



## European Social Fund+ (ESF+)

### Call for proposals

Framework partnership agreements to support networks active in the areas of social enterprise finance and microfinance

ESF-2021-OG-NETW-MF-SE-FPA

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION

EMPL.E – Skills  
EMPL.E.1 – Job Creation

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for an EU **framework partnership agreement for grants** in the field of microfinance and social enterprise finance under the **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (ESF+ Regulation<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2021 Work Programme<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL)**.



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

Operating grants provide general financial support to organisations whose statutory activities serve the strategic objectives of EU policies (*mainly non-profit organisations, voluntary associations, foundations, NGOs or similar*). They do not support a specific project (like action grants), but the annual operating budget of the organisation (or part of it). Operating grants are always mono-beneficiary grants supporting the work programme of activities of only one organisation. They follow the same rules for the grant agreements as action grants, but do not differentiate between direct and indirect costs. Receiving an operating grant may however have an impact on the possibility to receive the indirect costs flat-rate in EU action grants (see [AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).

Framework partnerships (FPAs) are long-term cooperation instruments that serve as an umbrella for regular or recurrent grants in the same field or area and under a common action plan (or work programme of activities). They are a prerequisite for being able to apply for these grants, but don't create any legitimate expectations or entitlement to get them. FPA beneficiaries are normally identified on the basis of a standard evaluation and award procedure and then invited to submit their proposals for grants (closed calls; addressed directly to the framework partners). **Please note that for the first year, the FPA and SGA applications are submitted in parallel due to time constraints. You must first complete the FPA application, and then use the FPA application number in the SGA application. Grant agreements (SGAs) can only be signed if the FPA has been signed, and before the end date of the FPA.**

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **ESF-2021-OG-NETW-MF-SE-FPA— Framework partnership agreements to support networks active in the areas of social enterprise finance and microfinance**

We invite you to read the **call documentation** on the Funding & Tenders Portal Topic page carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the

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<sup>1</sup> Proposal for a Regulation [COM\(2018\) 382 final](#) – pending adoption by the European Parliament and the Council.

<sup>2</sup> Commission Decision C(2021)3917 final of 7 June 2021 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2021 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand of the European Social Fund Plus.

[EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

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

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10) – not applicable
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc.*).

## 1. Background

This call for proposals is financed under the **Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") strand of the ESF+**, which provides financial support to achieve high employment levels, fair social protection, a skilled and resilient workforce ready for the future world of work, as well as inclusive and cohesive societies aiming to eradicate poverty. The overall political priority underpinning the activities under the EaSI strand of the ESF+ Programme is the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Entrepreneurship and self-employment help to create jobs, develop skills and give unemployed and vulnerable people an opportunity to fully participate in society and the economy. In addition, social enterprises and social economy organisations - thanks to their governance or social mission - are instrumental in the implementation of many of the rights and principles expressed in the European Pillar for Social Rights. Microenterprises, social economy organisations and social enterprises can contribute

towards achieving the specific objectives of the ESF+<sup>3</sup> and they make an important contribution to “an economy that works for people” indicated in the Political Guidelines of the current Commission.

In line with the objectives of the EaSI strand, this call will support **networking at Union level with and among relevant stakeholders and contribute to building up the institutional capacity of microfinance and social enterprise finance institutions**. The call will also **support the development of a market ecosystem for microfinance and the emergence of social investment markets**.

For this purpose, this call aims to set up **4-year Framework Partnership Agreements with EU-level networks** active in the areas of microfinance and social enterprise finance. Networks active in these areas are key in supporting financial intermediaries and/or organisations providing non-financial support (e.g. investment readiness, incubation or acceleration services) to microenterprises and/or social enterprises. They are well placed to act as multipliers and disseminate information about EU initiatives and funding at national and local levels, as well as to inform EU policy making about the challenges and expectations of their members.

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

### *Objectives (expected outcome)*

The activities of the applicant should contribute to the following main objectives:

- Support the Commission in its outreach activities and its mission at EU, national and local levels, in order to increase awareness about, and enable the implementation of, EU policies and funding in the area covered by the call.
- Reinforce the capacity of the network's members, including through offering a platform for the exchange of good practices, and raising their awareness about relevant EU policies.
- Provide input for policy design and implementation in the area of the call, by voicing the concerns and expectations of social enterprises, microenterprises and their support organisations/ financial intermediaries in the various European countries.
- Provide data / research on developments in the field of microfinance or social enterprise finance, which can serve as input for evidence-based policy making at EU, national and local levels. The focus can be put on broad overviews as well as on specific niche topics related to the field.

### *Themes and priorities (scope)*

Themes: Framework partners should be active in enabling access to finance and the provision of business development support for enterprises and microenterprises. This includes raising awareness about all funding opportunities relevant for these entities at EU level. Together with this, they can also work on complementary activities aimed

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<sup>3</sup> ESF+ Regulation - Article 4 - Specific objectives

at building an enabling environment in which social economy organisations, social enterprises, microenterprises and their intermediaries can operate (e.g. improving understanding of these business models and their needs among private and public finance providers at all levels, including in the context of the COVID crisis, improving the policy environment, access to procurement and grants, education and skills) and niche topics with close links to social enterprise finance and microfinance (e.g. improving research on social taxonomy). Such complementary activities should remain closely connected to the objective to facilitate access to finance.

Priorities: In the period covered by the framework agreements the priority of the Commission will be on implementing the actions announced in the upcoming European action plan for the social economy. In the area of access to finance, the focus will be on designing and launching financial instruments and measures for microfinance, social economy and social enterprise finance under the Social Investment and Skills window of the InvestEU Programme and on ESF+ actions implemented at EU level). Another important aspect will be that of raising awareness about EU funding at national/regional (in particular ESF+) among social economy stakeholders and microentrepreneurs, and improving their access to this funding. Social and inclusive entrepreneurship may have openings in other EU level initiatives (e.g. the Youth Employment Support Initiative, the Circular Economy Action plan, the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion, the Recovery Plan, the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans) and funding programmes (e.g. other InvestEU products, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, European Regional Development Fund).

Applicants are expected to support the Commission with the implementation of actions and further policy design in these areas.

### *Activities that can be funded (scope)*

This call will support networks at EU level whose activities contribute to the implementation of the above-mentioned objectives, priorities and initiatives.

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

- Analytical activities, such as (i) the collection of data and statistics, the development of common methodologies and, where appropriate, policy analyses and recommendations; (ii) the monitoring and assessment of relevant legislation, policies and practices; (iii) studies, researches, analyses and surveys;
- Capacity building activities, such as trainings, workshops, seminars, train-the-trainer events and the development of training modules and online training tools;
- Actions aiming at the creation and improving of networks, mutual learning, cooperation, awareness-raising and dissemination activities, such as (i) the identification of, and exchanges on, good practices, innovative approaches and experiences; (ii) the organisation of peer reviews and mutual learning; (iii) the organisation of conferences, seminars, media campaigns, information campaigns; (iv) the compilation and publication of materials to disseminate information about the EU initiatives and their results; (v) regular information on EU initiatives and funding (e.g. newsletters and mailings); (vi) the development, operation and maintenance of systems and tools using information and communication technologies, development of web pages or a helpdesk for members and stakeholders.

Activities should be geared towards:

- Contributing to evidence-based regulation, policies and reforms at EU/national/local level and provide the Commission with input for policy design, e.g. by gathering relevant evidence (especially from local levels) and by contributing to ad-hoc public or targeted consultations, to thematic strategic dialogue meetings and exchanges with Commission services;
- Raising awareness and disseminating information on social enterprise finance and microfinance at EU and national levels including good practices and mapping out existing gaps;
- Building capacity of national members to actively engage them in developing national and local microfinance and social enterprise finance markets;
- Reinforcing cooperation with other EU level networks, with and between national stakeholders, as well as national, regional and local authorities.

Activities should also enable the networks to integrate **cross-cutting issues** (e.g. gender, disability, non-discrimination) in their day-to-day work.

Applicants are encouraged to **optimise the use of online/offline activities** taking into account the objectives of each activity, as well as environmental and health considerations. Possibilities offered by online activities to maximise impact should be utilised whenever possible (e.g. publically available recorded webinars).

The annual operating grants that could be granted based on these FPAs would finance the expenditure linked to the activities of these networks, insofar as they are in line with the objectives of the Programme in the area concerned and with the annual priorities that may be established by the Commission. The costs of general administrative expenditure necessary for the running of these organisations may also be covered.

### Expected impact

The Commission expects networks to design and implement **relevant, quality and impactful work programmes that fit the objectives and priorities** defined in the call. The work plan should clearly demonstrate the organisation's capacity to generate **concrete impacts**.

#### Applicants are invited to:

- Provide clear descriptions of the main activities and implementation methodology;
- Describe the contribution and added value of the programme to the EU policy in the area of this call;
- Describe their monitoring system and the way in which they use monitoring and external evaluations in order to assess their overall performance and the relevance and impact of their outputs.

#### In particular, the expected impact is:

- Improved awareness about EU policies and funding for social economy, social enterprises and microenterprises among the network's members and other relevant stakeholders;
- Increased awareness of EU and national authorities about the needs and potential of organisations represented by the networks;

- Increased capacity of the networks and their members to support policy making in their respective areas;
- Enhanced research and availability of data about the fields in which the networks operate.

### 3. Available budget

The total budget earmarked for grants calls under this framework partnership call for the four year period is indicatively **EUR 6 400 000**.

Depending on the number and quality of proposals, the Commission expects to sign between four and five framework partnerships.

### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
<b>FPA</b>	
Call opening:	23 June 2021
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>28 September 2021 – 17:00:00 CET</u>
Evaluation:	October - November 2021
Information on evaluation results:	December 2021
FPA signature:	December 2021/January 2022
<b>First SGA calls</b>	
Opening for submission:	23 June 2021
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>28 September 2021 – 17:00:00 CET</u>
Evaluation:	October – November 2021
Information on evaluation results:	December 2021
GA signature:	January/February 2022

### 5. Admissibility and documents

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

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded as PDF in the system*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded as PDF files/included in Part B*):
  - detailed budget table: not applicable,
  - CVs (standard) of core project team,
  - activity reports of last year,
  - list of previous projects (key projects relating to the subject of the call in the last 3 years).

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

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to **40 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

## 6. Eligibility

### *Eligible participants (eligible countries)*

In order to be eligible, the applicants must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies),
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member State (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))

- non-EU countries:
  - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the ESF+ or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature,
- be non-governmental, non-profit-making, and independent of industry, commercial and business or other conflicting interests,
- have their mission falling under the objectives and scope of the priorities established under each relevant section of the call for proposals,
- have national member organisations in at least fourteen (14) Member States of the European Union,
- be mandated by their members, through a Management Board or other administrative forum, to represent these members at the EU level and to be responsible for the activities of the network.

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

### *Specific cases*

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

International organisations — International organisations are NOT eligible.

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>4</sup>.

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'<sup>5</sup>.  Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Social partner organisations — These include notably the European social partner organisations that are consulted in accordance with Article 154 TFEU (for the list, see [List of consulted organisations](#)) as well as other European-level social partner organisations that are not included in this list, but who are for example involved in the preparation and launch of European social dialogue at sector level. Social partner organisations without legal personality are eligible provided that the conditions for entities without legal personality (*see above*) are met.

<sup>4</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>5</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (*see list above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*<sup>6</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>7</sup>). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

<sup>i</sup> For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Consortium composition

Only applications by single applicants are allowed.

### Eligible activities

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

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc.*)

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

### Geographic location (target countries)

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

### Duration

The framework partnership agreements will have a **duration of four years**.

### Project budget

Annual operating grants budgets are expected to range indicatively **between EUR 250.000 and EUR 600.000 per work programme**.

Applicants must provide a high-level 4-year outline plan and budget for the period 2022-2025. The value of the grant requested must be stable across the 4 years. The

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<sup>6</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>7</sup> Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) 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 (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

FPA multi-annual budgetary envelope shall be respected when applying for subsequent annual grants.

## 7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

### Financial capacity

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

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

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

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

If we consider that one or more participants' financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information,
  - an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries (*see below, section 10*),
  - pre-financing paid in instalments,
  - (one or more) pre-financing guarantees (*see below, section 10*),
- or
- propose no pre-financing,
  - request that the participants are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

For framework partnerships, the financial capacity check will be done only once at FPA-level for all applicants.

For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Operational capacity

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

This capacity will be assessed on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical

and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

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

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project (CVs of the proposed the persons who will perform the main tasks, notably project manager and key personnel),
- description of the participant organisation,
- applicants' activity reports of last year,
- list of previous projects (key projects relating to the subject of the call in the last 3 years).

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

Public bodies are exempted from the operational capacity check.

For framework partnerships, the operational capacity check will be done generally at FPA-level and then again for each grant application in the grants calls.

### Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>8</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>9</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the framework partnership)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the framework partnership)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decisionmaking- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the framework partnership)

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<sup>8</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>9</sup> Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decisionmaking- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the framework partnership)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decisionmaking- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the framework partnership).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>10</sup>:

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

For framework partnerships, exclusion will be checked before FPA signature and then again before signature of each grant).

## 8. Evaluation and award procedure

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

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

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

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

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

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (*see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)*). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

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<sup>10</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

## 9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

- **Relevance:** (Max. 40 points; min 25): Relevance of the organisation’s mission statement, of the specific objectives defined for the period covered by the framework partnership, of the activities and multi-annual action plan, to the themes, priorities and objectives of the call; Contribution and added value of the programme to the EU policy.
- **Quality:**
  - **Project design and implementation:** (Max. 30 points; min 15): How cooperation arrangements among team and network members will ensure effective delivery of the work programme; well-justified recourse to sub-contracting.
  - **Project team and cooperation arrangements:** (Max. 10 points; min 5): Overall technical quality and clarity of multi-annual plan; internal communication and management procedures, risk management, monitoring and evaluation, feasibility of the programme (methodology and timeframe); cost-effectiveness (sufficient /appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money).
- **Impact:** (Max. 20 points; min 10): European/transnational impact of the network, activities and outputs; Extent to which the programme and activities focus on local reach out and implementation; Ambition and relevance of expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; Appropriate dissemination strategy to ensure sustainability and long-term impact on identified targetgroup.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	25	40
Quality — Project design and implementation	15	30
Quality — Project team and cooperation arrangements	5	10
Impact	10	20
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 25/40, 15/30, 5/10 and 10/20 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

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

Not applicable for Framework Partnership Agreements.

## 11. How to submit an application

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

Submission is a 2-step process:

### a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EULogin user account](#).

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

### b) submit the proposal

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF files.

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

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

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

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

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

## 12. Help

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

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

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

### **Contact**

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address:

- general questions on ESF+: EMPL-EaSI@ec.europa.eu
- call-specific questions: EMPL-VP-2021-005@ec.europa.eu.

Questions on submission must:

- be sent at the latest 7 days before the submission deadline (*see section 3*).
- indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (*see cover page*).

## 13. Important

### IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — Not applicable.
- **Coordinator** — Not applicable.
- **Affiliated entities** — Not applicable.
- **Associated partners** — Not applicable.
- **Consortium agreement** — Not applicable.
- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants: not applicable.**
- **Multiple proposals** — not applicable.
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.

- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*).
- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

This includes:

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

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

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