



Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)

Call for proposals

Networks of Towns
(CERV-2026-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT)

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EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

EACEA.B - Creativity, Citizens, EU values and Joint operations
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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

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

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

The call is launched in accordance with the 2026-2027 Work Programme³ and will be managed by the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** ('Agency').

 Please note that this call is subject to the final adoption of the budget 2026 by the EU budgetary authority. In case there are substantial changes, we may have to modify the call (or even cancel it).

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **CERV-2026-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns**

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

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

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
 - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - award criteria (section 9)
 - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)

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

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

³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2025) 8076 of 01.12.2025 on the financing of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2026-2027.

- how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
 - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

You are also encouraged to visit the [CERV Programme Project Result webpage](#), [Europe for Citizens Programme Project Results website](#), [REC Programme results webpage](#) and the [Daphne Toolkit](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme provides funding for citizens engagement, equality for all and the implementation of rights and EU values. The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (hereafter 'the programme') brings together the former Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme⁴ and the former Europe for Citizens programme⁵.

The programme promotes exchanges between people of different countries, reinforces mutual understanding and tolerance and gives them the opportunity to broaden their perspective and develop a sense of European belonging and identity through networks of towns. While maintaining a bottom-up approach, the programme also provides, in particular to networks of towns, an opportunity to focus on EU priorities.

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

Objectives

- To promote exchanges between citizens of different countries, in particular through networks of towns, to give them practical experience of the wealth and diversity of the common heritage of the Union and to make them aware that these constitute the foundation for a common future.
- To develop sustainable networks of towns, deepening and intensifying their cooperation, while outlining common activities to promote Union values and fundamental rights, and their long-term vision for the future of European integration.
- To inclusively support citizens' engagement and participation in the democratic life and public policymaking at local level.

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1381/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for the period 2014 to 2020 (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 62)

⁵ Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020 (OJ L 115, 17.4.2014, p.3)

The main policy initiatives supported:

- **2025 European Democracy Shield** (Join(2025)791 Final, European Democracy Shield: Empowering Strong and Resilient Democracies). Adopted on 12 November 2025, the European Democracy Shield provides a strategic approach to safeguard, strengthen and promote democracy in the EU. It is built on three main pillars: safeguarding the integrity of the information space, strengthening free and fair elections and free and independent media and supporting societal resilience and citizens' participation and engagement.
- **2023 'Defence of Democracy Package'**: Recommendation on inclusive and resilient electoral processes, Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policymaking processes.
- **2023 EU Citizenship Package**: Guide to EU citizenship, Guidance on the right of free movement of EU citizens and their families, Guide of good electoral practices in Member States addressing the participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process, Compendium of e-voting and other ICT practices.
- **2021 'Reinforcing democracy and integrity of elections' package** (Communication on protecting election integrity and promoting democratic participation (COM(2021) 730 final), Regulation (EU) 2024/900 on the transparency and targeting of political advertising ("the Political Advertising Regulation"), Council Directive (EU) 2025/1788 of 24 June 2025 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for Union citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals (recast); Recast of Council Directive on the electoral rights of mobile EU citizens in municipal elections).

Other relevant policies include: EU Strategy for Civil Society (COM(2025) 790 final) adopted 12 November 2025, EU Strategy on Victims' Rights 2020-2025 (COM(2020) 258 final), EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (COM(2021) 142 final), Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (COM(2020) 152 final), EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025 (COM(2020) 565 final), EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-2030 (COM(2020) 620 final), EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life 2021-2030 (COM(2021) 615 final), LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, Communication: 'No Place for Hate: A Europe United Against Hatred' (JOIN(2023) 27 final), 2024 Recommendations of the European Citizens' Panel on Tackling Hatred in Society, Commission Communication: Roadmap for Women's Rights, Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 (COM(2021) 101 final), Digital education action plan 2021-2027 (COM(2020) 624 final)). Some of the policy initiatives listed above will be followed up by new strategies and action plans, as outlined in the mission letter of the Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, Hadja Lahbib, in the mission letter of the Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection, Michael McGrath, and in the Commission work programme 2025. This therefore needs to be taken into account when preparing proposals and for the lifetime of projects.

Themes and priorities (scope)

In view of the overall objectives stipulated above, the call will support the following priorities:

- Encourage citizen engagement, participation and democratic involvement at local, national, and EU level, promoting EU citizenship, shared values and democratic standards.
- Raise awareness of the benefits of diversity, tackle discrimination, racism and exclusion, and support the participation of under-represented groups, including racialised people, migrants and LGBTIQ individuals.
- Support the active involvement of citizens, including children, in public life, and promote democratic participation, gender equality and representation in local decision-making.
- Prevent and raise awareness of violence, hatred and polarisation (including violence against women, domestic violence, violence against children, violence against LGBTIQ people and racialised people, as well as bullying and cyberbullying, and promote promising practices for local Roma inclusion, desegregation and social cohesion.
- Promote democratic participation through cultural activities, including projects inspired by or aligned with the New European Bauhaus initiative.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Activities may include, among others: workshops, seminars, conferences, training activities, coaching, expert meetings, webinars, awareness-raising activities, high-visibility events, data gathering and consultation, development, exchanges, and dissemination of good practices among public authorities and civil society organisations, development of communication tools and the use of social media.

Under this measure, municipalities or regions and associations working together in a long-term perspective are invited to develop networks of towns to make their cooperation more sustainable and to exchange good practice.

Networks of Towns are expected to integrate a range of activities around subjects of common interest related to the programme's objectives, to involve community members active in the subject area and to aim for sustainability.

The gender equality perspective should be taken into account when designing the 'format' of the activities, to ensure that it is accessible to women and men on equal terms, and both women and men are able to participate in the activities.

The design and implementation of the projects are expected to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming. For example, applicants could conduct and include in their proposal a gender analysis, which would map the different impact that the project and its activities could potentially have on women and men as well as on girls and boys in all their diversity. To this end, applicants are encouraged to consult the key questions listed on the [EIGE website](#) when conducting their gender analysis. This analysis could help avoid any unintended negative effects of the intervention on either gender (do no-harm approach).⁶

Applicants are expected to design and implement their communication and dissemination activities in a gender-sensitive way. This includes, in particular, usage of gender-sensitive language. The same applies to the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities. Proposals that integrate a gender-perspective across all their activities will be considered of higher quality.

⁶ For more information see section 6 *Ethics and EU values*.

Expected impact

- Increased citizens' engagement in society with a view to supporting more active citizens' involvement in the democratic life of the Union at the local level - with a focus on young people;
- Increased use of innovative ways to engage with citizens at local level, including through digital tools (civic tech) that can complement in-person participation;
- Safer political environment for political candidates and elected representatives at local level, in particular for women and other groups at heightened risk of discrimination;
- Greater awareness of EU citizenship rights and improved implementation of those rights across Member States;
- Better access to information for mobile EU citizens and their family members on their rights as EU citizens;
- Increased participation of citizens and civil society organisations in local, national and European policy-making processes;
- Improved prevention and response against hatred, discrimination, racism and LGBTIQ-phobia;
- Improved awareness of the benefits of diversity and greater mutual understanding and respect for European minorities, Roma, racialised people, LGBTIQ people, etc.;
- Increased participation of children in the EU project from an early age;
- Improved accessibility for persons with disabilities and better inclusion in the community;
- Stronger awareness of the contribution of migration, migrants and their descendants to the cultural richness, diversity and common history of Europe;
- Increased awareness of the importance of citizen participation, including through cultural activities.
- More effective policies tackling and preventing violence against women, domestic violence, violence against children and violence against LGBTIQ people, Roma and racialised people at local level.

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 12.000.000**.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below:

Topic	Topic budget
CERV-20265-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT – Networks of Towns	EUR 12.000.000

The availability of the call budget still depends on the adoption of the budget 2026 by the EU budgetary authority.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	17 December 2025
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>16 April 2026 – 17:00:00 CET</u> <u>(Brussels)</u>
Evaluation:	May - July 2026
Information on evaluation results:	October 2026
GA signature:	January 2027

5. Admissibility and documents

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

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [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 (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- Part C (KPI Tool) — contains additional project data and the project's contribution to EU programme key performance indicators (*to be filled in directly online*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - Lump sum calculator
 - List of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*). Not applicable for newly established organisations⁷.

⁷ Newly established organisations: an organisation that cannot provide validated documents such as activity reports or financial accounts as it has less than 12 months of existence.

- A letter of support signed by a Municipality (applicable for private non-profit organisation representing a local authority). The document must be provided at the latest during GAP stage.
- CVs (standard) of core project team: for private non-profit organisations only.
- Applicants' activity reports of last year: for private non-profit organisations only. Not applicable for newly established organisations.
- for all the participants implementing activities involving children (below the age of 18):
 - private entities must submit their child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#) (see section 6 *Ethics and EU values*)
 - public entities must submit at GAP stage a declaration on honour on the respect of child protection requirements (template to be provided by EACEA to projects invited to the GAP) (see section 6 *Ethics and EU values*).

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

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

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

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

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

 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 (beneficiaries) must:

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

countries associated to the CERV Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the

agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))

 Please check the list regularly, to get the latest status on countries in the process of association.

- be non-profit making towns/municipalities or, their twinning committees or networks, other local/regional authorities, federations/associations of local authorities, or other non-profit organisations representing local authorities.

Other eligibility criteria:

- Activities must take place in at least two different eligible countries.
- The application must involve at least four applicants (not being affiliated entity or associated partner) from at least four different eligible countries of which at least two are EU Member States.

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

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

Specific cases

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible.

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

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons⁸.

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'⁹.  Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations for participation in the programme (see list of participating countries above) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature and if the association covers the call (i.e. is retroactive and covers both the part of the programme and the year when the call was launched).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)¹⁰. Such entities are not eligible to

⁸ See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

⁹ For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁰ 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](#).

participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092¹¹. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc). Currently such measures are in place for Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 16 December 2022).



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

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least four applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- The application must involve at least four applicants (not being affiliated entity or associated partner) from at least four different eligible countries of which at least two are EU Member States.

Applicants that are non-profit organisations representing municipalities will be required to clearly explain in the proposal the role and involvement of municipalities in the project thus proving their participation and commitment.

Eligible activities

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

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

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

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc*). Projects must also respect EU values and European Commission policy regarding reputational matters (*e.g. activities involving capacity building, policy support, awareness raising, communication, dissemination, etc*)¹².

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Geographic location (target countries)

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

These activities must take place in at least 2 different eligible countries.

¹¹ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

¹² See, for instance, [Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy](#).

Duration

Projects should normally range between 12 and 24 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Project budget

Minimum grant amount: EUR 100.000.

Maximum grant amount: no limit.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

Ethics and EU values

Projects must comply with:

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

Projects must seek to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming in accordance with the [Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#). Project activities should contribute to the equal empowerment of women and men in all their diversity, ensuring that they achieve their full potential and enjoy the same rights (see [Non-discrimination mainstreaming instruments, case studies and ways forward](#)). They should also seek to reduce levels of discrimination suffered by particular groups (as well as those at risk of multiple discrimination) and to improve equality outcomes for individuals¹³. Proposals should integrate gender and non-discrimination considerations in proposals and target a gender-balanced representation in project teams and activities. It is also important that individual data collected by the beneficiaries are broken down by sex ([sex-disaggregated data](#)), disability or age whenever possible.

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

Private participants with activities involving children must moreover have a child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#). This policy must be available online and transparent to everyone who comes in contact with the organisation. It must include clear information about the recruitment of staff (including trainees and volunteers) and include background checks (vetting). It must also include clear procedures and rules to staff, including reporting rules, and continuous training. Applicants representing public entities and planning activities involving children below the age of 18 years, must provide a declaration on honour on the respect of child protection requirements at GAP phase (template to be provided by EACEA to projects invited to the GAP; see section 5). It should be clearly indicated in the application which partner(s) will work directly with children/minors.

¹³ [Non-discrimination mainstreaming– instruments, case studies and way forwards](#)

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 needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

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

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

or

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



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

Operational capacity

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

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

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

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

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- applicants' activity reports of last year: for private non-profit organisations only (not applicable for newly established organisations)
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years; not applicable for newly established organisations) (*template available in Part B*).

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

Public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check.

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 participate¹⁴:

- 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 misconduct¹⁵ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation,

¹⁴ See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁵ 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; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

- intentionally and without proper justification resisted¹⁶ an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that¹⁷:

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

8. Evaluation and award procedure

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

¹⁶ 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

¹⁷ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

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.

9. Award criteria

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

- **Relevance:** extent to which the proposal matches the priorities and objectives of the call; clearly defined needs and robust needs assessment; clearly defined target group, with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context; European/trans-national dimension; impact/interest for a number of countries (EU or eligible non-EU countries); possibility to use the results in other countries (potential for transfer of good practices); potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation. **(40 points)**
- **Quality:** clarity and consistency of project; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account (organisation of work, timetable, allocation of resources and distribution of tasks between partners, risks & risk management, monitoring and evaluation); ethical issues, measures and policies to guarantee child safeguarding (for activities involving children), and compliance with EU values are addressed; feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; original and innovative proposals. **(40 points)**
- **Impact:** ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; the foreseeable impact, notably for the identified target groups, is clearly defined and measures are in place to ensure that the impact can be achieved and evaluated. The project outputs have the potential to support long-term changes, improvements, or developments for the benefit of the target groups concerned; guaranteeing the visibility of the CERV Programme and the EU support; appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; potential for a positive multiplier effect; sustainability of results after EU funding ends. **(20 points)**

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

Maximum points: 100 points.

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

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance' AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected. Exceeding the minimum (quality) threshold is no guarantee of funding. Only the highest ranked proposals can be supported (in order of merit) within the limits of the available budget (funding threshold).

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

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

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

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

Starting date and project duration

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

Project duration: *see section 6 above*.

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The project activities must be organised as work package(s). More information can be found on the Q&A page.

The deliverables of the work packages must include the Event Description Sheet per event (mandatory document). Event Description Sheets must be published on the webpage of the municipality/ coordinator for the selected projects and could also include, agendas or minutes of meetings, evaluation and/or quality control reports, a set of indicators for the assessment of activities and their impact, conception/planning reports, brochures, recommendations, and other strategic documents which contain the conclusions of the activities.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

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

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

The grant will be a lump sum grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount, based on a lump sum or financing not linked to costs. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the variable amounts it has prefixed, and the estimates indicated by the beneficiaries in their project budget.

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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

Budget categories for this call:

- Lump sum contributions¹⁸
 - the lump sum amount must be calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the CERV lump sum decision and using the detailed Lump-Sum Calculator provided in the Portal Submission System
 - The lump sum calculation is based on two parameters: number of direct participants (local and non-national) and number of eligible countries per event. Events can take place either in situ or online.
 - In order to be eligible for funding, the total number of direct participants involved in the event must comply with the minimum requirements of participants/countries as set out in the lump sum decision.

Projects are built around the organisation of several 'events' gathering citizens. An event is one or a series of activities, not necessarily performed on the same day, aiming at gathering people involving direct and verifiable participation of the target group(s) to discuss a thematic defined in advance. An event aims at reaching a determined output as defined in the work package of reference.

Double funding is not allowed. Therefore, direct participants can be counted only once for the whole event under the same work package, even if they participate in several activities. Activities involving the same direct participants but belonging to different work packages should in principle not have overlapping timeframe (taking place on the same day/consecutive days). Should that occur, the same direct participants must be counted only once under one work package.

EU officials shall not be counted for the purposes of the calculation of the lump sum thresholds, in accordance with the [Decision](#) authorising the use of lump sums for actions under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027). EU officials or EU policymakers may participate; however, they are not the intended target group of this call, which is designed to engage citizens and civil society actors through participatory and interactive processes. Only the active and verifiable participation of citizens or stakeholders is considered eligible for the purposes of calculation of the lump sum.

Kick-off meetings: costs for potential kick-off meetings organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed.

For more information on events and how to structure your application form, please see the relevant section on the Q&A on the Topic page.

Reporting and payment arrangements

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

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the

¹⁸ [Decision](#) of 26 March 2021 authorising the use of lump sums for actions under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).

project (float of normally **60%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) – whichever is the latest.

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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

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

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

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
 - unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
- or
- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Other specificities

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

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



For more information, see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

11. How to submit an application

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

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

Once you have an EU Login 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 4 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online.
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Part C containing project data. To be filled in directly online.

- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

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

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal 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.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) in proposals

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

Specifically, applicants are required to:

- Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.
- Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations, including those generated by the AI tool. Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.
- Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarizing someone else's work.
- Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge.

12. Help

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

- [Online Manual](#)
- Q&A on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)

- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates, including invitations to info sessions for applicants (if any) after the opening of the call.

Contact

For help related to this call you may contact the [CERV Contact Point](#) of your country.

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:

FACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu.

Please clearly indicate 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, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them). Organisations may participate in several proposals.

BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this 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](#).