



Contracting Authority: European Commission

EU National Resource Centre for Civil Society Organizations in Serbia

Guidelines for grant applicants

Budget line(s):

VOBU/2026/E.15020101.01/ENEST.B.RS/IPAIII_21_27

ACT-63186

Reference:

EuropeAid/186165/DD/ACT/RS

Deadline for submission of full application:

05/10/2026 at 16:00 (Brussels date and time)

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

NOTICE

Please note that the awarding of grant contract under this call for proposals is subject to the condition of the funds availability under Action Fiche for Civil Society and Media 2026-2027 (allocation 2027), which does not modify the elements of the call for proposals. If the precedent condition is not met, the contracting authority will either abandon the procurement or cancel the award procedure without the candidates or applicants being entitled to claim any compensation.

This is an open call for proposals, where all documents are submitted together: concept note (Annex A.1- Grant application form - Concept note) and full application (Annex A.2 - Grant application form - Full application). In the first instance, only the concept notes will be evaluated. Thereafter, for the lead applicants who have been pre-selected, the full applications will be evaluated. After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected (including those placed on the reserve list). 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.

Online submission via PROSPECT

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.

Preparation: Information session 03 September 2026 at 11:00 hrs WEBEX platform and user manuals.

To help applicants familiarise themselves with the system before the online submission, an information session will be organised on 03 September 2026 at 11:00 hrs WEBEX platform.

Should you be interested in this session, please send an email by 28 August 2026 16:00 hrs to DELEGATION-SERBIA-FCS@eeas.europa.eu, copy to Ana Kalezic (ana.kalezic@eeas.europa.eu) indicating: name, surname, nationality and email address of the persons who are going to participate as well as their organisation (max. two participants per organisation). No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

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 PROSPECT¹.

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1. EU NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER (EUNRC) FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN SERBIA

1.1. BACKGROUND

An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and should be recognised and treated as such by all stakeholders including the state institutions. Sustainable and inclusive development need a strong, reliable and independent civil society to contribute to the policy making and monitor implementation at all levels of governance throughout the whole geography of the country. It is in the interest of any society to have a strong civil society promoting checks and balances; and demanding transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in the actions of the state and public authorities. By articulating citizens' needs and concerns, civil society fosters pluralism and furthers participatory democracy, increasing the hope and participation of the citizens in the future of their society.

As referred to in the Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Region,

- an enabling legal and policy environment, for the exercise of fundamental freedoms and rights,
- an enabling financial and fiscal environment, supporting sustainability of CSOs,
- strong dialogue and partnership between the civil society and public institutions for policy- and decision-making
- capable, transparent, accountable and strategically-led and supported CSOs.

are among important objectives to be achieved to enable strong and independent civil society for any country.

One of the European Commission's instruments for supporting the development of the civil society in the EU candidate and potential candidate countries is the "Civil Society Facility" (CSF). It was set up in 2008 and since then has been providing the pre-accession assistance to the civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey, through National and Multi-beneficiary initiatives.

As elaborated in detail in the Serbia 2025 report of the European Commission, *"CSOs in Serbia operate in an increasingly difficult environment. Since the start of the protests, CSOs advocating for the rule of law have faced intensified verbal attacks and smear campaigns, including by high-level officials. [...] Cooperation between the government and CSOs has been under strain. There is still significant scope to improve the transparency of public funding to civil society."* Overall, the civil society situation is active but operating in a constrained and often discouraging environment. Civil society organisations continue to play an important role in democratic oversight, human rights protection, and public policy debate, yet the overall conditions in which they work remain only moderately enabling. Civic space is still under pressure, with organisations—especially those focused on human rights, media freedom, environmental protection, and anti-corruption—frequently exposed to hostile rhetoric and smear campaigns. This contributes to a climate of mistrust and discourages open participation in public life.

The current Resource Centre has been operating since 2022 delivering on various activities in the field of CSO capacity building, visibility and enabling environment reaching out to thousands of individual CSO representatives, informal groups and CSOs.

The Resource Centre was recognised for tailor-made, focused programmes with long-term contributions to development of the capacities of numerous CSOs. The lack of possibility to couple Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) with the trainings provided was noted as a feedback received from the beneficiaries of the services of the Resource Centre.

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

In line with European Commission “Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021-2027” the overall objective of CSF for the period of 2021 – 2027 under IPA III, the objective is to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU approximation and integration process in the enlargement region through an enhanced contribution of civil society.

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is: to strengthen the EU integration process in Serbia by empowering civil society to actively participate in policy decision making and by further stimulating their role as competent, transparent, accountable and effective civil society actors.

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

- 1) to further strengthen the overall long-term capacity and commitment of civil society, including their operational capacities for advocacy, and monitoring of structural reforms and Serbia’s EU Integration process in all relevant sectors, including on the Reform Agenda and Growth Plan for Serbia;
- 2) to enhance civil society progress and development via tailor-made approaches, in line with their point of development in the life cycle and their constituencies, via an EU National Resource Centre (EUNRC) throughout Serbia by regional presence where and as relevant;
- 3) to increase the capacities of grassroots and informal groups for advocacy and monitoring of reforms and Serbia’s EU Integration process through flexible financial support to third parties (FSTP) mechanisms:
 - coupled with the generic resource centre trainings provided in all sectors, when necessary; and
 - with a focus on strengthening under-developed civil society in specific sectors and assisting to the transformation of informal groups into organised CSOs.

The EUNRC will have three main components in its work:

1.2.1 Trainings and relevant coaching / support to civil society: This component will comprise of trainings, when applicable, coupled with coaching and monitoring, assuring development of the beneficiaries, through measurable means of verification, up to 6 months after the provision of the training. It will also include self-study mock-up trainings made available to everyone interested via the website of EUNRC during the whole implementation period of this project and beyond.

1.2.2. Development of sustainability of civil society in Serbia through strengthening their funding capacities: This component will map the current legislative framework including identifications of the need for improvements. The EUNRC will provide capacity building to CSOs and informal groups to strengthen and diversify their funding sources through a wide range of options, including philanthropy, while also taking the necessary steps to advocate for the improvement of the legislative and fiscal framework where applicable.

1.2.3 Provision of FSTP: In order to strengthen the operational capacity of CSOs, grassroots and informal groups;

1.2.3.1 Provide FSTP coupled with trainings to support the learning process referred to in the first component, i.e. as defined in “Trainings and relevant coaching / support to civil society”, as appropriate;

1.2.3.2 Provide FSTP coupled with trainings, strong mentorship and monitoring in human rights and democracy, rule of law, good governance, social engagement and in any other priority areas that will be added to this list following the review of the findings with the stakeholders and in consultation with the EUD including other sectors subject to reforms within EU accession negotiations process and/or Serbia’s reform agenda under the Reform and Growth Facility where civil society is under-developed and needs the most capacity building support, through a mapping exercise.

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

- To develop organisational capacities of civil society including their operational activities,
- To increase the level and quality of participation of civil society and expertise in policy-making processes, including advocacy and monitoring of reforms within, Serbia's EU accession negotiations process and/or Reform Agenda under the Reform and Growth Facility; and
- To strengthen and further develop grassroots organisations and informal groups by means of networking, coaching, mentoring and FSTP.

1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 4,100,000. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Size of grants

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- minimum amount: EUR 3,700,000.
- maximum amount: EUR 4,100,000.

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum percentages of total eligible costs of the action:

- Minimum percentage: 51% of the 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 or the European Development Fund².

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 (PRAG), which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>).³

2.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

- (1) the actors (2.1.1.):
 - 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)')**;

² Where a grant is financed by the European Development Fund, any mention of European Union financing must be understood as referring to European Development Fund financing.

³ 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.

- 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 eligible costs or results/conditions (2.1.4.):
- where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs (totally or partially): the eligible costs, the types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant.
 - where the grant takes the form of financing not linked to costs (totally or partially): the eligibility conditions for the results/conditions.

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**
- a civil society organisation⁴ **and**
- be established in⁵ the Republic of Serbia, **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**
- not being in any of the situations listed in Section 2.4. of the practical guide.

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.

The lead applicant must act with at least 3 CSOs, established in Serbia outside the region/county/city where the lead applicant is established. The lead applicant is encouraged to act with co-applicants from

⁴ The broadest possible understanding about civil society organisations is applied under this call for proposals, as defined in 1999 by the European Economic and Social Committee (CES/1999/851) and further detailed by both the EESC (CES/1999/851, CES/2000/81) and the EC (COM/2002/0704 final, COM/2005/0290 final).

⁵ 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.

different regions/counties/cities of Serbia, in order to have the ability to provide services throughout the whole territory of Serbia.

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 beneficiary(ies) in the action (together with the coordinator).

Affiliated entities

The lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) may act with affiliated entity(ies).

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). They must sign the affiliated entity(ies) statement in Annex A.2 Section 5.F

2.1.2 Associates, contractors, recipients of financial support

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 Part B Section 6 — 'Associates participating in the action' — of the grant application form.

- Contractors

The beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are permitted to award contracts (subcontracting or implementation contracts). Beneficiaries, affiliated entity(ies), recipients of financial support or associates cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

- Recipients of financial support

If allowed by the call for proposals, and under the conditions laid herein and in the grant contract, the beneficiaries and their affiliated are permitted to provide financial support to other third parties. These third parties are neither beneficiaries, affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

Each actor should only participate in a single role in an action. This is to avoid any potential conflicts of interest and ensure clear allocation of rights and obligations as well as certainty on cost eligibility.

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

Sectors and themes relevant to EU Integration of Serbia, such as

- Themes which increase visibility, transparency, outreach and contribution to dialogue processes;
- Themes which advance and promote active citizenship, participation and volunteering;

- Themes which keep institutions accountable, monitor enforcement of relevant legislation, advocate for rights and standards in line with the EU requirements, reforms and best practices;
- Themes which promote education, awareness raising and activism to advance reforms;
- Themes which enhance citizens' engagement, participation and representation;
- Themes which include operations for improved partnership dialogue among civil society organisations, the EU counterparts and the public authorities, and provide possibilities for further synergies and complementarities with other initiatives.

Location

Actions must take place in the Republic of Serbia.

Types of action

This grant should provide comprehensive support and capacity building services, as EU National Resource Centre to Civil Society. The EUNRC is required to provide equal treatment to the actors of civil society.

The applicants should demonstrate in their project proposal that all regions of Serbia including remote areas will be reached, and that sufficient number of activities will be implemented in urban and rural areas targeting civil society from all backgrounds, sizes, levels of capacity and experience.

The action must further contribute to “Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021-2027” the overall objective of CSF for the period of 2021 – 2027 under IPA III.

This action must seek synergies with other EU-funded project, namely regional projects under the Multi-Country Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Western Balkans and Türkiye, which include HAJDE4EU, RelOaD3, Western Balkans Fund, Western Balkans Reform and Growth Monitor and others.

Types of Action which may be financed under this call:

- monitoring sectors, reforms, institutions, policies as well as international commitments in the context of the European Union perspective of Serbia;
- capacity building for sector lobbying with particular attention to wider outreach of CSOs, including small and grass-root CSOs;
- provision of sector/policy related reports, studies, needs assessments and researches;
- research, analysis and advocacy work and recommendations for the enforcement/revision/adoption of EU reforms, legislation and policies;
- preparation and delivery of action plans - joint activities with public institutions;
- dialogue initiatives with groups of parliamentarians or other legislative bodies;
- awareness raising events, advocacy campaigns, public communication activities;
- facilitating dialogue, consultation and discussion between civil society and other different stakeholders, involving decision makers, political actors, business community;
- strengthening organisational development of civil society;
- support civil society to strengthen their advocacy skills, building networks and coalitions;
- support civil society to build their technical expertise, in partnership with academia and sectoral experts, in sectors of the economy where civil society is under-organised

- support cooperation among civil society, state institutions and donor community;
- strengthening operational capacity of civil society to contribute to the EU integration process;
- policy research, needs analysis and monitoring of environment for civil society in line with the EU Guidelines on Civil Society and in coordination with the Regional Project HAJDE4EU for the Annual Assessment of the Guidelines;
- mentoring and coaching support to civil society and their networks;
- coordination of activities, in cooperation with the EU Delegation to Serbia, EU Info Centre, and the Regional Project HAJDE4EU, to strengthen the visibility of EU funded grants and sub-grants through provision of relevant expertise;
- advocacy for improvement of the legislative framework for funding of civil society, etc.

The list is indicative only; i.e. not exhaustive repository of activities that the work programme may contain.

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 and measures that may result in violation of human rights in partner countries or causing significant adverse effects on the environment or the climate⁶;
- infrastructure projects or projects essentially focused on the purchase of equipment;
- actions aiming predominantly at charitable donations and profit making activities;
- actions which are already funded by other Community programmes and / or undertaken before the date of contract signature.
- work programmes for the exclusive benefit of individuals or exclusive restricted groups of individuals;
- work programmes supporting individual political parties;
- humanitarian activities;
- (re)construction works.

It is to be noted that activities must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (such as human rights based approach, gender equality, environment, etc). Activities – especially those involving capacity building, policy support, awareness raising, communication and dissemination – must also respect EU values and European Commission policy regarding reputational matters.

Financial support to third parties

Applicants shall propose financial support to third parties.

Applicants shall propose financial support to third parties in order to help achieving the objectives of the action.

⁶ Article 29 NDICI.

The maximum amount of financial support per third party is EUR 60 000 except where achieving the objectives of the actions would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult, in which case this threshold can be exceeded. A threshold below EUR 60 000 can be set if appropriate.

In compliance with the present guidelines and notably of any conditions or restrictions in this Section, the lead applicant should define mandatorily in Section 2.1.1 of the grant application form:

- (i) the overall objectives, the specific objective(s) and the outputs⁷ (i.e. the results) to be achieved with the financial support
- (ii) the different types of activities eligible for financial support, on the basis of a fixed list
- (iii) the types of persons or categories of persons which may receive financial support
- (iv) (iv) the criteria for selecting these entities and giving the financial support
- (v) the criteria for determining the exact amount of financial support for each third entity, and
- (vi) the maximum amount which may be given.

In all events, the mandatory conditions set above for giving financial support (points (i) to (vi)) have to be strictly defined in the grant contract as to avoid any exercise of discretion.

Recipients of financial support cannot be designated in the lists of EU restrictive measures.

- **The grant beneficiary proposal must include a financial support to third parties consuming minimum 50% of the direct eligible cost of the action of which at least EUR 1,000,000.00 has to be allocated to support to CSO's operating activities linked to the applicant's annual work programme;**

(please refer to budget heading 7 “Subtotal direct eligible costs of the Action” within the Annex B-Budget).

The maximum total amount of financial support per third party during the full implementation period of the project is EUR ≤ 60,000.

The Informal Groups to benefit from the FSTP need to be supported via an intermediary CSO. The maximum total amount of financial support per Informal Group during the full implementation period of the project is EUR ≤ 5,000.

The financial support to third parties is allowed under the specific conditions applicable to this call for proposals.

For this Call for proposals the following specific conditions apply for the third parties:

- be a legal person
- be non-profit-making and
- be a specific type of organisation such as: non-governmental organisations (NGOs), i.e. organizations considered as non-state, non-profit making actors operating on an independent and accountable basis. They may include: non-governmental organizations, professional associations, chambers of commerce, employers associations and trade unions, centres, independent foundations, and independent research based institutions, public and private universities, media organizations, legally registered civil society network.
- be legally established in Serbia.

⁷ As per OECD DAC definition, the term ‘results’ includes ‘impact’ (overall objective), ‘outcome(s)’ (specific objective(s) and ‘output(s)’.

Indicative types of activities eligible for financial support to third parties:

Non-exhaustive list of types of activity, which may be financed under this call:

- Organisation of capacity building services with particular attention to a wide outreach to CSOs, including small and underdeveloped ones as well as informal groups;
- Organisation and implementation of training programmes, such as strategic management, PCM, advocacy and lobbying, CSOs' visibility and public relations, etc.;
- Provision of ad hoc services through a help-desk;
- Provision of trainings through an eLearning platform allowing for evaluation of performance, follow-up through tailor-made training coupled with seed money allowing implementation;
- Dissemination of timely information in relation to the changes in legislation and policies concerning civil society, including funding opportunities;
- Networking events and partnership building for CSOs;
- Facilitation of exchange of information, know-how and experience among CSOs, grassroots, informal groups and individual activists;
- Organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops, round tables and alike;
- Performing sector specific research activities relevant to development of civil society in that sector;
- Publication of monitoring reports, leaflets, brochures, manuals on best practices and related web based materials, etc.;
- Grant visibility activities: all applicants should include a communication and visibility strategic plan both in the Full Application and the budget in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Actions, see more precise instructions below;
- Issuing quarterly and ad-hoc reports about the general state of civil society, changes to relevant legislation, sector specific analysis and policy proposals.
- support to CSO's operating activities linked to the applicant's annual work programme;

The modalities through which the financial support is granted (e.g. following a call for proposals or expression of interest) must also be specified and clearly linked to support the achievement of the relevant specific objectives defined in the Guidelines.

The financial support to third parties must be awarded in accordance with the general principles for contracting in the context of European Union external actions:

- (a) ensuring sufficient transparency, fair competition and adequate ex-ante publicity;
- (b) ensuring equal treatment, proportionality and non-discrimination;
- (c) avoiding conflicts of interests throughout the entire procurement procedure.

The total amount foreseen for the financial support to third parties must be clearly identifiable in the Annex B - Budget under heading 6 "Other".

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to ensure the visibility of the European Union as the funder or co-funder of the action, through the correct and prominent display of the EU emblem and relevant funding statement. 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.

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/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/unit-cost-decision).

Derogation from contractual visibility obligations is permitted in exceptional situations, which may be required in the framework of this action due to security issues for the staff and beneficiaries, local political sensitivities, when this is in the interest of the beneficiary or the contracting authority. In such cases, visibility tools, products, and channels to be used in promoting a given action will be determined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation and agreement with the EU prior to limiting EU visibility. Requests for derogation from contractual visibility obligations should be included in Annex A.2 – Full application form and negotiated as part of the Special Conditions of the contract.

Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

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

The lead applicant may not be awarded more than one 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 two application(s) under this call for proposals.

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

Form of the grant

The grants awarded 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);

2.1.4 Eligibility of costs and eligibility of results/conditions

Reimbursement of costs

Where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs (entirely or partially), 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’.

Eligible costs can be reimbursed as actual costs⁸.

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).

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, and in case of reimbursement of costs, unrealistic costs and

⁸ Please note that where volunteer costs are accepted as co-financing, it shall be determined on the basis of the unit cost per volunteer per day as defined and authorised by the European Commission at the following address: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/unit-cost-decision>.

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**.

Contingency reserve

The budget may include a contingency reserve not exceeding 5 % of the estimated direct eligible costs (in case of actions comprising also financing not linked to costs, to be calculated on the cost-based component). 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 (except volunteer costs and project office costs) (in case of actions comprising also financing not linked to costs, to be calculated on the cost-based component). 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 an 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

Costs that do not comply with the conditions laid down in the contract are not eligible. 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; and

- Value Added Tax (VAT), excise duties and other special consumption taxes or any other similar tax, duties or charges having equivalent effect (subject to the final provisions as defined in the FFPA⁹).

2.1.5 Ethics and values

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 exclusion decisions for other award procedures and/or financial penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

Respect for environmental legislation and core labour standards

Applicants who are awarded a grant 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).

Respect of EU values

Applicants who are awarded a grant must commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities.

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.

Successful applicants, (and affiliated entities) other than (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies 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 application by the contracting authority, but is an administrative requirement. See section 6.2.10. of the practical guide.

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.

⁹ Please note that the ineligibility of taxes, including VAT, duties and charges, depends on the signature of the FFPA between the European commission and the Republic of Serbia for the MFF 2021-2027.

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 excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

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, lead applicants need to:

I. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action.

Lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities, other than natural persons, must register in PADOR¹⁰ and the lead applicants must make sure that their PADOR profile is up to date. .

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://webgate.ec.europa.eu/pador>.

Please note that the registration of this data in **PADOR is obligatory** for this call for proposals.

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, or for security and confidentiality concerns, lead applicants, co-applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) must complete the 'PADOR registration form'¹¹ attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent **together with the application**, by the submission deadline (see Section 2.2.2.).

The European Commission external action DGs (DG INTPA, DG NEAR, FPI) are migrating the management of their calls and contracts to an online portal based on a register of organisations participating in EU calls for proposals. This online register will apply the "once only" principle: data related to an organisation needs to be submitted only once. This portal will be used as a communication platform for the management of the contract(s). Since you are in the process of applying for a call for proposals financed by DG INTPA, DG NEAR or FPI, it is mandatory to register now in the Commission's Participant register. This Participant Register will act as an entry point to the future call and contract management portal. By registering you will obtain a Participant Identification Code (PIC, 9-digit number) which will act as your unique identifier. Registration is free of charge. Not registering your organisation might create technical difficulties with the future data migration.

To apply for this call for proposal, it is mandatory for the lead and co-applicants to register in the **Participant Register**. In order to register your organisation, please follow this link: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register>.

¹⁰ Natural persons who apply for a grant (if so allowed in the guidelines) do not have to register in PADOR. In this case, the information included in PROSPECT and in the concept note is sufficient.

¹¹ Which corresponds to Annex F – PADOR Off-line form (practical guide, Annex e13).

II. Provide information about the action in the documents listed under section 2.2.2. (Where and how to send applications).

Please note that online submission via **PROSPECT** is **obligatory** for this call.

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 to the use of these systems should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu via the online support form in PROSPECT.

2.2.1. APPLICATION FORMS

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

Applicants must apply in English.

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

WARNING

The title of your proposal will become, if selected, the subject matter of the grant contract that will be signed with your organisation.

On the [Europa website](#), the field 'Public subject', using the title of the selected proposal, is used for publication in the Financial Transparency System (FTS) of all EU grants. This field, being intended for the general public, should provide general and clear information on the purpose of the expenditure.

We therefore recommend to define the subject matter of your proposal along the following indications.

An appropriate subject:

- refers to the content of the project or its objective;
- does not repeat information available in other fields such as the recipient's name, the programme, the year;
- is preferably written in English;
- may contain acronyms if relevant for the citizens;
- may contain the reference to the project or programme.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the instructions on the concept note or any major inconsistency in the 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 the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

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

Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Annexes A.1 and A.2, Instructions). If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, or for confidentiality and security concerns, the lead applicant has to submit with the application the completed PADOR registration form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each co-applicant (if any) and each affiliated entity (if any).

In addition, the following documents shall be submitted by the application deadline together with the 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 shall submit instead, 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 been subject of a pillar assessment.
2. The declaration on honour (Annex H to these guidelines) signed by the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.4.2 of the practical guide) where the amount of the grant exceeds EUR 15 000.
3. In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted¹²:
 - a. 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 lead applicant accounts for up to the last 3 available financial years.

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 available financial years. 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).
 - b. 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). A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) (if any) nor from affiliated entity(ies) (if any).

These documents must be supplied in the form of originals (blue ink signature or by applying a qualified electronic signature (QES)¹³), photocopies or scanned versions of blue-ink originals (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates). Where photocopies or scanned copies are provided, originals shall be kept on file for controls in accordance with the record keeping obligations laid down in Section 2.5.5. of the practical guide.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union, a translation into English 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 English, 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 English.

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.

¹² No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000, or the following categories of lead applicants: (i) natural persons in receipt of education support (ii) natural persons most in need, such as unemployed and refugees, and in receipt of direct support (iii) public bodies, including Member State organisations (iv) international organisations.

¹³ Please note that only the QES within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 (eIDAS Regulation) will be accepted. Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC.

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

No additional annexes should be sent.

2.2.2 WHERE AND HOW TO SEND APPLICATIONS

Applications **must be submitted online** via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT user manual.

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

The other supporting documents, except the declaration on honour on exclusion criteria, shall be uploaded in PADOR¹⁴.

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses 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 (Annexes A.1 and A.2, Instructions).

2.2.3 DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

The deadline for the submission of applications is 05/10/2026 at 16:00 (CET). 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](#))¹⁵.

Lead applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their 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 aforementioned difficulties.

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.4 FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICATIONS

An information session on this call for proposals will be held on 03 September 2026 at 11:00h CET. The session will be held online.

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

E-mail address: **delegation-serbia-fcs@eeas.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 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), 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 DG International Partnerships https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr and/or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website(s) regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

¹⁵ For example: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at ec-external-relations-application-support@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 practical guide.

2.3 EVALUATION

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.

2.3.1 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 application satisfies all the criteria specified in Section 7 of Part B 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. Consistency with the objectives of the call: How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5
1.2. Relevance to the country/region/sector needs: How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5
1.3. Target groups and final beneficiaries: How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the target groups and final beneficiaries? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined? Does the proposal address them appropriately?	5
1.4. Added value elements: Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)? [and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the guidelines for applicants]	5
2. Design of the action	30
2.1. Intervention logic. Does the proposal indicate the expected results (outputs/outcomes/impacts) to be achieved by the action? Does the design of the proposed	5x2**

action identify explicitly the necessary sequence to achieve the desired objectives beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes and impacts?	
2.2. Context analysis. Does the design of the action include a robust analysis of the needs to be addressed, including the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? Are those also embedded adequately in the intervention logic?	5
2.3. Risks and assumptions. Is the design based on clear assumptions (the necessary and positive conditions that allow for a successful cause-and-effect relationship between different levels of results)? Does it take into account also risks (the factors that might hinder the achievement of results)?	5
2.4. Indicative Activities. Is the indicative list of activities linked to and consistent with the expected outputs?	5
2.5. Cross-cutting issues: To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth, combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)?	5
Maximum total score	50

* Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal specifically addresses more than the required minimum number of priorities as indicated in Section 1.2 (objectives of the programme) of these guidelines.

****:** 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 200% 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. [Lead applicants who, in exceptional cases (see section 2.2.2), had to submit their application by post or hand-delivery will receive the letter by e-mail or by post, if no e-mail address was provided.

The evaluation committee will then proceed with the lead applicants whose proposals have been pre-selected.

2.3.2 STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

If the applications pass the opening and administrative checks along the instructions of the Step 1, they 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 the 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. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house experience of project management?	5
1.2. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical in-house expertise (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)?	5
1.3. Do 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. Consistency with the objectives of the call: How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5
2.2. Relevance to the country/region/sector needs: How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5
2.3. Target groups and final beneficiaries: How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the target groups and final beneficiaries? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined? Does the proposal address them appropriately?	5
2.4. Added value elements: Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)? [and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the guidelines for applicants]	5
3. Design of the action	15
3.1. Intervention logic. Does the proposal indicate the expected results (outputs/outcomes/impacts) to be achieved by the action? Does the design of the proposed action identify explicitly the necessary sequence to achieve the desired objectives beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes and impacts? Is the indicative list of activities linked to and consistent with the expected outputs?	5
3.2. Logical Framework Matrix: Is the logical framework provided in Annex C complete? Does each result (output, outcome, impact) include an adequate number of indicators that are sufficient in scope to measure its achievement? Is each indicator RACER (Relevant,	5

Accepted, Credible, Easy to monitor, Robust)? Does each indicator have a baseline value (with year), target value (with year), and a credible source of data? If baselines and targets are not available, this is to be justified and a study (or other relevant tools) to be foreseen and budgeted in the proposal? In the case of use of FNLC, are the FNLC results and indicators clearly marked?	
3.3. Context analysis. Does the design of the action include a robust analysis of the needs to be addressed, including the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? Are those also embedded adequately in the intervention logic?	5
4. Implementation approach	15
4.1. Action plan: Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Are types of activities clearly clustered by output in the Activities Matrix? Is the timeline realistic?	5
4.2. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation: Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring and reporting system? Is the system in place adequate to update the values of the indicators included in the Logical Framework Matrix - thus informing regularly on progress towards the achievement of impact, outcomes and outputs? Is there an evaluation planned and budgeted (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)? If relevant, is the role of third party assessor included?	5
4.3. Project management (technical): Do the co-applicant(s) and (if applicable) their affiliated entities have the necessary technical skills to attain the objectives of the action? Are the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s adequately involved in the implementation (e.g. advocacy, research, capacity building, outreach related activities)?	5
5. Sustainability of the action	15
5.1. Long-lasting benefits: Is the action likely to ensure long lasting and transformative benefits to the target groups and the final beneficiaries?	5
5.2. Multiplier effects: Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, cross-fertilisation of experience and knowledge sharing?	5
5.3. Sustainability How likely the effects are to last after the intervention ends?- Financial sustainability: which financial resources are available to fund the continuation of the services provided by the intervention? How long are they likely to be available and from which sources?)- Institutional sustainability: which institutional arrangements allow for maintaining the benefits achieved? Is there any measure in place to ensure local ownership?)- Policy level sustainability (if applicable): is there any expected policy related effect from the action, e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods- Environmental sustainability (if applicable): will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?- Risk analysis and mitigation measures: will the action be accompanied by a good risk analysis (including physical, environmental, political, economic and social risks) and relevant mitigation measures?	5
6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	15
6.1. Budget: Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? In the case of entire or partly use of financing not linked to costs, are the results and performance indicators adequately reflected in the budget?	5

6.2. Efficiency: Is the relation between the estimated amounts as per budget and the expected results adequate?	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. The contracting authority informs those lead applicants provisionally selected and those placed on the reserve list, that they will be subject to the final eligibility check.

2.3.3 STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS AND AFFILIATED ENTITY(IES) AND OTHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.2.1). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected (including those placed on the reserve list) according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals. In this case:

- The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 of Part B of the grant application form) and declaration of honour on selection and exclusion criteria 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. including exclusion criteria.

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.

In the eventuality that the evaluation committee 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.

2.4 AWARD DECISION

After verifying the supporting documents (step 3), the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

The contracting authority may decide not to award any grants and cancel the call for proposals without having the applicants any right to compensation.

The award decision shall indicate the successful applicants, the names of the applicants rejected, and a reserve list (if any).

2.5 NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the contracting authority's decision concerning their application.

In case of rejection, they will be informed about the reasons for the negative decision. For the avoidance of doubt, please note that for applications rejected for reasons such as non-compliance with the admissibility requirements (for example, if the application was sent after the deadline), with the eligibility (the entity or person is not part of the predefined eligible population of entities or persons), the selection (the entity does not have financial capacity or professional or operational capacity) and the award criteria (the proposal does not comply with the predefined requirements such as quality, cost/efficiency), no prior adversarial procedure is required.

Applicants placed on the reserve list will also be informed. The applicable terms to the reserve list are laid down in Section 6.5. of the practical guide.

The successful applicants shall also be informed, and will be requested to provide some information and documents, including (for grants exceeding EUR 60 000) the self evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H. The lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities other than (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies shall fill in the self-evaluation questionnaire assessing the organisation's internal policy and procedures against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) (Annex L) (see Section 6.2.10 of the practical guide).

Successful applicants will also be informed if the first instalment of pre-financing is subject to the validation of a financial guarantee by the contracting authority. In this case, the applicant will be requested to send the guarantee in time to proceed to the payment of the first instalment in accordance with the payment provisions of the grant contract.

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

2.6 SIGNATURE OF THE GRANT CONTRACT

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.

The budget proposed for the action by the successful applicants at the call for proposals stage must be corrected to remove any obvious arithmetical errors or ineligible costs prior to signing the contract. The description of the action is corrected accordingly if need be.

The contracting authority may decide that other clarifications or minor corrections may be made to the description of the action or to the budget in so far as they do not call into question the grant award decision, do not conflict with equal treatment of applicants, and:

- relate to matters clearly identified by the evaluation committee; or
- aim at taking into consideration changes that have occurred since the date of receipt of the proposal.

These amendments cannot lead to an increase in either the amount of the grant or the percentage of the European Union contribution as set in the guidelines of the call for proposals. In this respect, records of the contacts with the applicants must be kept on the file.

In no case the conditions announced in the guidelines can be altered at this stage. Apart from the above-mentioned clarifications and/or corrections, any other alteration of the initial proposal or deviation from the award conditions laid down in the guidelines is strictly prohibited.

Any other alteration to the successful applicant's proposal, or negotiation of it, is prohibited.

2.7 INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

	DATE	TIME
1. Information meeting (if any)	03 September 2026	11:00 hrs CET
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	14 September 2026	16:00 hrs CET
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	24 September 2026	-
4. Deadline for submission of applications	05 October 2026	16:00 hrs CET
5. Information to lead applicants on [opening], administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)	November 2026	-
6. Notification of the contracting authority decision	December 2026	-
7. Contract signature	February 2027	-

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 and/or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

2.8 EARLY DETECTION AND EXCLUSION SYSTEM

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, natural or legal person that assumes unlimited liability for the debts, natural or legal person who is essential for the award or for the implementation of the legal commitment, beneficial owner or any affiliate of the applicant, 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) 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

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 (Excel format)
Annex D	[Not applicable]
Annex E	[Not applicable]
Annex F	PADOR registration form
Annex H	Declaration on Honour on exclusion criteria

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION¹⁶

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-A	Model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action
Annex VII-B	Terms of reference for a third party assessment in case of financing not linked to costs
Annex VIII	Model financial guarantee
Annex IX	Standard template for transfer of ownership of assets
Annex I	Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en
Annex J	Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.
Annex K	Additional clarifications on financing not linked to costs

USEFUL LINKS

PRAG	https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG
Project Cycle Management Guidelines	https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en
The implementation of grant contracts, A Users' Guide	https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=48169235
Financial Toolkit ¹⁷	https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en
Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES)	https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/how-it-works/annual-lifecycle/implementation/anti-fraud-measures/edes_en#data-protection

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

¹⁶ These documents should also be published by the contracting authority.

¹⁷ Please note that 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.