



Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)

Call for proposals

Call for proposals to promote gender equality
(CERV-2024-GE)

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (CERV Regulation [2021/692](#)¹).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2023-24 Work Programme² and will be managed by the **European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST)**.

 Please note that this call is subject to the final adoption of the 2024 budget by the EU budgetary authority. In case there are substantial changes, we may have to modify the call (or even cancel it).

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **CERV-2024-GE - Call for proposals to promote gender equality**

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

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

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

² [Commission Implementing Decision](#) C(2022) 8588 final of 1.12.2022 on the financing of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2024.

- the Call Document outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
 - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - award criteria (section 9)
 - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
 - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the Online Manual outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
 - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

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

1. Background

The Gender Equality Strategy³ identifies tackling the gender care gap as one of the key actions to enhance equal economic participation of women and men. Women still carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid work and often adapt their work patterns to their caring responsibilities and how these duties are shared with a partner.

The Work-Life Balance Directive aims at encouraging a better sharing of care responsibilities between women and men. It foresees rights to family leaves, including paternity leave, non-transferable parental leave and carers' leave as well as the right to request flexible working time arrangements. Member States had to implement the Directive by August 2022.

One of the Gender Equality Strategy's aims is also to address the gender pay and pension gap. Towards that specific aim the Commission tabled binding measures on pay transparency. They were adopted by the co-legislators in May 2023⁴ and Member

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023L0970>

States have 3 years to transpose them into national legislation. This complements the legal framework on equal pay already in place comprising of the 2006 Directive (Directive 2006/54/EC) and the 2014 Commission Recommendation on pay transparency.

The new Pay Transparency Directive aims at strengthening the principle of equal pay, and in particular unveiling and tackling conscious or unconscious bias in pay that often leads to an undervaluation of work predominantly done by women. To that aim it sets a clear framework and criteria for the application of the concept of “work of equal value”.

The application of the concept of “work of equal value” requires attaching a certain value to a job or position, based on objective, gender-neutral criteria. It will help workers to identify and challenge discrimination they may be victims of. It will also help employers to assess whether their pay structures in practice do comply with the principle of equal pay.

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

Objectives

Supporting, advancing and implementing comprehensive policies to promote women’s full enjoyment of rights, gender equality, including work-life balance, equal pay between women and men, women’s empowerment and gender mainstreaming.

Policy initiative supported:

- Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025;
- European Care Strategy⁵;
- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers;
- Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services;
- Digital Education Action Plan (2021-27);
- Directive (EU) 2023/970⁶ to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (Pay Transparency Directive);
- Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast);
- Commission Recommendation of 7 March 2014 on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency.

⁵ [A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers](#) - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu).

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023L0970>

Themes and priorities (scope)

Member State governments, local and regional authorities and their associations, social partners (workers or business representatives), labour inspectorates, equality bodies, civil society organisations, in particular women's rights organisations, and other stakeholders, are invited to submit projects (see eligibility criteria in point 6) within the following two priorities:

1. Tackling the root causes of the gender care gap by promoting a gender-transformative approach and challenging gender stereotypes

The European Care Strategy highlights the importance of affordable, accessible and high-quality care services, with a view to enhancing women's labour market participation and gender equality and encouraging sustainable working conditions of those in care jobs, so far predominantly women. The Council recommendation on Early Childhood Education and Care: the Barcelona targets for 2030⁷ aims at ensuring upward convergence across Member States in this area.

The aim of this priority is to support:

- Promotion of family-friendly practices in companies encouraging the take up of the new rights under the Work-life Balance Directive by both women and men (including family leaves, new ways of work organisation, telework and hybrid working, flexibility of hours, shorter working week, job sharing ...);
- Prevention and protection against any form of unfavourable treatment and discrimination of women during and after pregnancy as well as of women and men who took family leave (maternity/paternity/parental/carer leave) and flexible work arrangements;
- Raising awareness of the value of care work by reflecting on the appreciation of skills needed for care work, including soft skills, the intensity of the work and other aspects of working conditions in care jobs;
- Challenging gender stereotypes that perpetuate the traditional division of labour with the objectives to:
 - Encourage equal sharing of informal care work (care of their children, housework and care of dependents) to ensure better reconciliation of private/work life;
 - Promote the role of men in care and family responsibilities and encourage men to take parental and paternity leave;
 - Promote the value of paid care work;
 - Encourage the involvement of men in care work (formal and informal), both in childcare and long-term care.

Indicative budget: 4 EUR million

⁷ [Council recommendation on Early Childhood Education and Care: the Barcelona targets for 2030](#)

2. Supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive

The aim of this priority is to support Member States authorities responsible for implementation of the provision of the Pay Transparency Directive (possibly in cooperation with other entities such as other public entities, private organisations or international organisations which can apply as co-applicants⁸) in developing national guidance and/or tools for gender-sensitive job evaluation and classification systems and in raising awareness of this guidance and/or tools among employers and workers representatives in their respective countries.

In line with the Gender Equality Strategy⁹ and to address the root causes of the gender pay gap, the new Directive 2023/970 aims to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay between men and women for equal work or work of equal value through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms. The Directive seeks at better enforcing the right to equal pay and to make it easier to detect structural pay gaps and discrimination based on sex.

Among others, Member States obligations (Art.4.2 of the Directive 2023/970¹⁰) involve the establishment of analytical tools or methodologies to assess and compare the value of work. These may include gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems.¹¹

Job evaluation systems are a tool for assessing the value of jobs against factors such as the level of skill, effort, responsibility, or working conditions. They may, if not used in a gender-neutral manner, contribute to the accrued discrimination by evaluating male and female dominated jobs differently and in a biased way.

Indicative budget: 6,1 EUR million

Activities that can be funded (scope)

1. Tackling the root causes of the gender care gap through a gender-transformative approach and challenging gender stereotypes:

- Design of new approaches to encourage a dual earner dual carer model and to tackle gender stereotypes;
- Capacity building and training, including of human resource managers, representatives of public authorities, social partners and other concerned stakeholders including from civil society organisations;
- Mutual learning, exchange of good practices, cooperation between different actors;
- Dissemination of information and awareness raising, including via social media or press campaigns.

Practical projects that develop and implement specific measures and involve the target group are preferred. Where relevant, applicants should strive for active participation of children and youth in the design and implementation of activities.

⁸ For more information about the eligibility of the applicants please see section 6

⁹ A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>

¹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023L0970>

¹¹ [SWD\(2013\) 512 final ; Annex 1 to the report on the application of Directive 2006/54/EC](#)

2. Supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive

- Development of guidance, tools, and checklists for the assessment and comparison of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value within the same employer, including the implementation of gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems, for the use of public and private employers and more generally social partners in the context of collective bargaining;
- Development and conduct of training programmes to build capacity of employers and social partners in assessing equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and implement gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems;
- Promotion of gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems;
- Monitoring implementation of the concept of work of equal value via the assessment of existing job evaluation systems and pay classification schemes by employers and those used by social partners and recommendation for amendment when necessary to comply with equal pay principle and gender-neutral criteria.

Practical projects that develop and implement specific measures and involve the target group are preferred.

Under both priorities, projects' design and implementation are expected to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming. Applicants should include in their proposal a [gender-analysis](#) that maps gender-specific needs and risks. Given the specific scope of the call, projects are expected not to have any unintended negative effects on either gender, do not reproduce gender-stereotypes in all their activities and to go beyond the basic do no-harm approach.¹²

The gender equality perspective should also be taken into account when designing the 'format' of activities such as mutual learning, empowerment, awareness raising and possible training activities, to ensure that they allow for balanced participation of women, men, girls and boys as well as that they promote gender-sensitive approaches. For the promotion of gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems, applicants are advised to pay particular attention to gender-biases that might be induced based on historic data.

Projects can be national or transnational. Transnational projects are particularly encouraged.

Expected impact

1. Tackling the root causes of the gender care gap through a gender-transformative approach and challenging gender stereotypes

- Improved knowledge of the gender care gap and of ways to tackle gender stereotypes with regard to care and work;
- Improved knowledge and awareness of potential hindrances to gender equality, including obstacles to equal sharing of care and domestic work, and to obstacles to take up of family leaves and family friendly working time arrangements;

¹² For more information see section Ethics and EU values

- Increased awareness of policy measures and good practice examples that are leading to more gender equality in the workplace as well as more work-life balance for both working women and men throughout the life course, as well as good practice examples by companies and authorities;
- Increased knowledge about working conditions in care work and about value of care work;
- Improved awareness of policy measures and good practice examples that lead to more sustainable working conditions in care work and that address gender segregation in the care sector;
- Ultimately, leading to better work-life balance for women and men over the life course, reducing the gender care gap and provide more gender equality.

2. Supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive

- Establishment of gender-sensitive tools and methods for transparent pay systems and detection of direct or indirect pay discrimination based on sex related to the undervaluation of jobs typically done by women and correction;
- Increased awareness of gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems' purpose and benefit;
- Increased knowledge and expertise to negotiate on equal pay and use of gender-neutral job classification systems;
- Challenge of traditional, outdated, non-transparent criteria for assessment and comparison of the value of work, which are not gender neutral and thus reinforce occupational segregation and inequality in pay on grounds of sex.

 For more information see:

Bibliography

Policy documents/background information:

- EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en
- A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10382>
- Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023L0970>
- 2021 Opinion of the Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on Combatting Gender Stereotypes: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/01a4c140-26eb-43b3-95e6-5a91408a8ffc_en?filename=opinion_combatting_gender_stereotypes_2021_en.pdf

- 2021 Opinion of the Commission’s Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on the Care Gap in the EU: a holistic and gender transformative approach: [Advisory Committee on Eq Opps Women and Men-Opinion care_gap_2021_en.pdf](#)
- 2013 Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2013) 512 final accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the application of Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2013:0512:FIN:EN:PDF>

Gender Mainstreaming:

- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)'s guidance on Gender Mainstreaming: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming>

Behavioral insights:

- Joana Sousa Lourenço, Emanuele Ciriolo, Sara Rafael Almeida, and Xavier Troussard. Behavioural insights applied to policy: European Report 2016: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research/crosscutting-activities/behavioural-insights>

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 10 100 000**.

The availability of the call budget still depends on the adoption of the budget 2024 by the EU budgetary authority.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	12 December 2023
Deadline for submission:	<u>29 February 2024 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	March - July 2024
Information on evaluation results:	July - August 2024
GA signature:	September – November 2024

5. Admissibility and documents

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

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

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- Part C — contains additional project data and the project's contribution to EU programme key performance indicators (*to be filled in directly online*)
- **Mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*some templates are available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - **detailed budget table** (*template available in the Portal Submission System – **to be re-uploaded filled out in the format .xlsx***)
 - **CVs (standard)** of core project team
 - **activity reports of last year** of the coordinator
 - **list of previous projects** of the coordinator (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*)
 - for participants with activities involving children: their **child protection policy** covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#). It should be clearly indicated in the application which partner(s) will work directly with children/minors.

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

Please be aware that since **the detailed budget table** serves as the basis for fixing the lump sums for the grants (and since lump sums must be reliable proxies for the actual costs of a project¹³), the costs you include MUST comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6](#)). This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must comply with best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and be free of any conflict of interests. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the

¹³ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/horizon/lump-sum/guidance>

grant may be reduced (even later on during the project implementation or after their end).

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

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

Proposals are limited to maximum **45 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

6. Eligibility

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

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible under **the first priority** (Tackling the root causes of the gender care gap through a gender-transformative approach and challenging gender stereotypes) grant applications must comply with all the following criteria:

- a) The applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:
 - be legal entities (public or private bodies);
 - be international organisation or be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries:
 - countries associated to the CERV Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))
- b) Organisations which are profit-oriented may apply only in partnership with public entities or private non-profit organisations;
- c) Activities must take place in any of the eligible countries;
- d) The maximum duration of the action is 24 months;
- e) The EU grant applied for cannot be lower than EUR 100 000;
- f) The project can be either national or transnational;
- g) The application **must involve at least two applicants** (lead applicant and at least one co-applicant **not being affiliated entity or associated partner**).

To be eligible under **the second priority** (*Supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive*), grant applications must comply with all the following criteria:

- a) Lead applicants must be EU national authorities responsible for implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive (e.g. responsible Ministry or national agency); with only one application per Member State being accepted;
- b) Co-applicants (if any) must be international organisation or public entities or private organisations, formally established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries:
 - countries associated to the CERV Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))
- c) Activities must take place in any of the eligible countries;
- d) The maximum duration of the action is 24 months;
- e) The EU grant applied for cannot be lower than EUR 100 000;
- f) The project can be either national or transnational;
- g) The application **may** involve one or more organisations (lead applicant and co-applicants).

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

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

Specific cases

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

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

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons¹⁴.

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

¹⁴ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'¹⁵. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

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

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*)¹⁶. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

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

Consortium composition

Under the first priority (*Tackling the root causes of the gender care gap through a gender-transformative approach and challenging gender stereotypes*), proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least two applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions: the beneficiaries must be public entities or private organisations, duly established in one of the eligible countries, or an international organisation. Organisations which are profit-oriented must submit applications in partnership with public entities or private non-profit organisations.

Under the second priority (*Supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive*), applications by single applicants are allowed (single beneficiaries); affiliated entities and other participants are allowed, if needed. Lead applicants must be EU national authorities responsible for implementation of the provision of the Pay Transparency Directive (*e.g. responsible Ministries or national agency*); co-applicants (if any) must be international organisation or public entities or private organisations, formally established in one of the eligible countries.

Eligible activities

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

The following activities are not considered as eligible for funding under this call:

- activities that are not in line with EU values.

Activities must be grouped into work packages (*e.g., Project Management and Coordination; Communication and Dissemination, etc.*), which are major sub-divisions of the project.

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

¹⁵ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹⁶ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

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

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Geographic location (target countries)

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

Duration

Projects should normally range between 12 and 24 months.

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

Project budget

Project budget (maximum grant amount) cannot be lower than EUR 100 000 in both priorities.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

Ethics and EU values

Projects must comply with:

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

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

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

Participants with activities involving children must moreover have a child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#). This policy must be available online and transparent to everyone who comes in contact with the organisation. It must include clear information about the recruitment of staff (including trainees and volunteers) and include background checks (vetting). It must also include clear procedures and rules to staff, including reporting rules, and continuous training.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

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

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

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

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

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

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

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

or

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

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

Operational capacity

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

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

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

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

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- applicants' activity reports of last year
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

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

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

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate¹⁷:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct¹⁸ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

¹⁷ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹⁸ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that¹⁹:

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

8. Evaluation and award procedure

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁹ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

9. Award criteria

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

- 1. Relevance:** extent to which the proposal matches the priorities and objectives of the call; clearly defined needs and robust needs assessment; clearly defined target group, with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context; European/trans-national dimension; impact/interest for a number of countries (EU or eligible non-EU countries); possibility to use the results in other countries (potential for transfer of good practices); potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation (40 points)
- 2. Quality:** clarity and consistency of project; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account (organisation of work, timetable, allocation of resources and distribution of tasks between partners, risks & risk management, monitoring and evaluation); ethical issues and measures/policies to guarantee full compliance with EU values are addressed; feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; financial feasibility (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; cost-effectiveness (best value for money (40 points)
- 3. Impact:** ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; potential for a positive multiplier effect; sustainability of results after EU funding ends (20 points)

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

Maximum points: 100 points.

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

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance' AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

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

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

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

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

Starting date and project duration

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

Project duration: between 12 and 24 months maximum (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Milestones and deliverables

Activities must be grouped into work packages, which are major sub-divisions of the project. For each work package, an objective, list of the activities, milestones and deliverables must be defined. Deliverables must be quantifiable and measurable. The grouping should be logical and guided by identifiable outputs.

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


Beneficiaries will have to ask attendees in events to participate in the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values. This survey allows the granting authority to closely monitor training, mutual learning and awareness-raising events. The beneficiaries will receive a weblink to the survey, to be forwarded to the attendees. They will have access to the survey results for their project and can use it for their project evaluation. The granting authority will aggregate the results of all the projects financed under the CERV programme.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

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

Project budget (maximum grant amount) cannot be lower than EUR 100 000 in both priorities. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a lump sum grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount, based on a lump sum or financing not linked to costs. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the estimated project budget and a funding rate of 90%.

 The amounts for each project to be indicated in part "A" of the application form are not the total costs of each partner. They correspond to the maximum EU grant for each partner.

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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

Budget categories for this call:

- Lump sum contributions²⁰

Specific cost eligibility rules for this call:

- the lump sum amount must be calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the [lump sum decision](#) and using the detailed budget table provided
- the lump sum calculation should respect the following conditions:
 - the estimated budget must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6](#))
 - costs for financial support to third parties are not allowed
 - communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for separate project websites are not eligible
 - personnel costs:
 - volunteers' unit costs²¹ are allowed (without indirect costs)

Reporting and payment arrangements


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

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **80%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

In addition, you will be expected to submit one or more progress reports not linked to payments.

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees

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

²⁰ [Decision](#) of 30 September 2022 authorising the use of lump sums for actions under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).

²¹ [Commission Decision](#) of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646)

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

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

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

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

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

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Other specificities

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

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

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

11. How to submit an application

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

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

a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

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

b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Part C (KPI) containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online.
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type. Detailed budget table must be re-uploaded filled out in the format *.xlsx*.

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

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

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

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the

Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

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

12. Help

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

- [Online Manual](#)
- FAQs on the Topic page
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

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

Contact

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

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: EC-CERV-CALLS@ec.europa.eu.

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (*see cover page*).

13. Important



IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

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

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

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

Organisations may participate in several proposals.

BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).

- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).

- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

This includes:

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

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

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