



**Contracting Authority: European Commission**

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument  
(NDICI-Global Europe)

Global Gateway Early-Stage Investment Mechanism

## **Guidelines for grant applicants**

Budget line(s): 14.020240, 14.020241, 14.020142

Reference:

EuropeAid/184659/DH/ACT/Multi

Deadline for submission<sup>1</sup> of full application:

**16/03/2026 at 12:00 (Brussels date and time)**

(in order to convert to local time click [here](#)<sup>2</sup>)

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

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

## NOTICE

This is an open call for proposals, where all documents are submitted together (concept note and full application). In the first instance, only the concept notes will be evaluated. Thereafter, for the lead applicants who have been pre-selected, the full applications will be evaluated. After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected (including those placed on the reserve list). Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed 'declaration by the lead applicant' sent together with the full application.

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

**Preparation:** Online Information sessions and user manuals.

To help applicants familiarize themselves with this call before the online submission, **a virtual information session** will be organised on 20/01/2026 from 11:00 to 13:00 Brussels time.

Should you be interested in this session, please register by 16/01/2026 until 12:00 Brussels time in [this link](#) (max. two participants per organisation).

No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

All organisations may find more information regarding PROSPECT in the users' manual [Manual for Applicants e-Calls PROSPECT](#) and in the e-learning videos [e-Learning Videos - e-Calls PROPECT - EXACT External Wiki - EN - EC Public Wiki \(europa.eu\)](#). You may also contact our technical support team via the online support form in PROSPECT<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via e-mail: [ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu)

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# 1. GLOBAL GATEWAY EARLY-STAGE INVESTMENT MECHANISM

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

### Context and policy background

The Global Gateway is the EU contribution to reducing the global infrastructure investment gap, providing the framework for EU external action in a changing and challenging international environment. It reflects a change in the way the EU approaches its external action by aligning the needs of partner countries with a stronger assessment of the EU's strategic interests to position the EU more prominently in a competitive world.

In this context, where private sector-led initiatives are key to deliver on the ambitions of Global Gateway, a new need has emerged to promote knowledge sharing between EU investors/developers and the partner countries' governments to generate projects that are beneficial for all.

Moreover, in the current geopolitical landscape, providing very early-stage support to strategic initiatives is crucial not only for EU companies operating outside Europe but also to foster economic growth and prosperity in partner countries. At the same time, it is important to highlight that partner countries themselves require targeted support to adapt strategically to the fast-evolving EU policy framework, where stricter social, quality, and environmental standards are increasingly applied to products placed on the EU internal market. Meeting these standards often necessitates significant improvements in local infrastructure, such as sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) monitoring systems, waste management and recycling facilities, digital traceability for supply chains, or renewable energy installations to support low-carbon production.

Such early-stage support enables EU companies to establish and expand their global footprint through sustainable infrastructure projects, while simultaneously strengthening the capacity of partner countries to meet EU market requirements. This dual approach highlights the EU's commitment to promoting green and resilient development worldwide, facilitates the creation of local jobs, and fosters the transfer of EU expertise and innovation—empowering partner countries with advanced solutions and technologies that align with their long-term development goals

### Rationale

While the relationship between the EU industry and EU institutions has grown stronger as part of the Team Europe effort (with the EU private sector demonstrating significant interest in supporting Global Gateway through their own projects), DG INTPA needs to integrate in its toolbox a **mechanism to provide direct early-stage financial support** leveraging EU private companies' know-how through a competitive and transparent process. Many EU companies are competitive but lack the resources for early-stage development of projects or entering a new market, which leads to good ideas for investment being lost or realised by other partners. Others are well established locally but need to scale up and develop additional nascent projects.

This call for proposals is a concrete answer to that need, where DG INTPA will provide grants to mobilise EU private sector know-how and technology that will improve the quality and bankability of projects through pre-investment activities and/or pilot initiatives that lead to the definition and implementation of projects in partner countries in a Team Europe approach.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The main objective of this call for proposals is to use EU know-how, experience and technology to ensure that strategic and promising infrastructure projects proposed by EU companies in partner countries can advance from initial planning and feasibility stages to implementation and financing. This will contribute

to de-risking the early-stage projects and promote EU policy frameworks and standards, making projects more attractive to both domestic and international investors. By directly providing financial support for pre-investment preparation, this initiative hopes to unlock significant infrastructure improvements in partner countries and create new market opportunities for the EU private sector, contributing to economic development, job creation, connectivity and regional integration.

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is to support increased EU private sector investment in strategic infrastructure projects, thereby fostering the green transition of partner countries and promoting their socio-economic development.

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

1. To increase the involvement of **EU private sector in preparing sustainable infrastructure projects** in partner countries, enhancing European footprint in the world and aligning with the Global Gateway strategy.
2. To **enhance the quality and bankability** of infrastructure projects in the transport, artificial intelligence, energy and urban development sectors.
3. To facilitate the implementation of sustainable infrastructure projects that are **aligned with beneficiary countries' priorities and EU strategic interest and policy**.

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

- Alignment with SDGs and EU strategic priorities in the framework of the Global Gateway and EU policies (e.g. Green Deal, Global Gateway flagship projects and priorities, Team Europe offers, etc.) and work already advanced under the Global Gateway strategy.
- Alignment with beneficiary country's strategic priorities (e.g. National Development Policy, National Determined Contribution, etc.)
- Link to EU strategic interests and priorities in the country or region: priority will be given to actions that promote additional or sustained presence of EU private sector and industry actors either by supplying know how, expertise, management services or materials.
- Local engagement (local presence in the partner country, endorsement by the local authorities, existing MoU, consortia with a local company, commitment or intention of partners' cofinancing, etc.)
- Knowledge transfer: proof that the action is based on EU know-how and/or standards and that, when relevant, knowledge is intended to be transferred enabling local private and public capacities.
- Development impact: potential of the project to enhance connectivity, create jobs, reduce poverty and inequalities, promote gender balance and foster regional development.
- Sustainability: alignment with European policies and international sustainability standards, including the promotion of key EU instruments such as CBAM, RED, CEAP, CRMA, CSDDD, EUDR, ESPR and the EU Taxonomy, which together set the EU regulatory framework shaping infrastructure investment, trade and supply chains and can be the basis for partner countries and regions to develop their own regulations.
- Financial viability: demonstrating the development of sustainable business models and the potential to attract further EU private and public investment.
- Multiplying/enabling/cumulative effect for the EU industry in the same sector or in related ones.

### **1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY**

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 40 583 770. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

## **Indicative allocation of funds by lot:**

- **Lot 1: Transport**

Total available: EUR 7 800 000

- **Lot 2: Artificial intelligence**

Total available: EUR 4 000 000

- **Lot 3: Energy**

Total available: EUR 14 283 770

- **Lot 4: Urban development**

Total available: EUR 4 500 000

- **Lot 5: Railway sector in Latin America and Caribbean**

Total available: EUR 10 000 000

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

## **Size of grants**

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

- minimum amount: EUR 500 000
- maximum amount: EUR 2 000 000

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

- Maximum percentage: 90 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.4).

Exceptionally, grants covering up to 100% of the total eligible costs may be considered. Such requests must be duly justified by participants, demonstrating the interest of the European Union to be the sole donor to an action, and in particular to ensure visibility of a European Union action. Participants must provide detailed reasoning and supporting documentation within their proposals for consideration by the contracting authority.

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union or the European Development Fund<sup>4</sup>.

## **2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide (PRAG), which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG> ).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Where a grant is financed by the European Development Fund, any mention of European Union financing must be understood as referring to European Development Fund financing.

<sup>5</sup> Note that a lead applicant (i.e. a coordinator) whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission and who is awarded a grant will not sign the standard grant contract published with these guidelines but

## 2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

- (1) the actors (2.1.1.):
  - The **‘lead applicant’**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
  - if any, its **co-applicant(s)** (where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as ‘applicant(s)’);
  - and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s);
- (2) the actions (2.1.3.):
  - actions for which a grant may be awarded;
- (3) the eligibility of costs and eligibility of results/conditions (2.1.4.):
  - where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs (totally or partially): the eligible costs, the types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant

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

#### Lead applicant

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

- be a legal person **and**
- be a private or public body,  
including:
  - startups<sup>6</sup>, small and medium-sized enterprises<sup>7</sup> to large companies with internationalization projects<sup>8</sup>;
  - consortia of enterprises;
  - joint ventures in partnership with national or local public promoters;
  - government-linked companies (including state-owned enterprises, public-private partnerships, semi-public companies, etc.);
  - for Lot 2 (Artificial intelligence), research institutions and universities are also eligible.

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a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. All references in these guidelines and other documents related to this call to the standard grant contract shall in this case be understood as referring to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement template.

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this call, a “start-up” shall be understood as an independent company, generally not exceeding five years of age, which is not controlled by or a subsidiary of a larger corporate group, which pursues an innovative and scalable business model, and which demonstrates a significant potential for growth and job creation.

<sup>7</sup> As defined in the Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 (C(2003)1422).

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this call, “internationalization projects” shall be understood as projects aimed at enabling a company to enter, expand or strengthen its commercial, research and development, industrial, construction or logistical activities in markets outside its country of establishment.

excluding:

- state authorities (ministries, public agencies)
- regional and local authorities
- international organisations<sup>9</sup>

**and**

- be effectively established in<sup>10</sup> a Member State of the European Union, **and**
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary, **and**
- not being in any of the situations listed in Section 2.4. of the practical guide.

The lead applicant may act individually or with co-applicant(s).

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

### **Co-applicant(s)**

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

Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself.

In addition to the categories referred to in Section 2.1.1, the following are however also eligible:

- public or private entities effectively established in the country where the action will take place, including state authorities (ministries, agencies), regional and local authorities, international organisations<sup>11</sup>
- research institutions and universities

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

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

### **Affiliated entities**

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

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<sup>9</sup> International organisations are international public-sector organisations set up by intergovernmental agreements as well as specialised agencies set up by them; the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are also recognised as international organisations. While the European Commission may assimilate other non-profit organisations to international organisations, this is not relevant for this call for proposals. Thus, a non-profit organisation assimilated by the European Commission under Article 159(3) is not regarded as an international organisation under this call for proposals.

<sup>10</sup> To be determined on the basis of the organisation's statutes, which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a 'Memorandum of Understanding' has been concluded.

<sup>11</sup> Due to the legal status of international organisations, the obligation of effective establishment in the referred countries does not apply to international organisations, where the latter are eligible.

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

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

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

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

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

- Entities directly or indirectly controlled by the applicant (daughter companies or first-tier subsidiaries). They may also be entities controlled by an entity controlled by the applicant (granddaughter companies or second-tier subsidiaries) and the same applies to further tiers of control;
- Entities directly or indirectly controlling the applicant (parent companies). Likewise, they may be entities controlling an entity controlling the applicant;
- Entities under the same direct or indirect control as the applicant (sister companies).

- (ii) Membership, i.e. the applicant is legally defined as a e.g. network, federation, association in which the proposed affiliated entities also participate or the applicant participates in the same entity (e.g. network, federation, association...) as the proposed affiliated entities.

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

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

What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **2.1.2. Associates, contractors, recipients of financial support**

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

- Associates

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

- Contractors

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

- Recipients of financial support

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

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

### **2.1.3. Eligible actions<sup>12</sup>: actions for which an application may be made**

#### **Definition:**

An action is composed of a set of activities.

#### **Duration**

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 12 months nor exceed 36 months.

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<sup>12</sup> For consistency along the document, the following interpretation of the words “proposal”, “action” and “project” is considered:

- Proposal: detailed plan or offer submitted in response to this call for proposals, detailing the objectives, methodologies, and resources required to address the specific requirements set by the call.
- Action: specific set of activities outlined in the proposal, which becomes the actionable component once the proposal is approved and formalized through a grant agreement.
- Project: broader initiative or overarching goal to which the action contributes, encompassing various actions or phases that collectively aim to achieve the larger objectives. In this case, the project should be in the transport, digital, energy or urban development sectors.

## Sectors or themes

The call focuses on early-stage project preparation and/or pilot projects in the transport, artificial intelligence, energy and urban development sectors.

By early-stage it is understood pre-investment actions that allow improved decision-making and guide the next steps leading to higher-quality and bankable investments in line with European values.

Some indicative examples of early-stage project generation actions that can be funded under this call for proposals are:

### Lot 1: Transport

- Support to early-stages of railway, tramway and bus-rapid transit (BRT) operations (shadow operators) and project finance investment preparation
- Port and airport authorities/concessions peer support for sustainable port and airport investments (expansion, modernisation, greening of ports, decarbonisation, etc.)
- E-buses pilot projects (e.g. develop pilot project frameworks, test small-scale deployments, etc.)
- Smart urban mobility systems (e.g., baseline traffic and mobility studies, preliminary assessments of traffic management systems, evaluations of energy efficiency opportunities, studies aimed at reducing emissions and improving resilience, etc.).
- Preparatory work for renewable and low-carbon fuels development (aviation and maritime)
- Innovative solutions for road safety and resilient road management (digitalisation, advanced materials, etc.)
- Innovative road transport solutions (preparation of road concessions, integration of resilient road asset management systems, adoption of green technologies (e.g., digital twins/ITS, smart sensors, renewable-based EV charging, hydrogen corridors) and sustainable practices in road construction, etc.)

### Lot 2: Artificial intelligence for green transition

- Deploying AI in satellite image analysis and sensor data to monitor for example deforestation, illegal logging, and biodiversity changes in real-time, as well as early-warning systems for wildfires, floods, or drought risks.
- Predicting maintenance for renewable assets such as wind turbines, solar panels, or batteries, to increase lifespan and to optimise resource efficiency.
- Optimising distribution of water or energy with AI algorithms by analysing real-time data from smart meters and sensors to predict demand patterns and adjusting supply accordingly.

### Lot 3: Energy

- Onshore and offshore wind.
- Renewable hydrogen projects for the decarbonisation of hard to abate sectors, particularly fertilizers, iron and storage
- Hydroelectric power plants, including pump storage and rehabilitation.
- Electricity transmission and distribution, including grid modernisation.
- Energy efficiency projects, including building retrofits, appliance upgrades and industrial process optimisation.
- Geothermal
- Biomass

- Solar manufacturing or assembly
- Batteries manufacturing

#### Lot 4: Urban development

- Preparatory work for sustainable and smart cities applications/solutions, including for example low-emission transport systems, logistics/ freight solutions, green buildings, use of data and digital solutions for urban management/service delivery, in particular with a focus on cities along EU supported corridors in Africa as key nodes for sustainable growth.
- Preparatory work for solid waste management solutions, including for example waste-to-energy/fuels schemes, waste recovery value chains and investment opportunities to enhance circularity and recovery of secondary materials;
- Preparatory work for environmentally sustainable water supply, management and treatment solutions, including for example innovative financing models, smart leak detection, energy-efficient desalination and wastewater reuse technologies,

Lot 5: Support to the origination and structuring of railway and tramway projects in Latin America and Caribbean (see list below), with actions such as:

- Market analysis and research, including demand for low-carbon freight and passenger services and alignment with sustainable transport policies (conduct competitive analysis, identify market trends, assess the business environment and relevant laws and regulations, conduct market entry or expansion feasibility studies, perform surveys, interviews, and focus groups with customers or stakeholders, etc.)
- Strategic planning and project development (identify promoters and their strategic and operational objectives, develop business models and value propositions, set performance targets and KPIs, design organizational structures aligned with the proposed strategy, structure the potential involvement of different Team Europe stakeholders, support to early-stages of railway or tramway operations -shadow operators-, etc.)
- Project appraisal (conduct cost-benefit analysis and risk assessments, light assessment of the financial, economic, social and/or environmental impacts, support the promoter to raise funding for the preparatory work and studies, etc.)
- Project development and structuring (elaborate an action plan for the period of building up the project, lead in the dialogue with the promoter, develop partnerships with other entities providing support and expertise in specific sections of the project, coordinate negotiations with Development Finance Institutions and Export Credit Agencies, etc.)
- Preliminary design work (initial design and engineering work to outline project specifications and requirements, align project with international standards and local requirements, etc.)

#### Location

**For Lots 1, 2, 3, 4**, actions must take place in one eligible country for NDICI-Global Europe. Actions shall be carried out globally, with a focus on DG INTPA partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific.

#### **For Lot 1:** Transport

Actions shall be carried out globally, with a minimum share of **85% of the funds** implemented in DG INTPA partner countries<sup>13</sup> of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific.

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<sup>13</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries_en)

**For Lot 2:** Artificial intelligence for green transition

Actions shall be carried out globally, with a minimum share of **70% of the funds** implemented in DG INTPA partner countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific.

**For Lot 3:** Energy

Actions shall be carried out globally, with a minimum share of **70% of the funds** implemented in DG INTPA partner countries<sup>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</sup> of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific.

**For Lot 4:** Urban development

Actions shall be carried out in DG INTPA partner countries<sup>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</sup> of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas and Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific.

**For Lot 5:** Railway sector in LAC

Actions must take place in the following countries: Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Guatemala, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay, and be related to the following list of projects:

***COLOMBIA***

- Cali commuter train - Valle del Cauca
- Bogota L3 Metro
- Regiotrain del Norte
- Modernizacion Estacion Puerto Buenaventura Cali

***MEXICO***

- Metro modernization with CBTC
- CDMX Tren Ligero system overhauling
- Freight and Passenger trains (National plan)
- Rolling stock coop with CIIT
- Develop tech guidelines for passenger's railway for Mex
- Yucatan Multimodal Corridor
- Naucalpan-Buenavista Rail project

***COSTA RICA***

- Tren Gran Area Metropolitana

***PANAMA***

- Tren Panama-Chiriquí
- Metro Line 3
- Panama Canal Expansion

***PARAGUAY***

- Cercanías Asunción-Ypacaraí

## ***PERU***

- Lima L3 Metro
- Lima L4 Metro
- FFCC Lima-Ica

## ***BRAZIL***

- IFCO-FIOL East West Rail Corridor
- Intercity Train East Axis Sao Paolo - Sao Jose dos Campos

## ***GUATEMALA***

- Metro

## ***CHILE***

- LRT Coquimbo-La Serena
- LRT Pajaritos-Aeropuerto AMB
- Tranvía Viña del Mar - Reñaca
- Tranvía Anofagasta
- Train Saintiago – Valparaiso
- Santiago - Melipilla (TAM)
- Quinta Normal - Batuco (TSB)

## ***URUGUAY***

- Electric Tren-Tram Montevideo-Canelones - 25 Agosto

### **Types of action**

To bring EU know-how that will improve the quality and bankability of future projects and bear a lasting impact for partner countries, and ensure a level playing field for EU companies when necessary, actions should:

- a) be implemented by an entity(es) as described in section 2.1.1 that has proof of solid knowledge and experience about the particular needs of the chosen local context, possibly with some level of partnership already established with relevant actors in the partner country and Team Europe members;
- b) propose innovative measures whilst building on existing EU standards, best available technologies (BATs) and good practices where relevant. In this context, “innovative” refers to context-relevant and forward-looking measures, methods, or strategies that are new in or significantly improve the sector performances in the specific country or region where the action will take place. Further information can be found in section on types of activities (see below).
- c) have value for money and ensure sustainability, potential multiplier and transferability effects of the action by:

- demonstrating that developed activities are aligned to real needs and priorities in the targeted partner country/local context and to EU interests;
- having potential to be scaled up (the approach/strategy leads to mobilise Team Europe stakeholders and financiers, to form alliances with other EU companies, open/multiplies opportunities for EU companies and/or is replicable for/in other regional and/or thematic context thereby increasing the number of beneficiaries reached);
- linking, where possible, to existing national governance structures, policies and budgets as well as Team Europe groups; and where possible, contribute to reform and change;
- avoiding duplication, and where possible, complement related activities (ongoing or future) taking place at local, regional or national level, in particular if executed by Team Europe members;
- providing a breakdown of costs and a clear explanation for how each cost element was derived.

The rationale for all the choices made must be set out in the application at concept note step. The proposals must therefore include a (set of) tangible deliverables to be produced as the final output of the action (reports, knowledge products, demonstrations, etc.) that are suitable for sustained use and transferability.

The following types of action are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions and measures that may result in violation of human rights in partner countries or causing significant adverse effects on the environment or the climate<sup>14</sup>, including lock-in of fossil fuel infrastructure or unsustainable exploitation of natural resources;

## Types of activity

Potential applicants are invited to present all the activities they deem necessary to address the priorities and expected results under this call for proposals.

The grants will be used to mobilise EU private sector know-how and technology to improve the competitiveness, sustainability, quality and bankability of future projects through (indicatively and non-exhaustively):

- Pre-investment activities such as conception, stocktaking, scoping, sectoral pre-identification, prototyping design, pre-feasibility or light feasibility studies, technical assistance, light engineering, safeguards, recommendation on necessary regulatory reforms, training plans, master plans, support to missions, conferences, seminars, business forums, etc. and any other studies or activities that lead to the definition and implementation of projects of interest for EU companies in partner countries.
- Demonstration projects (pilots) to test EU business models, technologies and concepts that could attract additional investors or increase their confidence before committing into bigger investments.

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<sup>14</sup> Article 29 NDICI.

In terms of monitoring, the Contracting Authority will monitor the projects on a regular basis. Therefore, beneficiaries will have to transmit qualitative and quantitative monitoring data on the results of the activities in yearly reports.

At final reporting stage, the awarded applicants will be required to provide details about the results produced, including report material, copies of the information, research, best practices and findings, etc. as well as information on how interested parties have been involved in the project.

In setting up the action, beneficiaries must foresee the necessary funding for monitoring and reporting to the Contracting Authority.

### **Financial support to third parties**

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties.

### **Visibility**

The applicants must take all necessary steps to ensure the visibility of the European Union as the funder or co-funder of the action, through the correct and prominent display of the EU emblem and relevant funding statement. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission.

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

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

### **Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities**

The lead applicant may not submit more than 2 applications per lot (proposals targeting different projects) under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may not be awarded more than 1 grant per lot and 3 grants in total under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in other applications at the same time.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may not be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in more than 2 applications per lot under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be awarded more than 1 grant per lot, but not more than 3 grants in total under this call for proposals.

### **Form of the grant**

The grants awarded under this call for proposals take the following form:

Reimbursement of eligible costs that shall be based on one or more simplified cost options, as per Section 2.1.4:

## 2.1.4. Eligibility of costs and eligibility of results/conditions

### Reimbursement of costs

Where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs (entirely or partially), only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for ‘eligible costs’.

Eligible costs are reimbursed as simplified cost options. The grant shall take the form of a single lump-sum covering the entire eligible costs of the activities.

Single lump sums shall be determined in accordance with the methodology set out in the lump sum authorising decision<sup>15</sup> and on the basis of the estimated budget, which should comply with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The detailed cost estimation per work package and per beneficiary and affiliated entity (if any) shall include only costs that would be considered eligible in an actual costs grant. Ineligible costs shall not be included. Compliance with these principles shall be verified ex ante at the time of evaluation of the grant application.

The methods used by the beneficiary(ies) to determine the amounts shall be clearly described and substantiated in the budget and shall ensure compliance with the principle of co-financing and no double funding. Only costs that are directly linked to the action implementation and can therefore be attributed to it are eligible and can be included. They must not include any indirect costs (e.g. via cost drivers), ineligible costs or costs already declared under another costs item or heading of the budget of this contract.

In cases where a grant request includes justification for covering up to 100% of the total eligible costs, beneficiaries must provide detailed reasoning and supporting documentation within their proposals for consideration by the contracting authority. This justification should illustrate the need for full financing while aligning with the overall objectives of the action.

Additionally in Annex B, in the second column of worksheet no.1b, ‘Justification of the estimated costs’ per each of the corresponding budget item or heading, applicants must describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of lump sums, to which costs they refer.

The evaluation committee and the contracting authority decide whether to accept the proposed amounts on the basis of the provisional budget submitted by the applicants, by analysing factual data of grants carried out by the applicants or of similar actions.

Single lump sum action shall take the form of activity-based single lump sum. When using this form of financing, the description of the action shall include detailed information on the essential conditions triggering the payment, that shall be the completion of activities. Applicants have to divide their work programme into work packages in the description of the action and, if suitable, they can split working packages along the boundaries of reporting periods to allow activities to be reimbursed at interim payments. Under this call for proposals, each proposal shall contain **a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 6 work packages**.

### Eligible direct costs

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

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<sup>15</sup> Decision available at [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/guidelines/managing-intervention/single-lump-sum-grants\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/guidelines/managing-intervention/single-lump-sum-grants_en).

Salary costs of the personnel of national administrations may be eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the action were not undertaken

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

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

#### Contingency reserve

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

#### Eligible indirect costs

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

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

#### Contributions in kind

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

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

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

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

#### Ineligible costs

Costs that do not comply with the conditions laid down in the contract are not eligible. The following costs are not eligible:

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

- currency exchange losses;
- in kind contributions (except for volunteers' work);
- bonuses included in costs of staff;
- negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
- credit to third parties.

### **2.1.5. Ethics and values**

#### **Absence of conflict of interest**

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

#### **Respect for environmental legislation and core labour standards**

Applicants who are awarded a grant must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

#### **Respect of EU values**

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

#### **Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment:**

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

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

Successful applicants, (and affiliated entities) other than (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies shall assess their internal policy against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) through a self-evaluation questionnaire (Annex L). For grants of EUR 60 000 or less no self-evaluation is required. Such self-evaluation questionnaire is not part of the evaluation of the application by the contracting authority, but is an administrative requirement. See section 6.2.10. of the practical guide.

#### **Anti-corruption and anti-bribery**

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, 'corrupt practices' are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

## Unusual commercial expenses

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

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

## Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

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

## 2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

### 2.2.1. Application forms

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

Applicants must apply in English.

**The maximum length for the concept note is 6 pages, and for the full proposal 40 pages.**

Candidates may add annexes to their full proposals, but those should only be illustrative and not contain essential required information.

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

### **WARNING**

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

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

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

An appropriate subject:

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

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the instructions on the concept note or any major inconsistency in the application e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

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

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

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

In addition, the following documents shall be submitted by the application deadline together with the application form:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity. Where the contracting authority has recognised the lead applicant's, or the co-applicant(s)'s, or their affiliated entity(ies)'s eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it shall submit instead, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred in the meantime. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have been subject of a pillar assessment.
2. The declaration on honour (Annex H to these guidelines) signed by the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.4.2 of the practical guide) where the amount of the grant exceeds EUR 15 000.
3. In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted<sup>16</sup>:
  - a. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the lead applicant accounts for up to the last 3 available financial years. For start-ups established within the last three years, the accounts of all available financial years shall be certified.

In all other cases, the lead applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 available financial years. This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by an applicant to the contracting authority in any one financial year.

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

This obligation does not apply to secondary and higher education establishments.

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

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<sup>16</sup> No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000, or the following categories of lead applicants: (i) natural persons in receipt of education support (ii) natural persons most in need, such as unemployed and refugees, and in receipt of direct support (iii) public bodies, including Member State organisations (iv) international organisations.

These documents must be supplied in the form of originals (blue ink signature or by applying a qualified electronic signature (QES)<sup>17</sup>), photocopies or scanned versions of blue-ink originals (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates). Where photocopies or scanned copies are provided, originals shall be kept on file for controls in accordance with the record keeping obligations laid down in Section 2.5.5. of the practical guide.

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

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

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

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

### **2.2.2. Where and how to send applications**

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

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

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

### **2.2.3. Deadline for submission of applications**

The deadline for the submission of applications is 16/03/2026 at 12:00 (Brussels date and time). In order to convert this deadline to local time you can use any online time converter tool that takes into account timezones and winter/summer time changes (example available [here](#))<sup>18</sup>.

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

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

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<sup>17</sup> Please note that only the QES within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 (eIDAS Regulation) will be accepted. Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC.

<sup>18</sup> For example: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>.

## 2.2.4. Further information about applications

### Information session

To help applicants familiarize themselves with this call before the online submission, a **virtual information session** will be organised on 20/01/2026 from 11:00 to 13:00 Brussels time.

Should you be interested in this session, please register by 16/01/2026 in [this link](#) (max. two participants per organisation).

No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

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

E-mail address: [INTPA-184659@ec.europa.eu](mailto:INTPA-184659@ec.europa.eu)

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

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

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

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

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at [ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu) **via the online support form in PROSPECT**: please note that the working languages of the IT support are English, French and Spanish. Therefore, users are invited to send their questions in in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

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

## 2.3. EVALUATION

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

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

### 2.3.1. STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Annex A.2. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

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

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

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be scored on a scale proportional to its maximum score, as follows:

0–20% of the maximum score = Very poor

21–40% of the maximum score = Poor

41–60% of the maximum score = Adequate

61–80% of the maximum score = Good

81–100% of the maximum score = Very good

### Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
<b>1. Relevance of the action</b>	<b>25</b>
1.1. Consistency with the objectives of the call: How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (Section 1.2), including alignment with EU interest? Is the proposal aligned with the needs and priorities of the final beneficiary (local administration, partner country...)? Does the proposal demonstrate the integration of specific EU know-how or standards in the action, or alignment with established EU practices?	20
1.2. Added value elements: Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices, potential to have a strong Team Europe component, etc.)? Does the proposal clearly outline how/if the action adds value beyond existing initiatives?	5
<b>2. Maturity and expected impact of the action</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1. Level of maturity and local engagement: Has specific and relevant concrete groundwork already been carried out by the applicant (description of preparatory work concluded)? How advanced is the proposed initiative in terms of concept development, planning, and implementation readiness (including technical readiness)? How effectively are local actors engaged and committed (i.e. demonstration of local ownership, stakeholder participation, local presence in the partner country, letter of interest to justify endorsement by the local authorities, etc.)? Is there any previous engagement or involvement in the form of Team Europe dialogues around the proposal?	10
2.2. Expected impact and viability: Does the proposal demonstrate significant potential to generate new opportunities for future EU private sector investments? Does the proposal demonstrate significant financial involvement and commitment from EU private sector in the next stages of the project? Does the requested EU support have a catalytic effect on the project, such as overcoming financial gaps, mobilising additional investment, improving project quality, or accelerating implementation? Is the proposal part of a project that has significant economic, social, environmental (including progressing towards the EU Green Deal objectives) impact or other relevant positive externalities?	10
2.3. Cross-cutting issues: To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, inequality reduction, building local capacities, etc.?	5
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>50</b>

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

Firstly, only the concept notes with a score of at least **30** will be considered for pre-selection. If the score for at least one of the subsections is less than 20% of the maximum score, the application will also be rejected.

Secondly, the number of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to 200% of the available budget for this call for proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot, where relevant.

Lead applicants will receive a letter indicating the reference number of their application and the respective results. This letter will automatically appear online in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

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

### **2.3.2. STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION**

If the applications pass the opening and administrative checks along the instructions of the Step 1, they will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

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

1. (only for lead applicants) have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects in the field and contribute their share (measured by an average annual turnover of the candidate for the last three years, for which the accounts have been closed, that must exceed the annualised grant amount requested<sup>19</sup>, The average is calculated as the sum of the annual turnover of the candidate for each year divided by 3).

Start-ups established within the last three years are exempt from this requirement. Instead of average annual turnover, start-ups may demonstrate their financial capacity through alternative documentation such as recent financial statements (if available), proof of funding or investment (such as venture capital or angel investment), or a solid business plan or financial projection for the next three years; **AND**

2. (only for led applicants) have the know-how and resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share measured by:
  - a) demonstrating experience in at least 2 projects of comparable size and nature during the last three years, **and**
  - b) having at least five permanent contract staff that are/have been working as in-house staff (permanent staff on the pay roll) for the candidate in related fields during the last three years.

Start-ups with less than five permanent staff may qualify if they can demonstrate sufficient expertise<sup>20</sup> and capacity through the experience of their core team members; **AND**

3. (**only for lead applicants of lot 5**) have an open office on the country of the project or, at least, a regional office that covers the country having already developed engineering projects.

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<sup>19</sup> For clarification, this means that if an applicant requests a 2,000,000 EUR grant to be implemented during 36 months, the average annual turnover during the last three years should be at least 666,000 EUR/year.

<sup>20</sup> Sufficient expertise is understood as demonstrated, relevant knowledge and practical experience of the start-up's core team that collectively ensures the ability to implement the proposed project successfully.

Additionally, having experience leading railway projects in Europe.

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

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

**Scoring:**

The evaluation grid is divided into sections and subsections. Each subsection will be scored on a scale proportional to its maximum score, as follows:

0–20% of the maximum score = Very poor

21–40% of the maximum score = Poor

41–60% of the maximum score = Adequate

61–80% of the maximum score = Good

81–100% of the maximum score = Very good

**Evaluation grid**

Section	Maximum Score
<b>1. Financial and operational capacity</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical expertise in the domain and region of the proposal? (including knowledge of the issues to be addressed and staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.2. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?	5
<b>2. Relevance of the action</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1. Consistency with the objectives of the call: How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (Section 1.2), including alignment with EU interest? Is the proposal aligned with the needs and priorities of the final beneficiary (local administration, partner country...)? Does the proposal demonstrate the integration of specific EU know-how or standards in the action, or alignment with established EU practices?	20
2.2. Added value elements: Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices, potential to have a strong Team Europe component, etc.)? Does the proposal clearly outline how/if the action adds value beyond existing initiatives?	5
<b>3. Quality of the action</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1. Context and risk analysis: Does the design of the action include a robust analysis of the overall project, including the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? Does the risk analysis consider ESG risks specific to the region and industry, such as corruption or labor rights? Are the potential risks associated with the project comprehensively identified and risk mitigations strategies proposed?	5

3.2. Action design: Does the proposal indicate the expected results (outputs/outcomes/impacts) to be achieved by the action? Is the action plan for implementing the proposal coherent, clear and feasible? Are types of activities clearly clustered by working packages? Is the timeline realistic? Does each result (output, outcome, impact) include an adequate number of indicators that are sufficient in scope to measure its achievement?	10
3.3. Organizational and implementation structure: Are there clear roles and responsibilities delineated among team members, including co-applicants? Does the proposal include mechanisms for coordination and communication within the implementation team? Is a multidisciplinary approach assured in the proposal	5
<b>4. Impact and sustainability of the action</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1. Multiplier effects: Is the action likely to have multiplier effects for the EU industry, including scope for replication, extension, cross-fertilization of experience and knowledge sharing? Does the proposal demonstrate potential for significant impact and outline a clear plan for scaling the initiative to achieve broader reach and effectiveness? Does the proposed action leverage EU private sector expertise and resources, including in green technologies, sustainable solutions, and climate-resilient practices, to enhance outcomes, create added value, and maximize environmental and socio-economic impact?	10
4.2. Development impact and sustainability. Does the proposal demonstrate the project's development additionality? Including:- Contribution to the SDGs, reduction of inequalities, gender equality, climate change mitigation and adaptation, etc. - Institutional sustainability: Which institutional arrangements allow for maintaining the expected benefits the project? Is there any measure in place to ensure local ownership? Are there mechanisms in place to facilitate knowledge transfer and strengthen local private sector?- Environmental sustainability: Does the proposal actively contribute to the green transition, going beyond a “do no harm” approach? Does it integrate climate mitigation and adaptation, circular economy, and biodiversity protection into its outcomes? Does it apply innovative EU green technologies and solutions to enhance decarbonisation, resource efficiency, and sustainable systems? Does the proposal demonstrate how these can be transferred to partner countries to strengthen sustainable trade, investment, and convergence with EU standards?	15
<b>5. Budget and efficiency of the action</b>	<b>20</b>
5.1. Budget: Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? In addition, are the estimated costs for every work package (breakdown of costs in tab 1a of the budget) eligible?	5
5.2. Cost-effectiveness and budget clarity: Does the proposal demonstrate value for money through a well-justified and cost-efficient budget? Is there a clear and detailed cost breakdown aligned with the deliverables, and possibly with the lump sum(s)? Is the relation between the estimated amounts as per budget and the expected results adequate?	15
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>100</b>

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than **6** points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

*Provisional selection*

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

will be used if more funds become available during the 12 months validity period of the reserve list. The contracting authority informs those lead applicants provisionally selected and those placed on the reserve list, that they will be subject to the final eligibility check.

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

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

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

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

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

## **2.4. AWARD DECISION**

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

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

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

## **2.5. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION**

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

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

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

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

This letter will be sent by e-mail and will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the user who submitted the application. Lead applicants who, in exceptional cases (see section 2.2), had to submit their application by post, private courier or hand-delivery will be informed by e-mail or by post if they did not provide any e-mail address. Therefore, please check regularly your PROSPECT profile, taking into account the indicative timetable below. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure.

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

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

## **2.6. SIGNATURE OF THE GRANT CONTRACT**

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

The budget proposed for the action by the successful applicants at the call for proposals stage must be corrected to remove any obvious arithmetical errors or ineligible costs prior to signing the contract. The description of the action is corrected accordingly if need be. Please note that the same applies when the grant takes form of single lump sum, but only to the costs included in the worksheets "proposal design" of the budget template (Annex B). The budget annexed to the contract will consist only in worksheet 2 ("consolidated budget", with consolidated amounts per work packages). and worksheet 3 ("expected sources of funding") of Annex B.

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.7. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

	DATE	TIME
<b>1. Information meeting (if any)</b>	20/01/2026	11:00
<b>2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority</b>	24/02/2026	12:00
<b>3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority</b>	05/03/2026	
<b>4. Deadline for submission of applications</b>	16/03/2026	12:00
<b>5. Information to lead applicants on administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)</b>	16/05/2026	-
<b>6. Notification of the contracting authority decision</b>	31/07/2026	-
<b>7. Contract signature</b>	31/12/22026	-

Times are indicated in Brussels time zone.

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

## 2.8. EARLY DETECTION AND EXCLUSION SYSTEM

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, natural or legal person that assumes unlimited liability for the debts, natural or legal person who is essential for the award or for the implementation of the legal commitment, beneficial owner or any affiliate of the applicant, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm)

### 3. LIST OF ANNEXES

#### DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

Annex A	Grant application form (Word format)
A.1	Concept note
A.2	Full application form
Annex B	Budget for Single Lump Sum grants (Excel format)
Annex C	Logical framework (Word format)
Annex D	Identification form
Annex E	[Not applicable]
Annex F	PADOR registration form
Annex H	Declaration on Honour on exclusion criteria
Annex L	Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H

#### DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION<sup>21</sup>

Annexes G	Standard grant contract (Special and General conditions)
Annex IV	Contract award rules
Annex V	Standard request for payment
Annex VI-A	Model narrative and financial report
Annex VI-B	Model financial report for Single Lump Sum grants
Annex VII-A	Not applicable
Annex VIII	Model financial guarantee
Annex IX	Standard template for transfer of ownership of assets
Annex I	Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: <a href="https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en">https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en</a>
Annex J	Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.

#### USEFUL LINK

SPRAG	<a href="https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG">https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG</a>
Project Cycle Management Guidelines	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en">https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en</a>
The implementation of grant contracts, A Users' Guide	<a href="https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/spaces/ExactExternalWikiPT">https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/spaces/ExactExternalWikiPT</a>
Financial Toolkit <sup>22</sup>	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en">https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en</a>
Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES)	<a href="https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/how-it-works/annual-lifecycle/implementation/anti-fraud-measures/edes_en#data-protection">https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/how-it-works/annual-lifecycle/implementation/anti-fraud-measures/edes_en#data-protection</a>

<sup>21</sup> These documents should also be published by the contracting authority.

<sup>22</sup> Please note that the toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.