



**Contracting authority:** European Commission

**SWITCH Asia Promoting Sustainable Consumption and Production  
(Support to the greening of value-chains)**

**Guidelines  
for grant applicants**

**Budget lines: 14.020131: (Asia) & 14.020132 (Pacific) NDICI-Global  
Europe**

**Reference: 179588**

**Deadline for submission<sup>1</sup> of concept note:**

**12 December 2023 at 12:00 (Brussels time and date)**

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

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

## NOTICE

This is a restricted call for proposals. In the first instance, only concept notes (Part A of the grant application form) must be submitted for evaluation. Thereafter, lead applicants who have been pre-selected will be invited to submit a 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.

**Preparation:** Virtual Information Session on 8 November 2023 (09:00am Brussels time for Asia and 10pm Brussels time for Pacific) and user manuals.

To help applicants familiarise themselves, two information sessions will be organised through Webex on:  
8 November 2023 at 09:00am (Brussels time) for Asia and  
8 November 2023 at 10:00pm (Brussels time) for Pacific  
through Webex.

Short informative videos will be available on the SWITCH Asia website: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/>

Should you be interested in this Virtual Information Session, please send an email by 6 November 2023 12:00 (noon Brussels time) to [INTPA-SWITCH-ASIA@ec.europa.eu](mailto:INTPA-SWITCH-ASIA@ec.europa.eu), with the persons who are going to participate as well as their organisation (max. two participants per organisation). No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

All organisations may find more information regarding PROSPECT in the [User's Manual](#). You may also contact our technical support team via the online support form in PROSPECT<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup>If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via email:

# IMPORTANT

Even though the verification of eligibility is foreseen to be carried out only for the provisionally selected applicants at the end of the procedure, the Evaluation Committee may decide to verify this point at any previous step of the procedure. Consequently, any proposal found to be non-compliant with all the mandatory conditions set in these guidelines can be automatically rejected on that sole basis, at any stage of the procedure and without any prior notice or clarification request. Applicants are therefore strongly advised to fill in scrupulously the "Check List for Concept Note" (Annex A1) and the "Checklist for the Full Application form" (Annex A.2.). Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declarations and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the proposal on that sole basis.

**Please note that all information encoded in PROSPECT must be exhaustive and in line with the content of the concept note. The administrative check will be performed taking into consideration only the information available in PROSPECT in sections: 1 – Contact; 2 – Project; 3 – Co- applicants; 4 - Documents. Please make sure that there are no inconsistencies between the information in PROSPECT and the content of the concept note / full application.**

**Complaints about administrative rejections related to this kind of inconsistencies will not be considered and will not lead to a modification of the decision.**

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# 1. SWITCH-ASIA PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SUPPORT TO THE GREENING OF VALUE-CHAINS)

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

The coronavirus pandemic and the recent war in Ukraine caused **unprecedented socio-economic impacts testing the resilience of societies and economies and disrupting Global Value Chains (GVC)**. In addition, natural catastrophes such as floods and droughts heavily affected the development of many countries (Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines, Bangladesh, Kiribati, Fiji, just to name few) and accelerated the need to urgently address the causes and effects of climate change and consider models of economic growth decoupled from environmental degradation.

**Micro-small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of economies and the engine of growth in the Asia-Pacific region.** Overall in the region, they comprise 98% of enterprises contributing from about 17% to national GDP in the low-income countries to about 40 to 50% in the countries like Malaysia. MSMEs have generated the largest number of employment opportunities, second only to agriculture, employing more than 50% of the workforce.

In this regard, at the recent United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC/ COP 27) in Egypt in November 2022, the international community acknowledged “*the importance of the transition to sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production to address climate change*”<sup>3</sup> as well as **the key role played by the private sector in this transition.** In addition, the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** adopted in December 2022 also includes relevant targets to notably reduce pollution (target 7), to **encourage and enable businesses to reduce their negative impacts on biodiversity** (target 15), to establish frameworks to encourage people to make sustainable consumption choices, including through reducing overconsumption and waste generation, notably food waste (target 16) to which this Action will contribute.

According to research by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 45% of the carbon emission reductions will need to come from the Circular Economy transition, in order to reach the 2050 targets. In this context, it is important to recognise that the extraction, processing, and manufacturing (including final consumption and recycling and/or disposal) of goods and services accounts for close to 50% of the World's carbon emission, which highlights the importance of supporting MSMEs (being the backbone of production) in greening their businesses. Furthermore, companies adopting a greener business concept are likely to also invest in renewable energy solutions or apply measures for better energy efficiency. Overall, 70% of all global greenhouse gas emissions are related to material handling and use. So, unless we radically transform how we use materials to satisfy our needs, we cannot meaningfully cut emissions<sup>4</sup>.

**Since 2007, the EU launched the “SWITCH-Asia Programme” aiming at supporting the transition of energy-intensive and high polluting industries in the Asia-Pacific region such as plastics and waste, textiles and leather, agri-food and beverage (most of which are women-oriented sectors).**

Over the last 15 years, the programme has supported over 500 organisations in the region and provided technical assistance to more than 20 countries across Asia in adopting national plans on circular economy and sustainable production, green building codes and frameworks for alternative non-plastics packaging. Successful examples, among others, include the reduction of marine litter in the South Asia Sea, the integration of green technologies in the tanning processing in India and of monitoring, reporting and verification frameworks in the garment sector in Cambodia and a **National Standard for Sustainable Textile Production in Mongolia.**

**The 2022's review of projects funded by the programme so far showed a clear alignment between projects and EU policies supported under the EU Green Agenda.** 63% of completed projects reported quantitative data on the adoption of SCP practices by business units and about 43.000 companies engaged in activities through organisations implementing SWITCH-Asia grants reported the adoption of SCP practices. 27.000 MSMEs engaged in the 31 projects focusing on sustainability standards certifications declared having

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<sup>3</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/1CMA4\\_1CMP17\\_1COP27\\_preliminary\\_draft\\_text.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/1CMA4_1CMP17_1COP27_preliminary_draft_text.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.circularity-gap.world/2022?gclid=CjwKCAjwiOCgBhAgEiwAjv5whAIKggR55gzKqmU24h8R7RFmYkS3s\\_5KMUcsRC7Gb91aUjDn9Si5DRoC4TEQAvD\\_BwE#Emissions-x-ray](https://www.circularity-gap.world/2022?gclid=CjwKCAjwiOCgBhAgEiwAjv5whAIKggR55gzKqmU24h8R7RFmYkS3s_5KMUcsRC7Gb91aUjDn9Si5DRoC4TEQAvD_BwE#Emissions-x-ray)

integrated them as a regular practice. Finally, the 39 projects specifically focusing on CO<sub>2</sub>e emission reduction reported to have collectively saved about 25.867.552 t CO<sub>2</sub>e.

Based on this successful experience as of 2023 the programme entered its Phase III being **extended to additional countries in the Pacific**, raising the ambitions of the EU to support small island countries and fragile States in integrating more sustainable GVCs.

During the Phase III, the SWITCH-Asia programme will be structured around two components: (i) the **“Policy Support Component”** (Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)9580 adopted on 16/12/2021) providing direct support to national Governments and regional organisations, complementing bilateral actions and strengthening policy dialogues with policy-makers regionally; and (ii) the **“Grants Scheme” component (corresponding to this specific AAP/Action)** aiming at supporting the green transition of export-led value-chains across the region ensuring that financial instruments available in the market may respond to the real needs of MSMEs and that consumers are capacitated in their choices and protected from greenwashing.

This call for proposal will support **priorities of the Global Gateway** by strengthening the resilience and integration of value chains **and promoting EU interests and values** by ensuring that supply chains of EU companies in third countries may comply with EU standards and norms (avoiding the disruption of EU value chains in the long term) and in ensuring the import of more sustainable products to the EU market. The Action will also help in countering the perception in partner countries that standards are protectionist measures and it will help demonstrating that investing in the transition to more sustainable and circular models and higher standards both in production processes and in products will instead in the long term allow the private sector in these countries to be part of relevant GVC supporting also their internal economic development.

The call for proposal will also **directly support the implementation of the external dimension of the European Green Deal** such as the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU Strategy for Sustainable Textiles, the EU Consumer Agenda, the Green Deal Industrial Plan, the Net Zero Industrial Act, the Circular Economy Action Plan and related initiatives, among which the EU Ecodesign for sustainable product Regulation, the Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CS3D), the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, upcoming actions on the unintentional release of microplastics, legislations on the Right-to-Repair, the Green Claim Initiative, just to name few. Important links exist also with the **EU Trade Policy**. In this regard, the results of projects may advise chapters on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) as well as activities under the European Partnership Agreements (EPAs), the Free Trade Agreements (FTA) – and related Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Chapters, when existing.

In addition, policy and regulatory aspects of the **EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)** will eventually be considered in activities implemented by the Policy Support Component of the programme<sup>5</sup>, while projects eventually selected under this Action will rather support deforestation-free products and processes. The programme will consider also how to address future priorities of the **European Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**<sup>6</sup> shall this mechanism focus on economic sectors supported by the programme.

This call for proposal will also underpin goals of **several EU regional strategies** such as, the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the EU-ASEAN Partnership (including its Plan of Action 2023-2027). Awarded projects **contribute mainly to the achievement of the SDG12** (Sustainable Consumption and Production) **and SDG13** (climate change), while supporting the specific targets of SDG7 (clean energy), SDG8 (decent work & economic growth), SDG9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG11 (sustainable cities and communities).

Finally, this call for proposal will encourage applicants to associate Financial institutions to their applications and potentially link them with the **European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+)**<sup>7</sup>, **as well as other financial schemes**, aiming ideally to the future creation of a pipeline of bankable projects for financial institutions.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.switch-asia.eu/scp-facility/our-mission/>

<sup>6</sup> Sectors currently considered by this mechanism are cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen.

<sup>7</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/european-fund-sustainable-development-plus-efsd\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/european-fund-sustainable-development-plus-efsd_en)

## 1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The SWITCH-Asia Programme is currently organised around 2 components:

- A Grant scheme component supporting the greening of value-chains between Europe and the region underpinning goals of the Global Gateway
- A “Policy Support Component” providing direct support to governments and regional organisations in adopting sustainable policy and regulatory frameworks as well as facilitating policy dialogues between countries in the eligible regions

This call for proposals is proposed within the programme’s grant scheme.

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is: to support the transition of the region to a low-carbon, resource efficient and circular economy, whilst promoting more sustainable value chains and products between the region and Europe, contributing to the recovery of local economies.

The **specific objective(s)** of this call for proposals are:

- **1:** support the green transition of key economic value-chains either within the eligible region or to the EU to reduce their carbon and environmental footprints.
- **2:** ensure that available or new green and climate finance instruments will respond to the needs of MSMEs in the region.
- **3:** support local consumers in acting more responsibly in choosing low-carbon and environmentally and socially sustainable products and services.

In line with the priorities of Global Gateway, the European Green Deal, and the EU’s Indo-Pacific Strategy, **the priorities of this call for proposals are:**

- **Priority 1:** Support MSMEs in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and the environmental impact of their industrial production, improving resource mobilisation and efficiency and adopting circular economy practices
- **Priority 2:** Engaging with consumers on low-carbon practices and sustainable consumption and production practices

Applicants proposing projects should address one of the aforementioned priorities.

## 1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 24 million. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

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

Lot 1: EUR 20 million for Asia

Lot 2: EUR 4 million for Pacific

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 another lot.

### **Size of grants**

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

- minimum amount: EUR 500.000
- maximum amount: EUR 1.500.000

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

- Minimum percentage: 50% of the total eligible costs of the action.
- Maximum percentage: 80% of the total eligible costs of the action and 90% if **all** activities of the action take place in Least Developed Countries (LDC)<sup>8</sup> (see also Section 2.1.4.).

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union or the European Development Fund<sup>9</sup>.

## 2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG> ).<sup>10</sup>

### 2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

(1) the actors (2.1.1.):

- the **'lead applicant'**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
- if any, its **co-applicant(s) (where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as 'applicant(s)')**;
- and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s);

(2) the actions (2.1.3.):

- actions for which a grant may be awarded;

(3) the 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))**

International organisations (as defined by Article 156 of the EU Financial Regulation<sup>11</sup>) are **not eligible** under this call for proposals.

The implementers (and sub-contractors) of contract PC-15460 "SWITCH-Asia - Promoting Sustainable Consumption and Production (Policy Support Component)" are **not eligible** under this call for proposals.

<sup>8</sup> Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kiribati, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste and Tuvalu

<sup>9</sup> Where a grant is financed by the European Development Fund, any mention of European Union financing must be understood as referring to European Development Fund financing.

<sup>10</sup> Note that a lead applicant (i.e. a coordinator) whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission and who is awarded a grant will not sign the standard grant contract published with these guidelines but a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. All references in these guidelines and other documents related to this call to the standard grant contract shall in this case be understood as referring to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement template.

<sup>11</sup> International organisations are international public-sector organisations set up by intergovernmental agreements as well as specialised agencies set up by them; the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are also recognised as international organisations.



## Lead applicant

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

- be a legal person **and**
- be non-profit-making **or**
- be a business and for-profit organisation (e.g. Micro-Small-and-Medium-Sized Enterprises/MSMEs, retailers, chambers of commerce, industrial clusters or associations), national and regional clean production centres, universities, research centres, centres for technology transfer, consumer organisations, development organisations, trade federations and labour organisations, **or**
- be a specific type of organisation such as: non-governmental organisation, public sector operator.

be established in a **Member State of the European Union**<sup>12</sup> (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden) **or**

be established in one of the following **Asian-Pacific countries**: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Indonesia, India, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu **or**

be established in member countries of the **OECD**, in case of contracts exclusively implemented in a Least Developed Country or a Highly Indebted Country as included in the list of ODA recipients, **or**

be established in a Member State of the **European Economic Area** (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), **or**

be established in countries from the Instrument for **Pre-accession Assistance** (IPA II) (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye) **and**

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

(2) 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 or those placed in the reserve list 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.

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<sup>12</sup> This includes also the European Union's Overseas Territories and Countries (OCTs): Aruba (Netherlands), Curaçao (Netherlands), French Polynesia (France), Greenland (Denmark), New Caledonia (France), Saint Barthélemy (France), Sint Maarten (Netherlands), Saint Pierre and Miquelon (France), Wallis and Futuna (France), Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba (Netherlands), French Southern and Antarctic Lands (France).

In Part A, Section 3 and Part B Section 8 of the grant application form ('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 sole interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

**Each proposal should be submitted by a partnership/ consortium composed at least by one lead applicant and one co-applicant.** The partnership/ consortium has to include:

- at least one organisation from a **Member State of the European Union or the European Economic Area**<sup>13</sup>;

**AND**

- at least one organisation from **an eligible Asian-Pacific country** originating from the country/ies where the action is implemented ('action location' as per guidelines 2.1.4).

The role of each partnership/ consortium member organisation must be clearly explained in the proposal. Even though the contracting authority concludes a contract with the lead applicant, the co-applicant(s)/affiliated entities should be shown to actively contribute to the implementation of the project. It is strongly recommended that the applicant and its co-applicant(s) draw up an agreement defining the technical and financial rights and obligations of each partnership member. A clear written allocation of responsibilities and a balanced distribution of costs will contribute to the partnership's success.

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

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

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

Co-applicants must sign the mandate in Part B Section 4 of the grant application form.

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

- (3) In addition, please note that contracts cannot be awarded to or signed with applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG).<sup>14</sup>

### **2.1.2. 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):**

<sup>13</sup> Including the EU's OCTs as mentioned in the previous footnote

<sup>14</sup> The updated lists of sanctions are available at [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://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.

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

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

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

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

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

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

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

#### What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

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

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

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

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

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

Affiliated entity(ies) must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as the lead applicant and the co-applicant(s). They must sign the affiliated entity(ies) statement in Part B Section 5 of the grant application form.

### **2.1.3. 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, financial institutions, 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 Part B Section 6 — ‘Associates participating in the action’ — of the grant application form.

- 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.

### **2.1.4. 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 an action may not be lower than 36 months nor exceed 48 months.

Sectors or themes

In line with the Global Gateway and the EU Green Deal, and reflecting regional challenges, this call for proposals will target primarily (but not exclusively) the following sectors<sup>15</sup>: **textiles and leather, agri-food, building and construction, plastics, plastic packaging and electronics. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to address these sectors in their applications.** These sectors are not only among the most energy-intensive in the region, but also the most polluting ones due to their industrial processes. Most of these sectors are export-led industries which account for a large share of the economies of countries in the region. Additional sectors will be considered as specific needs will arise.

- **Textiles and leather:** the sector highly contributes to the increase of global greenhouse gas emissions due to its long supply chains and energy intensive production, including energy and material-intensive processes in which large amounts of water and chemicals are used. It represents one of the major job providers in the region, accounting for around 80% of total export revenue in Bangladesh and Cambodia, while over 50% in Pakistan. The majority of employees are women, most of which highly exposed to harmful products and to long and irregular working hours.
- **Food sector (incl. agri-food and fishing):** while agri-food sectors sustain livelihoods of major part of the population in the region, its energy and water-intensive processing, the use of large quantities of non-environmentally friendly packaging, and a very significant amount of food loss/ waste makes it

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<sup>15</sup> In case different sectors will be proposed, applicants are highly encouraged to verify their relevance to national priority sectors identified by governments in their Green Strategies, Development Plans, NDCs, etc.

one of the most polluting and emitting economic sectors. In most cases, they are poorly paid and are required to work long hours also in post-harvest and industrial processing jobs like drying and storage.

- **Building and construction:** this sector has a great potential for climate change mitigation in the region. The possibilities of retrofitting existing buildings for energy and emissions savings remain mostly unexplored. Although, few efficient technologies remain in use, there exist a combination of ineffective policies and a lack of investments in sustainable building and construction sectors in the region. Likewise, there is a great potential for water savings in the sector, with water embodied in the construction material corresponding to a considerable amount of the total water consumption in a building's life cycle.
- **Plastics with particular focus on plastic packaging (and its waste):** in Asia, millions of plastic containers are consumed per minute, half of which are single-use items. Plastic released from Asian rivers contribute to 86% of the global marine litter<sup>16</sup>. Of the 10 rivers in the world with the highest amount of plastic waste, 8 are located in the region. The main bottleneck is represented by the overuse of plastics in daily activities and the lack of viable alternatives for products' packaging. Selected projects will also support policymakers in the region during the negotiation of the Global Agreement on Plastics, providing them with evidence on viable solutions to address the problem of plastics both downstream and upstream of value chains.
- **Electronics:** The electronics sector highly contributes to environmental and public health challenges because it often contains lead, mercury, cadmium, and other heavy metals that might contaminate soil/water and leads to heavy metal poisoning. This will result in developmental delays for children/fetus, respiratory issues, neurological damage, and increased risk of certain cancers. The health risks can be worse if there are no proper protective measures during the e-waste handling process. Considering these risks, both production and recycling of e-waste need to be improved, both in terms of material recovery and health and safety measures.

Despite the key role that women play in certain value chains (e.g. textiles and leather, agri-food, etc.) their participation in the economic life (including employment and business opportunities) is, in some case, not yet well fostered. The SWITCH-Asia Programme is committed to **support the equal participation of both women and men** in the implementation of its activities. Project proposals are encouraged to integrate a gender element, when relevant in the chosen value chain and for the achievement of a substantial change of production and/or consumption models in the selected country.

### Location

With regards to the scope of geographical eligibility for this grant, the provisions adopted by Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and the Council of 9 June 2021 (Article 28 of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation) will apply.

Actions must take place in one or more of the following countries in Asia/Pacific: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China DPR Korea, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

However, a few individual activities (e.g. conferences and seminars) can take place in other locations mentioned in section 2.1.1 (if duly justified and already tentatively indicated in the Full Application). These activities should last **maximum 21 non-consecutive days throughout the whole project implementation and they should be clearly indicated in the timeline of the action, notably in the Full-Application.**

**Multi-country proposals** are allowed in this call as long as they belong in the same lot (Asia or Pacific). They should show the clear added-value of tackling a topic regionally and/or jointly across-borders and they should not result only in a list of activities carried out nationally.

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<sup>16</sup> Lebreton, L., van der Zwet, J., Damsteeg, JW. *et al.* River plastic emissions to the world's oceans. *Nat Commun* **8**, 15611 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms15611>

## Types of action

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;

The Grant Scheme of the SWITCH-Asia Programme aims at implementing actions promoting the greening of industrial processes, circularity of products, processes and services as well as bio-based solutions, thus reducing the overall carbon and environmental footprint of the production system, encouraging the uptake of international Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards and the adoption of new low-carbon and green business models that would result in the integration of Asian MSMEs within greener value and supply chains globally (and especially with European counterparts), as well as raising awareness among Asian consumers to make more sustainable choices daily and adapt their consumption models.

Proposed actions should not focus exclusively on the production of raw materials or on primary production but rather touch upon all stages of the value chains, engaging with producers, retailers and/or consumers in a complementary way.

Types of action which may be financed under this call are (indicative list):

- **For Priority 1:** reduce greenhouse gas emissions including methane; reduce water and energy consumption throughout the product's lifecycle and in post-harvesting activities implementing resource mobilisation and efficiency measures; replace carbon-intensive energy sources with renewable energy; address the presence of hazardous chemicals in products and during production phases and reducing them, 3R (reduce, reuse, and or recycle by-products of production); test innovative packaging solutions and promote alternatives to plastics packaging; reduce technical errors at all levels of operation and processing to optimise processing operations and/or to better plan the buying of raw material; promote the use of certification and eco-labelling for products; support MSMEs to integrate EU and international standards for products (such as ISO certifications<sup>31</sup>); promote Take-Back-Schemes, promote re-manufacturing and high-quality recycling; promote circular economy principles through innovation during the whole product's life-cycle; restrict the single-use and countering premature obsolescence of products; improve product durability, reusability and repairability; promote measures to ensure that products are designed for circularity; promote traceability and improving transparency for circular products; boost circularity through regulatory measures and encouraging industrial applications supporting countries in meeting separate waste collection obligations for circularity; integrate circularity in innovative, public and pre-commercial procurements; promote nature-based solutions and the regeneration of natural systems (e.g. in wastewater treatment, by returning nutrients to ecosystems); integrate sustainability into corporate strategies; support the development of codes and regulatory frameworks for responsible business and marketing conduct in the food-supply chain; reformulating food products in line with guidelines for health.
- **For Priority 2:** promote eco-design and eco-labelling practices; strengthen consumer protection against green washing and premature obsolescence; set minimum requirements for sustainability labels and for information tools; introduce nutrition labelling and mandatory provenance indicators; inform consumers about healthy and sustainable food choices; engage in broad debates on sustainable lifestyles; mobilise the potential of digitalisation of product information to inform and educate consumers about the product characteristics and proper storage and to improve food chain traceability; incentivise Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR); educate consumers in reducing their food losses; further test or develop end-of-waste criteria for specific waste streams; boost the creation of national/regional second raw-material markets; promote 'product as a service'; etc.;

Proposals may tackle **one or more** of these actions **within the same priority** (in accordance with section 1.2). Actions may take place **at any of the phases of the product lifecycle** (designing, manufacturing, logistics and distribution, consumption and end-of-life management).

Regardless of the priority chosen, **proposals could include an “access to finance and investments dimension” exploring green finance opportunities to scale-up and replicate their results** (either nationally or regionally). Scale-up and replication actions should go beyond ordinary dissemination and communication activities and projects are expected to **prepare one or more business case(s) to be proposed to private and public investors.**

Applicants are encouraged to associate financial institutions to their applications and potentially link them with the **European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+)**<sup>17</sup>, as well as **other financial schemes**, aiming ideally to the future creation of a pipeline of bankable projects for financial institutions.

It is **compulsory** for the activities of selected projects to **report against clear EU<sup>18</sup>/ international sets of indicators** which should be presented in the Full-Application. Applicants may, for instance, consider the **SDG goals/ targets**<sup>19</sup> (see below table) or **DG INTPA’s set of indicators on Green Economy**<sup>20</sup>. Other substantial international indicators may be identified by each project proposal.

<b>SDG 12</b> <b>Responsible Consumption and Production</b>	<b>ALL TARGETS</b>	<b>ALL INDICATORS</b>
<b>SDG 13</b> <b>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</b>	<b>TARGET 13.2</b> Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning	<b>INDICATOR 13.2.1</b> Number of countries that have communicated the establishment or operationalization of an integrated policy/strategy/plan which increases their ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development in a manner that does not threaten food production (including a national adaptation plan, nationally determined contribution, national communication, biennial update report or other)
	<b>TARGET 13.3</b> Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning	<b>INDICATOR 13.3.2</b> Number of countries that have communicated the strengthening of institutional, systemic and individual capacity-building to implement adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer, and development actions
<b>SDG 7</b> <b>Ensure access to affordable and sustainable energy</b>	<b>TARGET 7.3</b> By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency	<b>INDICATOR 7.3.1</b> Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP

<sup>17</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/european-fund-sustainable-development-plus-efsd\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/european-fund-sustainable-development-plus-efsd_en)

<sup>18</sup> <https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-06/Core%20performance%20indicators%20%28new%29.pdf> such as objective 2; indicators 9, 11 and 13 of the NDICI standard indicators where applicable

<sup>19</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.switchtogreen.eu/new-sector-indicator-guidance-on-green-economy/>

<p><b>SDG 8</b></p> <p><b>Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET 8.4</b></p> <p>Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead</p>	<p><b>INDICATOR 8.4.1</b></p> <p>Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP</p> <p><b>INDICATOR 8.4.2</b></p> <p>Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP</p> <p><b>INDICATOR 8.4.3</b></p> <p>Number of countries and policy instruments to ensure decent work for all, including the ratification of Conventions of the International Labour Organization and respective plans for implementation</p>
<p><b>SDG 9</b></p> <p><b>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET 9.4</b></p> <p>By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities</p>	<p><b>INDICATOR 9.4.1</b></p> <p>CO2 emission per unit of value added</p>
	<p><b>TARGET 9.B</b></p> <p>Support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities</p>	<p><b>INDICATOR 9.B.1</b></p> <p>Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added</p>
<p><b>SDG 11</b></p> <p><b>Sustainable Cities and Communities</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET 11.6</b></p> <p>By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management</p>	<p><b>INDICATOR 11.6.1</b></p> <p>Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated, by cities</p>
<p><b>SDG 5</b></p> <p><b>Gender equality and women's empowerment</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET 5.C</b></p> <p>Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels</p>	<p><b>INDICATOR 5.c.1</b></p> <p>Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment</p>

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;
- inception and preparatory activities exceeding 4 months;



- proposals focusing exclusively on farming, harvesting, primary production or raw materials;
- proposals whose main objective (or where the majority of the activities) is to provide training courses. Training courses should not represent more than 20% of the budget propose.

The use of grant resources for the provision of liquidity or credit enhancements/risk sharing for local green finance schemes/institutions is not allowed, unless approved by the Contracting Authority.

#### Types of activity

**Inception activities** may be financed under this call. However, these should be considered within the whole duration of the project and they should not last more than 4 months and be clearly indicated in the timeline of the action in the Full-Application.

#### Financial support to third parties<sup>21</sup>

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties.

Under this call, financial support to third parties is not considered essential to achieve the objective of the action.

#### 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 emblem<sup>22</sup> in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission.

All measures and activities relating to visibility 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 \(europa.eu\)](#)).

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

The lead applicant may submit more than 1 application per lot under this call for proposals. However, it must be clarified that in terms of eligibility, double funding is not admitted. Therefore, the following rules need to be complied with:

The lead applicant may not be awarded more than 1 grant per lot under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may not be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in another application of the same lot at the same time.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in more than 1 application per lot under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may not be awarded more than 1 grant per lot under this call for proposals.

### ***2.1.5. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included***

- 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);

<sup>21</sup> These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

<sup>22</sup> [eu-emblem-rules\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

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 (SCOs) 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. This form is not applicable to output or result based SCOs.

Simplified costs options 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 (Grant application form – Full application). In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided, reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

Please 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.

Where SCOs are proposed the evaluation committee and the contracting authority decide whether to accept the proposed amounts or rates on the basis of the provisional budget submitted by the applicants, by analysing factual data of grants carried out by the applicants or of similar actions. In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

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.

### 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).

In case the contracting authority has its own audit and verification system, as for instance one specific audit firm (or one out of a pool) that has been previously selected in respect of the applicable procurement rules:

The applicants (and where applicable their affiliated entities) agree that the expenditure verification(s) referred to in Article 15.7 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines) will be carried out by the contracting authority or any external body authorised by the European Commission.

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

### 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 an 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> . 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 (PRAG Annex e3c). 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.

Other co-financing shall be based on estimates provided by the applicant. **Contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing.**

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

#### 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.

### ***2.1.6. 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 provisionally 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, 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 breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

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

### **2.2.1. *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).

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 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 section 2.1.1. of the full application form. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.**

3. 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 form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly (minimum font size 12).

Any error or major discrepancy related to the concept note instructions 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 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.

**Please note that incomplete concept notes may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their concept note is complete using the checklist for concept note (Part A Section 2 of the grant application form).**

### ***2.2.3. Deadline for submission of concept notes***

The deadline for the submission of concept notes is 12 December 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 timezones and winter/summer time changes (example available [here](#))<sup>37</sup>

**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 Contacting 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**

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/funding/looking-for-funding\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/looking-for-funding_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 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](mailto: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.

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 Part B of the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

Please note that the elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application except for the 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.

**An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in section 2.1.1. of the full application form. 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 (Part B, Section 7 of the grant application form) 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. **With the full**

**application the lead applicant also has to submit completed PADOR registration form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each co-applicants (if any) and each affiliated entities<sup>23</sup> (if any).**

Please note that the following documents should be submitted together with PADOR registration form and the full application:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, of each co-applicant (if any) and of each affiliated entity (if any). 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, what should be submitted, instead of the statutes or articles of association, is 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 that 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 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<sup>24</sup>:

1. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants above 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 three available financial years.

In all other cases, the applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last three available financial years. Such self-declaration shall be dated and signed, either by hand or by applying a qualified electronic signature (QES)<sup>25</sup> by an authorised representative of the signatory.

This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by a beneficiary the same contracting authority in any one financial year.

The external audit report is not required from the co-applicant(s) or affiliated entities (if any).

This obligation does not apply to pillar assessed entities.

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

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<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000.

<sup>25</sup> Please note that only the QES within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 (eIDAS Regulation) will be accepted. Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC.



2. For action grants not exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants below EUR 100 000, a copy of the lead applicant's profit and loss account and the balance sheet for up to the last three financial years for which the accounts were closed<sup>26</sup>. A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) (if any) nor from affiliated entity(ies)(if any).

Documents must be supplied in the form of scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union or in the language of the country where the action is implemented, 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 included 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.

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 application forms together with 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 users' manual.

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

**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).

Applications sent by any other means (by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

Where lead applicants send several different applications (if allowed to do so by the guidelines of the call), each one must be sent separately.

**Applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form). Incomplete applications may be rejected.**

#### **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.

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<sup>26</sup> This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received education support or who are in most need or in receipt of direct support, nor to public bodies and to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to Section 2.2.5, point 1.

### **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-SWITCH-ASIA@ec.europa.eu](mailto:INTPA-SWITCH-ASIA@ec.europa.eu)

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

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

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/funding/looking-for-funding\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/looking-for-funding_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 regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

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.

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](mailto: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: OPENING & ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the opening and administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Section 2 of Part A 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 Part A of the grant application form.

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.

**Scores\***

<b>1. Relevance of the action</b>	Sub-score	<b>20</b>
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities 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 country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	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	
1.4 Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)? <i>[and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the guidelines for applicants]</i>	5	
<b>2. Design of the action</b>	Sub-score	<b>30</b>
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?	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)?	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 relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth, combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)?	5	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>50</b>

[\* 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.]

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

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.

The Programme aims at a **balanced coverage** of SWITCH-Asia grant projects in the region. In order to ensure actions take place in as many target countries as possible, proposal selection **at the Concept Note stage** will be done as follows:

- (1) All proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria of section 2.3 (step 1) and then only those that pass the threshold of 30 points will be ranked.
- (2) Selection from the ranked proposals will be **done according to target countries**. This means that the highest-ranking **application per target country** will be invited to submit a Full Application.

**Full Applications to the tune of 200% of the total available budget for this call will be invited.** If, following the country-based selection referred to in point (2), there is a need to select further proposals in order to reach this 200% mark, then selection of these will be conducted purely on the basis of ranking (and irrespective of where the action will be carried out).

In the case of **multi-country projects, the candidates must clearly specify in the Concept Note the principal country in which the action will be implemented.**

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. After the evaluation of concept notes, the contracting authority will send letters to all lead applicants, indicating whether their application was submitted by the deadline, informing them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether the concept note was evaluated and the results of that evaluation. The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications.

## STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

- If the submission deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will automatically be rejected.]
- If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (Section 7 of Part B 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 full applications that pass this check: they will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

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

- 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);
- 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
<b>1. Financial and operational capacity</b>	<b>20</b>
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 in-house technical expertise? (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)	5
1.3 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house management 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
<b>2. Relevance</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation</i>	
<b>3. Design of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
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)?	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
<b>4. Implementation approach</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic?	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?	5
<b>5. Sustainability of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
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? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financially (<i>e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs</i>)</li> <li>- Institutionally (<i>will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?</i>)</li> <li>- At policy level (where applicable) (<i>what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods</i>)</li> <li>- Environmentally (if applicable) (<i>will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?</i>)</li> </ul>	5
<b>6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	/ 5
6.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory?	/ 10
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>100</b>

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.

**(2) 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 Sections 2.2.5 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.

- The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 of Part B of the grant application form) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of applicants and the affiliated entity(ies) will be verified according to the criteria set out in Section 2.1.1.

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 should submit the documents listed in Section 2.2.5

Supporting documents must be provided through PADOR

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<sup>27</sup>:

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. The declaration on honour shall be dated and signed, either by hand or by applying a qualified electronic signature (QES)<sup>28</sup> by an authorised representative of the signatory.
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)<sup>29</sup>.
3. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity<sup>39</sup>. 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.
4. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants above 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 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.
5. This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by a beneficiary to an authorising officer responsible in any one financial year.
6. The external audit report is not required from (if any) the co-applicant(s) or affiliated entities.

This obligation does not apply to public bodies.

7. 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)<sup>41</sup>. A copy of the latest account is neither required from (if any) the co-applicant(s) nor from (if any) affiliated entity(ies).
8. Legal entity sheet (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and (if any) by each co-applicant), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the

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<sup>27</sup> No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000.

<sup>28</sup> Please note that only the QES within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 (eIDAS Regulation) will be accepted. Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC.

<sup>29</sup> Applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities who are (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies do not have to submit the self-evaluation questionnaire.

contracting authority, instead of the legal entity sheet and supporting documents, the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.

9. 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.

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.

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 before the deadline indicated in the request for supporting documents sent to the lead applicant by the contracting authority, the application may be rejected.

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 must 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. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure.

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 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.

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

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](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm)

### **2.5.2. Indicative timetable**

	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>
<b>0. Info-sessions</b>	8 November 2023	9am for Asia, 10pm for Pacific (Brussels time)
<b>1. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority</b>	21 November 2023	17:00 (Brussels time)
<b>2. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority</b>	1 December November 2023	17:00 (Brussels time)
<b>3. Deadline for submission of concept notes</b>	12 December 2023	12:00 (Brussels time)
<b>4. Information to lead applicants on opening, administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)</b>	January 2024	-
<b>5. Invitations to submit full applications</b>	February 2024	-
<b>6. Deadline for submission of Full Applications</b>	May 2024	-
<b>7. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)</b>	July 2024	
<b>8. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)</b>	August 2024	-
<b>9. Contract signature</b>	From September 2024 onwards	-

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\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr) 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 (Word format)  
A.1 – Concept Note  
A.2 – Full application form
- Annex B: Budget (Excel format)
- Annex C: Logical framework (Excel format)
- Annex D: Legal entity form
- Annex E: Financial identification form
- Annex F: PADOR registration form

#### DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION<sup>30</sup>

- 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 I: Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en)
- 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

#### Useful links:

##### **Project Cycle Management Guidelines**

[https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en)

##### **The implementation of grant contracts**

##### **A Users' Guide**

<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=48169235>

##### **Financial Toolkit**

[https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit\\_en](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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<sup>30</sup> These documents should also be published by the contracting authority.