



Contracting Authority: European Commission

**The EU System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society - EU
SEE**

Guidelines for grant applicants

Budget line: BGUE-B2022-14.020220-C1

Reference: EuropeAid/175093/DH/ACT/Multi

Deadline for submission¹ of concept notes:

13/03/2023 at 12:00 (Brussels date and time)

(in order to convert to local time click [here](#)²)

¹ Online submission via PROSPECT is mandatory for this call for proposals (see Section 2.2.2). In PROSPECT all dates and times are expressed in Brussels time. Applicants should note that the IT support is open Monday to Friday from 08:30 to 18:30 Brussels time (except for public holidays). Applicants should take note of the weekly maintenance hours mentioned in the PROSPECT user manual.

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

NOTICE

This call for proposals is published only in English.

This is a **restricted call for proposals**. In the first instance, only concept notes (Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note) must be submitted for evaluation. Thereafter, lead applicants who have been pre-selected will be invited to submit a full application (Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed ‘declaration by the lead applicant’ sent together with the full application.

To apply to this call for proposals organisations must register in PADOR and submit their application in PROSPECT (see section 2.2.2 of the guidelines). The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations through a new panel of functionalities such as the on-line submission and the possibility to follow up online the status of their application. All organisations may find more information regarding PROSPECT in the [user’s manual](#) and the [e-learning videos](#). You may also contact our technical support team via the online support form in PROSPECT³.

Preparation:

Virtual Information session: 31/01/2023 at 12.00 (Brussels time)

To help applicants familiarise themselves with the call for proposal before the online submission, a virtual information session will be organised on 31/01/2023 at 12:00 (Brussels time).

Should you be interested in this session, please send an email by 23/01/2023 to INTPA-G2@ec.europa.eu indicating: name, surname, and email address of the person who is going to participate as well as the name of the organisation (max. one participant per organisation). No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

A functional mailbox specifically dedicated to this call has been set up: **INTPA-175093@ec.europa.eu**

This functional mailbox shall be used exclusively for **sending clarification requests** within the deadlines set in section 2.5.2 of these guidelines. The Contracting Authority reserves the right to close this mailbox without prior notice once this call for proposals is closed and not to reply to requests, which do not fall under the afore-mentioned category.

³ If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via email: EuropeAid-IT-support@ec.europa.eu

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1. THE EU SYSTEM FOR AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY – EU SEE

1.1. BACKGROUND

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)⁴ are vital to promote the rule of law and protect human rights, to support democracy and good governance, to preserve peace and prevent conflict and to contribute to stability and resilience. They are key partners in sustainable development, by voicing the needs and experiences of their constituencies, **devising and implementing policies and programmes that have true local legitimacy, meet people's needs, reduce inequalities,** and fulfil the central commitment of the **2030 Agenda to leave no one behind**. The EU is a longstanding global champion for civil society as actors of good governance and development in their own right and supports their engagement to contribute to democratic processes, more effective policies, equitable and sustainable development and inclusive growth. The main current challenge for civil society globally, as for EU cooperation with civil society, is the increasingly and rapidly **shrinking civic space and the continuous deterioration of an enabling environment for civil society**. This is partly the result of authoritarian pushbacks against democracy and has recently intensified in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis. It poses an obstacle to civil society organizations' ability to **act as actors of good governance and sustainable development**.

The EU has several policies in place in its external action to contribute to, protect and expand the space and the enabling environment for civil society, including the EC Communication: The roots of democracy and sustainable development (2012)⁵. Other key documents of reference include Council Conclusions from 2017⁶, the European Parliament resolution of 2017 on addressing shrinking civil society space in developing countries⁷, and the EU Consensus on Development⁸, which includes commitments to an enabling environment. **The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024** strongly commits to “develop tools to detect and respond to early signs of closing civic space and space for civil society, [...] as well as tools to monitor opportunities of opening civic space” and to “the creation of a safe and an enabling environment for civil society as actors in their own right, including long-term strategic support to capacity building and meaningful participation of civil society at country, regional and global level⁹.” An enabling environment for civil society is furthermore a crucial part of, and foundation for, the underpinning fundamental principles of the **Global Gateway** in particular the principles of democratic values and high standards, good governance and transparency, and the principle of equal partnerships, respectively.

Support for an enabling environment for civil society is a core objective of the **Multiannual Indicative Programme of the Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations 2021-2027**¹⁰. In addition to a continued mainstreaming of an enabling environment throughout all initiatives at all levels of the programme, the new global initiative under this call for proposals, **the EU System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society – EU SEE**, will be developed and funded with the aim to **strengthen the capacity of civil society** at global, regional and partner country level to prevent further deteriorations and promote a sustainable and accessible enabling environment for civil society overall. The EU SEE should, through improved monitoring and early warning, inform and support EU wide actions on strengthening an enabling environment for civil society at all levels. Activities under the EU SEE should be closely

4 For the purpose of this call “civil society organisation” is defined as by Article 46 of the NDICI regulation: Civil society organisations embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not-for-profit independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise the pursuit of shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic. Operating from local, national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations.

5 Joint Communication The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations 2012, COM(2012) 492 final

6 EU engagement with Civil Society in external relations - Council conclusions, 2017 (10279/17)

7 European Parliament resolution of 3 October 2017 on addressing shrinking civil society space in developing countries (2016/2324(INI))

8 The New European Consensus On Development “Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future, 2017, (2017/C 210/01)

9 Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020 – 2024 (JOIN(2020)5 final)

10 mip-2021-c2021-9158-civil-society-organisations-annex_en.pdf (europa.eu)

coordinated with actions funded by EU Delegations and actions at regional and **global** level, most prominently activities under the **Human Rights and Democracy Thematic Programme 2021-2027** and the **Team Europe Democracy (TED)**.

1.2. OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The EU System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society – EU SEE will contribute to the CSO Thematic Programme¹¹ Priority 1: *An inclusive, participatory, empowered, and independent civil society and democratic space in partner countries; and an inclusive and open dialogue with and between Civil Society Organisations*. It specifically contributes to the programme’s Specific Objective 1.1: *Support Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as actors of good governance and development: Strengthen global partnerships*.

The ability of CSOs to participate in different domains of public life depends on a set of preconditions commonly referred to as the "CSO enabling environment", for which different actors carry responsibility¹². Universally agreed key elements to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for civil society include a robust legal framework in compliance with international standards (aligned with the universal rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, and other related fundamental freedoms), a conducive political and societal environment; access to information; meaningful participation by civil society in decision-making processes; access to funding and long-term support.¹³ For the purpose of this call, the **enabling environment** is understood to be comprised of: *A legal framework and a regulatory environment that support and promote CSOs’ work rather than constrain it; access to funding that allow CSOs to operate in a way that is responsive to the individuals and communities they serve or represent; access to information; access to spaces for dialogue and collaboration with governments and other development actors; meaningful participation in policy and decision making; positive values, norms and attitudes towards civil society*¹⁴. It is to be understood as also encompassing the digital environment for civil society and related fundamental freedoms.

The EU SEE will encompass components of **monitoring** of factors pertaining to an enabling environment for civil society; **early warning**¹⁵ in times of change; **long-term support** for **capacity development** in prioritised areas¹⁶; and **flexible financial support**¹⁷ to enable civil society actors to preventively engage in, and adapt to, situations of deterioration and/or positive developments pertaining to this environment. It will furthermore encompass activities aimed at **knowledge sharing** and **coalition building** for CSO actors, as well as activities aimed at improving CSO capacity for efficient **advocacy** for an enabling environment **at all levels**.

The EU SEE builds on several **principles and approaches**:

1. All components should be interlinked in a **system approach** where each component contributes to the global objective and that, through close coordination of interrelated components, adds value in terms of

11 Global Europe - Programming (europa.eu)

12 September 2012 Communication from the European Commission “The Roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations”

13 E.g.: A/HRC/32/20: Practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practices and lessons learned - Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2016, CONCORD, Analysis and recommendations on the promotion of civic space and enabling environment in EU external action, March 2018

14 As per CSO Country Roadmaps; EU, and Member States strategies for engagement with civil society Ref: ARES(2020)5762493

15 Early warnings for example be reflecting negative developments and changes to the environment, including but not limited to violations of existing, as well as plans or proposals for worsening of, legal and regulatory frameworks; diminishing access to information, funding and opportunities for dialogue and participation; derogatory and threatening public statements and defamation campaigns, increasingly burdensome and hindering administrative measures, etc. Early “warnings” shall also be applicable to positive developments where there are signals of improvements that can be supported by civil society actors and/or other actors of relevance.

16 Prioritised areas for actions of long-term capacity development under this call are: Digitalization and data technologies ; an enabling legislative and administrative environment for civil society; CSO access to policy dialogue; the promotion of a positive narrative on civil society; initiatives for increased CSO financial sustainability and strengthened capacity to address root causes of shrinking civic space..

17 Including discrete or confidential, flexible, rapid, short-term financial support.

identifying and utilizing synergies, increasing coherency and efficiency. All **partners contracted** under this call (henceforth **EU SEE Partners**¹⁸) must therefore contribute to the coherence of the system through participation in coordination mechanisms for which a **Global Lead**¹⁹ will be selected and contracted.

2. The EU SEE should be built on **cooperation and collaboration** of civil society actors, supporting and leveraging existing competencies and bringing together actors active in monitoring of, and work to promote, an enabling environment. It should **enrich existing structures**, contribute to **filling identified gaps**, engage a **broad set of actors**, whilst **avoiding overlap, gaps and fragmentation**.

3. The EU SEE should furthermore be implemented through a **complementary approach** aimed at linking **global, regional and local actors**, drawing on the **knowledge, experience and capacity of each** for the **benefit of all** throughout planning, implementation and monitoring of all components under the initiative. Accordingly, EU SEE Partners contracted through this call, **must** in turn engage with, and support, a broad base of **local CSO actors** in countries eligible under the call and, as relevant, other **regional and global CSO actors** of relevance to the objective of the call.

4. The EU SEE should contribute to a **preventive approach**. The quickly and negatively changing landscape for civil society developments over the last years demonstrate that **civil society needs to be able to prevent and not only react to changes, both negative and positive**¹. The EU SEE should support a move towards prevention by offering **early warnings at the first onset of negative or positive developments; flexible rapid support** at the early onset of changes, for civil society to quickly adapt and adjust existing strategies, to engage in prevention, response and scale up of targeted efforts; and long-term support for **CSO core capacities for adaptation, prevention and response**. The preventive approach of the EU SEE will complement existing EU initiatives for response and protection. This means that activities implemented under the EU SEE, unless otherwise specified, should mainly be implemented in countries where space is not completely closed and where activities towards prevention are deemed most relevant (for the list of eligible countries, henceforth **EU SEE Countries**²⁰ see Annex N: List of “EU SEE countries and territories” as referred to in Section 2.1.3. Location

5. **Engagement with EU Institutions**²¹ **and likeminded actors**²²: Whilst the EU SEE will be **CSO led and independent**, it will generate and disseminate timely and meaningful information and analysis, including early warnings that may in addition inform EU wide actions, and actions of like-minded donors and other actors, for civic space and an enabling and environment for civil society. To this end, it is vital that EU SEE Partners systematically engage with relevant EU institutions and likeminded donors and actors both at global and on country levels²³.

The **global objective** of this call for proposals, mirroring the Expected Result 1.2 of the Multiannual Indicative Programme²⁴ is: *Civil society partners’ at global, regional and partner country levels, capacity and ability to detect and respond to situations of a deteriorating or improving enabling environment, and address and contribute to structural prerequisites for such an environment, is improved.*

The **specific objectives** of this call for proposals are all to contribute to the global objective through separate but interlinked specific objectives (SOs) for each Lot under the call. To reflect the importance of the

18 Defined as all CSO partners directly contracted under the call (lead- and co-applicants).

19 Lead applicant for Lot 1.

20 Taking into account eligibility requirements for NDICI – CSO thematic programme, the eligibility of EU SEE Countries will be subject to review and possible changes between contracted parties and the EU on an annual basis during the initiatives lifespan to allow for changes in the environment to be reflected.

21 The European Commission, the European External Action Service and other relevant actors.

22 EU Member States, other likeminded donors including philanthropic actors, and international and regional institutions of relevance to the action.

23 EU SEE should develop forms for engagement with EU Institutions and EU Member States, for example, but not limited, an Advocates Group linked to Team Europe Democracy (TED) initiative or equivalent structure/s. The EU SEE will be independent from the steering of TED, but should participate in the TED Network, for example by presenting analysis and information to TED participants

24 Global Europe - Programming (europa.eu)

contribution of each EU SEE Partner to the system approach of the EU SEE, specific objectives are defined for each Lot. For both lots, all actions must contribute to:

- i) the global objective, and
- ii) specific objectives as defined in section 1.2., and
- iii) the principles and approaches as defined in section 1.2.

Lot 1: EU SEE Coordination, Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism

Lot 1 aims to result in an action framing the largest component under the SEE, to set up and implement (a) internal and external coordination and support, and (b) the EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism.

a. EU SEE Coordination and Support

The lead applicant contracted under Lot 1 will serve as the **Global Lead** for EU SEE. This task includes **(1)** the overarching responsibility for, in dialogue and cooperation with other **EU SEE Partners**²⁵, setting up and managing an **operative structure for EU SEE coordination**, including, but not limited to the equivalent of a Secretariat²⁶, an EU SEE Management Group²⁷ and contribution to an EU SEE Advocates Group linked to the Team Europe Initiative on Democracy (TED), or equivalent structure/-s. Applicants submitting proposals under the Lot are invited to describe how such an operative structure should be set up and managed²⁸.

The Global Lead should furthermore be overall responsible for **(2) the establishment and coordination of the core body of the EU SEE – the EU SEE Network**²⁹, including management of **financial support** to Network Members to enable their participation. In line with the priorities of the call, it is vital that the SEE Network includes a **diversity of civil society organisations**³⁰ and **their associations and networks** in all EU SEE Countries, and relevant regional civil society organisations (henceforth **EU SEE Network Members**). The main function of the SEE Network will be to be the **eyes and ears of the Monitoring and Early Warning Mechanism** (see below), in all SEE Partner Countries. Applicants submitting proposals should therefore describe how the SEE Network will be set up³¹, supported and managed³².

Specific focus should be given to bringing in a diverse range of actors and expertise from different sectors of civil society, to enrich and broaden the information and subsequent analysis of the mechanism.

25 Defined as all CSO partners directly contracted under the call (lead- and co-applicants).

26 Such a Secretariat may be tasked, inter alia, with coordinating the aggregated SEE programming, monitoring and reporting; coordinate with and EU Delegations; facilitate communication amongst EU SEE partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders; coordinate joint communication; coordinate the Digital Hub; organise the logistics and the meetings of the EU SEE Management Group; inform the EU led EU SEE Advocates Groups. The Global Lead (Lead Applicant, Lot 1) must include adequate staffing of Secretariat in proposal and budget. In addition Lead applicant for Lot 2 contracted under the EU SEE must budget for and provide a minimum of one position to the secretariat, and any other co-applicant/-s should budget for and provide positions as relevant.

27 Consisting of representatives of all EU SEE Partners management and DG INTPA

28 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

29 Consisting of a broad and diverse base of local civil society organisations and/or their associations and/or networks established or based in an EU SEE Country as per Annex N: List of “EU SEE countries and territories » as referred to in Section 2.1.3. Location. All EU SEE Countries **must** be represented in the EU SEE Network.

30 “Civil society organisation” as defined by Article 46 of the NDICI regulation: Civil society organisations embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not-for-profit independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise the pursuit of shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic. Operating from local, national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations. Different legal forms of registration in the respective countries will be accepted with due justification. Examples of different such legal forms are: Trust, Trust with limited liability, Company with limited liability, Private company limited by share, Association, Charitable organisations, Society, Non-profit corporation, Non-profit ecclesiastic legal personality, Institute of research, etc. Additionally, in situations where registration or receipt of foreign funding as non-profit organisation is made very difficult or might put the entity in danger, civil society organisations may be obliged to register as for-profit organisations to continue operating. Such for-profit entities will be accepted with due justification.

31 NB: It is not mandatory for applicants to have the EU SEE Network entailing members in all EU SEE Countries in place/selected at the time of the application. The application shall however describe the indented model for selecting participants and setting up the Network.

32 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

Proposals submitted under the Lot should specifically describe³³ how it aims to **involve and capacitate actors** that are not **currently to a significant extent involved in monitoring of the enabling environment**³⁴ in the EU SEE Network, to enable their contribution to the SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism, thereby explicitly contributing to **broadening the base and availability of local monitoring expertise** in EU SEE countries.

The Global Lead should furthermore, in coordination and cooperation with other SEE Partners through the Secretariat, propose methodology for, and be overall responsible for the execution of, **(3) cooperation and coordination with other global and regional CSO actors** (including networks/platforms and their members) active in monitoring of aspects pertaining to the enabling environment. Proposals should accordingly describe how activities under the SEE will allow, promote and enable such cooperation and coordination between actors and enable them to identify and develop synergies through learning and exchange³⁵.

Applicants should furthermore propose activities to **(4)**, in coordination and cooperation with other SEE Partners, through the Secretariat or equivalent structure/-s, provide continuous support for **EU SEE Network Member's dialogue and engagement with EU Delegations** in EU SEE Countries, as well as with other likeminded donors and actors at **country level**.

Proposals should describe how **(5)** activities under this Lot will serve to **strengthen EU SEE Network Members' core capacities** and medium- and long-term ability to respond to deteriorations of, uphold and promote, and identify and address the drivers of changes to, the enabling environment through the provision of medium- and long-term capacity building and technical support³⁶. **Key priorities**³⁷ for such actions under this call are: *Digitalization and data technologies; an enabling legislative and administrative environment for civil society; CSO access to policy dialogue; the promotion of a positive narrative on civil society* and strengthened civil society capacity to *identify and address root causes of shrinking civic space*. In line with the priorities of the call, actions under the component should explore, and as relevant entail, **participatory approaches**. Proposals should therefore describe how proposed actions allow participating organisations to learn from each other, to identify existing capacities and demand, and allow for connections and exchanges in-between members as well as with other actors of relevance, including the private sector and government actors as relevant.

Activities under this component of the SEE should entail **(6)** digital coordination of the EU SEE, including the dissemination of digital resources³⁸ and coordination of EU SEE digital activities and initiatives. Proposals should accordingly outline the design and management of a **digital knowledge management and coordination hub** or equivalent structure³⁹.

Proposals should also outline how the EU SEE partners, through the Secretariat and an Advocates Group linked to Team Europe Democracy (TED), or equivalent structure/-s, will **(7) share SEE findings, including early warning alerts and analysis, with relevant stakeholders**⁴⁰ in a sensitive and risk-aware manner⁴¹.

33 Ibid.

34 Including as relevant, but not limited to, actors representing marginalized and vulnerable communities, women and youth organizations, private sector associations, labour unions, cooperatives, faith based organisations etc.

35 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

36 Ibid.

37 All key priorities are to be understood as eligible for activities. However, it is not mandatory for applicants to address all key priorities in proposal.

38 Including but not limited to datasets, EU SEE Index, early warnings, reports and studies, toolkits and training materials etc.

39 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

40 For example, but not limited to, through an EU SEE Advocates Group, linked to the Team Europe Initiative on Democracy (TED) or equivalent structure/-s

41 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

b. The EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism

The EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism developed and implemented under this Lot is at the heart of the EU SEE initiative. It should **continuously and coherently assess the state of the enabling environment for civil society in EU SEE countries**. Under this component, verifiable, real-time, information on the enabling environment should be collected, analysed and disseminated. **Existing knowledge and monitoring practices** should as relevant be **considered and leveraged**, whilst **new methodologies and network modalities** should be developed. Applicants submitting proposals under the Lot are thus invited to describe how such a Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism should be set up and managed⁴².

Proposals should describe how, drawing on the information/data attained and analysed by the **EU SEE Network** as well as through **coordination and cooperation** with a broad set of actors as per above, a **(1) coherent EU SEE Monitoring Index** entailing data on all **core aspects of enabling environment as identified for this call** can be developed and implemented for EU SEE Countries⁴³. Specific attention should be given to the inclusion of aspects of the enabling environment currently **not systematically covered at global scale and/or not covered on a continuous basis**⁴⁴, increasing the **scope and frequency of monitoring**. A specific focus should be given to monitoring **aspects of digital space** for civil society.

Proposals should furthermore describe how this mechanism can support the overall aim of the initiative **to move towards prevention by developing and implementing a methodology and instrument** able to offer **(2) systematic Early Warning** at the first onset of negative or positive developments⁴⁵. This should include methods for support for SEE Network Members to gather and analyse evidence at early stages of developments, as well as for their ability to react, including through dissemination of **early warning alerts**. The contracted partner/-s under this Lot will, in coordination and cooperation with other SEE Partners and EU SEE Network Members, be **responsible for developing a protocol, and relevant mechanisms, for response and dissemination of such Early Warnings**⁴⁶.

Proposals should describe how information gathered under the SEE activities will be **(3) analysed and effectively utilized**⁴⁷. Proposed expected outputs⁴⁸ could, besides the publication of the SEE Monitoring Index and Early Warnings, include annual reports on trends and development and activities of global, regional and country level, or the equivalent outputs as relevant. Specific attention should also be given to **(4) methods for systematised advisory services** to Network Members (in terms of for example response protocol and guidelines or equivalent) as well as **individual targeted ad hoc guidance** for Network Members as justified by early warning/changes in their environment.

Proposals should also describe how activities under the Lot contribute to ensure **(5) adequate communication, and advocacy activities, to ensure a broad dissemination**⁴⁹ of results to a wider audience of international, regional and partner country stakeholders, to enable data and analysis produced

⁴² To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Including as relevant, but not limited to, issues related to; Favourable social environment and perception of civil society; CSO environment for policy dialogue and advocacy; CSO - government relations; CSO organisational capacity, financial capacity, and sectoral infrastructure etc. It could as relevant particularly include aspects of the environment affecting specific minority or marginalised groups (women/youth/LGBTQI/indigenous communities/people living with disabilities etc. depending on the context).

⁴⁵ To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

⁴⁶ This should include standard procedures for interactions with EU Institutions and likeminded actors at country and global level. It should furthermore include standard procedure for coordination of response within the EU SEE Secretariat and with concerned Network Members.

⁴⁷ To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

⁴⁸ As per Annex A.1. application form concept note – section 1.1.1.

⁴⁹ Results and outputs should as appropriate be published on the EU SEE Digital Platform, distributed to EU SEE Partners and Stakeholders as well as to relevant actors of the international community. Specific attention should be given to dissemination of early warnings to EU institutions and likeminded donors through the development of an alert in a risk aware manner.

under the EU SEE to inform key policy and decision-making processes at all levels⁵⁰.

In line with the priorities of the initiative, it is vital that a **broad base of CSOs be engaged in the design and implementation** of the mechanism and that an **intersectional lens** is applied. This should seek to ensure that the mechanism responds to the **differentiated impact of changes in the enabling environment on the rights of diverse groups of actors in civil society**.

The four **specific objectives for Lot 1**, which should contribute to the Global Objective of the EU SEE, are⁵¹:

SO1.1: *To coordinate and lead a coherent and comprehensive EU funded, CSO-based, system for enabling environment*

SO1.2: *To strengthen civil society's ability to detect and address changes to civil society's enabling environment, as well as their ability to coherently and consistently monitor and analyse the enabling environment over time*

SO1.3: *To strengthen civil society's core capacities in prioritised areas to increase their ability to uphold and promote an enabling environment*

SO1.4: *To strengthen civil society's ability to exchange knowledge, engage with donors and policy makers at all levels on, and advocate efficiently for, an enabling environment*

Lot 2: EU SEE Flexible Support Mechanism (FSM)

Lot 2 aims to result in an action that responds to the need for more flexible and timely financial support for civil society in situations of urgency. Applicants are invited to propose the development and process of implementation of an **(1) EU SEE Flexible Support Mechanism (FSM)** for actions in **SEE Countries**⁵².

Through the support for, and provision of, Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP), this mechanism would serve to provide flexible and innovative funding in EU SEE Partner Countries, for actions that serve to counteract and **prevent deterioration** in the enabling environment for civil society and/or **strengthen positive developments**, as well as assisting civil society to **adapt to developments**⁵³.

The EU SEE FSM should in all aspects be closely coordinated with and, as it is developed, be triggered by the EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism under Lot 1. Proposals should **clearly outline eligibility criteria**⁵⁴ for FSTP support, in line with the **EU SEE Global Objective**⁵⁵ and the **Specific Objectives** for the Lot described below, clearly demonstrating how the **correlation with the Monitoring and Early Warning Mechanism**⁵⁶, at the core of the EU SEE, can be achieved⁵⁷.

Proposals should specifically describe how the FSM will be developed **learning from, building on and expanding existing flexible funding modalities**⁵⁸, whilst also proposing and developing **new modalities** to strengthen, complement and **fill existing gaps** in the funding landscape for civil society⁵⁹. It should

50 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

51 It is mandatory for proposals under Lot 1 to address all four specific objectives.

52 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

53 For details about support to third parties, see the corresponding paragraph in section 2.1.3. of these guidelines.

54 In Annex A.2. application form Full Application.

55 See section 1.2. of these guidelines.

56 At minimum 75% of all funds under the FSM should be triggered by the Monitoring and Early Warning Mechanism over the lifespan of the initiative.

57 Within the EU SEE Secretariat or equivalent structure. The Lead applicant is to budget for and provide a minimum of one position to the secretariat, and co-applicants should budget for and provide positions as relevant.

58 This includes mechanisms funded and developed by the EU, EU Member States and other donors.

59 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

ideally include **several funding windows** and a **variety of modalities, coordinated under the EU SEE FSM** for efficiency and coherency. The FSM should, as far as possible, be developed in dialogue with civil society actors at global, regional and country level, and proposals should accordingly describe how such dialogue will be designed and managed⁶⁰.

The FSM should be able to offer both **activity related, project based** and **institutional funding**⁶¹ for a broad base of civil society actors to address urgent preventive actions for, and early adaptation to, changes in the enabling environment. The EU SEE FSM should entail opportunities to provide **confidential, flexible, rapid, short**⁶²- and **long**⁶³-**term financial support**; be accessible for actors working in rapidly deteriorating situations; and be able to enter into funding agreements with informal structures, as/if relevant.

NB: In order to minimize overlap with actions funded under country programmes, **long-term support** under the FSM should as a principle only entail support for, and clearly demonstrate added value in relation to, actions for an enabling environment at **global, multi-country and/or regional level**, including transnational movements and/or cross-border initiatives involving actors from multiple EU SEE Countries⁶⁴.

Applicants are invited to describe how the FSM will serve to make flexible, preventive and/or adaptive EU funding available to a **broadened group of civil society actors**⁶⁵ with a priority on development CSOs⁶⁶. It should particularly include modality/-ties for funding for women's organizations, funding for specifically marginalized groups, and youth. Applicants should to this end consider integrating specific funding windows with **high- and low-tech** funding modality options, to enable it to reach all types of civil society actors, including actors with low or limited technical capacities. Methodologies including **Participatory grant-making mechanisms**, which involve CSOs in the decisions on fund disbursement as a way to make space for CSO representatives to influence priorities and directions, should be proposed as relevant.

Whilst financial support through third parties (FSTP) is at the core of this component of the EU SEE under Lot 2 it is vital that **learning functionalities** and **continuous technical support** is made available to all applicants and recipients of FSTP **throughout the application process and during implementation**. Applicants are thus invited to describe how **(2) such learning functionalities and support** can best be structured and managed as an integral part of the EU SEE FSM⁶⁷. Specific care should be taken to **ensure sufficient support for CSOs with low administrative capacity and/or little experience of management of funds**, and/or specific support for organisations and actors who have little to no experience of working in a highly restrictive environment where management of funds becomes particularly difficult.

It is furthermore vital that the proposed EU SEE FSM includes opportunities for applicants and recipients of FSTP to **(3) connect with other recipients** in their country, region, or as relevant with similar grantees globally, in order to strengthen **networking and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning**. Applicants are invited to describe how this can be achieved⁶⁸.

60 Ibid.

61 Core grants can be considered if based on rigorous scrutiny of the mission and financial/operational capacity of the CSOs partner.

62 Short-term is to be understood as individual urgent actions spanning less than or equal to 6 months. For institutional funding to allow for adaptation to changes in the environment, short-term is to be understood as equal to or less than 12 months.

63 Long-term actions is to be understood as more than 12 months.

64 In exceptional circumstances actions in one partner country can be funded, given that the EU Delegation in the country at hand has been consulted and is in favour of the action

65 For the purpose of this call, "civil society organisation" is defined as by Article 46 of the NDICI regulation: Civil society organisations embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not-for-profit independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise the pursuit of shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic. Operating from local, national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations.

66 To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

Actions funded under the mechanism should **not overlap with initiatives funded by the EU on country level**. Regular **(4) coordination with EU Delegations**⁶⁹ in respective country of action is therefore essential to ensure complementarity to country programmes, and proposals should describe how this can best be designed and managed⁷⁰. Proposals should further describe how **(5) coordination and articulation with EU Initiatives for Human Rights Defenders and their organisations**, including the EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism managed by ProtectDefenders.eu worldwide, as well as the Human Rights Crisis Facility and the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) can be ensured to avoid overlap and ensure efficiency⁷¹. All activities under the FSM should be **based on a solid risk analysis** and on a **do no harm approach**, aiming to minimize risks for applicants and grantees. It will be vital to exercise **due diligence in selection of beneficiaries**, ensuring that **they respect the universality and indivisibility of human rights** and **do not act contrary to fundamental rights and values**. Applicants are invited to describe how these aspects will be considered in the design and implementation of the mechanism⁷².

The specific objectives for Lot 2 that should contribute to the Global Objective of the EU SEE are⁷³:

SO2.1: *To strengthen civil society's ability to adapt and react to changes in their operating environment, prevent further deterioration of, and contribute to upholding and improving, an enabling environment*

SO2.2 *To contribute to and actively support a coherent and comprehensive EU funded, CSO led, system for an enabling environment.*

The expected results related to the specific objectives for both Lots are, inter alia:

R1.⁷⁴ (SO1.1, SO2.2): The EU SEE functions as a **coherent, well-coordinated, system** where each component adds value to the system, whilst avoiding overlaps and inefficiency.

R2.⁷⁵ (SO1.2): A coherent, global **EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism** for the enabling environment for civil society, is established and implemented, and results are available and disseminated at all levels.

R3.⁷⁶ (SO 2.1) A coherent, global **EU SEE Flexible Support Mechanism**, is established and implemented, allowing for timely and appropriate action to prevent deterioration, support positive developments and/or adapt to changes in the enabling environment

R4.⁷⁷ (SO1.3, SO2.1): Civil society ability to **adapt to changes in, prevent deterioration of, and support positive developments** in an enabling environment in EU SEE Countries has been demonstrably improved.

R5.⁷⁸ (SO 1.4, SO 2.1) Civil society's ability to **exchange knowledge and engage with donors and policy makers** on, and **advocate efficiently for**, an enabling environment has been demonstrably improved at all

⁶⁹ Coordination mechanism should be managed in coordination with, or through, the EU SEE Secretariat as per above. Case by case consultations for all grants are not mandatory, with the sole exception of long-term grants covering only one country as described below.

⁷⁰ To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ It is mandatory for proposals under Lot 2 to address both specific objectives.

⁷⁴ To be addressed by all proposals under both Lots in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

⁷⁵ To be addressed by all proposals under Lot 1 in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

⁷⁶ To be addressed by all proposals under Lot 2 in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

⁷⁷ To be addressed by all proposals under both Lots in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

levels.

Cross-cutting issues

All applications should **demonstrate relevance and adherence to the principles and approaches outlined** in section 1.2 of these guidelines⁷⁹. Each proposal should specifically demonstrate how it will contribute to increased and strengthened **cooperation and collaboration of civil society actors**, and how it aims to better **enable engagement with EU Institutions and likeminded actors**.

All applications shall furthermore demonstrate how a **broad base** of civil society organisations at **all levels**, including women's and youth organisations, as well as organisations representing vulnerable and marginalised groups, including persons with disability, have been engaged in the **designing** of the proposal and how they will **be supported, consulted and engaged** throughout **implementation and monitoring** of the full intended Action.

1. Human Rights (Human Rights-based approach)

The European Consensus on Development commits the EU and its Member States to implementing a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to development cooperation, encompassing all human rights⁸⁰. The NDICI Instrument shall apply a rights-based approach encompassing all human rights, whether civil and political or economic, social and cultural in order to integrate human rights principles, to support the right holders in claiming their rights, with a focus on poorer, marginalised and vulnerable people and groups, including persons with disabilities, and to assist partner countries in implementing their international human rights obligations. That approach shall be guided by the principles of **'leaving no one behind'**, equality and non-discrimination on any grounds.

In line with a human Rights-Based Approach, development cooperation should contribute to the development of the capacities of 'rights-holders' to claim their rights and 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations. Programmes and projects therefore need to assess the capacities of rights-holders and duty-bearers and develop the appropriate strategies to build these capacities. The HRBA methodology also reminds us that development projects can have unintended negative impact in terms of human rights such as disadvantaging certain groups, interfering with participation rights and labour rights or contributing to forced displacement. It is therefore important to abide by the 'do no harm' principle and carry out the required analysis and mitigation.

Moreover, the HRBA working methodology recognises that pursuing desired human rights outcomes is not enough. The way these outcomes are achieved is equally important. Programmes should therefore monitor and evaluate both outcomes and processes. Applicants should explain to what extent their applications take into account the rights-based approach⁸¹.

2. Gender Equality

Equality between men and women is at the core of values of the European Union. The Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025⁸² stresses the need for the full realisation of women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of

⁷⁹ This will be evaluated in point 2.5. – Annex A.1 – grant application form Concept Note.

⁸⁰ It thereby reinforces the EU's commitment to a RBA as outlined in the 2012 EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, the 2021 Tool-box "A Rights-Based Approach, Encompassing All Human Rights, for EU Development Cooperation", and the respective Council Conclusions.

⁸¹ This will be evaluated in point 2.5. – Annex A.1 – grant application form Concept Note.

⁸² EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An Ambitious Agenda For Gender Equality And Women's Empowerment In EU External Action, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, JOIN(2020) 17 final

all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Gender equality is also a central, standalone goal in the 2030 Agenda.

Applicants shall should explain to what extent their applications take into account gender equality issues.⁸³ All applications should furthermore meet the *minimum criteria for the project to qualify for a 1 score under the DAC gender equality policy marker*⁸⁴.

3. Environment

EU treaties and policies underpin the Union’s high-level commitment to environmental sustainability, protection of biodiversity and combating climate change. Mainstreaming environment and climate change is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Applicants should as a minimum explore the *environmental dimensions of the initiative and how these will be considered and/or addressed*. Applicants are encouraged to ensure that environment and climate change considerations are mainstreamed throughout the proposal and/or to include specific results on environment and climate change.

1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 50 000 000**. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds. If the allocation indicated for a specific lot cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to other lots. Likewise, this amount could be increased should more funds become available.

Indicative allocation of funds by lot

LOT 1: total available: EUR 30 000 000

Minimum level of financial support to third parties under the lot is set at 40%.

LOT 2: total available: EUR 20 000 000

Minimum level of financial support to third parties under the lot is set at 60%.

Size of grants

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts of total eligible costs of the action:

For LOT 1:

- minimum amount: EUR 30 000 000

⁸³ This will be evaluated in point 2.5. – Annex A.1 – grant application form Concept Note.

⁸⁴ 1) Findings from a gender analysis inform the proposal, which adopts a ‘do no harm’ approach. 2) The proposal include one gender equality specific objective/expected outcome of the overall action in line with EU commitments and the GAP III; or, if it is not possible to have at least one specific objective/ expected outcome to Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, clear language expressing commitment (s) to achieve gender equality must be integrated in one of the other specific objective(s)/outcome of the Action; or at least one output promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment should be included. 3) The proposal includes one gender-responsive and/or one indicator informing on gender equality and women’s empowerment either at output or preferably outcome level. Furthermore, data and indicators disaggregated at least by sex are planned where applicable. 5) The proposal ensures that gender equality will be mainstreamed into the monitoring and evaluation of the action and that indicators will be sex-disaggregated and disaggregated by other relevant aspects whenever possible (e.g. age, disability and/or any other relevant aspects).

- maximum amount: EUR 30 000 000

For LOT 2:

- minimum amount: EUR 20 000 000
- maximum amount: EUR 20 000 000

Any grant requested under this Call for Proposals must be limited to the following minimum and maximum percentage of total eligible costs of the action:

Minimum percentage: 75% of the total eligible costs of the action.⁴

Maximum percentage: 95 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.4).

The grant **may cover the entire eligible costs of the action if this is deemed essential to carry it out**. If that is the case, the lead applicant must justify full financing in Section 2.1 of Annex A.2. The validity of the justification provided will be examined during the evaluation procedure. The absence of any justification may lead to the rejection of the application. If the evaluation committee considers that the justification is not valid, only the maximum percentage allowed (95%) will be accepted.

Please note that the lead applicant can either ask for a minimum amount of 75% up to a maximum percentage of 95% or exceptionally 100%, under the conditions described above. **A percentage between 95.01% and 99.99% is not allowed** and it will lead to the rejection of the application.

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union or the European Development Fund⁸⁵.

In line with section 6.3.10. of the Practical Guide (PRAG 2021.1), neither the beneficiaries (coordinator/lead applicant and co-beneficiaries/co-applicants) nor affiliated entities shall produce a profit within the framework of the action. In the context of this call, profit is defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs approved by the Contracting Authority when the request for payment of the balance is made. Income generated by the action may be accepted as co-financing.

In case a profit is made, the Contracting Authority has the right to reduce the final amount of the grant by the percentage of the profit corresponding to the final European Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred approved by the Contracting Authority (thus excluding other eligible costs declared on a simplified cost option basis), except in the cases listed in section 6.3.10 of the PRAG.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSAL

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

⁸⁵ Where a grant is financed by the European Development Fund, any mention of European Union financing must be understood as referring to European Development Fund financing.

2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

- (1) the actors (2.1.1.) and (2.1.2.):
 - The ‘**lead applicant**’, i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
 - if any, its **co-applicant(s) (where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as ‘applicant(s)’)**;
 - and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s);
- (2) the actions (2.1.3.):
 - actions for which a grant may be awarded;
- (3) the costs (2.1.4.):
 - types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant.

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

Lead applicant

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

- (1)
 - be a legal person **and**
 - be non-profit-making. Please note that for-profit organisations may also be eligible in exceptional and duly justified cases⁸⁶ **and**
 - be a non-governmental civil society organisation (CSO)⁸⁷, or a global umbrella organisation of non-governmental civil society organisations⁸⁸ **and**
- (2) be established in one of the eligible countries or territories listed in *Annex M: List of countries and territories as referred to in Section 2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants*^{89,90}

⁸⁶ In situations where registration or receipt of foreign funding as non-profit organisation is made very difficult or might put the entity in danger, civil society organisations may be obliged to register as for-profit organisations to continue operating. The validity of the justification will be examined by the Evaluation Committee.

⁸⁷ “Civil society organisation” as defined by Article 46 of the NDICI regulation: Civil society organisations embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not-for-profit independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise the pursuit of shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic. Operating from local, national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations. Please note that the Evaluation Committee will take into consideration the different legal forms of registration in the respective countries, for which the applicant should attach a justification. Examples of different legal forms are: Trust, Trust with limited liability, Company with limited liability, Private company limited by share, Association, Charitable organisations, Society, Non-profit corporation, Non-profit ecclesiastic legal personality, Institute of research, etc.

⁸⁸ For the purpose of this call “global umbrella organisation of non-governmental civil society organisations” is defined as organisation having as members regional and/or national umbrella organisations for CSOs and/or national individual CSOs on different continents.

⁸⁹ With regard to Israeli entities, please follow Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJ C 205, 19.7.2013, p. 9).

⁹⁰ With regard to entities based in India:

and

(3) be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity (-ies), not acting as an intermediary.

- To be eligible for a grant, the **lead applicant for Lot 1** must furthermore have:

(4) Significant experience⁹¹ of leading projects or programmes involving multiple CSO actors, implemented at global, regional and country level,

(5) Significant experience of coordination of global⁹² or multi-regional⁹³ network/-s of CSOs, and/or of leading a consortium of CSOs with multi-regional or global coverage,

(6) Significant thematic expertise and proven experience in the promotion and protection of an enabling environment for civil society.

- All proposals under Lot 1 must furthermore demonstrate that applicants (lead- and co-applicant/-s) **in between them/jointly**⁹⁴ have:

(7) Significant experience of developing methodology to monitor significant aspects of an enabling environment for civil society, and of implementing this methodology globally⁹⁵,

(8) Significant experience of strengthening CSO coalitions and networks to share information and knowledge, lessons learnt, and strategies, and develop common positions and participation in joint actions, including through digital platforms,

(9) Significant experience of research, awareness raising, and evidence based advocacy related to aspects of an enabling environment for civil society, at global, regional and country level,

(10) Significant experience of support to civil society capacity development at a global or multi-regional scale within one or more of the prioritised areas⁹⁶ for the call,

a) All local Indian entities applying under the Call must have a valid FCRA registration certificate at the time of submitting their Concept Note. The FCRA registration certificate will need to be uploaded in PROSPECT at the time of submission of the full proposal.

b) In case the lead applicant is an Indian Local Organization it will not be possible to have a co-applicant, except if the costs of co-applicants can be covered by the co-funding or their own funds (no transfer of foreign funds is allowed).

c) Section 2.1 & 2.1.3 of the Guidelines for applicants:

- Section 2.1 of the Guidelines: if the lead applicant is an Indian organisation, co-applicants are not allowed unless their costs are covered by the local co financing or their own funds.

- Section 2.1.3 of the Guidelines: Financial support to third parties provided by Indian entities (applicants or co-applicants) is not allowed for activities in India.

The following documents must be provided in PROSPECT and they will be verified at the moment of submission of the Full Application:

FCRA registration certificate of all Indian entities

Self-declaration declaring to be aware and compliant with all the provisions and requirements of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill 2020 signed by the Indian lead applicant and in case of a European lead applicant by each Indian co-applicant.

In case of a European lead applicant, self-declaration that it can transfer funds to the Indian co-applicants.

91 "Significant experience" is for the purpose of this call to be understood as >5 years of experience, of any one singular, or of several individual, applicant/-s (i.e. not jointly/aggregated amongst applicants), unless otherwise specified

92 "Global" is for the purpose of this call to be understood as involving all regions included under the EU SEE, including at minimum 25% of countries in respective region.

93 "Multi-regional" is for the purpose of this call to be understood as involving at minimum 3 of regions included under the EU SEE, including at minimum 25% of countries in respective region.

94 Lead- and Co-Applicants should clearly demonstrate that they jointly as a group they cover the full list of requirements.

95 Experience of applicants/co-applicants of developing methodology to monitor aspects of an enabling environment for civil society, and of implementing this methodology should singularly for one applicant, or jointly for two or more applicants, apply to a global scale by entailing experience in all regions included under the EU SEE, including at minimum 25% of countries in respective region.

96 Prioritised areas for actions of long-term capacity development under this call are: Digitalization and data technologies ; an enabling legislative and administrative environment for civil society; CSO access to policy dialogue; the promotion of a positive narrative on civil society; initiatives for increased CSO financial sustainability and strengthened capacity to address root causes of shrinking civic space..

(11) Significant experience of grant management for civil society actors through financial support to third parties.

- To be eligible for a grant, the **lead applicant for Lot 2** must furthermore have:

(12) Significant experience of developing methodology for, and implementation of, grant management of flexible grants for civil society actors in EU SEE partner countries, through financial support to third parties, at a global or multi-regional⁹⁷ scale,

(13) Significant thematic expertise and proven experience in the promotion and protection of an enabling environment for civil society.

- All applicants (lead- and co-applicant/-s) under Lot 2 must furthermore demonstrate that **in between them/jointly**⁹⁸ they have:

(14) Significant experience of support to civil society addressing aspects of an enabling environment,

(15) Significant experience of support to civil society at global, regional or country level in terms of support for project management (developing technical strength on project formulation, implementation, financial management, monitoring and evaluation etc.).

Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide;

Lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entities and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant, the co-applicants and the affiliated entities are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion according to Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract. In this respect, provisionally selected lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities are obliged to declare that they are not in one of the exclusion situations through a signed declaration on honour (PRAG Annex A14). For grants of EUR 15 000 or less, no declaration on honour is required. See section 2.4.

In Annex A.1 Section 2 and Annex A.2 Section 5 ('declaration(s) by the lead applicant'), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself, the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies) are not in any of these situations.

The lead applicant must act with co-applicant(s) as specified hereafter.

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

Co-applicant(s)

The lead applicant **for both Lots must act with at least 1 co-applicant** (minimum) to benefit from

⁹⁷ «Multi-regional» to be understood as involving at minimum 3 of regions included under the EU SEE, including at minimum 25% of countries in respective region.

⁹⁸ Applicants / Co-Applicants should demonstrate that as a group they cover the full list of requirements.

collective operational capacity and ensure the provision of relevant thematic and geographic expertise⁹⁹.

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

Co-applicant/-s must equally satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself with regards to criteria as listed under 1-3 above.

Co-applicant/-s for Lot 1 must additionally satisfy one or more of the eligibility criteria 7 and/or 8 and/or 9 and/or 10 and/or 11.

Co-applicant/-s for Lot 2 must additionally satisfy one or more of the eligibility criteria 14 and/or 15.

The choice of co-applicant/-s must be justified in the proposal as part of the project design and will be taken into account in point 2.1 of the concept note evaluation grid (see section 2.3 of these guidelines). The composition of the partnership will be evaluated in point 4.3 of the full application evaluation grid (see section 2.3 of these guidelines).

Each member of a partnership must have a precise and clearly identified role in the implementation of the project. A partnership should be composed in such a way as to allow the achievement of the project objectives in the most effective and cost-efficient manner.

The role of each member of the partnership (lead and co-applicant/-s) must be clearly explained in the proposal¹⁰⁰ (description of the action). It is strongly recommended that the lead applicant and its co-applicant/-s draw up an agreement defining their partnership as well as their respective technical and financial roles and obligations. A clear allocation of responsibilities and costs will contribute to the partnership's success.

Co-applicant/-s must sign the mandate in Annex A.2 Section 5.

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

Applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG) at the moment of the award decision cannot be awarded the contract¹⁰¹.

Affiliated entities

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

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

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

⁹⁹ The co-applicants will be evaluated on their aggregated proven capacity to deliver on the priorities of this call for proposals. Please note that there is no upper limit on the number of members in a partnership, but the composition of any consortium should aim towards the achievement of objectives in the most effective and cost-efficient manner, and the role and responsibilities of each co-applicant must be clearly explained in the application form. The choice of co-applicants must be justified in the proposal as part of the project design.

¹⁰⁰ Concept note – Annex A.1. application form

¹⁰¹ The updated lists of sanctions are available at www.sanctionsmap.eu.

Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

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

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

- Entities directly or indirectly controlled by the applicant (daughter companies or first-tier subsidiaries). They may also be entities controlled by an entity controlled by the applicant (granddaughter companies or second-tier subsidiaries) and the same applies to further tiers of control;
 - Entities directly or indirectly controlling the applicant (parent companies). Likewise, they may be entities controlling an entity controlling the applicant;
 - Entities under the same direct or indirect control as the applicant (sister companies).
- (ii) Membership, i.e. the applicant is legally defined as a e.g. network, federation, association in which the proposed affiliated entities also participate or the applicant participates in the same entity (e.g. network, federation, association,...) as the proposed affiliated entities.

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

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

What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

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

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

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

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

If the applicants are awarded a grant contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become beneficiary(ies) of the action and signatory(ies) of the grant contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the

implementation of the action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for implementation contracts and financial support to third parties and subcontractors) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the beneficiary(ies) under the grant contract.

Affiliated entity (ies) must satisfy the eligibility criteria 1 and 2 as per the lead applicant and the co-applicant(s). They must sign the affiliated entity (ies) statement in Annex A.2 Section 5.

2.1.2. Associates and contractors

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

- Associates

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

- Contractors

The beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are permitted to award contracts. Associates or affiliated entity(ies) cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

2.1.3. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Definition

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of all actions shall be **72 months**¹⁰² (minimum and maximum).

Sectors or themes

All Actions under the Call must contribute to **an enabling environment for civil society**, to be understood as: *of: A legal framework and a regulatory environment that support and promote CSOs’ work rather than constrain it; access to funding that allow CSOs to operate in a way that is responsive to the individuals and communities they serve or represent; access to information; access to spaces for dialogue and collaboration with governments and other development actors; meaningful participation in policy and decision making; positive values, norms and attitudes towards civil society.* All actions need to address the priorities, principles and approaches as identified in section 1.2.

Location

Actions must take place as follows:

- **For both Lots:**

¹⁰² NB: This does not refer to individual actions of FSTP. For details about FSTP, please refer to section 2.1.3. of these guidelines.

Actions under the Call may take place at global, regional and EU SEE Country¹⁰³ level.

- **For Lot 1:**

All EU SEE Countries¹⁰⁴ **must** be included in activities under the Action that relate to EU SEE Network, EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism, and related **financial support for third parties for EU SEE Network Members**.

- **For Lot 2:**

All, and only, EU SEE Countries¹⁰⁵ are **eligible** for activities pertaining to **financial support to third parties under the action**. Such activities must take place in EU SEE countries¹⁰⁶.

Types of action

To be eligible, actions must comply with the objectives and the priority issues and contribute to expected results of the call for proposals described in point 1.2 of these guidelines.

The following types of action are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions which consist exclusively or primarily in capital expenditure, such as infrastructure, land, equipment;
- actions which discriminate against individuals or groups of people on grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack of them, or their ethnic origin;
- actions supporting directly political parties;
- actions which include proselytising activities.

Types of activity which may be financed under this call:

Activities under Lot 1 **must** include (but not limited to):

- Activities pertaining to role as Global Lead¹⁰⁷ of the EU SEE, including but not limited to set up and hosting of SEE Secretariat, reporting to an EU SEE Advocates groups (or equivalent structure/-s) as per above.
- Activities pertaining to the establishment and management of **EU SEE Network**¹⁰⁸.

103 EU SEE Countries as defined in Annex N: List of "EU SEE countries and territories » as referred to in Section 2.1.3. Location

104 ibid

105 ibid

106 EU SEE Countries as defined in Annex N: List of "EU SEE countries and territories » as referred to in Section 2.1.3. Location. Exceptions can be made in specific situations to entail actions in neighbouring countries and/or actions at a regional level, and/or actions undertaken by CSOs in diaspora, justified by the situation in the country or region at hand. In such exceptional circumstances the recipient must be established or based in a country or territory as per Annex M: List of countries and territories as referred to in Section 2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants

107 Lead applicant for Lot 1

108 Including but not limited to: Activities pertaining to financial support to EU SEE Network Members for their involvement in and contribution to the development and implementation of the EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism and other EU SEE Network activities as relevant. Activities pertaining to strengthening the capacity of EU SEE Network Members specifically to ensure quality, consistency and timeliness of data and information of the Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism

- Activities pertaining to the **development of, and implementation of actions required for**¹⁰⁹, the **EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism** including the EU SEE Index.
- Activities pertaining to the **publication and dissemination of results of the EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism** on a continuous basis, as well as in-depth analysis and reporting (annual and as relevant) at global level; and support for in-depth analysis and reporting by SEE Network Members in partner countries.
- Activities pertaining to the production and dissemination of **structured guidance** to EU SEE Network Members (in terms of for example response protocol/-s and guidelines) as well as **targeted guidance** for SEE Network Members as justified by early warnings/changes in the environment.
- Activities pertaining to strengthening civil society capacity to monitor enabling environments and respond to findings, through the provision of **technical assistance** to SEE Network Members. This can include, but is not limited to **digital support services** (provision of resources as well as advisory/support services); **legal support services** (advisory as well as direct); support for communication and advocacy etc.
- Activities pertaining to capacity development¹¹⁰ for SEE Network Members within the **prioritised areas identified for the call**¹¹¹. This can include, but is not limited to, development of relevant materials and tools, digital and in situ **trainings and training programmes**, opportunities for **peer-to-peer learning, mentoring programmes and exchanges**.
- Activities pertaining to support for EU SEE Network Members **engagement at country level** to ensure to that data and analysis produced under the EU SEE informs key regional and in-country policy and decision-making processes.
- Activities pertaining to the establishment and implementation of a **digital knowledge and coordination hub** (or equivalent) for publication of EE Monitor and other relevant data and analysis as above, as well as analysis and material produced by EU Partners, EU SEE Network Members and other monitoring entities and networks, and for digital network activities.
- Activities pertaining to communication and advocacy, coordination and enactment of **global level engagement with EU institutions, EU member states and other relevant international actors** to ensure to that data and analysis produced under the EU SEE informs key international policy and decision-making processes.
- Activities supporting **coordination and collaboration** including, but not limited to, support for coalition building between civil society and between civil society and non-CSO actors, such as media, the private sector, local and national authorities, relevant international actors etc.

109 Including monitoring actions by EU SEE Network members at partner county level funded by FSTP modality

110 For the purpose of this call, “capacity development” is to be understood as: Capacity to learn: Developing programmatic and technical competence and CSO expertise on prioritised areas as well as staff skills, including in using tools, including digital tools, that will ultimately produce results conducive to strengthening the organizations capacity in the prioritised areas. Capacity for coordination and collaboration: Improving the ability to build and strengthen coalitions and networks to share information and knowledge/lessons learnt/strategies, development of common positions and participation in joint actions, of relevance to prioritised areas. Capacity for research, communication and awareness raising and evidence based advocacy of relevance to prioritised areas: Improving the ability to generate independent research and evidence to inform stakeholders, build cases for policy change, develop adequate advocacy and lobbying skills, strengthening a positive narrative of civil society, and improving the visibility and impact of the CSOs

111 Prioritised areas for actions of long-term capacity development under this call are: Digitalization and data technologies ; an enabling legislative and administrative environment for civil society; CSO access to policy dialogue; the promotion of a positive narrative on civil society; initiatives for increased CSO financial sustainability and strengthened capacity to address root causes of shrinking civic space.

Activities under Lot 2 **must** include (but not limited to):

- Activities pertaining to the development and establishment of a **EU SEE Flexible Support Mechanism (FSM)**¹¹² for EU SEE Country CSOs (including, but not limited to, EU SEE Network Members).
- Activities pertaining to management of the EU SEE FSM through rapid¹¹³ and flexible¹¹⁴ financial support to third parties for the following categories of support:
 - a) Activity based support for preventive and/or early response activities to prevent deterioration of the enabling environment and/or contribute to and support of positive developments of the same.
 - b) Organizational support for CSOs to prepare for and/or adjust to the changes in the enabling environment (including capacity for innovation and learning, short- and long-term institutional support, technical and financial capacity strengthening etc.).
- Activities pertaining to the provision of continuous **thematic and technical support to applicants and recipients of FSTP** in the application process and during implementation. This can include, but is not limited to, support that is provided to improve their approach, proposal, reporting (monitoring, narrative, budgeting and financial reporting skills etc.) etc.
- Activities pertaining to opportunities for applicants and grantees to **connect with other recipients of FSTP in order to strengthen networking and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.**
- Activities pertaining to **coordination with EU Delegations**¹¹⁵ in respective country of action to ensure complementarity to country programs of any/all grants given.
- Activities pertaining to **coordination and articulation with EU Initiatives for Human Rights Defenders and their organisations.**
- Activities pertaining to the set-up of, **participation in, and contribution to the EU SEE** including (but not limited to) participation in SEE Secretariat and Advocates Group or equivalent structures as per above.
- Activities pertaining to contribution to the EU SEE **digital knowledge and coordination hub** as per Lot 1.

Inception Period Activities (relevant to both Lots):

Applicants should plan for a six-month inception period during which the EU SEE Partners, within the format of the Secretariat, under the guidance of the Global Lead, jointly should develop the below-mentioned strategies and plans¹¹⁶.

The following *activities* pertaining to the development and subsequent implementation of the following elements during the inception period can hence be eligible under the call:

- **EU SEE governance structure and policy** (to create an effective governance structure where all

¹¹² Closely coordinated with, and, as it is developed, be triggered by the Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism under Lot 1.

¹¹³ Depending on size and urgency of grants. For the most pressing situations rapid could, as an example only, be defined as less than two weeks

¹¹⁴ Examples of flexibility are grants given on a rolling and needs driven basis, through an open-ended application process without deadlines, and with simplified application requirements depending on grant size etc.

¹¹⁵ In coordination with the EU SEE Secretariat

¹¹⁶ At the end of the inception period, the EU SEE Management Group will be consulted on the mentioned elements, strategies and plans. Plans shall be reviewed and updated by the Secretariat as needed.

EU SEE partners feel engaged/informed, where responsibilities and decision-making processes are clear, where decisions are documented and policies ensure Section 2.1.5 ethical standards are met.);

- **EU SEE plan for strategic-level coordination** and streamlining of organisational working principles, standards and processes to maximise effectiveness and impact while leveraging the individual strengths of each EU SEE partner (political influence, capacity building etc.) and ensuring compliance with legal and contractual obligations (including quality control mechanisms);
- **EU SEE knowledge management strategy** with criteria to identify and fill information gaps (both internal and external to the EU SEE) and avoid contributing to over-documentation;
- **EU SEE communication, outreach, advocacy and visibility plans** (with communication objectives, main target audiences, guidelines for delivering key messages, preferred communication methods etc.);
- **EU SEE training and capacity building strategy** (with aim, principles, capacity assessment tools, type of capacity development activities and geographical coverage, how to prioritise needs, how to monitor and evaluate the success of the proposed strategy, how to follow up at the local level etc.);
- **EU SEE Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan** (results-oriented plan which helps gather reliable quantitative and qualitative information on impact consistently across EU SEE partners, enables ownership, adaptive learning and improvement, with clear quality standards and criteria for monitoring and addressing enhanced monitoring, if required);
- **EU SEE exit strategy/sustainability plan.**

Financial support to third parties¹¹⁷

Under this call, financial support to third parties is considered essential to achieve the objective of the action for Lot 1 and Lot 2. Applicants shall therefore mandatorily propose financial support to third parties (sub-granting) in order to help achieve the objectives of the action. This must be clearly indicated in Annex A.1 (Concept note, description of the action).

Lot 1: Applicants **must**¹¹⁸ propose financial support to third parties (FSTP) in order to help achieving the objectives of the action. FSTP budget will be at least 40% of the overall budget for actions under this Lot.

Lot 2: Applicants **must**¹¹⁹ propose financial support to third parties (FSTP) in order to help achieving the objectives of the action. FSTP budget will be at least 60% of the overall budget for actions under this Lot.

The maximum amount of financial support per third party grant is EUR ≤ 60 000, **except where achieving the objectives of the actions would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult in which case no thresholds apply.**

In compliance with the present guidelines and notably of any conditions or restrictions in this Section, the lead applicant must define mandatorily in Section 2.1.1 of Annex A.2:

- (i) the overall objectives, the specific objective(s) and the outputs¹²⁰ (i.e. the results) to be

¹¹⁷ These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

¹¹⁸ To be described in both Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note, and in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ As per OECD DAC definition, the term 'results' includes: 'impact' (overall objective), 'outcome(s)' (specific objective(s) and 'output(s)'.

achieved with the financial support

- (ii) the different types of activities eligible for financial support, on the basis of a fixed list
- (iii) the types of persons or categories of persons which may receive financial support
- (iv) the criteria for selecting these entities and giving the financial support
- (v) the criteria for determining the exact amount of financial support for each third entity, and
- (vi) the maximum amount which may be given¹²¹.
- (vii) the set-up of a control system to verify the eligibility of costs.

In all events, the mandatory conditions set above for giving financial support (points (i) to (vii) have to be strictly defined in the grant contract as to avoid any exercise of discretion.

Specific conditions or restrictions apply to this call for proposals:

- **Third parties which may receive financial support:**

Lot 1: EU SEE Network Members¹²².

Lot 2: EU SEE Network Members and other civil society actors¹²³ of relevance to the action established or based in the EU SEE Country where the action, funded under the FSM, takes place¹²⁴.

Due diligence in selection of EU SEE Network Members and recipients of financial support to third parties ensuring that these **respect the universality and indivisibility of human rights** and that they **do not act contrary to fundamental rights and values** is required.

Types of activity eligible for financial support to third parties (indicative):

For Lot 1: All activities pertaining to **development, coordination, implementation, including monitoring, analysis, and dissemination** of the results of EU SEE Monitor and Early Warning Mechanism

For Lot 2: Short- and long-term activities, funded under the Flexible Support Mechanism, to **prevent deterioration** of the enabling environment and/or contribute to and **support of positive developments** of the same and/or activities to **prepare for and/or adjust to the changes** in the enabling environment in an EU SEE country.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU

121 Art.1.6 g) of the GC: The coordinator shall 'have full financial responsibility for ensuring that the action is implemented in accordance with this contract'.

122 As defined under 1.2.OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ISSUES.

123 "Civil society organisation" as defined by Article 46 of the NDICI regulation: Civil society organisations embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not-for-profit independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise the pursuit of shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic. Operating from local, national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations. Different legal forms of registration in the respective countries will be accepted with due justification. Examples of different such legal forms are: Trust, Trust with limited liability, Company with limited liability, Private company limited by share, Association, Charitable organisations, Society, Non-profit corporation, Non-profit ecclesiastic legal personality, Institute of research, etc. Additionally, in situations where registration or receipt of foreign funding as non-profit organisation is made very difficult or might put the entity in danger, civil society organisations may be obliged to register as for-profit organisations to continue operating. Such for-profit entities will be accepted with due justification.

124 I.e. established or based in in country or territory as per Annex N: List of "EU SEE countries and territories » as referred to in Section 2.1.3. Location. Exceptions can be made in specific situations to entail CSOs in diaspora, CSOs in neighbouring countries, regional CSOs and their platforms and/or CSOs and their platforms in EU countries, if this can be justified due to the situation in the country or region at hand. In such exceptional circumstances the recipient must be established or based in a country or territory as per Annex M: List of countries and territories as referred to in Section 2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants

emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission. If applicable, communication activities may be undertaken to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

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

Under this call for proposal, **financial support to third parties is exempt from Visibility requirements as so far as it can be considered in line with section 2.1.3 on exceptional situations in the 2018 Communication and Visibility in EU-financed external actions**, specifically in cases where Communications and Visibility Requirements can be said to **constitute an increased risk for beneficiaries**.

Number of applications and grants per lot and per applicant / affiliated entities

The lead applicant **may not** submit **more than 1** application **per Lot** under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant **may be a co-applicant** or an affiliated entity in another application at the same time.

The lead applicant **may** be awarded **more than one grant** under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity **may** be the co-applicant or affiliated entity **in any number of application(s)** under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity **may** be awarded **more than one grant** under this call for proposals.

Should an entity submit more than one application as a lead applicant per lot under this call for proposals, the Evaluation Committee will only consider the first proposal arrived on the basis of submission date and hour. Any other proposal submitted by the entity will be rejected.

2.1.4. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Union contribution under this call for proposals take the following form(s):

- Reimbursement of eligible costs that may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:
 - (i) actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);
 - (ii) one or more simplified cost options (see below).

Only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for ‘eligible costs’.

Simplified cost options may take the form of:

- **unit costs:** covering all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by reference to an amount per unit.
- **lump sums:** covering in global terms all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance.

- **flat-rate financing:** covering specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by applying a percentage fixed ex ante.

Simplified costs options (SCOs) which can be proposed are the following:

- "output or result based SCOs": they include costs linked to outputs, results, activities, deliverables in the framework of a specific project (for example the determination of a lump sum for the organization of a conference, or for the realisation of a determined output/activity). Where possible and appropriate, lump sums or unit costs shall be determined in such a way to allow their payment upon achievement of concrete outputs and/or results. This type of SCO can be proposed by the beneficiary (no threshold is applicable) at proposal's stage (in Annex A.2 – Grant application form – ^{Full} application). In case the evaluation committee is not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

Refer to Annex K for the details of the procedure to be followed depending on the type and amount of the costs to be declared as SCO.

Applicants proposing this form of reimbursement, must clearly indicate in worksheet no.1 of Annex B, each heading/item of eligible costs concerned by this type of financing, i.e. add the reference in capital letters to 'UNIT COST', 'LUMPSUM' in the Unit column (see example in Annex K).

Additionally in Annex B, in the second column of worksheet no.2, 'Justification of the estimated costs' per each of the corresponding budget item or heading applicants must:

- describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of unit costs and/or lump sums, to which costs they refer, etc. for output or result based SCO;
- clearly explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount for output or result based SCO;

No threshold is set ex-ante for the total amount of financing that can be authorised by the contracting authority on the basis of simplified cost options.

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

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

The grant may take the form of a single lump-sum covering the entire eligible costs of an action or a work programme.

Single lump sums may be determined on the basis of the estimated budget, which should comply with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Compliance with these principles shall be verified ex ante at the time of evaluation of the grant application.

When authorising single lump sums the authorising officer responsible shall comply with the conditions applicable to output or result based SCOs.

When using this form of financing, the description of the action shall include detailed information on the essential conditions triggering the payment, including, where applicable, the achievement of outputs and/or results.

To allow an easy verification of the distribution of the budget, in Annex III applicants must indicate how much funding is allocated towards the governance structure of the EU SEE, to diverse components under the Action, and to financial support to third parties. In case of applicants and co-applicants acting together as a consortium, the budget should also demonstrate how much funding is allocated to respective organisation.

Eligible direct costs

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

Contingency reserve

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

Eligible indirect costs

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

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

Contributions in kind

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

The contracting authority may accept co-financing in kind in the form of volunteers' work. Volunteers' work may comprise up to 50 % of the co-financing. For the purposes of calculating this percentage, contributions in kind in the form of volunteers' work must be based on the unit cost per volunteer per day as defined and authorised by the European Commission at the following address: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/?fuseaction=list&coteId=3&year=2019&number=2646&version=ALL&language=en>.¹²⁵

This type of costs must be presented separately from other eligible costs in the estimated budget, in the dedicated budget line 10.2 of the budget template (Annex B). The value of the volunteer's work must always be excluded from the calculation of indirect costs. When the estimated costs include volunteers' work, the grant shall not exceed the estimated eligible costs other than the costs for volunteers' work.

¹²⁵ The maximum unit cost to be used as a reference is: X EUR/working day/volunteer. See list of daily rates in the link

Contributions involving real estate must be excluded from the calculation of the amount of co-financing. In kind contributions must comply with national tax and social security rules.

If co-financing in kind is proposed, it must be included in Annex B (Worksheet 3) to the guidelines for applicants on the expected sources of funding for the action. The same amount must be indicated in the budget (worksheet 1)

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

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant;
- purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred in accordance with Article 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;
- currency exchange losses;
- in kind contributions (except for volunteers' work);
- bonuses included in costs of staff;
- negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
- credit to third parties;
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations;
- purchases of vehicles, unless the applicant can demonstrate that the purchase is necessary for the purpose of the action implementation.

2.1.5. Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct

a) Absence of conflict of interest

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

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation

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

Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment:

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

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

Applicants (and affiliated entities) other than (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies whose application has been pre-selected or placed in a reserve list, shall assess their internal policy against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) through a self-evaluation questionnaire (Annex L). For grants of EUR 60 000 or less no self-evaluation is required. Such self-evaluation questionnaire is not part of the evaluation of the full application by the contracting authority, but is an administrative requirement. See section 2.5.6 of the PRAG.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

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

d) Unusual commercial expenses

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

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

e) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

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

2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

To apply for this call for proposals the lead applicants need to:

I. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action. To this end, lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities must register in PADOR. Lead applicants must register at the concept note step. Co-applicants and affiliated entities must register at the full application step; lead applicants must make sure that their PADOR profile is up to date. Please note that the registration of this data in **PADOR is obligatory**¹²⁶ for this call for proposals:

PADOR is an on-line database in which organisations register and update information concerning their entity. Organisations registered in PADOR get a unique ID (EuropeAid ID) which they **must mention** in their application. PADOR is accessible via the website: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/looking-for-funding_en

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, lead applicants, co-applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) must complete the ‘PADOR registration form attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent **together with the full application** (Annex A.2), by the submission deadline (see section 2.2.5).

II. Provide information about the action in the documents listed under sections 2.2.2 (Where and how to send concept notes) and 2.2.5 (Full applications). Please note that online submission via **PROSPECT is obligatory** for this call.

PROSPECT is the European Commission’s online application system developed for the submission of applications for call for proposals in the field of external action. The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations allowing them to submit their proposals online and to follow up online the status of their application. Applicants also receive automatic notifications when new documents (clarifications, corrigenda, etc.) are published for their call. PROSPECT is accessible via the website: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/looking-for-funding_en

It is strongly recommended to register in PADOR well in advance and not to wait until the last minute before the deadline to submit your application in PROSPECT.

Before starting using PADOR and PROSPECT, please read the user guides available on the website. All technical questions related the use of these systems should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT.**

2.2.1. Concept note content

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the concept note instructions in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A.1). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the concept note and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

Applicants must apply in **English**.

Please note that:

1. In the concept note, lead applicants must only provide an estimate of the requested EU contribution as well as an indicative percentage of that contribution in relation to the eligible costs of the action. A detailed budget is to be submitted only by the lead applicants invited to submit a full application in the second phase.
2. The elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application, except for the

¹²⁶ Natural persons who apply for a grant (if so allowed in the guidelines for applicants) do not have to register in PADOR. In this case, the information included in PROSPECT and the grant application form is sufficient.

changes described below:

- The EU contribution may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20 %. Lead applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these guidelines in Section 1.3.
- The lead applicant may add, remove or replace one or more co-applicant(s) or affiliated entity (ies) only in duly justified cases.
- The lead applicant may adjust the duration of the action if unforeseen circumstances outside the scope of the applicants have taken place following the submission of the concept note and require such adaptation (risk of action not being carried out). In such cases, the duration must remain within the limits imposed by the guidelines for applicants. Own contributions by the applicants can be replaced by other donors' contributions at any time.

An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in Annex A.2 – Instructions for drafting the Full Application, section 2.1.1, point viii. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.

Only the concept note form will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that this document contains ALL relevant information concerning the action. No additional annexes should be sent.

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

Any error related to the concept note instructions (Annex A.1) or major discrepancy related to the concept note instructions (Annex A.1) may lead to the rejection of the concept note.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

2.2.2. Where and how to send concept notes

The concept note (Annex A.1) together with the declaration by the lead applicant (Annex A.1 section 2) **must be submitted online via PROSPECT** <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT user manual.

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

Concept notes sent by any other means (e.g. by e-mail) will be rejected.

Please note that incomplete concept notes may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their concept note is complete by using the checklist for concept note (Annex A.1, Instructions).

2.2.3. Deadline for submission of concept notes

The deadline for the submission of concept notes is **13/03/2023 at 12:00** (Brussels date and time). In order to convert this deadline to local time you can use any online time converter tool that takes into account time zones and winter/summer time changes (example available [here](#))¹²⁷ **The lead applicant is strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit** its concept note, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The

¹²⁷ For example: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>.

contracting authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

Any concept note submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.4. Further information about concept notes

A virtual information session on this call for proposals will be held on **31/01/2023** at **12:00** Brussels time.

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

E-mail address: INTPA-175093@ec.europa.eu
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The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

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

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

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure will be published on the website where the call was published: website of DG International Partnerships https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_en or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>, as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website(s) regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published. All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT**: Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English, French and Spanish. Therefore users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

In the event that only one concept note is selected in a given lot during the first evaluation phase, the European Commission reserves the right to enter into a negotiated procedure for a direct award of a grant to the Applicant. This eventuality would not affect other lots.

In the event that no concept note is selected in a given lot during the first evaluation, the European Commission reserves the right to contract the related Action/-s through a different procedure. This eventuality would not affect other lots.

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

2.2.5. Full applications

Lead applicants invited to submit a full application following pre-selection of their concept note must do so using the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

The elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application, except for the changes described below:

1. The EU contribution may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20 %. Lead applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these guidelines in Section 1.3.
2. The lead applicant may add, remove or replace one or more co-applicant(s) or affiliated entity(ies) only in duly justified cases.
3. The lead applicant may adjust the duration of the action if unforeseen circumstances outside the scope of the applicants have taken place following the submission of the concept note and require such adaptation (risk of action not being carried out). In such cases, the duration must remain within the limits imposed by the guidelines for applicants.

An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in Annex A.2 – Instructions for drafting the Full Application, section 2.1.1, point viii. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.

Lead applicants must submit their full applications in the same language as their concept notes.

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

Any error related to the points listed in the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions) or any major inconsistency in the full application (e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

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

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

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, **the lead applicant has to submit with the full application the completed PADOR form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each (if any) co-applicants and each (if any) affiliated entities¹²⁸.**

Please note that the following documents shall be uploaded in PADOR by the full application deadline or submitted together with the PADOR registration form with the full application form:

1. The **statutes or articles of association** of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity . Where the contracting authority has recognised the lead applicant's, or the co-applicant(s)'s, or their affiliated entity(ies)'s eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it should be submitted, instead of the statutes or articles of association, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred in the meantime. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.
2. **Legal entity form** (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and by each co-applicant, if any), accompanied by the justifying

¹²⁸ Natural persons who apply for a grant (if so allowed in the guidelines for applicants) do not have to provide an organisation data form. In this case, the information included in the grant application form is sufficient.

documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the contracting authority, instead of the legal entity form and supporting documents, the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.

3. A **financial identification form** of the lead applicant (not from co-applicant(s)) conforming to the model attached as Annex E of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the lead applicant is established. If the lead applicant has already submitted a financial identification form in the past for a contract where the European Commission was in charge of the payments and intends to use the same bank account, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead.

In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted:

1. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants exceeding EUR 100 000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

In all other cases, the lead applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by an applicant to the contracting authority in any one financial year.

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

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

The requested supporting documents (uploaded in PADOR or sent together with the PADOR offline form) must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals. Originals should be kept on file for controls.

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

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

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

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

No additional annexes should be sent.

2.2.6. Where and how to send full applications

Full applications (i.e. the full application form, PADOR registration form (where applicable), the budget, the logical framework, and the declaration by the lead applicant) must be submitted online via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT users' manual.

Upon submission of the full application online, the lead applicants will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in their PROSPECT profile.

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by e-mail) will be rejected.

Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions).

2.2.7. Deadline for submission of full applications

The deadline for the submission of full applications will be indicated in the letter sent to the lead applicants whose application has been pre-selected. This letter will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

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

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.8. Further information about full applications

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than **21 days before the deadline** for the submission of full applications to the addresses listed below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: INTPA-175093@ec.europa.eu
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The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

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

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

<p>No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure, will be published on the website of DG International Partnerships: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_en, as the need arises.</p>

<p>It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers.</p>
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All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT**. Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English, French and Spanish.

Therefore users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

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

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

(1) STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- i. If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- ii. If the concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Annex A.1, Instructions of the grant application form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that sole basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

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

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

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Relevance of the action	20
1.1. How relevant is the proposal to the global and specific objectives and priorities of the call for proposals, and any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities and expected results defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5
1.2. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target countries and regions under the initiative?	5
1.3. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5
Specific attention should be given to criteria of selection for, and planned engagement with, EU SEE Network members for Lot 1, and recipients of financial support to third parties under the	

Flexible Support Mechanism (FSM) for Lot 2 respectively.	
1.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)? Is the proposal aligned with the principles and approaches outlined in the guidelines (section 1.2)?	5
2. Design of the action	30
2.1. How coherent is the overall design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Attention should be given to the choice of co-applicant/-s as outlined in section 2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant/-s).	5x2**
2.2. Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5
2.3. Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)? Specific attention should be given to risk analysis, and subsequent risk mitigation measures, for stakeholders.	5
2.4. Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic?	5
2.5. To which extent does the proposal integrate the identified cross-cutting issues outlined in the guidelines (section 1.2)?	5
Maximum total score	50

****:** this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal specifically addresses more than the required minimum number of priorities as indicated in Section 1.2 (objectives of the programme) of these guidelines.

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

Firstly, only the concept notes with a score **of at least 30** will be considered for pre-selection.

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

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

The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications.

(2) STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

1. If the submission deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will automatically be rejected.
2. If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions). This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The full applications that pass this check will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

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

1. have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding (this only applies to lead applicants);
2. have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This applies to applicants and any affiliated entity(ies).

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

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

Scoring:

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Financial and operational capacity	20
1.1. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house experience of project management?	5
1.2. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical in-house expertise, especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed, as defined in the Guidelines (Section 2.1.1)?	5

1.3. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management in-house capacity (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.4. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?	5
2. Relevance of the action	20
2.1. How relevant is the proposal to the global and specific objectives and priorities of the call for proposals, and any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities and expected results defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5
2.2. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target countries and regions under the initiative?	5
2.3. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? Specific attention should be given to criteria of selection for, and planned engagement with, EU SEE Network members for Lot 1, and recipients of financial support to third parties under the Flexible Support Mechanism (FSM) for Lot 2 respectively.	5
2.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)? Is the proposal aligned with the principles and approaches outlined in the guidelines (section 1.2)?	5
3. Design of the action	15
3.1. How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)? Specific attention should be given to the choice of co-applicant/-s as outlined in section 2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant/-s).	5
3.2. Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification? If not, is a baseline study foreseen (and is the study budgeted appropriately in the proposal)?	5
3.3. Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5

4. Implementation approach	15
4.1. Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic? Attention should be given to the inclusion of adequate time for inception activities as outlined in section 2.1.3. of the guidelines.	5
4.2. Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)?	5
4.3. Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory? Attention should be given to project coordination structures as outlined in the guidelines (section 1.2).	5
5. Sustainability of the action	15
5.1. Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5
5.2. Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing?	5
5.3. Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable? - Financially (e.g. are proposals including analysis of potential for financing of follow-up activities, potential sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs, etc.) - Institutionally (will structures as proposed by applicants allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action?) Specific attention should be given to the issue of local 'ownership' of the results of the action. - At policy level (where applicable) (what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods). Attention should be given to both the potential policy development in SEE partner countries, as well as on regional and global policy level development of relevance.	5
6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	15
6.1. Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	5
6.2. Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?	5x2**
Maximum total score	100

**: this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the lead applicant applies without co-applicants or affiliated entities the score for point 4.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of co-applicants or affiliated entities is mandatory according to these guidelines for applicants.

Provisional selection

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

(3) STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS AND AFFILIATED ENTITY(IES)

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.4). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

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

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

2.4. Submission of supporting documents

The lead applicant shall submit the documents listed in section 2.2.5.

In addition, a lead applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents via PROSPECT:

1. Declaration on honour: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in and sign the declaration on honour certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.6.10.1 of the PRAG) where the amount of the grant exceeds EUR 15 000. Please note that the declaration on honour should be submitted via PROSPECT.
2. Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in the self-evaluation questionnaire assessing the organisation's internal policy and procedure against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) (Annex L) where the amount of grant exceeds EUR 60 000 (see Section 2.5.6 of the PRAG). Please note that the self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H should be submitted via PADOR.

If it is impossible for the lead applicants to supply the abovementioned documents via PROSPECT or PADOR for technical reasons, they must submit the requested supporting documents in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery to the postal address described in sections

2.2.2 and 2.2.6 and according to the instructions therein.

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

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

2.5. Notification of the Contracting Authority's decision

2.5.1. Content of the decision

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

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

Applicants who were unsuccessful at the **Opening and Administrative Check stages** of the procedure wishing to obtain further information should send their request by letter, indicating the reference of the Call for Proposals and the reference allocated to the proposal, to:

European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships
Unit R.6 - Finance and Contracts for Centralised operations
Attn. Head of Unit L-41 03/110
Avenue du Bourget, 1 B-1140 Brussels BELGIUM

Applicants who were unsuccessful at the **Technical evaluation stages of the procedure or at the Eligibility check stage** wishing to obtain further information should send their request, by letter indicating the reference of the Call for Proposals and the reference allocated to the proposal, to:

European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships
Unit G.2 – Local Authorities, Civil Society and Foundations
Attn. Head of Unit L-41 03/043
Avenue du Bourget, 1 B-1140 Brussels BELGIUM

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in

relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm

2.5.2. Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME
1. Information meeting	31/01/2023	12:00
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	20/02/2023	16:00
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	02/03/2023	-
4. Deadline for submission of concept notes	13/03/2023	12:00
5. Information to lead applicants on administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)	April 2023	-
6. Invitations to submit full applications	April/May 2023	-
7. Deadline for submission of full applications	July 2023	-
8. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)	September 2023	-
9. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)	October 2023	-
10. Contract signature	November 2023	-

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

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

2.6. Conditions for implementation after the contracting authority's decision to award a grant

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard

grant contract. Where the coordinator is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed, it will sign a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. In this case, references to provisions of the standard grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the grant contract shall be understood as references to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement.

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the beneficiary(ies) and its affiliated entity(ies) (if any) to award procurement contracts, those contracts must be awarded in accordance with Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

In this context, a distinction should be made between awarding implementation contracts and subcontracting parts of the action described in the proposal, i.e. the description of the action annexed to the grant contract, such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

Awarding implementation contracts: implementation contracts relate to the acquisition by beneficiaries of routine services and/or necessary goods and equipment as part of their project management; they do not cover any outsourcing of tasks forming part of the action that are described in the proposal, i.e. in the description of the action annexed to the grant contract.

Subcontracting: Subcontracting is the implementation, by a third party with which one or more beneficiaries have concluded a procurement contract, of specific tasks forming part of the action as described in annex to the grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

- Annex A: Grant application form
A.1 – Concept note (Word format)
A.2 – Full application form (Word format)
- Annex B: Budget (Excel format)
- Annex C: Logical framework (Word format)
- Annex D: Legal entity sheet
- Annex E: Financial identification form
- Annex F: PADOR registration form (ONLY IF IMPOSSIBLE TO REGISTER IN PADOR)

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION

- Annex G: Standard grant contract
- Annex II: general conditions
 - Annex IV: contract award rules
 - Annex V: standard request for payment
 - Annex VI: model narrative and financial report
 - Annex VII: model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action
 - Annex IX: standard template for transfer of ownership of assets
- Annex H: Declaration on Honour
- Annex J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call
- Annex K: Guidelines for assessing simplified cost options
- Annex L: Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H
- Annex M: List of countries and territories as referred to in Section 2.1.1 *Eligibility of applicants*
- Annex N: List of “EU SEE countries and territories” as referred to in Section 2.1.3. *Location*

Useful links:

Daily allowance rates (per diem)

https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en

Project Cycle Management Guidelines

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en

The implementation of grant contracts

A Users' Guide

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/companion/document.do?nodeNumber=19&locale=en>

Financial Toolkit

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en

Please note: the toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general

guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

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