to be submitted together with the application:

- a list of the main, most recent projects relating to the subject of the call (see section 12, checklist point 10) or, for newly-established organisations, the list of main projects can be replaced by a description of the competences to be transferred from the members to the network organisation and the mechanism through which this will be done ;
- the CVs of the proposed person(s) in charge of coordination and of the persons who will perform the main tasks, showing all their relevant professional experience (see section 12, checklist point 9) or, for newly-established organisations, CVs for the persons who will perform the main tasks can be replaced by a recruitment plan which includes details concerning the professional profile of the staff to be selected and the timeline for the hiring;
- declaration on honour signed by the legal representative (including operational capacity to carry out the activity) (see section 12, checklist point 3).

If the applicant is considered not to have the required financial or operational capacity, the application as a whole will be rejected.

6.4. Award criteria

The quality of the proposals for the 4-year framework partnership agreement, which fulfil the eligibility and selection criteria, will be assessed according to the extent to which the quadrennial strategy meets the following award criteria:

1) Coherence and consistency with the relevant EaSI objectives and the needs for the period concerned (maximum 20 points).

This criterion will be judged by the extent to which the proposal:

- is in line with the objectives set out in the Regulation establishing the EaSI Programme in particular the Progress axis and the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis
- corresponds to EU policy objectives in one or more of the fields covered by the call (i.e., a clear link should be made with the most recent EU strategic documents).

2) Added value and relevance at European level of the programme proposed, as well its dissemination and availability to all countries involved in the EaSI Programmes (maximum 15 points).

This criterion will be judged by the extent to which the proposal:

- proves its potential to voice the public's concerns from different regions of Europe and to promote them in all EU and national policies;
- includes awareness raising and knowledge-enhancement activities of EU and national policies and detailed solid and concrete actions to disseminate the results of their work.
- contributes to the elaboration and dissemination of best practices or their potential to create practical tools and solutions that address cross-border or Union-wide challenges.

3) Quality and impact of the proposal (maximum 25 points).

This criterion will be judged by the extent to which the proposal:

- is clear, realistic and detailed, in particular as regards the definition of the objectives and their potential to achieve the desired results, and this in a 4 year perspective;
- the expected long-term quantitative and qualitative impact of the activities and outputs on the target groups and/or the general public, and, beyond these groups, policies, strategies or systems at European, national, regional and/or local level;
- the existence of a clear, targeted and appropriate dissemination strategy, which will ensure that the results will reach the target groups and/or the general public, that they are accessible to all including people with disabilities, and that they will be optimally used;
- comprises appropriate means for monitoring and evaluating the activities of the organisation.

4) Efficiency and feasibility of the work organisation (maximum 40 points).

The effective and efficient organisation of work will be judged by the extent to which the applicant:

- outlines its relations with its national members, including arrangements to ensure involvement of member organisations in policy development and policy statements, goal-orientation and planning practices, reporting methods;
- demonstrates its ability to interact with external actors, including key institutions, other NGO networks and relevant constituents when designing and implementing each activity envisaged;
- demonstrates the financial feasibility of the 4-year strategic plan and the appropriateness of the amounts requested in relation to the scale and type of the activities, to the expected results and to the size of the network ;

- demonstrates appropriate allocation of human resources and time schedule.

Applications will be ranked according to the total score awarded **up to a maximum of 100 points**. The proposals with the highest total scores will be recommended for award, on condition that:

- the total score reaches at least 70% of the maximum possible mark for the overall proposal;
- the score for each criterion is at least 50% of the maximum possible mark for that criterion.

7. OPERATING GRANTS FOR 2018

The grants will fund operating costs and those activities of the network which have EU added value and contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the Programme, among others: analytical activities, training activities, mutual learning, cooperation, awareness-raising and dissemination activities.

The eligibility criteria and exclusion criteria detailed respectively in sections 6.1 and 6.2 de facto apply to the operating grants. The assessment of the selection criteria is not necessary for operating grants published in the context of Framework Partnership Agreements.

The Commission will evaluate the annual work programmes and related budgets proposed for 2018 only for those organisations selected as framework partners.

7.1. Available Budget and Co-Financing Rate

7.1.1. Available budget

The total budget earmarked for the EU co-financing of operating grants under this call is estimated at:

- EUR 9.000.000 for area 1
- EUR 1.500.000 for area 2

The EU grant requested should indicatively be:

- between EUR 100.000 and EUR 1.000.000, for area 1
- between EUR 100.000 and EUR 600.000, for area 2

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

7.1.2. Co-Financing Rate

Under this call for proposals, the EU grant may not exceed 80% of the total eligible costs of the action. The applicants must guarantee their co-financing of the remaining amount covered by the applicants' own resources or from other sources other than the European Union budget¹⁸.

7.2. Award Criteria

Annual work programmes from European level organisations whose 4-year action plan satisfies the above eligibility, selection and award criteria will then be assessed according to the following award criteria:

1) Coherence and consistency, i.e. the extent to which the proposed programme (i) takes into consideration the relevant EaSI objectives, (ii) responds appropriately to actual needs for the period concerned, and (iii) ensures coherence between the multiannual and the annual work programmes (maximum 20 points).

2) Added value and relevance at European level of the programme proposed, as well its dissemination and availability to all countries involved in the EaSI programme (maximum 20 points).

3) Quality and impact of the work programme and of each of its modules (maximum 20 points).

4) Efficiency and feasibility of the work organisation and/or work methodology, including a clear description of the allocation of human resources in relation to the individual tasks or activities and the timetable (maximum 20 points).

Particular attention will be paid to:

- clarity of the work programme and each of its modules, including timetable and methodology and in particular its capacity to achieve the planned objectives,

5) Financial quality of the work programme, including the existence of a clear, detailed, and reasonable budget which is coherent with the actions proposed (maximum 20 points).

Particular attention will be paid to:

- the cost effectiveness of the programme.

Applications will be ranked according to the total score awarded **up to a maximum of 100 points**. Taking into account the available budget, the proposals with the highest total scores will be recommended for award, on condition that:

- the total score reaches at least 70% of the maximum possible mark for the overall work programme,

¹⁸ Letters of commitment are required and any third party providing financial contributions to the eligible costs of the action (for further details see section 10, checklist point 5).

- the score for each criterion is at least 50% of the maximum possible mark for that criterion.

8. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant being awarded by the Commission, a grant agreement, drawn up in euros and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiary.

The 2 copies of the original agreement must be signed by the beneficiary and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last.

The Commission may have made relevant corrections and deletion of ineligible costs or activities in the grant agreement sent to the applicant – therefore the applicant should carefully read the whole agreement before signing and returning the copies to the Commission.

The applicable model Grant Agreement(s) is/are published on the Europa website under the relevant call: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en>.

Please note that the award of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

8.1. Sources of Funding

In addition to the obligations with regard to visibility of Union funding foreseen in the General conditions to the grant agreement, beneficiaries must acknowledge in writing that the project has been supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") 2014-2020. In practice, all products (publications, brochures, press releases, videos, CDs, posters and banners, and especially those associated with conferences, seminars and information campaigns) must state the following:

This (publication, conference, video, xxx) has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

The European emblem must appear on every publication or other material produced. Please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/services/visual_identity/pdf/use-emblem_en.pdf

Every publication must include the following:

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.]

9. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Details on financial provisions are laid out in the Financial Guidelines for Applicants and the model Grant Agreement, both published on the Europa website under the relevant call: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en>.

10. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The procedure to submit proposals electronically is explained in point 14 of the "Financial Guidelines for Applicants". Before starting, please read carefully the SWIM user manual:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/calls/pdf/swim_manual_en.pdf

Once the application form is filled in, applicants must submit it both electronically and in hard copy, before the deadline set in section 3 above.

The SWIM electronic application form is available until midnight on the day of the submission deadline. Since the applicants must first submit the form electronically, and then print, sign and send it by post service or hand delivery by the submission deadline, it is the **applicant's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate postal or courier services are locally available on the day of the deadline.**

The hard copy of the proposal must be duly signed and sent in three copies (one marked "original" and two marked "copy"), including all documents listed in section 12, by the deadline (the postmark or the express courier receipt date serving as proof) to the following address:

European Commission
(NOT TO BE OPENED BY CENTRAL MAIL SERVICES)
Call for proposals VP/2017/015 – DG EMPL.C3
J-27 – 02/241
B-1049 Bruxelles - BELGIUM

Please send your proposal by registered post, express courier service or by hand delivery only. Proof of posting or express courier receipt should be kept as it could be requested by the European Commission in cases of doubt regarding the date of submission.

Hand-delivered proposals must be received by the European Commission before 4 p.m. on the date of the deadline for submission as indicated in section 3(b) at the following address:

European Commission
Service central de réception du courrier
(NOT TO BE OPENED BY CENTRAL MAIL SERVICES)
Call for proposals VP/2017/015 – DG EMPL.C3
Avenue du Bourget, 1
B-1140 Evere

At that time the European Commission's Mail Service will provide a signed receipt which should be conserved as proof of delivery.

Additional documents sent by post, by fax or by electronic mail after the deadlines mentioned above will not be considered for evaluation unless requested by the European Commission.

The applicant's attention is also drawn to the fact that incomplete or unsigned forms, hand-written forms and those sent by fax or e-mail will not be taken into consideration.

11. COMMUNICATION

The information contained in the present call document together with the Financial Guidelines for Applicants provides all the information you require to submit an application. Please read it carefully before doing so, paying particular attention to the priorities of the present call.

All enquiries must be made by e-mail only to:

empl-vp-2017-015@ec.europa.eu

For any technical problems please contact: empl-swim-support@ec.europa.eu

Questions may be sent by to the above address no later than 10 days before the deadline for the submission of proposals.

The Commission has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 5 days before the deadline for submission of proposals. To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the Commission will not give a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants, or affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

No individual replies to questions will be sent but all questions together with the answers and other important notices will be published (FAQ in EN) at regular intervals on the Europa website under the relevant call: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en>.

The Commission may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or clerical error in the text of the call for proposals on the mentioned Europa website. It is therefore advisable to consult this website regularly in order to be informed of any updates and of the questions and answers published.

No modification to the proposal is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. If there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process. This is generally done by e-mail. It is entirely the responsibility of applicants to ensure that all contact information provided is accurate and functioning. In case of any change of contact details, please send an e-mail with the application VP reference and the new contact details to empl-vp-2017-015@ec.europa.eu.

In the case of consortia, all communication regarding an application will be done with the lead applicant only, unless there are specific reasons to do otherwise.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed of the reasons for rejection. No information regarding the award procedure will be disclosed until the notification letters have been sent to the beneficiaries.

12. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE APPLICATION AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

12.1. Instructions for the presentation of the application

The application comprises an application form including the budget for the 4-year strategic plan and the budget for the annual work programme, a description of the 4-year strategic plan and the annual work programme plus a series of other required documents (see section 12.2).

The 4-year strategic plan and the annual work programme must be written using the template available in SWIM. The budget must be presented using the application form in SWIM.

In the description of the action, the role of all applicants must be clearly explained.

In case of subcontracting any tasks comprising part of the action (see the Financial Guidelines), the description of the action must provide details on the tasks to be subcontracted and the reasons for doing so and these tasks must be clearly identified in the budget.

12.2. Required documents

The table in annex includes the documents that should be provided including the documents mentioned in 12.1. Except for items 14, 15 and 16¹⁹ which can be submitted only for successful applications, please note that all other documents are necessary either for the admissibility (see section 5) or for the analysis of the eligibility (see section 6.1) or selection criteria (see section 6.3). It also indicates where originals are required. We recommend that applicants use the table as a **checklist** in order to verify compliance with all requirements.

While some information must be supplied using the templates available in the SWIM, other documents may need to be completed and/or attached electronically, usually either administrative documents or free format text descriptions. The SWIM application indicates in each section where SWIM templates should be used as well as which and where free format documents can be uploaded electronically.

Regarding the compilation of the application file, it is recommended to:

- 1) follow the order of documents as listed in the checklist (and attach a ticked checklist as below to the proposal);
- 2) print the documents double-sided;
- 3) use 2-hole folders (do not bind or glue; stapling is acceptable).

¹⁹ Legal entity form, VAT Certificate and Financial identification form.

CHECKLIST PART 1 – Documents to be submitted by the submission deadline

This table includes the documents that must be provided and where originals are required. We strongly recommend using the table as a checklist in order to verify compliance with all requirements. Documents marked with * are obligatorily to be attached online in SWIM as well as being sent in paper version.

No.	Document	Specification and content	The document must be provided by each				Originally signed?	Checkbox
			Applicant	Co-applicant	Affiliated entity	Third party		
1	Signed SWIM application form submitted online + hard copies	The SWIM application form submitted online must be printed and dated and signed by the authorised legal representative and send by hard copies as foreseen in Section 10. The SWIM application form must include the budget for the year 2018. <i>Note: the online form must be electronically submitted before printing. After electronic submission, no further changes to the proposal are permitted.</i>	✓	N/A	N/A	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Executive summary (if necessary)	Executive summary in EN (maximum 2 pages) – free format	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Declaration on honour*	The template is available in SWIM and must be written on the official letterhead of the organisation, bearing the original signature of the authorised legal representative and include the application's reference number generated by SWIM (VP/2017/015/XXXX).	✓	N/A	N/A	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Letter of commitment*	The template is available in SWIM and must specify the amount of any funding provided (for third parties). The letter must be written on the official letterhead of the organisation and bear the original signature of the legal representative. <i>Copies of the original signed letters of commitment are accepted at the submission of the application; originals to be submitted upon request.</i>	--	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Proof of registration	A certificate of official registration or other official document attesting the establishment of the entity (for public bodies: the law, decree, decision etc. establishing the entity).	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Statutes	The articles of association/statutes or equivalent proving the eligibility of the organisation.	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Strategic Plan 2018-2021*	The template is available in SWIM which must be duly completed and submitted electronically together with the online submission form and on paper as well. Separate templates are available for area 1 and 2, please use the appropriate template. The paper version must be identical to the electronic version of the detailed work programme. Applicants are encouraged to submit their project proposal in English.	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Annual work programme 2018*	The template is available in SWIM which must be duly completed and submitted electronically together with the online submission form and on paper as well. Separate templates are available for area 1 and 2, please use the appropriate template. The paper version must be identical to the electronic version of the detailed work programme. Applicants are encouraged to submit their project proposal in English.	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Curricula vitae of key staff	Detailed CVs of the person responsible for managing the action (named in section A.3 of the online application form) and the persons who will perform the main tasks. The CVs should indicate clearly the current employer.	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>

10	List of main projects	A list of the main projects carried out, if any, in the last three years relating to the subject of the call other than those already indicated in the SWIM online application form (section C.1.2) – free format	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Balance sheet & profit and loss accounts	The annual balance sheet and profit & loss accounts for the last two financial years available, including assets and liabilities, specifying the currency used. For newly-established organisations which cannot provide these documents, a business plan (only for area 2)	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Audit report	For operating grant requests exceeding EUR 100,000: an external audit report produced by an approved auditor, certifying the accounts for the last financial year available. The threshold applies to each co-applicant in line with their share of the action budget. The report should be submitted in English, French or German. For newly-established organisations which cannot provide these documents, a business plan (only for area 2)	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Summary balance sheet & profit and loss accounts	The template is available in SWIM and must be signed by the authorised legal representative For newly-established organisations which cannot provide these documents, a business plan (only for area 2)	✓	N/A	N/A	---	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>

CHECKLIST PART 2 – Documents to be submitted only for selected applications, upon request by the European Commission

This table includes the documents that can be submitted only for successful applications.

No.	Document	Specification and content	The document must be provided by each				Originally signed?	Checkbox
			Lead applicant	Co-applicant	Affiliated entity	Third party		
14	Legal entity form	The template is available in SWIM and online (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm) and must be duly signed and dated by the legal representative.	✓	N/A	N/A	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	VAT certificate	A document showing the identification number for tax purposes or the VAT number, if applicable.	✓	N/A	N/A	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Financial identification form	The template is available in SWIM and online (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_en.cfm) and must be duly signed and dated by the account holder and bearing the bank stamp and signature of the bank representative (or a copy of recent bank statement attached).	✓	N/A	N/A	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANNEX I: FINANCIAL GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Annex I is available on the Europa website under the relevant call:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en&callId=422&furtherCalls=yes>