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Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)

Call for proposals

To foster Citizens' engagement and participation
(CERV-2025-CITIZENS-CIV)

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EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

EACEA.B – Creativity, Citizenship, EU Values and Joint Operations
EACEA.B.3 – Citizens and EU Values

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

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

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

The call is launched in accordance with the 2023-2025 Work Programme[3] and will be managed by the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** ('Agency').

⚠ Please note that this call is subject to the final adoption of the budget 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-2025-CITIZENS-CIV — Citizens' engagement and participation**

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

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

- the Call Document outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the Online Manual outlines the:

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

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

[3] Commission Implementing Decision C/2024/4922 final of 18.07.2024 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2025 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme.

  - 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 Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal to consult the list of previously funded projects in the framework of the calls **CERV-2022-CITIZENS-CIV** and **CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV**.

1. Background

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme provides funding for citizens engagement, equality for all and the implementation of rights and EU values. Its general objective is to protect and promote the rights and values enshrined in the Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in the applicable international human rights conventions. The programme does this in particular by supporting civil society organisations and other stakeholders active at local, regional, national and transnational level, and by encouraging civic and democratic participation, in order to sustain and further develop open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law. It pays particular attention to encouraging the participation of regional and local civil society organisations.

It is important to give citizens the opportunity to take part in the debate on Europe and to play an active role in advancing the EU integration project. Through the 'Citizens' engagement and participation' strand, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme helps people make their voices heard and increase inclusion and democratic participation, in line with the Commission's political priorities.

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

Objectives

Promoting citizens' and representative associations' participation in and contribution to the democratic and civic life of the Union by making known and publicly exchanging their views in all areas of Union action.

Among the policy initiatives supported:

- European Democracy Action Plan (3 December 2020)
- Defence of Democracy Package (12 December 2023)
- EU Citizenship Package (6 December 2023)
- Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU (2 December 2020)
- European Commission Recommendation on Protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded

or abusive court proceedings ("Strategic lawsuits against public participation")
(27 April 2022)

- European Commission Communication on Protecting election integrity and promoting democratic participation (25 November 2021)

Themes and priorities (scope)

This call aims to support projects promoted by transnational partnerships and networks directly involving citizens. These projects will gather a diverse range of people from different backgrounds and genders in activities directly linked to EU policies, giving them an opportunity to actively participate in the EU policymaking process and thus contribute to the democratic and civic life of the Union. The projects will encourage citizens', including young persons, understanding of the policymaking process, showing in practice how to engage in the democratic life of the EU and enabling them to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.

The call provides an opportunity to broadly cover a variety of policy areas and contribute to the promotion of EU values, the rule of law, gender equality, fundamental rights and democracy.

Projects should support democratic participation, including by stimulating and organising reflection, debates or other activities. They should also propose practical solutions that can be implemented through cooperation or coordination at European level, support the sharing of good practices, and ensure a practical link with the policymaking process.

While maintaining a bottom-up approach, there will be a focus on the priorities outlined below. Each project application under the call must address **only one** of these priorities

Priority 1. Promoting exchanges on future Union policy priorities and challenges

This priority encourages discussions and exchanges among citizens and other stakeholders on the future of the European Union and its policies to support democratic institutions and processes. Citizens will be given an opportunity to express what kind of Europe they want and to outline their long term vision for the future of European integration.

The goal is to foster a deeper understanding of the EU's priorities and democratic challenges, and to gather input and ideas from citizens on how to address them while boosting citizen engagement in the democratic life of the Union and on topics that matter to them. The ultimate aim of projects is to promote a greater sense of belonging to the European Union and of EU values.

Examples of activities that could be supported under this priority include:

- Organising public debates, workshops, or conferences on specific EU policy areas
- Using online platforms or social media campaigns to engage citizens in discussions on EU policies and priorities
- Developing educational materials or toolkits to engage and help citizens understand EU policies and their impact on daily life
- Facilitating exchanges between citizens from different EU countries to share experiences and perspectives on EU policies.

Priority 2. Countering disinformation, information manipulation and interference in the democratic debate

Citizens should be able to access a variety of verifiable information in order to be able to participate in an informed way in public debates and express their will through free and fair democratic processes. The spread of online disinformation and misinformation can have a range of consequences, such as threatening our democracies, polarising debates, and putting the health, security and environment of EU citizens at risk. The EU is tackling the spread of online disinformation and misinformation to ensure the protection of European values and democratic systems.

The aim of this priority is to fund projects tackling disinformation and other forms of interference in the democratic debate, empowering citizens to make informed decisions by helping them to identify disinformation and promoting media literacy, raising awareness and informing on how to safeguard the free formation of opinion and fundamental freedoms, and contributing to identify, prevent and mitigate risks of interference on sovereignty, values and interests of Member States and the EU. These will also help fight against fake news, hate speech, including gender-based hate such as misogyny, and populist discourse in media, including social media

Therefore, this priority supports activities that promote democratic resilience by promoting best practices, knowledge exchange, critical thinking, and media literacy, in order to counter disinformation, information manipulation and interference in the democratic debate.

Examples of activities that could be supported under this priority include:

- Engaging citizens in developing and disseminating tools, knowledge exchange platforms, and resources to help citizens prebunk, detect and debunk disinformation and information manipulation
- Organising media literacy training programs and/or implementing toolkits for citizens, particularly for young people, helping them critically evaluate online information
- Engaging citizens in public awareness campaigns to highlight the risks of disinformation and information manipulation and encourage the responsible use of AI
- Organising trainings, exchanges of best practices, engaging relevant actors in reporting and monitoring of Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) and actions supporting independent media outlets and journalists against SLAPPs

Priority 3. Promoting citizens' active engagement and democratic participation

This priority aims to instil a lasting culture of participative democracy and encourage citizens to take an active role in representative democracy, by supporting turnout in elections of all groups of society or participating in decision-making, engaging in civic activities, and exercising rights and responsibilities as EU citizens.

Examples of activities that could be supported under this priority include:

- Developing and facilitating citizen-led initiatives through debates, voicing opinions, and other citizens' engagement activities
- Developing, implementing and disseminating educational programs or materials to teach citizens about their rights and responsibilities as EU citizens, and how to participate in democratic processes

- Supporting free, fair and inclusive electoral processes by conducting awareness campaigns, engagement programmes, workshop, conferences
- Supporting the development of tools and platforms to facilitate citizen engagement and participation in decision-making
- Facilitating cooperation between citizens and public authorities, including local councillors, to promote participatory democracy.

Above mentioned examples of activities must comply with Section 10.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Projects should gather people from different countries and different backgrounds in activities directly linked to EU policies. The projects should provide an opportunity for direct participation in the policymaking process and thus create the conditions for a stronger bottom-up approach and a more inclusive policymaking process, fostering civic and democratic engagement.

Projects are expected to:

- have diversified partnerships, with the civil society sector and cooperation with public authorities, including local or regional authorities, playing a prominent role
- include different organisation types (i.e. non-profit organisations, including civil society organisations, educational, cultural or research institutions, public local/ regional authorities or universities)
- have a European dimension and be implemented on a transnational level (involving the creation and operation of transnational partnerships and networks).

Activities that support specific political parties or proselytising activities will not be funded, regardless of their grounds for applying or their objectives.

Projects' design and implementation are expected to promote gender equality and to mainstream non-discrimination. This includes a gender analysis, mapping potential different needs of and impact on women and men as well as integrating a gender equality perspective in the design of the activities. To this end, applicants are encouraged to consult the key questions listed on the EIGE website when conducting their gender analysis. Unintended negative effects of the intervention on either gender should be avoided (do no harm approach). Applicants are expected to design and implement their communication and dissemination activities in a gender-sensitive way. This includes in particular usage of gender-sensitive language. The same applies to the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities. Proposals that integrate a gender-perspective across all their activities will be considered of higher quality.

Expected impact

Increased citizens' awareness of rights and EU values and increasing their engagement in society and with the EU

- Enhanced opportunities for citizens to express and make their views know about what kind of Europe they want and to outline their long-term vision for the future of European integration

- Improved knowledge and understanding by the citizens of EU institutions and policies as well as of the EU's achievements and benefits

- Increased citizens' empowerment to get involved in decision-making from local to EU levels

- Increased citizens' empowerment to make their voices heard by the relevant political authorities and decision makers, thus helping them make an impact in practice; Increased active participation of people from different backgrounds in the EU policymaking process and thus increased contribution to the democratic and civic life of the Union

- Increased citizens' situational awareness, resilience and preparedness to counter disinformation and information manipulation

- Increased citizens' awareness and understanding of SLAPPs and a safer and more enabling environment for journalism

- Strengthened democratic participation, with a special focus on inclusion of younger and older people, women, mobile EU citizens and people with disabilities, and on reaching those citizens not active in civic participation in their everyday life.

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 33 000 000.**

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

Call topic	Priority	Budget
CERV-2025-CITIZENS-CIV		EUR 33 000 000
	Priority 1. Promoting exchanges on future Union policy priorities and challenges	EUR 12 500 000
	Priority 2. Countering disinformation, information manipulation and interference in the democratic debate	EUR 8 000 000
	Priority 3. Promoting citizens' active engagement and democratic participation	EUR 12 500 000

The availability of the call budget still depends on the adoption of the budget 2025 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:	15 January 2025
Deadline for submission:	29 April 2025 – 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)
Evaluation:	May - October 2025
Information on evaluation results:	October 2025
GA signature:	December 2025 - January 2026

5. Admissibility and documents

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

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

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project *(to be filled in directly online)*
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project *(to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded)*
- Part C (KPI)— contains additional project data and the project's contribution to EU programme key performance indicators *(to be filled in directly online)*
- **Mandatory annexes and supporting documents** *(templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*:
  - Lump-Sum Budget Calculator (template available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and re-uploaded)
  - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) *(template available in Part B, n/a for newly established organisations)*
  - for any participant organisation implementing activities involving children (persons under the age of 18):

- private organisations: their child protection policy covering the four areas described in the Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards
- public entities must submit at Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP) stage a declaration on honour on the respect of child protection requirements (template to be provided by EACEA to projects invited to the GAP) (see section 6 *Ethics and EU values)*.

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 **70 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages. You may be asked at a later stage for further documents *(for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc)*.

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

6. Eligibility

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

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- Lead applicants (i.e. "Coordinator") must be non-profit private legal entities or public universities
- Co-applicants must be non-profit legal entities (public or private bodies) or an international organisation
- Be 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)

Other eligibility conditions:

- Activities must take place in any of the eligible countries
- The EU grant applied for cannot be lower than EUR 75 000
- The project must be transnational
- The application must involve **at least two applicants** (lead applicant and at

least one co-applicant not being affiliated entity or associated partner) **from two different eligible countries.**

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 persons[4].

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

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

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

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for 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)[6])*. 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

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 2 applicants (lead applicant (i.e. "Coordinator") and at least one co-applicant not being affiliated entity or associated partner) from 2 different eligible countries.

4 See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

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

6 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.

Eligible activities

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

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

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

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

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

Minimum grant amount: EUR 75 000.

Maximum grant amount: No limit.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

Ethics and EU values

Projects must comply with:

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

Projects must seek to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming in accordance with the Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit. Project activities should contribute to the equal empowerment of women and men in all their diversity, ensuring that 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-disagregated data)*, disability or age whenever possible.

Applicants must show in their application that they respect ethical principles and EU

values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article of the 21 EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Private non-profit organisations 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. Public entities with activities involving children must provide a declaration on the respect of child protection requirements (template provided by EACEA to projects invited to the GAP (see section 5 Admissibility and documents).

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.

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
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years; *template available in Part B, n/a for newly established organisations*).

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 participate[7]:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct[8] (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

[7] See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

[8] 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.

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).

- intentionally and without proper justification resisted[9] an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that[10]:

- 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 (within the same priority budget envelope) 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 priority budget envelope 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'.

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

[10] See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

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.

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 child safeguarding (for activities involving children) and compliance with EU values are addressed; feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; (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: *see section 6 above*.

Milestones and deliverables

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

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

- Reports on the implementation of work packages, one report for each work package/event (template available on the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal, section Project reporting templates, file name "Event description sheet (CERV REM, CIV and NETW"))

Other deliverables may be linked to Work packages, such as: policy recommendations, training materials, event conclusions, publications, analyses, audio-visual materials, dissemination materials.

The following milestone will be mandatory for all projects:

- Milestone related to "EU survey on Justice, Right and Values". 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.

Other milestones are optional.

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): *see section 6 above*.

The grant will be a lump sum grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount, based on a lump sum or financing not linked to costs. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the variable amounts it has prefixed and the estimates indicated by the beneficiaries in their project budget. Project budget should be established by filling out the mandatory annex Lump-Sum Budget Calculator: *see section 5 above.*

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 contributions[11]
- the lump sum amount must be calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the lump sum decision and using the Lump-Sum Budget Calculator provided in the Portal Submission System
- One lump sum listed in the Lump-Sum Budget Calculator must correspond to one Work Package ('event' gathering citizens) in the Application Form.
- 1 lump sum = 1 work package = 1 'event' = one or several activities
- An 'event' happens within a defined timeframe and can include one or several activities (e.g. conferences, workshops, trainings, seminars, debates, webinars, exhibitions, campaigns, surveys, research etc), aiming at gathering people (i.e. involving direct and verifiable participation of the target group(s)) to discuss a thematic defined in advance. An event aims at reaching a determined output as defined in the work package of reference.
- Projects should be built around the organisation of several 'events' gathering citizens.

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

- The lump sum calculation is based on two parameters: number of direct participants and number of eligible countries per 'event'. 'Events' can take place either in situ or online.

- In order to be eligible for funding, the total number of direct participants involved in the event must comply with the minimum requirements of participants/countries as set in the lump sum decision.

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

- Kick-off meetings with project coordinators: costs for the in situ kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night), upon grant agreement signature and invitation sent by the granting authority.

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

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

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

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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

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

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

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up* to their maximum grant amount
- unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*

or

- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Other specificities

Consortium agreement: Yes

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.

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.

Guidance on the use of generative AI tools for the preparation of the proposal

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

Specifically, applicants are required to:

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

12. Help

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

- Online Manual
- Topic Q&A on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- Portal FAQ (for general questions).

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

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the IT Helpdesk.

Non-IT related questions should be sent to: the CERV National Contact Point of your country (if established) or otherwise the following email address: EACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu

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

13. Important

IMPORTANT

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

  The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.
- **Coordinator —** In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget—** Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully *(e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc)*. You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).

- **Completed/ongoing projects —** Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).

- **No-profit rule—** Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.

- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding—** It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).

- **Combination with EU operating grants—** Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E).*

- **Multiple proposals —** Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them).

  Organisations may participate in several proposals.

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

- **Resubmission —** Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.

- **Rejection —** By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this 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.

Electronically signed on 26/11/2024 18:34 (UTC+01) in accordance with Article 11 of Commission Decision (EU) 2021/2121