



# **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)**

## Call for proposals

Town Twinning  
(CERV-2025-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT)

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## EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

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

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

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

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

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

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **CERV-2025-CITIZENS-TOWN-TT — Town Twinning**

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic, must submit a separate proposal under each topic.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the CERV Programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2025, amending Commission Implementing Decision C(2022) 8588 final

- procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
- recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

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

## 1. Background

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (hereafter 'the programme') provides funding for citizens' engagement, equality for all, and the implementation of rights and EU values. This programme brings together the former Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme and Europe for Citizens programme<sup>4</sup>.

The programme promotes exchanges between people of different countries, cultures, genders and socio-economic backgrounds, reinforces mutual understanding and tolerance and gives them the opportunity to broaden their perspective and develop a sense of European belonging and identity through "Town- Twinning and Networks of towns" projects.

In particular, Town Twinning projects aim at promoting exchanges between people of different countries to reinforce mutual understanding and tolerance and to give them the opportunity to broaden their perspective and develop a sense of European belonging and identity. While maintaining a bottom-up approach, the Town Twinning call for proposals provides an opportunity to focus on EU priorities covered by other strands of the programme. This means, for example, improving local knowledge on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, including children's rights, the rights deriving from EU citizenship, or building knowledge and sharing best practices on the benefits of diversity and gender equality, and encouraging citizens engagement, including children, in democratic life. Finally, the [European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity award](#)<sup>5</sup> will recognise the role that cities and local authorities play in fostering diversity and inclusion.

This Call for proposals aims to support the following policy initiatives: European democracy action plan, the EU Anti-racism Action Plan (2020-2025), the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation (2020-2030), promoting diversity and inclusion (Diversity Charters), Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU, EU Citizenship Report 2020, the Gender Equality Strategy, the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy (2020-2025), the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021-2030), the EU Strategy on the rights of the child, the EU citizenship package, Recommendation on inclusive and resilient elections, as part of the 'Defence of Democracy package.'

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<sup>4</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1381/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for the period 2014 to 2020 (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 62). Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020 (OJ L 115, 17.4.2014, p.3)

<sup>5</sup> [European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award \(europa.eu\)](#)

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

### Objectives

This call aims to support projects that bring together a wide range of people from twinned towns, from different socio-economic backgrounds, genders and countries. By mobilising members of the public at the local and EU levels to debate specific issues on the European political agenda, this call seeks to promote mutual understanding, inclusion and cultural diversity and develop opportunities for civic engagement at the EU level.

More specifically:

- promote exchanges between citizens of different countries;
- give citizens practical experience of the wealth and diversity of the common heritage of the Union and to make them aware that these constitute the foundation for a common future;
- guarantee peaceful relations between Europeans and to ensure their active participation at the local level;
- reinforce mutual understanding and friendship between European citizens;
- encourage cooperation between municipalities and the exchange of best practices;
- support good local governance and
- reinforce the role of local and regional authorities in the European integration process.

It is expected that Town-Twinning projects will reflect on a new narrative for Europe, be citizen-oriented, equality promoting, violence-free, forward-looking, constructive and more engaging for children and the younger generation in particular. Projects may be based on the outcome of citizens' consultations and may lead to debates about concrete ways to create a more democratic Union, to enable citizens to re-engage with the EU and to develop a stronger sense of ownership of the European project.

### Themes and priorities (scope)

The CERV programme helps to promote intercultural dialogue by bringing people of different nationalities and different languages together and giving them the opportunity to participate in common activities. In this context, Town-Twinning projects will raise awareness of the richness of Europe's cultural and linguistic environment and promote mutual understanding and respect, contributing to the development of a respectful, dynamic and multifaceted European identity and the respect of common values, democracy and fundamental rights.

In view of this overall objective, the projects may address the following topics (the list is not exhaustive):

- The EU is built on solidarity: solidarity between its citizens across generation, solidarity across borders between its Member States, and solidarity through support actions in and beyond the EU. Solidarity is a shared value that creates cohesion and responds to societal challenges. Town-Twinning projects will help to overcome biases in national perceptions by fostering mutual understanding and by creating fora where common solutions can be discussed in a constructive way. Their aim should be to raise awareness of the importance of reinforcing the European integration process based on solidarity and EU values;

- Town-Twinning projects will give citizens the opportunity to express what kind of Europe they want. Debates supported under the Town-Twinning call should be based on the EU's specific achievements and on lessons learnt from history and from European integration. They should also reflect on current trends and enable participants to challenge euroscepticism and to suggest possible actions that the EU could take to foster a sense of belonging to Europe, to increase an understanding of the benefits of the EU and to reinforce the EU's social and political cohesion.
- Projects may cover promotion of broad and inclusive participation in democratic processes and decision-making, including of children in matters that concern them and the promotion of their rights.
- Projects may cover promoting awareness and building knowledge of EU citizenship rights, free movement of people and associated European common values and common democratic standards, making them more tangible for EU citizens. Projects may cover the promotion of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union at the national, regional and local levels when EU law is applied by domestic authorities, including by promoting awareness and sharing best practices especially in matters that concern them and the promotion of their rights
- Projects can also concern prevention activities and awareness raising by towns and local authorities in the field of domestic violence, as well as any form of violence against children, including (cyber-)bullying and harassment
- Projects may also explore methods for improving citizens' democratic participation through cultural activities, including by drawing inspiration from or be related to the New European Bauhaus initiative. Projects aiming at benefiting not only the direct participants but also the citizens of the participating towns are particularly encouraged, as these can help to multiply the practical experience of the richness and diversity of the common heritage of the Union. Projects should propose innovative actions and approaches, focus on a gender sensitive way on the needs and challenges faced by targeted groups in twinned municipalities

### Activities that can be funded (scope)

Activities related to Town-Twinning may include, among others:

- workshops,
- seminars,
- conferences,
- training activities,
- expert meetings,
- webinars,
- awareness-raising activities,
- cultural events, festivals, exhibitions,
- gathering and consultation of (age and sex-disaggregated) data,
- development, exchanges and dissemination of good practices among public authorities and civil society organisations,
- development of communication tools and the use of social media.

The gender equality perspective should be taken into account when designing and implementing the project activities, to ensure that they are accessible to women and men on equal terms, and both women and men are able to participate in the activities.



The design and implementation of the projects are expected to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming within the scope of the activities. For example, applicants should conduct and include in their proposal a [gender analysis](#) of topics addressed by project activities. This can help to contextualise experiences and needs of Europeans of different gender. It can also map the different impact that the project and its activities could potentially have on women and men as well as on girls and boys in all their diversity. To this end, applicants are encouraged to consult the key questions listed on the "[EIGE website](#)" when conducting their gender analysis. This analysis could help avoid any unintended negative effects of the intervention on either gender (do no-harm approach) <sup>11</sup>.

Applicants are expected to design and implement their communication and dissemination activities in a gender-sensitive way. This includes, in particular, usage of gender-sensitive language. The same applies to the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities. Proposals that integrate a gender perspective across all their activities will be considered of higher quality.

If the project is of a very small scale and limited to one type of activity such as for example cultural events, the reflection on the gender perspective may be adjusted to the scope of your project.

Projects involving children should ensure that children's rights, including their rights to be heard and to participate<sup>6</sup> is respected. These projects activities shall ensure that actions are adequate to the age and gender specific needs of children. As a good practice, organisations that already work with children could consult them on the project proposal and include reflections/references to this process in the applications. Voices of children can also be brought in, based on direct participation and consultations, available reports and documents recording children's opinions and needs.

### Expected impact

- An increase and encouragement of mutual understanding and friendship between citizens at local level
- Support for citizens from local communities to experience and recognise the added value that the EU provides through a grassroots approach
- An increased sense of belonging to the EU
- An increased engagement of citizens, including children, in democratic life
- Encouragement of a long-lasting bond between municipalities and between citizens
- Increased cross-border cooperation around similar practical issues of democratic participation between municipalities and between citizens, going beyond cultural exchanges
- Increased awareness of the role of national, regional and local authorities in applying fundamental rights, including children's rights.
- Increased awareness of effective domestic violence and violence against children<sup>7</sup> prevention and support policies at local level
- An active inclusion of groups with disadvantages and communities which are marginalised
- Increased citizens' participation, including children, in inclusive, meaningful and age-appropriate activities and increased citizens' contact with Europe's rich cultural heritage

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<sup>6</sup> Article 24 - The rights of the child | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, The United Nations committee on the rights of the child - General Comment 2009

<sup>7</sup> In light of the Commission [Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child](#), see: [Protecting children from violence](#).

### 3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 5 000 000**.

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

### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	9 April 2025
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<b><u>17/09/2025 – 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)</u></b>
Evaluation:	September 2025-February 2026
Information on evaluation results:	March 2026
GA signature:	June 2026

### 5. Admissibility and documents

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

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

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- The **KPI Tool** contains additional project data regarding the project's contribution to EU programme key performance indicators (to be filled in directly online, all sections to be completed)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded):
- lump sum calculator (template available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)

- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*). Not applicable for newly established organisations.
- a letter of support signed by the Municipality (applicable to applicants and partners under the category “Non-profit organisation representing local authorities”). The document must be provided at the latest during GAP stage.
- for all participants implementing activities involving children (below the age of 18) child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#) (for private bodies: copy of their policy; for public bodies: child protection policy declaration).

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

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

Proposals are limited to maximum **40 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

- ④ For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

## 6. Eligibility

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

### Eligible participants (eligible countries)

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

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
  - non-EU countries:
    - countries associated to the CERV Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))<sup>8</sup>.

Other eligibility conditions:

- Lead applicant and its associated partner(s) must be a public body or a non-

<sup>8</sup> Please check the list regularly, to get the latest status on countries in the process of association.

profit organisation with legal personality formally established in one of the eligible countries.

- They must be towns/municipalities and/or other levels of local authorities or their twinning committees or other non-profit organisations representing local authorities.
- The project must be transnational and must involve municipalities from at least two eligible countries of which at least one is an EU Member State.
- Activities must take place in any of the eligible countries participating in the project.
- Events must involve a minimum of 50 direct participants, of which a minimum of 25 participants are “invited international participants”<sup>9</sup>.

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

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

### Specific cases

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

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

**Entities without legal personality** — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>10</sup>.

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

**Programme Contact Points** — Are eligible as coordinator or beneficiary in this call, if they have procedures to segregate the project management and the information provision functions and if they are able to demonstrate cost separation (i.e. that their project grants do not cover any costs which are covered by their other grant). This requires the following:

- use of analytical accounting which allows for a cost accounting management with cost allocation keys and cost accounting codes AND application of these keys and codes to identify and separate the costs (i.e. to allocate them to either one of the two grants)
- recording of all real costs incurred for the activities that are covered by the two grants (including the indirect costs)

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<sup>9</sup> “Invited international participants” are participants from associated partners travelling from a country to another country hosting a Town-Twinning event.

<sup>10</sup> See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

- allocation of the costs in a way that leads to a fair, objective and realistic result.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'<sup>11</sup>. ⚠️ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

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

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*<sup>12</sup>). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092<sup>13</sup>. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc.). Currently such measures are in place for Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 16 December 2022).

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

### *Consortium composition*

Only applications by single applicants are allowed (single beneficiaries).

Proposals must involve municipalities from at least 2 eligible countries of which at least one is an EU Member State.

### *Eligible activities*

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above and submitted by towns/municipalities or their twinning committees or networks, other levels of local/regional authorities; federations/associations of local authorities; non-profit organisations representing local authorities.

Town-Twinning events must involve a minimum of 50 direct participants, of which a minimum of 25 participants are "invited international participants". "Invited international participants" are delegations from associated partners travelling from a country to another country hosting a Town-Twinning event.

On-line events are not eligible.

<sup>11</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

<sup>12</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>13</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

*Projects will need to demonstrate a particular added value in the description of the activities (e.g. innovation, best practices).*

*Applications that are repeated from one year to the other submitted by the same applicant should demonstrate in the application the added value of the new action/continuation of the action.*

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

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

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

#### *Geographic location (target countries)*

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

#### *Duration*

Projects should normally range between 6 and 12 months.

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

#### *Project budget (maximum grant amount)*

Project budgets are expected to range between EUR 8.455 and EUR 50.745 per project.

#### *Ethics and EU values*

Projects must comply with:

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

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

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

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

Applicants representing public entities and planning activities involving children below the age of 18 years, must provide a [declaration on honour](#) on the respect of child protection requirements at GAP phase (see also section 5).

## 7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

### *Financial capacity*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

or

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

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

### Operational capacity

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

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

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

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

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project.
- description of the consortium participants.
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years; *template available in Part B*).

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

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

### Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>14</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>15</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

<sup>14</sup> See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

<sup>15</sup> 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment



- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted<sup>16</sup> an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that<sup>17</sup>:

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

## 8. Evaluation and award procedure

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

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

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

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<sup>16</sup> 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

<sup>17</sup> See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 9. Award criteria

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

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

and long-term impact; potential for a positive multiplier effect; sustainability of results after EU funding ends (20 points)

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

Maximum points: 100 points.

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

Overall threshold: 70 points.

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

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

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

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

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

### Starting date and project duration

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

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

Project duration: see section 6

### Milestones and deliverables

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

Dissemination, etc.). For Town Twinning, the project activities must be organised as one single work package (WP).

The coordination and management costs of this WP1 should not be higher than 10% of the total cost of the proposal.

For this work package, an objective and lists of tasks/activities milestones and deliverables must be defined. The deliverables and milestones must be quantifiable and measurable. Their structure should be logical and guided by identifiable outputs with clear indicators.

The milestones (not applicable to Town Twinning Call) and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

This one work package should correspond to one or several events in the application form. Use a single work package for the total duration of the action and a single deliverable per event.

In total you will have one work package and two or more deliverables according to the number of events. The deliverables must be submitted after the end of each event.

1 work package = 1 or more event(s) = one or several activities

The deliverables of the work package must include the Event Description Sheet per event (mandatory document). Event Description Sheets must be published on the webpage of the municipality/coordinator for the selected projects and could also include, agendas or minutes of meetings, evaluation and/or quality control reports, a set of indicators for the assessment of activities and their impact, conception/planning reports, brochures, recommendations, and other strategic documents which contain the conclusions of the activities. For each event a signed and dated attendance list should be available, as well as proof of travel and subsistence of all international participants and kept by the project coordinator for any checks and audits by the EU services as stated in article 25 of the grant agreement.

An event is one or a series of activities, not necessarily performed on the same day, aiming at gathering people involving direct and verifiable participation of the target group(s) to discuss a thematic defined in advance. An event aims at reaching a determined output as defined in the work package of reference. To be eligible for funding, the total number of direct participants involved in the event must comply with the minimum requirements of participants/countries set in the lump sum decision.

Double funding is not allowed. Therefore, direct participants can be counted only once for the whole event under the same work package, even if they participate in several activities/ projects.

### *Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount*

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

Project budget (maximum grant amount): see section 6 above.

The grant will be a lump sum grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount, based on a lump sum or financing not linked to costs. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the variable amounts it has prefixed, and the estimates indicated by the beneficiaries in their project budget.

### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

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

*Budget categories for this call:*

- Lump sum contributions<sup>18</sup>

*Specific cost eligibility rules for this call:*

- the lump sum amount must be calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the lump sum decision and using the detailed budget table/calculator provided
- the lump sum calculation should respect the following conditions: number of invited international participants (number of participants from associated partners travelling from a country to another country hosting a Town-Twinning event).


### Reporting and payment arrangements

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

After grant signature, you will receive no prefinancing.

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

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

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

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

### Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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<sup>18</sup> [Decision](#) of 26 March 2021 authorising the use of lump sums for actions under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).

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

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

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

### Certificates

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

### Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

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

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

### Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

### Other specificities

n/a

### Non-compliance and breach of contract

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

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

## 11. How to submit an application

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

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

### a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

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

### b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners<sup>19</sup>) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Part C containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online.
- **KPI tool** containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online, all sections to be completed
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

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

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

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

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

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<sup>19</sup> See section 13 for more information on consortium roles and the roles of coordinator, affiliated entities and associated partners.

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

### *Use of artificial intelligence (AI) in proposals*

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

Specifically, applicants are required to:

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

## **12. Help**

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

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

Please also consult the Call and Topic pages regularly, since we will use them to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update) , including an invitation to the info session for applicants (if any) after the opening of the Call.

### *Contact*

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: [EACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu).

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



## 13. Important



### IMPORTANT

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

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding).

**Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.

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

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects**— Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding**— It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants**— Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

Organisations may participate in several proposals.

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

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

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

This includes:

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

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

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