



Contracting Authority: European Commission

Thematic programme on Global Challenges (Prosperity) for 2022-2023 part 1

Strengthening the role of Civil Society in Digital multilateral and multistakeholder models (CSDM3)

Guidelines for grant applicants

Budget line: 14.020242

Reference:

EuropeAid/175439/DH/ACT/Multi

Deadline for submission¹ of concept notes:

14/02/2023 at 12:00 (Brussels date and time)

(in order to convert to local time click [here](#)²)

¹ Online submission via PROSPECT is mandatory for this call for proposals (see Section 2.2.2). In PROSPECT all dates and times are expressed in Brussels time. Applicants should note that the IT support is open Monday to Friday from 08:30 to 18:30 Brussels time (except during European Commission public holidays in Belgium as published in the Official Journal). Applicants should take note of the weekly maintenance hours mentioned in the [PROSPECT user manual](#).

² An example of a time converter tool available online: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>

NOTICE

This is a restricted call for proposals. In the first instance, only concept notes (Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note) must be submitted for evaluation. Thereafter, lead applicants who have been pre-selected will be invited to submit a full application (Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed ‘declaration by the lead applicant’ sent together with the full application.

To apply to this call for proposals organisations must register in PADOR and submit their application in PROSPECT (see section 2.2.2 of the guidelines). The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations through a new panel of functionalities such as the on-line submission and the possibility to follow up online the status of their application.

All organisations may find more information regarding PROSPECT in the [user’s manual](#) and the [e-learning videos](#). You may also contact our technical support team via the online support form in PROSPECT³.

Preparation:

A functional mailbox specifically dedicated to this call has been set up: INTPA-175439@ec.europa.eu. This functional mailbox shall be used exclusively for sending clarification requests within the deadlines set in section 2.5.2 of these guidelines. The Contracting Authority reserves the right to close this mailbox without prior notice once this call for proposals is closed and not to reply to requests, which do not fall under one of the afore-mentioned category.

³ If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via email: INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu

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1. STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DIGITAL MULTILATERAL AND MULTISTAKEHOLDER MODELS (CSDM3)

1.1. BACKGROUND

Civil society is an important part of the European Union (EU) digital policy. People are at the centre of digital transformation, EU digital policy is based on people's rights protection, support of the democracy and fair, responsible and secure use of digital technologies. The EU has been actively promoting these values across the globe; yet, more active involvement of civil society is clearly needed.

There are obvious differences in terms of civil society organisations' (CSOs) readiness to take part at international digital fora. While we get used to active involvement of so called 'Global North'⁴ CSOs in actively shaping digital policy, the 'Global South'⁵ CSOs still struggle to be more visible and have their voice heard louder.

The European Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe – (NDICI-Global Europe) focuses on closer engagement with civil society; The Global Gateway⁶ - a European strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links – delivered and developed through Team Europe initiatives (incl. digital sector) also foresees a dialogue with civil society to ensure a fully inclusive approach is taken.

This grant is aimed at strengthening the capacities of CSOs (digital advocacy groups, grassroots, think tanks, digital associations and NGOs) dealing with open internet and digital rights to increase their capabilities and capacities to become more influential on global arena. These organisations are expected to be capable to strengthen their participation at International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and other organisations' working formats (groups, open cooperation platforms, events, etc.).

The action is aimed at CSOs which are dealing in the field of Open Internet Governance, and digital rights. There is a limited CSOs (global) capacity in this field to draft proposals, formulate position papers, provide non-papers, reports, reviews, organise events, maintain qualitative dialogue and report back on the outcomes of the main digital questions. The EU is promoting the development of Open Internet Governance at the global level and this action is a part of the global strategy.

This action is foreseen in the Action Document for Multilateralism and Digitalisation, Financed under the NDICI-Global Europe.

Note on terminology

Within the context of this call for proposals, we understand **CSO** as it is described in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 2021/947: 'civil society organisation' means a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates, which may vary over time and across institutions and countries, and includes all non-State, not-for-profit independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise the pursuit of shared objectives and

⁴ 'Global North' is understood in these guidelines as a concept to describe a grouping of countries along socio-economic and political characteristics that could be considered as developed countries. In the context of these guidelines, 'Global North' countries encompass EU Member States, European Economic Area Member States and IPA III Beneficiaries. See annex M for exhaustive lists.

⁵ "Global South" is understood in these guidelines as a concept to describe a grouping of countries along socio-economic and political characteristics that could be considered as developing countries mainly in regions within Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. In the context of these guidelines, 'Global South' encompass 'Least developed' and 'Lower Middle Income' Countries as provided in the DAC List of ODA Recipients, see: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2022-23-flows.pdf> See annex M for exhaustive lists.

⁶ See: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/joint_communication_global_gateway.pdf

ideals, including political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic, and which operate at local, national, regional or international levels, and which comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations.

Open internet is a concept that conveys the idea of an internet that is inclusive, interoperable, and enables competition, innovation, development and human rights. Four main dimensions of internet openness⁷ are technical openness, economic openness, social openness and other cross-cutting elements of openness. Each dimension includes further components, such as interoperability and accessibility in the case of technical openness, regulatory transparency in the case of economic openness, or the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the case of social openness. Other elements of openness, which do not fit in the first three categories include digital security, multilingualism, user empowerment over the use of their personal data and being able to control the information they receive online, inclusive governance shaping the way the internet is used and evolves, and the distributed control and coordination of the different components that make the internet work.

Internet governance means the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet.⁸

Human centric approach means that technologies works for people and protect fundamental rights.

Human centred digital transition means a set of digital principles such as access for all to the Internet; a secure online space; the right to learn digital skills; algorithms that respect people; the protection of children online and other principles that complement the legal rights that already protect Europeans online (like the protection of personal data or the freedom of expression).⁹

Digital for development is understood in this document as a development of digital ecosystems geared towards EU digital policy embedded in AI Act¹⁰, GDPR¹¹, Data Act¹², DSA¹³, DMA¹⁴, and Declaration on Digital rights and Principles¹⁵, Declaration for the Future of Internet¹⁶, Communication: "2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade"¹⁷.

Multistakeholder fora – in the context of these guidelines, ‘fora’ should be understood as relevant (to the actions of the guidelines) formats, events, working groups, advisory groups, committees and other structures of IETF, IGF, ICANN and ITU. Such information could be found on the official websites of these organisations, therefore it is not provided in the guidelines. Applicants are expected to choose relevant fora for actions implementation and to explain/justify their proposed engagement.

⁷ Source: OECD; Economic and Social Benefits of Internet Openness (2016). https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/economic-and-social-benefits-of-internet-openness_5jlwqf2r97g5-en

⁸ [Internet Governance \(un.org\)](#)

⁹ [Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles | Shaping Europe’s digital future \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁰ [EUR-Lex - 52021PC0206 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹¹ [EUR-Lex - 32016R0679 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹² [Data Act: measures for a fair and innovative data economy \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹³ [The Digital Services Act: ensuring a safe and accountable online environment | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁴ [The Digital Markets Act: ensuring fair and open digital markets | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁵ [Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles | Shaping Europe’s digital future \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁶ [Declaration for the Future of the Internet \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁷ [Europe’s Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is to promote EU values-based human-centric digital transformation through the multilateral system, whilst supporting the EU's vision of multi-stakeholderism as a model to help shaping the global narrative.

The **specific objectives** of this call for proposals are:

- to enhance in-depth long-term participation and cooperation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in multilateral- and multistakeholder- fora, with regards to digital for development, Internet Governance, digital rights and principles, standards setting and inclusion; and
- to enhance “Global-North - Global-South” cooperation of CSOs, inter alia also targeting women's organisations and gender equality issues and strengthening CSO capacities to allow more efficient engagement on national, regional and global scale.

The **priorities** of this call for proposals are:

1. To establish efficient CSO cooperation with ITU, IETF, ICANN, IGF and other multistakeholder/multilateral digital organisations;
2. To strengthen CSOs role in digital for development, Internet Governance, digital rights and principles, and standards setting;
3. To establish, enable and promote synergies of Global South and Global North CSOs' cooperation in digital domain.

1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 7,500,000**. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Indicative allocation of funds by lot:

Lot 1 – Enhanced participation and cooperation of CSOs in/with multilateral and multistakeholder organisations and fora in the digital domain.

Total available: **EUR 4,000,000**.

Lot 2 – “Global-North-Global-South” cooperation of CSOs in the digital domain.

Total available: **EUR 3,500,000**.

If the allocation indicated for a specific lot cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to the other lot.

Size of grants

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must not exceed the below maximum amounts:

- **Lot 1** : amount: EUR 4,000,000
- **Lot 2** : amount: EUR 3,500,000

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must not exceed the below maximum percentage of total eligible costs of the action:

- Maximum percentage: 95 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.4).

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union.

In line with section 6.3.10. of the Practical Guide (PRAG 2021.1), neither the beneficiaries (coordinator/lead applicant and co-beneficiaries/co-applicants) nor affiliated entities can produce a profit within the framework of the action. In the context of this call, profit is defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs approved by the Contracting Authority when the request for payment of the balance is made. Income generated by the action may be accepted as co-financing.

In case a profit is made, the Contracting Authority has the right to reduce the final amount of the grant by the percentage of the profit corresponding to the final European Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred approved by the Contracting Authority (thus excluding other eligible costs declared on a simplified cost option basis), except in the cases listed in section 6.3.10 of the PRAG.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?locale=en>).¹⁸

2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

(1) the actors (2.1.1). and (2.1.2):

- The **'lead applicant'**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
- if any, its **co-applicant(s) (where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as 'applicant(s)')**;
- and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s);

(2) the actions (2.1.3.):

- actions for which a grant may be awarded;

(3) the costs (2.1.4.):

- types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant.

¹⁸ Note that a lead applicant (i.e. a coordinator) whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission and who is awarded a grant will not sign the standard grant contract published with these guidelines but a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. All references in these guidelines and other documents related to this call to the standard grant contract shall in this case be understood as referring to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement template.

2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))

Lead applicant

(1) In order to be eligible for a grant, the lead applicant must:

- be a legal person **and**
- be non-profit-making **and**
- be a non-governmental civil society organisation (CSO)¹⁹ (please note that the Evaluation Committee will take into consideration the different legal forms of registration in the respective countries²⁰, for which the applicant should attach a justification)

Please note that, in the framework of this call for proposals, international organisations are **not** eligible.

and

- be established in^{21 22 23} :
 1. EU Member States, beneficiaries listed in the relevant Annex to the IPA III Regulation and contracting parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area;
 2. Neighbourhood partner countries when the relevant procedure takes place in the context of the programmes referred to in Annex I of the NDICI-Global Europe regulation in which it participates;

¹⁹ For the purpose of this call for proposals, the EU considers CSOs to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations. They include membership-based, cause-based and service-oriented CSOs. Among them, non-governmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, community – based organisations, advocacy organisations, organisations representing national and/or ethnic minorities, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations in partner countries, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations representing person with disabilities, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, women's and youth organisations environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, education, institutions, churches and religious associations and communities, the media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations.

²⁰ Examples of different legal forms are: Trust, Trust with limited liability, Company with limited liability, Private company limited by share, Association, Charitable organisations, Society, Non-profit corporation, Non-profit ecclesiastic legal personality, Institute of research, etc.

²¹ To be determined on the basis of the organisation's statutes, which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a 'Memorandum of Understanding' has been concluded.

²² With regard to Israeli entities, please follow Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJ C 205, 19.7.2013, p. 9).

²³ Annex M - eligibility of the applicants

3. Developing countries and territories, as included in the list of ODA recipients published by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which are not members of the G-20 group, and overseas countries and territories;

and

- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary;

and, only for the lead applicant:

- have managed digital development and cooperation projects, including **at least two** capacity building and/or cooperation grants (or other forms of financial support). These grants were implemented (totally or partially) during the last five years (2018-2022);

To demonstrate the fulfilment of this criterion, applicants must provide with their full application form a scanned version of the relevant grant contracts. In the event of doubt, the Contracting Authority shall request any additional documentary evidence. Please note that these documents shall be uploaded in PROSPECT by the full application deadline.

- demonstrate an annual turnover or annual budget of **at least EUR 1,000,000** for each financial year during the last three years (2019-2021) as demonstrated by the supporting documents requested under Section 2.2.5.

- (2) Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide;

Lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entities and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant, the co-applicants and the affiliated entities are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion according to Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract. In this respect, provisionally selected lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities or those placed in the reserve list are obliged to declare that they are not in one of the exclusion situations through a signed declaration on honour (PRAG Annex A14).

In Annex A.1 Section 2 and Annex A.2 Section 5 ('declaration(s) by the lead applicant'), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself, the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies) are not in any of these situations.

The lead applicant must act with co-applicant(s) as specified hereafter.

If awarded the grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in Annex G (special conditions). The coordinator is the sole interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

Co-applicant(s)

Co-applicants participate in designing and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant.

Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself, **except** for those explicitly applicable only to the lead applicant.

Actions of both lots must be implemented by a **partnership** complying with the following minimum criteria:

- in addition to the lead applicant, the partnership must include at least two co-applicants, **and**
- the number of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicants) established in the Global South²⁴ must always be equal or greater than the number of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicants) established in 'Global North'²⁵, **and**
- among the applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicants), at least two of them must be established in two different 'Global South' countries, **and**
- at least one applicant (i.e. lead applicant or co-applicant) must be from a 'Global North' country.

Co-applicants must sign the mandate in Annex A.2 Section 5.

If awarded the grant contract, the co-applicant(s) (if any) will become beneficiaries in the action (together with the coordinator).

- (3) In addition, please note that contracts cannot be awarded to or signed with applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG).

The choice of co-applicants must be justified in the proposal as part of the project design and will be taken into account in point 2.1 of the concept note evaluation grid (see section 2.3 of these guidelines). The composition of the partnership will be evaluated in point 4.3 of the full application evaluation grid (see section 2.3 of these guidelines).

Each member of a partnership must have a precise and clearly identified role in the implementation of the project. A partnership should be composed in such a way as to allow the achievement of the project objectives in the most effective and cost-efficient manner.

The role of each member of the partnership (lead and co-applicants) must be clearly explained in the proposal (description of the action). It is strongly recommended that the lead applicant and its co-applicants draw up an agreement defining their partnership as well as their respective technical and financial roles and obligations. A clear allocation of responsibilities and costs will contribute to the partnership's success.

²⁴ Please see footnote 5

²⁵ Please see footnote 4

Affiliated entities

The lead applicant and its co-applicants may act with affiliated entities.

Only the following entities may be considered as affiliated entities to the lead applicant and/or to co-applicant(s):

Only entities having a structural link with the applicants (i.e. the lead applicant or a co-applicant), in particular a legal or capital link.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

- (i) Control, as defined in Directive 2013/34/EU on the annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements and related reports of certain types of undertakings:

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

- Entities directly or indirectly controlled by the applicant (daughter companies or first-tier subsidiaries). They may also be entities controlled by an entity controlled by the applicant (granddaughter companies or second-tier subsidiaries) and the same applies to further tiers of control;
 - Entities directly or indirectly controlling the applicant (parent companies). Likewise, they may be entities controlling an entity controlling the applicant;
 - Entities under the same direct or indirect control as the applicant (sister companies).
- (ii) Membership, i.e. the applicant is legally defined as a e.g. network, federation, association in which the proposed affiliated entities also participate or the applicant participates in the same entity (e.g. network, federation, association,...) as the proposed affiliated entities.

The structural link shall, as a general rule, be neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation. This means that the link would exist independently of the award of the grant; it should exist before the call for proposals and remain valid after the end of the action.

By way of exception, an entity may be considered as affiliated to an applicant even if it has a structural link specifically established for the sole purpose of the implementation of the action in the case of so-called 'sole applicants' or 'sole beneficiaries'. A sole applicant or a sole beneficiary is a legal entity formed by several entities (a group of entities) which together comply with the criteria for being awarded the grant. For example, an association is formed by its members.

What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

- Entities that have entered into a (procurement) contract or subcontract with an applicant, act as concessionaires or delegates for public services for an applicant,
- Entities that receive financial support from the applicant,
- Entities that cooperate on a regular basis with an applicant on the basis of a memorandum of understanding or share some assets,
- Entities that have signed a consortium agreement under the grant contract (unless this consortium agreement leads to the creation of a 'sole applicant' as described above).

How to verify the existence of the required link with an applicant?

The affiliation resulting from control may in particular be proved on the basis of the consolidated accounts of the group of entities the applicant and its proposed affiliates belong to.

The affiliation resulting from membership may in particular be proved on the basis of the statutes or equivalent act establishing the entity (network, federation, association) which the applicant constitutes or in which the applicant participates.

If the applicants are awarded a grant contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become beneficiary(ies) of the action and signatory(ies) of the grant contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the implementation of the action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for implementation contracts and financial support to third parties and subcontractors) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the beneficiary(ies) under the grant contract.

Affiliated entity(ies) must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as the lead applicant and the co-applicant(s), except those explicitly applicable only to the lead applicant. They must sign the affiliated entity(ies) statement in Annex A.2 Section 5.

2.1.2. Associates and contractors

The following entities are not applicants nor affiliated entities and do not have to sign the ‘mandate for co-applicant(s)’ or ‘affiliated entities’ statement:

- Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Annex A.2 Section 4 — ‘Associates participating in the action’.

- Contractors

The beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are permitted to award contracts. Associates or affiliated entity(ies) cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

2.1.3. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 36 months nor exceed 48 months.

Sectors or themes

Actions will have to address the priority issues identified in chapter 1.2.

Location

Lot 1

Action is global.

Participation can include virtual/online activities²⁶. Specific attention must be given to the ‘Global South’. In case of Internet Governance Forum (IGF) the actions could be taken on national, regional and global level in relevant IGF fora.

Lot 2²⁷

Action is global.

However, actions must take place in at least ten (10) ‘Global South’ countries,

out of which:

at least two (2) ‘Global South’ countries from America, at least four (4) ‘Global South’ countries from Africa, at least two (2) ‘Global South’ countries from Asia or/and Oceania.

For both Lots, the applicant should explain in the application form how the location of activities is justified within the context of the overall action.

Types of action

To be eligible for co-financing, actions under this call must comply with the objectives and the priorities of this call for proposals described in section 1.2 of these guidelines. The objectives will be reached through:

- peer-to-peer and long-term partnership building actions;
- policy scrutiny and position formulation actions; training, awareness raising and capacity building actions;
- formal and informal participation and engagements in the relevant working groups and formats alike;
- actions related to the promotion of a human centric approach;
- actions related to assure subsequent national, international and global outreach and follow up;
- actions leading to the design and implementation of innovative approaches;
- actions related to organisation of workshops, conferences, side events and other similar events (excluding individual sponsorships for participation);
- actions related to inclusive participation and gender equality promotion.

²⁶ Long-term participation in certain working groups which for example does not require physical presence all the time.

²⁷ See Annex N

The following types of action are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions that consist of or contain mainly pure research,
- actions concerned only with once-off conferences. Conferences can only be funded if they form part of a wider range of activities to be implemented during the life-time of the action;
- actions which consist exclusively or primarily in capital expenditure, e.g. land, buildings, equipment and vehicles;
- actions supporting directly political parties;
- actions including proselytism.

Types of activity

The activities to be implemented by the applicant(s) must necessarily belong to those mentioned here. Other activities should not be included.

For Lot 1:

Activities must obligatory include all of the following:

- a) Long term structural engagement of CSOs – specifically including CSOs from the ‘Global South’ - in relevant working groups of entities including ICANN, IETF, ITU, IGF- to contribute to policy and to further and maintain a human centric and public interest-based approach. Other entities may be considered depending on due justification.
- b) Increase of CSOs engagement at national, regional and international IGF multistakeholder’s fora, including EuroDig (European Dialogue on Internet Governance) and possibly others, to promote national and multistakeholder engagement when formulating positions and assuring subsequent outreach and follow up.
- c) Partnerships building between ‘Global North’ CSOs and ‘Global South’ CSOs concerning the priority activities/objectives of this lot.

For Lot 2:

Activities must obligatorily include all of the following:

- a) Capacity building of and by CSOs on Digital Economy, Digital Diplomacy, Internet Governance, Open Internet, Strengthen CSOs knowledge and capacities to engage on topics and principles covered by EU policy. Such as those mentioned in the EU Digital Compass / Digital Decade communication, relevant legislative work such as the GDPR, the AI act, the Digital Services Act, Digital Markets Act, Data Governance, Act, the EU’s declaration on digital rights and principles, declaration on the future of the internet and in general, the EU’s human centric approach with attention to inclusive participation and gender equality.
- b) Enhancing ‘Global South’ stakeholders’ participation in the open internet and digital rights debates to raise awareness on governmental level and society at large; Promoting the EU declaration of Digital Rights and Principles.
- c) Increase of CSOs engagement at national, regional and international IGF multistakeholder’s fora, including EuroDig (European Dialogue on Internet Governance) and possibly others, to promote national

and multistakeholder engagement when formulating positions and assuring subsequent outreach and follow up.

- d) Partnerships building between ‘Global North’ CSOs and ‘Global South’ CSOs concerning the priority activities/objectives of this lot.

For Lot 2, Activities might also (in addition to the obligatory activities) include:

- e) Within relevant fora of multilateral and multistakeholder organisations (study groups, etc), scrutinise policy of artificial intelligence (incl.EU AI Act²⁸) and capacity building to ensure its responsible and ethical use globally;
- f) Design and implement innovative approaches towards dealing with disinformation. This should focus on pre-bunking²⁹ (rather than debunking) and involve methods which can be scaled up to very large volumes at low cost, and for which the impact can be measured/estimated in a robust manner.

In proposing actions, the applicant should clearly indicate and explain in the grant application form the following:

- In which manner the action is fulfilled and the indicators are to be achieved;
- In which manner the action would target geographical areas and how ‘Global South’ CSOs would be involved in the activities of ITU, ICANN, IETF, IGF; EuroDig;
- In which manner ‘Global North’ can cooperate efficiently with ‘Global South’ to implement the activities;
- In which working groups, events and other formations of IETF, IGF, ICANN and ITU, the applicant plans to get engaged with in order to fulfil the requirements of the call;
- In which of the themes/subjects under the respective working groups of IETF, IGF, ICANN, ITU the applicant plans to engage (and is expected to provide arguments why and how those themes/subjects are relevant to the action);
- The value-added that all applicants bring to the partnership and to its activities. The partnership should involve organisations with demonstrated and complementary experience in the relevant areas of the proposal;
- If and in which manner the action establishes complementarity, synergy and/or coordination with other actions funded either by the EU or national Governments or other donors in the same sector, so to achieve greater impact;
- In which manner multi-stakeholder, multilateral approach would be fulfilled;
- Which performance indicators will be used to evaluate the benefits of the action and its overall performance, and how these and parameters will be monitored during and after implementation;
- How sex-disaggregated data will be sourced and used for monitoring and evaluating the action and gender equality will be ensured;

²⁸ AI Act: [EUR-Lex - 52021PC0206 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

²⁹ Inspiration could potentially be found in the study published in the journal Science Advances: Psychological inoculation improves resilience against misinformation on social media (link: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abo6254>)

- What concrete measures will be taken to share the knowledge and the results generated by the action;
- How the proposed activities are complementary with EU policy and the Directorate General ‘International Partnerships’ objectives in digital domain.

Financial support to third parties³⁰

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission. If applicable, communication activities may be undertaken to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

All measures and activities relating to visibility and, if applicable, communication, must comply with the latest Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU-funded external action, laid down and published by the European Commission [Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions | International Partnerships \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/visibility-requirements).

Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

The lead applicant **may not** submit more than 1 application under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant **may not** be awarded more than 1 grant under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant **may not** be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in another application at the same time.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity **may not** be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in more than 1 application under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity **may not** be awarded more than 1 grant under this call for proposals.

2.1.4. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Union contribution under this call for proposals take the following form(s):

- Reimbursement of eligible costs that may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:
 - (i) actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);
 - (ii) one or more simplified cost options (see below).

³⁰ These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

Only 'eligible costs' can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for 'eligible costs'.

Simplified cost options may take the form of:

- **unit costs:** covering all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by reference to an amount per unit.
- **lump sums:** covering in global terms all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance.
- **flat-rate financing:** covering specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by applying a percentage fixed ex ante.

Simplified costs options (SCOs) which can be proposed are the following:

"output or result based SCOs": they include costs linked to outputs, results, activities, deliverables in the framework of a specific project (for example the determination of a lump sum for the organization of a conference, or for the realisation of a determined output/activity). Where possible and appropriate, lump sums or unit costs shall be determined in such a way to allow their payment upon achievement of concrete outputs and/or results. This type of SCO can be proposed by the beneficiary (no threshold is applicable) at proposal's stage (in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). In case the evaluation committee is not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

Refer to Annex K for the details of the procedure to be followed depending on the type and amount of the costs to be declared as SCO.

Applicants proposing this form of reimbursement, must clearly indicate in worksheet no.1 of Annex B, each heading/item of eligible costs concerned by this type of financing, i.e. add the reference in capital letters to 'UNIT COST', 'LUMPSUM', 'FLAT RATE' in the Unit column (see example in Annex K).

Additionally in Annex B, in the second column of worksheet no.2, 'Justification of the estimated costs' per each of the corresponding budget item or heading applicants must:

- describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of unit costs, lump sums and/or flat-rates, to which costs they refer, etc. for output or result based SCO;
- clearly explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount for output or result based SCO.

No threshold is set ex-ante for the total amount of financing that can be authorised by the contracting authority on the basis of simplified cost options.

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant contract do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the contracting authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant or the percentage of EU co-financing as a result of these corrections.

It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

The grant may take the form of a single lump-sum covering the entire eligible costs of an action or a work programme.

Single lump sums may be determined on the basis of the estimated budget, which should comply with the

principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Compliance with these principles shall be verified ex ante at the time of evaluation of the grant application.

When authorising single lump sums the authorising officer responsible shall comply with the conditions applicable to output or result based SCOs.

When using this form of financing, the description of the action shall include detailed information on the essential conditions triggering the payment, including, where applicable, the achievement of outputs and/or results.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines).

Contingency reserve

The budget may include a contingency reserve not exceeding **5 %** of the estimated direct eligible costs. It can only be used with the **prior written authorisation** of the contracting authority.

Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed **7 %** of the estimated total eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the special conditions of the grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

If any of the applicants or affiliated entity(ies) is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU, it may not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the action.

Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to beneficiaries or affiliated entities free of charge by a third party. As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for beneficiaries or affiliated entities, they are not eligible costs (except for personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or operating grant if so authorised).

Contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing.

However, if the description of the action as proposed includes contributions in kind, the contributions have to be made.

Other co-financing shall be based on estimates provided by the applicant.

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant;
- purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred in accordance with Article 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;

- currency exchange losses;
- in kind contributions (except for volunteers' work);
- bonuses included in costs of staff;
- negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
- credit to third parties;
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations;
- purchases of vehicles, unless the applicant can demonstrate that the purchase is necessary for the purpose of the action implementation.

2.1.5. Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment:

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

Applicants (and affiliated entities) other than (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies whose application has been pre-selected or placed in a reserve list, shall assess their internal policy against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) through a self-evaluation questionnaire (Annex L). For grants of EUR 60 000 or less no self-evaluation is required. Such self-evaluation questionnaire is not part of the evaluation of the full application by the contracting authority, but is an administrative requirement. See section 2.5.6 of the PRAG.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation.

For the purposes of this provision, ‘corrupt practices’ are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

d) Unusual commercial expenses

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

e) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to substantial breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If substantial breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

To apply for this call for proposals the lead applicants need to:

- I. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action. To this end, lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities must register in PADOR. Lead applicants must register at the concept note step. Co-applicants and affiliated entities must register at the full application step; lead applicants must make sure that their PADOR profile is up to date. Please note that the registration of this data in **PADOR is obligatory** for this call for proposals:

PADOR is an on-line database in which organisations register and update information concerning their entity. Organisations registered in PADOR get a unique ID (EuropeAid ID) which they **must mention** in their application. PADOR is accessible via the website: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/looking-for-funding_en

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, lead applicants, co-applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) must complete the ‘PADOR registration form’³¹ attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent **together with the full application**, by the submission deadline (see section 2.2.5).

- II. Provide information about the action in the documents listed under sections 2.2.2 (Where and how to send concept notes) and 2.2.5 (Full applications). Please note that online submission via PROSPECT is obligatory for this call.

PROSPECT is the European Commission’s online application system developed for the submission of applications for calls for proposals in the field of external action. The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations allowing them to submit their proposals online and to follow up online the status of their application. Applicants also receive automatic notifications when new documents

³¹ Which corresponds to Annex F – PADOR off-line form (PRAG annex e13).

(clarifications, corrigenda, etc.) are published for their call. PROSPECT is accessible via the website:

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/looking-for-funding_en

It is strongly recommended to register in PADOR well in advance and not to wait until the last minute before the deadline to submit your application in PROSPECT.

Before starting using PADOR and PROSPECT, please read the user guides available on the website. All technical questions related the use of these systems should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT.**

2.2.1. Concept note content

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the concept note instructions in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A.1). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the concept note and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

Applicants must apply in **English**.

Please note that:

1. In the concept note, lead applicants must only provide an estimate of the requested EU contribution as well as an indicative percentage of that contribution in relation to the eligible costs of the action. A detailed budget is to be submitted only by the lead applicants invited to submit a full application in the second phase.

2. The elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application, except for the changes described below:

- The EU contribution may **not vary** from the initial estimate by **more than 20%**. Lead applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these guidelines in Section 1.3.
- The lead applicant may **add, remove or replace one or more co-applicant(s) or affiliated entity (ies) only in duly justified cases.**
- The lead applicant may **adjust the duration of the action** if unforeseen circumstances outside the scope of the applicants have taken place following the submission of the concept note and require such adaptation (risk of action not being carried out). In such cases, the duration **must remain within the limits imposed by the guidelines for applicants.** Own contributions by the applicants can be replaced by other donors' contributions at any time.

An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in Annex A.2 – Instructions for drafting the Full Application, section 2.1.1, point viii. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.

Only the concept note form will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that this document contains ALL relevant information concerning the action. No additional annexes should be sent.

Please complete the concept note carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the concept note instructions may lead to the rejection of the concept note.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

2.2.2. Where and how to send concept notes

The concept note together with the declaration by the lead applicant (Annex A.1 section 2) **must be submitted online via PROSPECT** <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT user manual.

Upon submission of a concept note online, the lead applicant will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in its PROSPECT profile.

Concept notes sent by any other means (e.g. by paper or by fax or by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

Hand-written concept notes will not be accepted.

Please note that incomplete concept notes may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their concept note is complete by using the checklist for concept note (Annex A.1, Instructions).

2.2.3. Deadline for submission of concept notes

The deadline for the submission of concept notes is **14/02/2023 at 12.00** (Brussels date and time). In order to convert this deadline to local time you can use any online time converter tool that takes into account timezones and winter/summer time changes (example available [here](#)). **The lead applicant is strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit** its concept note, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The contracting authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

Any concept note submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.4. Further information about concept notes

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than **21 days before the deadline for the submission of concept notes** to the address(es) below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: INTPA-175439@ec.europa.eu

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

Replies will be given no later than **11 days before the deadline for submission of concept notes**.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure will be published on the website where the call was published: website of DG International Partnerships https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home> as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website(s) regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in**

PROSPECT: Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English French and Spanish. Therefore users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

Please note that the contracting authority may decide to cancel the call for proposals procedure at any stage according to the conditions set out in Section 6.5.9 of the PRAG.

2.2.5. Full applications

Lead applicants invited to submit a full application following pre-selection of their concept note must do so using the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

The elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application, except for the changes described below:

- The EU contribution may **not vary** from the initial estimate **by more than 20 %**. Lead applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these guidelines in Section 1.3.
- The lead applicant may **add, remove or replace one or more co-applicant(s) or affiliated entity(ies) only in duly justified cases.**
- The lead applicant may adjust the duration of the action if unforeseen circumstances outside the scope of the applicants have taken place following the submission of the concept note and require such adaptation (risk of action not being carried out). In such cases, the duration **must remain within the limits imposed by the guidelines for applicants.**

An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in Annex A.2 – Instructions for drafting the Full Application, section 2.1.1, point viii. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.

Lead applicants must submit their full applications in the same language as their concept notes.

Please complete the full application form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

Any error related to the points listed in the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions) or any major inconsistency in the full application (e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is unclear and thus prevents the contracting authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Please note that only the full application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be transmitted to the evaluators (and assessors, if used). It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, **the lead applicant has to submit with the full application the completed PADOR form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each (if any) co-applicants and each (if any) affiliated entities**³².

Please note that the following documents shall be uploaded in PADOR by the full application deadline or submitted together with the PADOR registration form with the full application form:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity. Where the contracting authority has recognised the lead applicant's, or the co-applicant(s)'s, or their affiliated entity(ies)'s eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it should be submitted, instead of the statutes or articles of association, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred in the meantime. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.
2. Legal entity form (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and by each co-applicant, if any), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the contracting authority, instead of the legal entity form and supporting documents, the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.
3. A financial identification form of the lead applicant (not from co-applicant(s)) conforming to the model attached as Annex E of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the lead applicant is established. If the lead applicant has already submitted a financial identification form in the past for a contract where the European Commission was in charge of the payments and intends to use the same bank account, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead.

In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted³³:

1. For action grants exceeding EUR 750,000 and for operating grants exceeding EUR 100,000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

In all other cases, the lead applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by an applicant to the contracting authority in any one financial year.

The external audit report as well as the self-declaration certifying the validity of the accounts are not required from the co-applicant(s) or affiliated entities (if any).

2. A copy of the lead applicant's latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed)³⁴. A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) (if any) nor from affiliated entity(ies) (if any).

³² Natural persons who apply for a grant (if so allowed in the guidelines for applicants) do not have to provide an organisation data form. In this case, the information included in the grant application form is sufficient.

³³ No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60,000.

The requested supporting documents (uploaded in PADOR or sent together with the PADOR offline form) must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals. Originals should be kept on file for controls.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union, a translation into the language of the call for proposals of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, must be attached for the purpose of analysing the application.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than the language of the call for proposals, it is strongly recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, into the/one of the language(s) of the call for proposals.

Applicants have to take into consideration the time necessary to obtain official documents from national competent authorities and to translate such documents in the authorised languages while registering their data in PADOR.

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided by the deadline for the submission of the full application, the application may be rejected.

2.2.6. Where and how to send full applications

Full applications (i.e. the full application form, PADOR registration form (where applicable), the budget, the logical framework, and the declaration by the lead applicant) must be submitted online via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT users' manual³⁵.

Upon submission of the full application online, the lead applicants will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in their PROSPECT profile.

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by paper or by e-mail) will be rejected.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions).

³⁴ This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received a scholarship or that are in most need of direct support, nor to public bodies and to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to Section 2.2.5, point 1.

³⁵ [Manual for Applicants - e-Calls PROSPECT - EXACT External Wiki - EN - EC Public Wiki \(europa.eu\)](#)

2.2.7. Deadline for submission of full applications

The deadline for the submission of full applications will be indicated in the letter sent to the lead applicants whose application has been pre-selected. This letter will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

Lead applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their full applications, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The Contacting Authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.8. Further information about full applications

Questions may be sent by e-mail **no later than 21 days** before the deadline for the submission of full applications to the addresses listed below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: INTPA-175439@ec.europa.eu

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

Replies will be given no later than **11 days before the deadline** for the submission of full applications.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), or an action.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure, will be published on the website of DG International Partnerships: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr, as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT**. Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English French and Spanish. Therefore users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

(1) STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Annex A.1, Instructions of the grant application form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The concept notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note, which can be found in Annex A.1.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Relevance of the action	20
1.1. How relevant is the proposal to the global objective, specific objectives and priorities of the call for proposals under relevant Lot (Lot 1 or Lot 2)? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5
1.2. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies) and/or CSOs in these countries?	5
1.3. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries (CSOs), target countries)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5
1.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices) in terms of the EU values-based digital transformation through multistakeholderism model?	5
2. Design of the action	30
2.1. How coherent is the overall design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results?	5x2**
2.2. Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5
2.3. Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)?	5

2.4. Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic?	5
2.5. To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples and youth)?	5
Maximum total score	50

****:** this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

Once all concept notes have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

Firstly, only the concept notes with a score of **at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.**

Secondly, the number of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is **equal to 400% of the available budget** for this call for proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot, where relevant.

Lead applicants will receive a letter indicating the reference number of their application and the respective results. This letter will automatically appear online in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant. The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications.

(2) STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

- If the submission deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will automatically be rejected.
- If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions). This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The full applications that pass this check will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

The selection criteria help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s operational capacity and the lead applicant's financial capacity and are used to verify that they:

- have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding (this only applies to lead applicants);
- have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This applies to applicants and any affiliated entity(ies).

For the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, lead applicants must ensure that the relevant information and documents (i.e. accounts of the latest financial year and external audit report, where applicable) are up to date either in their PADOR profile or when submitting the requested documents with PADOR registration form. If the information and documents requested are outdated and do not allow for a proper evaluation of the financial capacity, the application may be rejected.

The award criteria help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

Scoring:

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Financial and operational capacity	20
1.1. Does the consortium of CSOs (applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies)) have sufficient in-house experience of project management?	5
1.2. Does the consortium of CSOs (applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies)) have sufficient technical in-house expertise (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed i.e. digital for development, Internet Governance, digital rights and principles, and standards setting)?	5
1.3. Does the consortium of CSO (the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies)) have sufficient management in-house capacity (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.4. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?	5
2. Relevance of the action	20
2.1. How relevant is the proposal to the global objective, specific objectives and priorities of the call for proposals under relevant Lot (Lot 1 or Lot 2)? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5
2.2. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies) and/or CSOs in these countries?	5
2.3. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries (CSOs), target countries)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5
2.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices) in terms of the EU values-based digital transformation through multistakeholderism model?	5
3. Design of the action	15
3.1. How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)?	5
3.2. Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification?	5

3.3. Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5
4. Implementation approach	15
4.1. Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic?	5
4.2. Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)?	5
4.3. Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	5
5. Sustainability of the action	15
5.1. Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on the activities and involvement of CSOs in the digital domain at international fora (Lot 1) and 'Global North' and 'Global South' co-operation (Lot 2)?	5
5.2. Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing in 'Global South' countries?	5
5.3. Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable?- Financially (e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs)- Institutionally (will the participation and cooperation with multilateral and multistakeholder organisations (Lot 1) and cooperation between 'Global North' and 'Global South' CSOs (Lot 2) be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?)- At policy level (where applicable) (what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods)	5
6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	15
6.1. Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	5
6.2. Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?	5x2**
Maximum total score	100

****:** this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the lead applicant applies without co-applicants or affiliated entities the score for point 4.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of co-applicants or affiliated entities is mandatory according to these guidelines for applicants.

Provisional selection

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

(3) STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS AND AFFILIATED ENTITY(IES)

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.4). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

- The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 5 of Annex A.2) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of applicants and the affiliated entity(ies) will be verified according to the criteria set out in Section 2.1.1.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals.

2.4. SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The lead applicant shall submit the documents listed in section 2.2.5., together with the full application.

In addition, a lead applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents via PROSPECT:

1. Declaration on honour: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in and sign the declaration on honour certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.6.10.1 of the PRAG) where the amount of the grant exceeds EUR 15,000. Please note that the declaration on honour should be submitted via PROSPECT.
2. Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in the self-evaluation questionnaire assessing the organisation's internal policy and procedure against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) (Annex L) where the amount of grant exceeds EUR 60,000 (see Section 2.5.6 of the PRAG)³⁶. Please note that the self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H should be submitted via PADOR.

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

NB: In the eventuality that the contracting authority is not satisfied with the strength, solidity, and guarantee offered by the structural link between one of the applicants and its affiliated entity, it can require the submission of the missing documents allowing for its conversion into co-applicant. If all the missing documents for co-applicants are submitted, and provided all necessary eligibility criteria are fulfilled, the above mentioned entity becomes a co-applicant for all purposes. The lead applicant has to submit the application form revised accordingly.

³⁶ Applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities who are (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies do not have to submit the self-evaluation questionnaire.

2.5. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

2.5.1. Content of the decision

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the Contracting Authority's decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. This letter will be sent by e-mail and will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the user who submitted the application. Therefore, please check regularly your PROSPECT profile, taking into account the indicative timetable below. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See further Section 2.12 of the practical guide.

Applicants who were unsuccessful following the **Administrative Check** of the procedure wishing to obtain further information should send their request by letter, indicating the reference of the call for proposals and the reference allocated to the proposal, to:

European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships
Unit R.6 - Finance and Contracts for Centralised operations
Attn. Head of Unit L-41 03/110
Avenue du Bourget, 1 B-1140 Brussels, BELGIUM

Applicants who were unsuccessful following the **Technical evaluation of the procedure or the Eligibility check** wishing to obtain further information should send their request, by letter indicating the reference of the call for proposals and the reference allocated to the proposal, to:

European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships
Unit F5 - Science, Technology, Innovation and Digitalisation
Attn. Head of Unit, Mr. Thierry Barbe, J-51
Rue Joseph II, 54, B-1140 Brussels, BELGIUM

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm

2.5.2. Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME
1. Information meeting (if any)	Not applicable	Not applicable
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	24/01/2023	12:00
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	03/02/2023	-
4. Deadline for submission of concept notes	14/02/2023	12:00
5. Information to lead applicants on administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)	April 2023	-
6. Invitations to submit full applications	April 2023	-
7. Deadline for submission of full applications	June 2023	-
8. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)	August / September 2023	-
9. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)	September 2023	-
10. Contract signature	September / October 2023	-

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site where the call was published: website of DG International Partnerships https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

2.6. CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AFTER THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION TO AWARD A GRANT

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract. Where the coordinator is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed, it will sign a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. In this case, references to provisions of the standard grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the grant contract shall be understood as references to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement.

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the beneficiary(ies) and its affiliated entity(ies) (if any) to award procurement contracts, those contracts must be awarded in accordance with Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

In this context, a distinction should be made between awarding implementation contracts and subcontracting parts of the action described in the proposal, i.e. the description of the action annexed to the grant contract, such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

Awarding implementation contracts: implementation contracts relate to the acquisition by beneficiaries of routine services and/or necessary goods and equipment as part of their project management; they do not cover any outsourcing of tasks forming part of the action that are described in the proposal, i.e. in the description of the action annexed to the grant contract .

Subcontracting: Subcontracting is the implementation, by a third party with which one or more beneficiaries have concluded a procurement contract, of specific tasks forming part of the action as described in annex to the grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

Annex A: Grant application form (Word format)

A.1 – Concept note

A.2 – Full application form

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical framework (Word format)

Annex D: Legal entity sheet

Annex E: Financial identification form

Annex F: PADOR registration form

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION³⁷

Annex G: Standard grant contract

- Annex II: general conditions
- Annex IV: contract award rules
- Annex V: standard request for payment
- Annex VI: model narrative and financial report
- Annex VII: model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action
- Annex IX: standard template for transfer of ownership of assets

Annex H: Declaration on Honour

Annex J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.

Annex K: Guidelines for assessing simplified cost options.

Annex L: Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H

Annex M: Eligibility of the applicants

Annex N: Eligibility of the actions

Useful links:

Daily allowance rates (per diem)

https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en

Project Cycle Management Guidelines

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en

The implementation of grant contracts

A Users' Guide

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/companion/document.do?nodeNumber=19&locale=en>

Financial Toolkit

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en

Please note: the toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

* * *

³⁷ These documents should also be published by the contracting authority.