Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)

Call for proposals

Call for proposals for civil society organisations active in protecting and promoting Union values: call to intermediaries (financial support to third parties)

(CERV-2026-CITIZENS-VALUES)

Version 1.0
27 October 2026

HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	27.10.2026	▪ Initial version.	
		▪	
		▪	
		▪	

EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

EACEA.B – Creativity, Citizens, EU Values and Joint Operations
EACEA.B.3 – Citizens and EU Values

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction 4
1. Background 5
2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact 7
Objectives 7
Themes and priorities (scope) 7
Activities that can be funded (scope) 9
Expected impact 16
3. Available budget 16
4. Timetable and deadlines 17
5. Admissibility and documents 17
6. Eligibility 18
Eligible participants (eligible countries) 18
Consortium composition 20
Eligible activities 20
Financial support to third parties 20
Geographic location (target countries) 21
Duration 21
Project budget 21
Ethics and EU values 21
7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion 22
Financial capacity 22
Operational capacity 22
Exclusion 23
8. Evaluation and award procedure 24
9. Award criteria 25
❖ Relevance 25
❖ Quality 26

❖ Impact....26
10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements....27
Starting date and project duration....27
Milestones and deliverables....27
Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount....29
Budget categories and cost eligibility rules....29
Reporting and payment arrangements....31
Prefinancing guarantees....31
Certificates....32
Liability regime for recoveries....32
Provisions concerning the project implementation....32
Other specificities....32
Non-compliance and breach of contract....32
11. How to submit an application....32
12. Help....34
13. Important....35

0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU action grants in the field of Union Values under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Value Programme (CERV). The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2024/2509 (EU Financial Regulation)[1]
- the basic act (CERV Regulation 2021/692[2]).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2026-2027 Work Programme[3] and will be managed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) ('Agency').

Please note that this call is subject to the final adoption of the budget by the EU budgetary authority. In case there are substantial changes, we may have to modify the call (or even cancel it).

The call covers the following topic:

- CERV-2026-CITIZENS-VALUES — Call for proposals for civil society organisations active in protecting and promoting Union values: call to intermediaries[4] (financial support to third parties).

[1] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024).

[2] Regulation (EU) 2021/692 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (OJ L 156, 5.5.2021, p. 1).

[3] Commission Implementing Decision C(2025) 8076 final of 1.12.2025 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2026-2027 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme.

[4] Beneficiary(ies) selected for funding under this call and signatory(ies) of a Grant Agreement with EACEA.

We invite you to read the call documentation carefully, and in particular this Call document, the Model Grant Agreement, the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual and the EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement.

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

- the Call document outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the Online Manual outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant *(including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc)*.

You are also encouraged to visit the Europe for Citizens Programme Projects Results website, the REC Programme results webpage, the Daphne Toolkit and the list of projects funded previously under the 2022 and 2024 Union values calls.

1. Background

As recognised in the EU Strategy for Civil Society[5] and the European Democracy Shield[6], as well as the 2022 report[7] on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights ("the Charter"), the 2023 Rule of Law report[8] and in the Council Conclusions[9] on the role of the civic space in protecting and promoting fundamental rights in the EU, civil society has a key role to play in upholding the values on which the EU is founded: the rule of law, fundamental rights, equality and democracy.

[5] EUR-Lex - 52025DC0790 - EN - EUR-Lex
[6] EUR-Lex - 52025JC0791 - EN - EUR-Lex
[7] EUR-Lex - 52022DC0716 - EN - EUR-Lex
[8] COM(2023) 800 final
[9] https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7388-2023-INIT/en/pdf

According to the 2025 Rule of Law report[10], most Member States continue to ensure an enabling and supportive framework for civil society, and several Member States have taken further steps to further improve civic space at national level.

However, the trend noted in previous reports of increasing challenges for civil society, with new legal restrictions, insufficient funding or physical and verbal attacks, has continued. In some Member States, civil society continues to face serious challenges or systematic restrictions of their operating space.

Many civil society organisations (CSOs) and human rights defenders (HRDs) still report about measures that restrict the environment in which they operate, which include disproportionate and burdensome registration requirements, or difficulties in accessing funding; many CSOs and HRDs face a range of threats and attacks including smear and disinformation campaigns, or strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). Attempts to unduly dissolve associations, the dismantling of dialogue structures, discretionary freezing or cutting of funding or illegal surveillance measures are also raised as a concern by civil society[11].

At the same time, according to a 2024 Eurobarometer survey on the rule of law, 86% of Europeans consider it important that media and civil society organisations across Member States are able to operate freely and without pressure[12]. Maintaining such a free and enabling environment requires continuous monitoring and effective responses when threats or attacks arise. Support for a vibrant civil society therefore remains central to the European Commission's work across all policy areas, a commitment reflected in a range of strategies and policy initiatives.

This commitment has most recently been reaffirmed through the Commission's first-ever EU Strategy for Civil Society. The Strategy aims to strengthen effective and meaningful engagement with civil society as a partner in governance; ensure an open, safe and enabling civic space by providing support and protection to civil society organisations; and support CSOs through adequate, sustainable and transparent funding. The Strategy also recognises that Member States play a crucial role in enabling and protecting civic space at the national, local and grassroots levels, and are often the first to provide concrete support to CSOs that face risks or threats.

The European Commission monitors the respect of the rule of law, including the framework for civil society, in the above-mentioned annual Rule of Law reports[13] as well as the respect of fundamental rights and EU citizenship rights, including through its annual report[14] on the application of the Charter and the Citizenship reports[15]. The European Commission uses the possibilities provided for by the Treaty on the European Union to ensure the respect of EU law in the area of fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Dedicated measures to empower, protect, and promote strong and resilient democracies are further listed in the European Democracy Shield[16]. Building on the robust legal and policy framework anchored in the 2020 European Democracy Action Plan and the 2023 Defence of Democracy Package, the European Democracy Shield encompasses concrete actions to contribute to empowering Europeans to exercise their rights freely, form and express their opinions and to participate in the democratic life of the Union actively and safely. The European Democracy Shield also

[11] COM(2025) 900 final
[11] See for example: https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2026/civic-space-update
[12] https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3224
[13] Annual Rule of Law Cycle - European Commission
[14] Annual reports on the application of the Charter - European Commission
[15] EU citizenship - European Commission
[16] EUR-Lex - 52025JC0791 - EN - EUR-Lex

reinforces measures on the safety of journalists and civil society, including from the point of view of combatting strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP)[17].

In line with these endeavours, the CERV programme contributes to the EU's effort to uphold the rule of law, promote equality[18] and protect fundamental rights and democracy, including by supporting CSOs and a thriving civic space.

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

Objectives

The overall aim of this call for proposals is to protect, promote and raise awareness of fundamental rights and of EU values by supporting local, regional and/or national civil society organisations and increasing their capacity.

The purpose of this call is to select and support a limited number of intermediaries in EU Member States, capable of building the capacities of a large number of CSOs active at local, regional and/or national level in the fields covered by the CERV programme, including through providing them with financial support.

Reach out to grassroot, small, remote, and rural based CSOs: intermediaries should give priority to grassroots, small, remote and rural based organisations, which tend to have more limited capacity and funding sources.

For the purpose of this call, a CSO is to be understood as an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between state authorities and citizens[19]. The EU considers CSOs to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, that are non-partisan and nonviolent, and that promote and protect the fundamental rights and values on which the EU is founded[20].

Themes and priorities (scope)

The priorities of this call are:

– To support, protect and strengthen the capacity and resilience of CSOs to protect and promote Union values including democracy, fundamental rights, equality and the respect of the rule of law;

– To support CSOs in their efforts to protect, promote and raise awareness on fundamental rights and democratic values;

– To support dialogue, transparency, and good governance, also in cases where

[17] Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/758 of 27 April 2022 on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation') and Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation').

[18] The CERV programme also supports the implementation of several European Commission equality strategies, notably: LGBTIQ+ equality strategy 2026 – 2030; Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030; Anti-Racism Strategy 2026–2030; Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021 - 2030); Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030.

[19] Civil Society Organisation, as referred to in the EUR-Lex portal.

[20] See Communication COM/2025/790 final "EU Strategy for Civil Society"; Communication COM(2012) 492 "The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations".

space for civil society is shrinking.

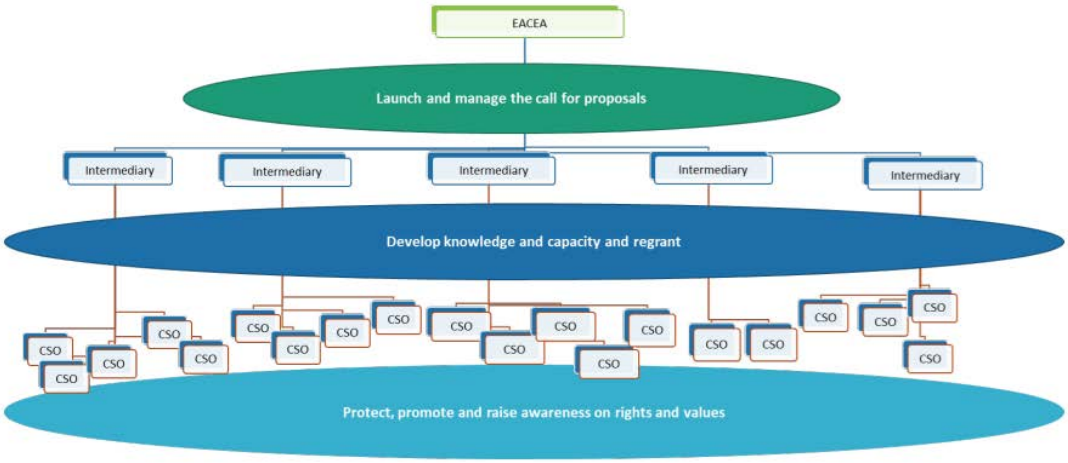
Applications must include the provision of financial support to CSOs (i.e. third parties) active at local, regional, and national level, which promote and protect fundamental rights and Union values, and which carry out activities in the fields covered by the CERV programme.

The EU funding should help to support, protect, empower and build the capacity of independent civil society organisations active in the promotion of values and rights, whose activities help strategically enforce rights under EU law and the Charter (including through advocacy, watchdog and support activities for the proper functioning of a healthy democracy) and help promote, safeguard and raise awareness of rights and Union's values at local, regional, national and transnational level. The EU funding should also support civil society organisations in promoting the implementation of court judgments (European Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights, national courts).

Proposals should be based on and include a thorough assessment of the state of civic space and the landscape[21] for CSOs to operate in the country(ies) covered, the challenges they face, the opportunities they can leverage and their needs.

The assessment of needs should also be based on a gender analysis and, to the extent possible, on an intersectional approach[22]. A gender analysis maps the potential different impacts of a project and its activities on women and men as well as girls and boys in all their diversity. Findings should inform the design and implementation of the project's activities (including all categories of activities as listed in the following section). Hence, activities should be tailored to and accessible to women and men on equal footing[23]. Likewise, when designing the activities' content, the applicant (i.e., intermediary) shall consider the differences in situations and conditions for women and men (or girls and boys).

Below is an indicative representation of the granting scheme:



[21] The 2022 report "Civil society landscape in the European Union" brings together results of an analysis on behalf of the European Commission to gain a better understanding of the civil society landscape in the area of protection and promotion of EU rights and values.
[22] An approach is intersectional when it is based on an acknowledgement of the multiple characteristics and identities of an individual, to analyse and respond to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics.
[23] For instance, to design an equally accessible training programme, applicants should consider the social roles of women and men. When women are the main caregivers, they may find it more difficult to attend training courses lasting until late in the evening or several days in a row.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Funded activities must respect the rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy. Proposals must include both the following categories of activities:

a) Financial support to third parties (CSOs) by intermediaries

b) Capacity building for CSOs by intermediaries.

Other relevant and innovative activities may be considered.

a) Financial support to third parties (CSOs) by intermediaries

Financial support to third parties is considered essential to achieve the objective of this call for proposals and must represent a significant part of the project's budget.

Financial support to third parties includes the following: definition of selection and award criteria, publication of calls for proposals, evaluation of applications, contracting, monitoring of implementation, including risk management, final evaluation of projects and payment.

In compliance with this call for proposals and notably any conditions or restrictions in this section, applicants shall define and describe in their application (Part B, Work package 2: Financial support to third parties):

i. The objectives and the results that the third parties should achieve with the financial support, and which must be in line with the objectives and priorities of this call for proposals.

ii. The maximum amount that may be given and the criteria for determining the exact amount of financial support for each third party.

iii. The types of organisations that may receive financial support.

iv. The different types of activities eligible for financial support based on a fixed list.

v. The procedure for evaluating these third parties and for giving the financial support, the selection and award criteria.

vi. The communication tools and channels through which they will ensure outreach to potential third parties

The mandatory conditions for giving financial support – as per the above points (i) to (vi) – must ensure an objective and transparent selection procedure and will be strictly defined in the grant agreement between the intermediary and the Commission.

a.1) Selection of third parties for financial support: award criteria and evaluation procedure

Applicants (hereafter referred to as the "intermediaries") are expected to describe in their application the procedure and the criteria used to make sure they select the appropriate organisations (i.e. the third parties) in particular as regards the respect of EU values.

In addition, intermediaries are expected to integrate a gender perspective in their own calls for proposals and award criteria for financial support to third parties. As a

minimum the following two considerations should be included: (i) the text of the calls should require applicants to reflect gender differences in their applications; (ii) the award criteria should include the promotion of gender equality as an aspect that is taken into account. For both considerations, intermediaries should keep the level of complexity proportionate to the scope of the call and its objectives.

When launching calls for proposals for the award of financial support, intermediaries may use their own procedures provided these procedures comply with the principles of proportionality, sound financial management, equal treatment, and non-discrimination. While ensuring sound financial management, intermediaries should also aim at reducing administrative burden for third parties.

Intermediaries must ensure transparency and equal treatment through adequate publication of calls for proposals and prevent conflicts of interests throughout the entire award procedure. They will have to clearly demonstrate both these aspects in their application and report on them throughout the project implementation.

Calls for proposals should be published on the intermediaries' project webpage in the EU languages most relevant to the local context; applicants for financial support to third parties should be able to submit applications in the language of the call for proposals. Calls must remain open for at least two months (for single-stage calls and for the first stage of two-stage calls). Open-ended calls under which CSOs may apply at any time are also possible.

Additionally, once a call for financial support to third parties is published on the intermediary's project webpage, it must also be published in the dedicated section of the Funding and Tenders Portal: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls[24].

The application forms and procedures should be adapted to the technical and managerial capacities of the target organisations (i.e. third parties) in the relevant countries. Intermediaries may envisage a two-stage selection process to support CSOs with less experience and capacity to better develop their ideas into fully-fledged projects.

While respecting the principles of equal treatment and absence of conflicts of interests, intermediaries should provide support to applicants in the process of preparing applications (e.g. pre-application information sessions, helpdesk, training, coaching on proposal writing, two-phase calls with face-to-face meetings in between to improve applications, etc.). They should use a uniform evaluation procedure and ensure that proposals are consistently evaluated, independently from which partner in the consortium[25] may manage the call for proposals.

Calls may also constitute capacity building tools: feedback to non-selected applicants may help those organisations improve their future proposals. Appeal mechanisms for unsuccessful proposals should also be set up.

Intermediaries must publish the outcome of the call(s) on their websites, including a brief description of the selected projects (information on organisation, country, grant awarded, project title, duration, as well as a short summary of the project). Indicatively, such information should be published within two months after the submission deadline of the call or equivalent date for open-ended calls.

[24] For more information see the dedicated IT How to page: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/funding-tenders-opportunities/spaces/IT/pages/25559615/Cascade+Funding+Calls+Financial+Support+for+Third+Parties+FSTP.

[25] The intermediary may be a consortium of several organisations, see section 6 Eligibility.

During the evaluation of the proposals, intermediaries must take measures to mitigate the risk of double funding i.e. check if proposals are already benefitting from EU funding directly or through another intermediary.

a.2) Financial support to third parties: budget, duration and location

- The maximum amount of financial support per third party awarded under this call is EUR 60 000.
- The maximum amount of financial support per individual re-granted project is EUR 60 000.
- Applicants for financial support to third parties should not be required to provide any co-financing.
- Applicants for financial support to third parties should be able to use simplified cost options and in particular lump sums.
- Activities carried out by third parties must take place in EU Member States – including overseas countries and territories (OCTs) – and during the grant implementation period. Only costs incurred during that period can be considered eligible.

a.3) Types of organisations / third parties that may receive financial support

To be eligible for financial support, the third party must:

- Be established in a Member State of the European Union, including overseas countries and territories (OCTs).
- Be non-profit making and a civil society organisation.
- Respect EU values as laid down in Art.2 of the Treaty on European Union and the EU Charter of fundamental rights.

Natural persons are NOT eligible.

The third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) (of the intermediary) nor associated partners, nor contractors.

Beneficiaries (i.e. intermediaries) are not eligible to apply to calls for third parties issued by other beneficiaries under this call.

a.4) Activities implemented by the third parties

The following list of activities is not exhaustive; other relevant and innovative activities may be considered.

- Awareness raising on rights and values under the EU treaties and the Charter and outreach to the general public and key actors such as policy and law makers, legal professionals and the judiciary; communication and public information campaigns through social media.
- Organisation of civic platforms and civic dialogues on themes related to EU rights and values (including through the use of digital technologies).
- Coalitions and partnerships among CSOs; coordination and strategic cooperation between CSOs and other stakeholders, public or private sector entities.
- Provision of free advice, watchdog and monitoring activities on EU policies,

rights and values under the EU Treaties and the Charter.

- Promotion of the implementation of adopted laws, regulations, and Court cases.

- Civic participation/lobbying/advocacy to influence policy and contribute to decision-making processes (at national, regional or local level), including revision/update/adoption of policies and legislation.

- Research and analysis aimed at informing policymaking at EU and national level, development of tools and standards to support the promotion and respect for EU values.

- Provision of targeted support services, such as victims support, psychological support to cope with online/offline threats, etc.

Activities on strategic litigation can be supported if limited to capacity building, awareness raising, training, mutual learning and exchange of good practices, and analytical activities.

In summary, under Work package 2, the applicant describes each call for financial support to third parties planned during the project. The description should at minimum cover the following elements:

1. A detailed description of the objectives and the results that the third parties should obtain with the financial support, and

2. Contain the following specifications (as a minimum):

a) the maximum amount of financial support for each third party; this amount may not exceed 60 000 EUR.

b) the criteria for calculating the exact amount of the financial support;

c) the different types of activity that qualify for financial support, based on a closed list;

d) the types of organisations that may receive financial support;

e) the evaluation procedure, including the prevention and mitigation measures for avoiding potential conflicts of interest[26], the selection and the award criteria;

f) the communication tools and channels to ensure outreach to potential third parties; and

g) the measures to ensure compliance of the third parties and their projects with EU values.

b) Capacity building for CSOs (by intermediaries)

Capacity building for CSOs is considered essential to achieve the objective of this call for proposals and must be reflected appropriately in the budget distribution.

In compliance with this call for proposals, applicants must define and describe in their proposal their capacity building strategy and programme, which should aim at supporting and building CSOs resilience, and which may include the following

[26] Among the measures to prevent potential conflicts of interest (CoI), applicants should require evaluators to sign a declaration of absence of CoI.

activities targeting third parties (CSOs):

- Technical and methodological support for the preparation and implementation of activities of CSOs (for instance, coaching and/or helpdesk during the application phase, support on monitoring and reporting, grant management, etc.).

- Thematic training for CSOs on EU law and policies to promote and protect rights and values as enshrined in the Treaties, the Charter and in the applicable international human rights conventions. Thematic training can also include dedicated measures to strengthen the resilience of European democracies and civic space, such as on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings (i.e. strategic lawsuits against public participation).

- Training and building the capacity, sustainability and resilience of CSOs. This may include, but it is not limited to: mentoring networks, coaching to strengthen the strategic thinking and managerial aspects of CSOs; training sessions on technical skills, such as fundraising and EU funding; seminars on communication, including through social media and video-making; capacity building on diversity management and diversity in the work place; capacity development on gender mainstreaming and/or on strengthening policy research and analysis; technical training on digital security and other relevant tools to help protect CSOs in their activities.

- Targeted training and capacity building activities to monitor and react to online or offline threats and attacks (including disinformation and attacks motivated by hate); capacity development for organisational and individual resilience.

- Awareness raising for CSOs on the rule of law culture in the EU and its Member States.

- Promoting and facilitating cooperation, networking and opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange and learning between CSOs and relevant stakeholders, including National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Equality bodies and support services.

- Promoting and building gender expertise within CSOs as a strategic horizontal approach to develop capacities more sustainably.

Capacity building[27] should be adopted as a concept that goes beyond the conventional perception of training.

Capacity building should be carried out as a continuous exercise and linked to the concept of learning organisations. The learning concept involves constant changes and experiments by using feedback of processes and results, transforming individual and organisational practices and values, and adjusting structures to cope with changes.

Therefore, the proposed capacity building programmes and activities should show the added value or cumulative effect of the action to be undertaken. They should consider the importance of working at system and network levels to pool multiple competencies, address complex challenges and recognise different perspectives on social change.

Capacity building programmes and activities should be based on knowledge sharing of partner organisations and employ a wide range of intervention types, which are

[27] Sometimes also referred to as "capacity development", it is defined as "the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time" (OECD).

chosen based on the understanding of and tailored to the local context. Capacity building activities may vary[28] from expert-driven consultancy services and trainings to mentoring, coaching, on-the-job training, and participant-driven peer-to-peer exchanges. The proposed capacity building programmes and activities need to be results oriented and sustainable, and aimed at strengthening organisational ability to make more effective decisions, become more active players and to take full responsibility for the consequences of decisions.

To the extent possible, capacity building programmes should be designed in a participatory and inclusive manner.

While capacity building must be targeted to CSOs (i.e. third parties), applicants (i.e., intermediaries) may consider implementing a limited number of activities that aim at further developing and updating their own capacities in the areas listed above.

Management and control system

The applicant should put in place and describe in their grant application form under section 4.2, Work package 1 'Project and Risk management' a solid management and control system to ensure respect of the principles of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Financial support to third parties carries several risks[29]. Such risks may relate to the effective implementation of third party projects and achievement of their expected outcomes as well as to the reputation of the European Commission (representing the European Union), the intermediaries and the third party projects. Therefore, the intermediaries are required to ensure the prevention, detection, mitigation and reporting on the risks applicable to the implementation of their project and their portfolio of third party projects.

The management and control system shall cover in particular:

- Project management and control set-up.
- The intermediary's procedures for the selection of third party CSOs and for implementing financial support to third parties.
- The intermediary's procedure for effective cooperation with and support of the third party CSOs with the view of the successful implementation of third party projects.
- The intermediary's procedures to monitor the third party projects; in which way and how frequently they propose to monitor third parties' projects, e.g. visit projects 'in the field' and offer advice and support, or phone or video calls; whether they will use financial, risk and/or other criteria for reinforced monitoring; and, what standard thresholds will apply for reinforced monitoring.
- The intermediary's system for preventing, detecting, mitigating, reporting on and remedying suspected or actual cases of conflict of interests in the selection procedures.
- The intermediary's system for preventing, mitigating, detecting, reporting on

[28] The list is indicative and not exhaustive.

[29] The concept of risk reflects an event that has a potentially negative impact, and the possibility that such an event will occur and adversely affects the organisation's assets, activities and operations. Risk management focuses on anticipating what might not go to plan and putting in place actions to reduce uncertainty to a tolerable level. This should involve a continuous process of assessing risks, reducing the potential that an adverse event will occur, and putting steps in place to deal with any event that does occur.

and remedying suspected or actual cases of irregularities and frauds, and other cases such as those described in art. 136 of the EU Financial Regulation[30].

- The intermediary's system for preventing, mitigating, detecting, reporting on and remedying risks to the effective implementation of the project and the achievement of its expected outcomes.

- The intermediary's system for preventing, mitigating, detecting, reporting on and remedying breaches of compliance with EU Values and highest ethical standards.

- The intermediary's system for preventing, mitigating, detecting, reporting on and remedying reputational risks.

As regards reputational risks linked to the non-respect of EU values by the CSOs/third parties, the intermediary must demonstrate in the grant application form how they plan to ensure that their grantees have not:

– breached Union values.

– promoted values contradictory to Union values.

– engaged into activities contradictory to Union values.

In addition, the intermediary must include in their calls for proposals a requirement that the beneficiaries sign a Declaration of Honour to this effect. The declaration should state that breaches will make the (potential) beneficiary liable to exclusion, administrative sanctions, or cancellation of funding.

Intermediaries must carry out a due diligence process whenever they have reason to doubt that an organisation does/will not comply with its stated objectives[31]. The intermediary should explain how their evaluation procedures will incorporate the expertise necessary to ensure that only organisations defending EU values will qualify for grants.

The European Commission recognises that intermediaries apply their own procedures for financial support to third parties including risk management procedures, as appropriate to the specificity of their organisation and their calls, with the view of minimising risk notably in the context of third party projects. The European Commission might provide intermediaries during project implementation with further guidance on risk management especially related to financial support to third parties.

For examples and good practices in the area of risk management and control of third party project selection and monitoring, please refer to the document entitled "Framework for monitoring and control activities under the Union Values call" available under this link[32].

[30] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202402509

[31] This could be carried before or after the selection process, but before signing the grant agreement. It needs to be made clear in the call for proposals at which point this may occur and that eventual signature of a grant agreement may be subject to this due diligence process, including requests for additional information to facilitate transparency. The process could include a review of the CSOs' online presence, including their social media channels and social media channels of their key personnel and trustees/board members, and verification of other sources available in their Member State, including annual reports, state registers, etc., as well as engaging on a dialogue with the concerned organisations.

[32] The document is available at this link.

Reporting

The applicant should put in place and describe in their grant application form a reporting mechanism that allows to meet the following requirements:

- Report back to the European Commission on the achievement of outputs and outcomes of the project as well as on irregularities or emerging risks[33] related to the project or third party projects, especially those that may lead to reputational damage.
- Submit standardised information related to each third party CSO project (see section 10 Milestones & deliverables).
- Collect and review third party CSO project implementation and completion reports.
- Respond to ad hoc requests for information from the European Commission (including on third party projects).
- Report back on the number of third party projects, country of implementation, as well as objectives tackled and amounts re-granted.
- Identify and report back on projects considered as promising/best practices.
- Establishing indicators, baselines and targets for measuring the impact of their project (see next section).

Expected impact

- Increased promotion and public awareness of Union values and the fundamental rights of the Charter at local, regional and national level.
- Strengthened capacity of CSOs to protect and promote Union values and fundamental rights, including at grassroots level and among vulnerable groups.
- Increased resilience and capacity of CSOs to conduct their work effectively and sustainably.
- Increased protection and targeted assistance for CSOs and human rights defenders at risk of facing online and offline threats and attacks.
- Improved advocacy and watchdog skills for CSOs.
- A more supportive and protective environment for CSOs.
- Increased involvement of CSOs in policy-making processes at all governance levels.
- Strengthened cross-border and regional cooperation within civil society.

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is EUR 114 000 000.

The availability of the call budget still depends on the final adoption of the budget 2027 by the EU budgetary authority.

[33] For example, set-backs in project implementation vis-a-vis agreed timeframe, serious mismanagement or fraud of the funds, conflict of interest in the selection process, failure of calls for financial support to third parties, negative media coverage related to projects or activities, etc.

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	27 October 2026
Deadline for submission:	24 February 2027 – 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)
Evaluation:	March-May 2027
Information on evaluation results:	August 2027
GA signature:	November 2027

5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the call deadline *(see timetable section 4)*.

Proposals must be submitted electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the Calls for proposals section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be complete and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project *(to be filled in directly online)*
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project *(template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*
- Part C (KPI tool) — contains additional project data regarding the project's contribution to EU programme key performance indicators *(to be filled in directly online; all sections to be completed)*
- mandatory annexes and supporting documents *(templates to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*:
  - CVs (standard) of core project team
  - activity reports of last year of all applicants (for proposals submitted by a consortium, an activity report is required for each applicant. Reports should be compiled into one single document)

- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) *(template available in Part B)*
- for participants with activities involving children (below the age of 18): child protection policy covering the four areas described in the Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards (for private bodies: copy of their policy; for public bodies: child protection policy declaration)

⚠ Please note that an annual activity report is NOT a financial audit report or balance sheet, but a report highlighting the activities and projects of your organisation.

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

Your application must be readable, accessible and printable (please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded).

Proposals are limited to maximum 70 pages (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible,

a) the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e. EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
- be non-profit-making;
- be a civil society organisation;
- All applicants (if proposal submitted by a consortium) must be legal entities formally established in one of the eligible countries.

b) the applicant or the consortium must fulfil all the following:

- have recent proven experience of at least 3 years in implementing CSO capacity building activities;
- have recent proven experience in awarding and managing grants to CSOs;

If the proposal is submitted by a consortium, the consortium must fulfil both conditions listed above. This means that these conditions can be fulfilled either by one single member of the consortium or by different members of that consortium, responsible for capacity building or awarding and managing

financial support to third parties.

c) the EU grant applied for cannot be lower than EUR 2 500 000 or higher than EUR 6 000 000.

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the Participant Register — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc *(see section 13)*.

Specific cases and definitions

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible.

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

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons[34].

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

Programme Contact Points — Are NOT eligible under this call for proposals.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'[35]. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[36]. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092[37]. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc). Currently such measures are in place for Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16 December 2022).

[34] See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

[35] For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

[36] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map.

[37] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

For more information, *see* *Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 1 applicant (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities).

Eligible activities

Applications will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds wholly (or at least in part) to the topic description for which it is submitted.

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

The following activities are not considered as eligible for funding under this call:

- activities that may be contradictory with the interests of the EU;
- activities that would be against EU fundamental values;
- activities which include proselytising activities;
- activities supporting directly political parties.

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

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities *(such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc)*. Projects must also respect EU values and European Commission policy regarding reputational matters (*e.g. activities involving capacity building, policy support, awareness raising, communication, dissemination, etc*)[38].

Financial support to third parties

Financial support to third parties is allowed for grants under the conditions set out under section 2 above.

When the applicant does not have partners established in the FSTP target country or countries, it is expected to demonstrate country expertise and suitable monitoring mechanisms in order to be able to perform a needs assessment, promote the calls and monitor FSTP project implementation in these countries.

Under this Call, financial support to third parties is considered essential and mandatory in all projects. Your project application must notably clearly specify why financial support to third parties is needed, how it will be managed and provide a list of the different types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support. The proposal must also clearly describe the results to be obtained[39].

[38] See, for instance, Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy.
[39] Please also refer to the FSTP good practices guidance (guidance_fstp-good-practices_en.pdf)/

Geographic location (target countries)

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

Duration

Projects should have a duration of minimum 36 and maximum 48 months.

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

Project budget

Project budgets (requested grant amount) are expected to range between EUR 2 500 000 and EUR 6 000 000 per project.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

Ethics and EU values

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards
- EU values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and
- other applicable EU, international and national law (including the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679).

Projects must seek to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming in accordance with the Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit. Project activities should contribute to the equal empowerment of women and men in all their diversity, ensuring that that they achieve their full potential and enjoy the same rights. They should also seek to reduce levels of discrimination suffered by particular groups (as well as those at risk of multiple discrimination) and to improve equality outcomes for individuals. Proposals should integrate gender and non-discrimination considerations in proposals and target a gender-balanced representation in project teams and activities. It is also important that individual data collected by the beneficiaries are broken down by sex *(sex-disaggregated data)*, disability or age whenever possible.

Applicants must show in their application that they respect ethical principles and EU values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article of the 21 EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Participants with activities involving children must moreover have a child protection policy covering the four areas described in the Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards. This policy must be available online and transparent to everyone who comes in contact with the organisation. It must include clear information about the recruitment of staff (including trainees and volunteers) and include background checks (vetting). It must also include clear procedures and rules to staff, including reporting rules, and continuous training.

The intermediaries are responsible for ensuring that third party CSOs that have direct contact with children respect relevant child protection standards.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

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

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

The check will normally be done for coordinators, except:

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

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

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

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

or

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

For more information, *see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

Operational capacity

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

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

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following information:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- applicants' activity reports of last year
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) *(template available in Part B)*.

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

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an EU exclusion decision or in one of the following exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate[40]:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct[41] (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

[40] See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

[41] 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

– intentionally and without proper justification resisted[42] an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that[43]:

– during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information

– they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

8. Evaluation and award procedure

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

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

For proposals with the same score a priority order will be determined according to the following approach:

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

The ex aequo proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Quality'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (evaluation result letter). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

⚠ No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc*.

Grant preparation will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Full compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a complaint (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please

[42] 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

[43] See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending will be considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access *(see also Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions)*. Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

The award criteria for this call are as follows:

- *Relevance:* (40 points)

  - independence of the applicant's or the consortium's organisational structure(s) from government, public authorities, and political, religious or commercial interests. Independence is considered instrumental to achieve the objectives of the call and guarantee the credibility of the financial support to third parties. When assessing applicants' independence, the following elements are taken into consideration: operational independence, accountability, transparency, financial and personal independence (relevant information regarding this point, including links to annexes to the application, have to be included in section 2.2 Consortium set-up of the application form).

Extent to which the **applicant's regular activities and mission**:

- match the objectives and priorities of EU support towards increased capacity development of CSOs in the EU;
- are relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) in one or more EU Member States;
- show the capacity of the applicant to reach out to the most remote regions and marginalised or vulnerable groups.

Extent to which the proposal:

- matches the priorities and objectives of the call;
- presents a high-quality overview and analysis of the CSOs sector in the target country(ies), region(s), including the identification of key challenges clearly defined needs and robust needs assessment;
- is relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) (including synergy with other development initiatives, avoidance of duplication with existing EU capacity development support);
- clearly defines target groups, with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account.

Extent to which the planned measures in particular, capacity building and financial support to third parties:

- are balanced, well-proportioned and well-structured and relevant to address the needs;
- contribute to the EU strategic and legislative context.

❖ *Quality:* (40 points)

- clarity and consistency of the project;
- logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept);
- strategy to reach out to a large number of grass-root, small CSOs and CSOs in rural and remote areas;
- approach to evaluation and selection of third party CSOs to be funded (including how to ensure absence of conflict of interest and that only organisations defending EU values will qualify for grants);
- approach to reduce administrative burden on CSOs/ third parties and facilitate implementation of CSOs/third parties projects;
- methodology for implementing the project with gender perspective being appropriately take into account (organisation of work, timetable, allocation of resources and distribution of tasks between partners);
- risk control & risk management, monitoring and evaluation;
- operational capacity to implement the project;
- strategy to ensure that ethical issues are addressed;
- feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame;
- financial feasibility (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation);
- cost-effectiveness (best value for money).

❖ *Impact:* (20 points)

- ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public;
- appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; potential for a positive multiplier effect;
- sustainability of results after EU funding ends.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	25	40
Quality	n/a	40
Impact	n/a	20
Overall (pass) scores	70	100

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance': 25/40 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance' AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

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

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

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

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

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 1)*. The starting date should be after grant signature (normally within 1 and 6 months). A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: *see section 6 above*.

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement. The project activities must be organised in the following Work Packages (WP):

WP 1 – Project and risk management (mandatory)

WP 2 – Financial support to third parties (mandatory)

WP 3 – Capacity building (mandatory)

WP 4 – Communication and dissemination, including project webpage (mandatory)

Additional work packages may be added.

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

– For WP 1 - Project and risk management, beneficiaries will have to provide as a deliverable:

- Risk management and monitoring plan. A comprehensive document summarising the consortium's risk management and monitoring strategy. It should outline procedures, distribution of responsibilities, etc. (see section 2, 'Management and Control System') in line with the information provided under section 2.7 and 4.2 (Work package 1, 'Project and risk management') in the application form. In addition, it should describe the system for monitoring the implementation of thirdparty projects (desk monitoring, onsite monitoring visits, tools etc). The approval of this deliverable is a prerequisite to the publication of FSTP calls.

– For WP 2 - Financial Support to third parties, beneficiaries will have to provide the following deliverables:

– Pre-information sheet. Each call constitutes a separate deliverable and should be encoded as such. In addition, for each call to be authorised for publication, beneficiaries (intermediaries) have to fill in a pre-information sheet based on a standard template, provided by the Granting Authority. The purpose is to demonstrate that the call meets the six mandatory conditions for Financial Support to Third Parties set out in the Financial Regulation (see section 2 a) of this Call). The pre-information sheet is to be submitted for approval between two and four weeks prior the planned publication date of the call[44]. Its approval is subject to the approval of the Risk Management and Monitoring Plan.

– Call evaluation summary. Once the beneficiary (intermediary) published the outcome of the call(s) on their website, they submit a call evaluation summary using a standard template, provided by the Granting Authority. The summary provides key data, including number of proposals received, number of eligible proposals, cumulative amount of the requested grants, list of proposals awarded, list of proposals below the funding threshold, number of complaints, list of identified high risk projects, etc.

For two stages calls, a summary is provided after each stage, and for open ended calls a summary is due every six months.

The following information on third party projects shall be published on the beneficiary's website: organisation, country, grant awarded, project title and duration.

– For WP 3 - Capacity building, beneficiaries will have to provide as a deliverable:

– Survey summary results. Beneficiaries (intermediaries) will have to ask attendees to their events to participate in the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values. This survey allows the Granting Authority to closely monitor training, mutual learning, and awareness-raising events. The beneficiaries will receive a weblink to the survey to then be forwarded to the attendees. Beneficiaries will have access to the survey results for their project and they can use them for their project evaluation. The beneficiary (intermediary) will also submit to the Granting Authority a short information report (around two pages) on the capacity building activities that took place, e.g., how many people attended, how many participated to the survey, and any other useful background information. The Granting Authority will aggregate the results of all the projects financed under the CERV programme.

– For WP 4 - Communication and dissemination, beneficiaries will have to provide as a deliverable:

– Impact report. A two-to-five-page report (indicative length), summarising the actual impact of the project activities in line with the requirements set out in the call for proposals section 2 'Expected impact'. Part of the Impact Report should also highlight best practices/success stories of Financial Support to Third Parties (including promotional audiovisual material).

[44] Intermediaries must ensure that their contractual obligations under Articles 12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping) also apply to the third parties receiving the support (recipients). They must also ensure that the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g. granting Authority, OLAF, Court of Auditors (ECA), etc) can exercise their rights also towards the recipients. Please see Model Grant Agreement Art. 9.4.

– The beneficiary (intermediary) should also foresee adequate resources to participate in networking, cooperation, mutual learning and peer review activities possibly in the form of an online community, to:

- identify and share experience and good practices,
- identify common implementation issues,
- take stock of and learn from activities implemented in a specific country or region,
- collect success stories for the promotion of the action and the CERV programme,
- provide policy feedback,
- advertise project events,
- serve as a capacity-building platform through webinars and thematic online meetings for intermediaries on topics of common interest,
- serve as a repository for useful non sensitive documents.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters *(maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc)* will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5)*.

Project budget (requested grant amount): *see section 6 above*.

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

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (94%).

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

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

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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

Budget categories for this call:

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.5 Volunteers
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs

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

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost[45]: No
  - Volunteers' unit cost[46]: Yes (without indirect costs)
- travel and subsistence unit cost[47]: Yes[48]
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: allowed for grants; maximum amount per third party EUR 60 000,
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers' costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible/non-refundable VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - kick-off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels, and accommodation and subsistence for maximum two nights only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed)
  - Thematic cluster meetings: costs for thematic cluster meetings organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels, and accommodation and subsistence for maximum two nights per meeting), only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement.

---

45 Commission Decision of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7115).

46 Commission Decision of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646).

47 Commission Decision of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

48 See EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6 on eligible costs: travel and subsistence costs must be declared using the unit cost according to Annex 2a of the grant agreement. If a particular instance of travel, accommodation or subsistence in the action is not covered by one of the unit costs mentioned in Decision C(2021)35 the actual costs may be used.

- project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the beneficiaries' (i.e. intermediaries) websites, webpages, platforms or social media accounts are eligible;
- cost linked to independent financial audit of third party projects.
- ⚠ Volunteers' costs — Volunteers' costs are not a classic cost category. There are no costs because volunteers work for free, but they may nonetheless be added to the budget in the form of a prefixed unit cost (per volunteer) and thus allow you to benefit from the volunteers' work for the grant (by increasing the amount of reimbursement up to 100% of the normal costs, i.e. cost categories other than volunteers). More information is available in the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.A.5.

Reporting and payment arrangements

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

After grant signature, you will normally receive a prefinancing to start working on the project (float of normally 40% of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

In addition, every 12 months you will be expected to submit a periodic report linked to payment. The reporting language is English.

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

⚠ Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if you or one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement *(see art 22)*.

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees are normally requested from the coordinator, for the consortium. They must be provided during grant preparation, in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

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

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement *(art 23)*.

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

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

or

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

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Other specificities

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

For more information, *see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement*.

11. How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a 2-step process:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to create an EU Login user account.

Once you have an EULogin account, you can register your organisation in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) submit the proposal

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the Calls for proposals section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners[49]) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Part C containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online.
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the page limits *(see section 5)*; excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the right category in the Submission System, otherwise the proposal may be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted before the call deadline (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a confirmation e-mail (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the IT Helpdesk webform, explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the Online Manual. The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

[49] See section 13 for more information on consortium roles and the roles of coordinator, affiliated entities and associated partners.

Guidance on the use of generative AI tools for the preparation of the proposal

When considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised.

Specifically, applicants are required to:

• Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.

• Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations, including those generated by the AI tool. Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.

• Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarizing someone else's work.

• Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge.

12. Help

As far as possible, *please try to find the answers you need yourself*, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- Online Manual
- FAQs on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- Portal FAQ (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates, including an invitation to the info session for applicants after the opening of the call (if any). (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the IT Helpdesk.

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: EACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu.

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

13. Important

IMPORTANT

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

  The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as beneficiaries or affiliated entities; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. Associated partners and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). Subcontracting should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.
- Coordinator — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- Affiliated entities — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any). If affiliated entities participate in your project, please do not forget to provide documents demonstrating their affiliation link to your organisation as part of your application.
- Associated partners — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- Consortium agreement — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- Balanced project budget — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully *(e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc)*. You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).

- Completed/ongoing projects — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).

- No-profit rule — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.

- No cumulation of funding/no double funding — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants; projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).

- Combination with EU operating grants — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E)*.

- Multiple proposals — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them).

  Organisations may participate in several proposals.

  BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).

- Resubmission — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.

- Rejection — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be rejected. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.

- Cancellation — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.

- Language — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*).

- Transparency — In accordance with Article 38 of the EU Financial Regulation, information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the Europa website.

  This includes:

  – beneficiary names
  – beneficiary addresses
  – the purpose for which the grant was awarded
  – the maximum amount awarded

  The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- Data protection — The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement.