



Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)

Call for proposals

Agri-food and retail SMEs – renewable energy communities

(SMP-COSME-2024-REC)

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EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL AND SMEs EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EISMEA)

Innovation ecosystems, SMP/Entrepreneurship and Consumers
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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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O. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU action grants in the field of sustainability of the agri-food industrial ecosystem under the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs strand of the Single Market Programme (SMP COSME).

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation¹](#))
- the basic act (SMP Regulation [2021/690²](#)).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2024-2027 SMP Work Programme³ and will be managed by the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) ('Agency').

The call covers the following topic:

- **SMP-COSME-2024-REC – Agri-food and retail SMEs – renewable energy communities**

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)

¹ Regulation (EU, Euratom) [2024/2509](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) (OJ L, 2024/25/09, 26.9.2024).

² Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 1).

³ Annex 2 to Commission Implementing Decision C(2024)5420 of 31 July 2024 amending Commission Implementing Decision C(2023) 8926 as regards the implementation of certain action under the Single Market Programme (2024-27 SMP WP).

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

You are also encouraged to visit the [EISMEA](#) website to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

The Farm to Fork Strategy

The Farm to Fork Strategy⁴ was launched by the European Commission in May 2020. The Strategy is at the heart of the European Green Deal aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. Food systems can only be resilient to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and counter unprecedented inflation if they are sustainable. We need to redesign our food systems, which today account for nearly one-third of global GHG emissions. In many cases they consume large amounts of natural resources, result in biodiversity loss and negative health impacts (due to both under- and overnutrition) and do not allow fair economic returns and livelihoods for all actors in the food chain. The Farm to Fork Strategy aims to accelerate our transition to a sustainable food system that should:

- have a neutral or positive environmental impact
- help to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts
- reverse the loss of biodiversity
- ensure food security, nutrition and public health, making sure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, sustainable food
- preserve affordability of food while generating fairer economic returns, fostering competitiveness of the EU supply sector and promoting fair trade.

The EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices

The EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices⁵ is one of the first outcomes of the Farm to Fork Strategy and an integral part of its action plan. **It sets out the actions that the actors 'between the farm and the fork', such as food processors, food service operators and retailers, can voluntarily commit to undertake to tangibly improve and communicate their sustainability performance.** These actions can be directly relevant and implementable within their own operations or may encourage collaboration with industry peers and other food system stakeholders

⁴ European Commission (2020). Farm to Fork Strategy. https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en.

⁵ European Commission (2021). The EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing practices. https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy/sustainable-food-processing/code-conduct_en.

(such as farmers and consumers) to make similar changes. This voluntary Code was launched on 5 July 2021.

The Code includes a set of 7 aspirational objectives, each with specific targets and a list of indicative, tangible and measurable actions, which contribute to a food environment that makes healthy and sustainable food choices easier. Commitments may take the form of a declaration of engagement and actions in major areas, together with an agreement to move towards higher levels of ambition within a defined timeframe. The Code also includes a framework for commitments by food and drink companies and associations to ambitious, measurable actions under the objectives of the Code. The signatories of the Code also share best practices and have exchanges with a view to creating future partnerships.

Transition pathway for the agri-food industrial ecosystem

The agri-food ecosystem is one of the fourteen industrial ecosystems identified in the updated EU Industrial Strategy, published in 2021⁶. In this Strategy, the Commission proposed the co-creation of transition pathways with stakeholders, as a collaborative tool for the green and digital transition of industrial ecosystems. The pathways aim to build a shared vision for 2030 and specific actions for enhanced sustainability and resilience of the industrial ecosystems, in collaboration with all relevant public and private stakeholders.

Together with agri-food stakeholders, the European Commission has drafted the transition pathway for the agri-food industrial ecosystem, which was published in March 2024. It includes a set of actions to support the green and digital transition of the agri-food ecosystem, while improving its resilience. The pathway addresses issues such as sustainable competitiveness, investments and funds, research and innovation, skills, infrastructure, public governance and international trade and cooperation. A Transition Pathway Stakeholder Support Platform will be set up to help stakeholders implement the actions of the transition pathway⁷.

Inflation in the agri-food sector

In 2022 the agri-food sector was faced with unprecedented inflation, mainly due to energy and fuel price increases. According to Eurostat, food inflation reached over 18% in November 2022. Food came in secondly, after energy, as the largest contributor to the EU inflation rate. The inflation particularly affected prices of essential food items such as bread, milk, eggs, and cheese, as well as oils and fats. The EU food and drink industry association FoodDrinkEurope estimated, based on Eurostat data, that food price increases in Member States ranged from 49.2% in Hungary to 15.7% in Belgium. Many other Member States witnessed an increase in the range of two additional percentage points⁸.

In 2023, the situation was exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which disrupted energy supplies and led to higher global prices for both energy and food commodities. The invasion caused significant volatility in energy markets, leading to supply shortages and price spikes that impacted the cost of food production and distribution. In 2024, food inflation started to decline as energy prices began to stabilise. Despite this decline, food inflation has remained above pre-pandemic COVID-19 levels, indicating that the effects of previous energy price surges are still having an impact throughout the food supply chain.

⁶ [Updating the 2020 industrial strategy: towards a stronger single market for Europe's recovery](#)

⁷ [Transition Pathway for the agri-food industrial ecosystem](#)

⁸ FoodDrinkEurope (2022). Data and Trends of the European Food Industry 2022. <https://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/resource/data-trends-of-the-european-food-and-drink-industry-2022/>

In addition to agricultural commodities inflation, food and drink producers, as well as retailers, still face high prices in energy (processing, storing), transport, and packaging (pulp and paper, plastic packing goods, light metal packaging). This has resulted in increased pressure on all actors in the food supply chain.

In this context, to counter inflation and boost the competitiveness of the **EU's** food and drink industrial and retail ecosystems, it is crucial to help these sectors implement changes in the way they produce, distribute and operate with their partners. They should be supported to become more sustainable both individually and collectively. Therefore, it is key for agri-food and retail SMEs to become less dependent on energy purchases and join efforts to minimise the impact of energy in their operations.

Renewable energy communities in the Renewable Energy Directive

Renewable energy communities (REC) were introduced in EU legislation for the first time in 2019 when the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package⁹ was adopted. Renewable energy communities are defined in Article 2 of the Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2018/2001:

'renewable energy community' means a legal entity:

- (a) which, in accordance with the applicable national law, is based on open and voluntary participation, is autonomous, and is effectively controlled by shareholders or members that are located in the proximity of the renewable energy projects that are owned and developed by that legal entity;
- (b) the shareholders or members of which are natural persons, SMEs or local authorities, including municipalities;
- (c) the primary purpose of which is to provide environmental, economic or social community benefits for its shareholders or members or for the local areas where it operates, rather than financial profits;

The Directive and in particular its Article 22 contain further provisions on renewable energy communities. According to paragraph 1, Member States shall ensure that final customers are entitled to participate in a renewable energy community. They must maintain their rights and obligations as final customers and not be subject to unjustified or discriminatory conditions or procedures that would prevent their participation. For private undertakings, participation is allowed as long as it does not constitute their primary commercial or professional activity. Paragraph 2 includes provisions on the activities that renewable energy communities can engage in, including producing, consuming, storing and selling renewable energy. This also includes the ability to share renewable energy generated by the community's own production units among its members.

Citizen energy advisory hub (CEAH)

In May 2024, the European Commission's Directorate General for Energy (DG ENER) launched a call for tenders to support the establishment or facilitation of citizen-led energy projects, by providing technical, organisational, administrative and outreach assistance. The objectives of the call were to:

- Set up a European advisory and information hub for citizens, incorporating the information produced by the Energy Communities Repository and Rural Energy Community Advisory Hub;

⁹ [Clean energy for all Europeans package](#)

- Provide technical assistance and guidance to set up citizens' energy projects, and identify and disseminate best practices;
- Collect data on energy-sharing schemes and other citizen-led energy models, including energy communities.

As stated in the call, the technical assistance to develop energy-related activities and projects will benefit:

- Groups of individuals
- Small-business owners (e.g. farmers)
- Local authorities, including municipalities
- Social economy actors (e.g. cooperatives)
- Energy communities

It should be noted that there are potential benefits to be gained from the links between this call for proposals and the CEAH, which is expected to be operational by the time the projects of this call for proposals kick off.

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

SMP-COSME-2024-REC – Agri-food and retail SMEs – renewable energy communities

Objectives

This call for proposals aims to support the creation of local/regional renewable energy communities (RECs) across the EU integrating local Agri-food and Retail SMEs. The creation of these RECs will contribute to reducing and stabilising the energy costs of their SME members. Support will be given by providing advisory and consulting services that facilitate the creation of RECs but may not be available to SMEs in the agri-food and retail sectors. This could be due to insufficient regional consulting / advisory capacity, or because of inaccessible prices for small companies.

To achieve these objectives, consortia selected through this call for proposals shall themselves organise one or more calls for expressions of interest for third party support. These calls shall offer legal and technical advisory and consulting services in order to support projects aimed at establishing RECs with agri-food and retail SMEs. These services shall be provided directly by the members of the consortium and/or through a voucher system (described in more detail in Activity 2) for more specific local services.

Themes and priorities (scope)

This call for proposals covers the following themes:

- Increasing the use of renewable energy sources
- Reducing the exposure of agri-food and retail SMEs to high energy costs
- Reducing emissions in the agri-food and retail sectors
- Supporting the establishment of renewable energy communities including agrifood and retail SMEs

Projects funded under this call will be expected to:

- Launch calls for expressions of interest for third party support
- Contact relevant agri-food and/or retail SMEs in order to raise awareness of the opportunities under this action
- Provide expertise and advisory services on renewable energy to local agrifood and retail SMEs interested in applying for third party support
- Provide advice on how to set up a renewable energy community in terms of legal, technical and practical requirements, including financial and business aspects and engage with municipalities / local authorities / regional authorities in order to establish cooperation to provide the local support required by REC projects.
- Monitor and demonstrate the overall impact of the individual projects

Activities that can be funded (scope)

The proposal must address all the activities listed below.

Activity 1: Supporting the establishment of RECs through calls for expressions of interest for third party support

Projects funded under the present call for proposals shall organise one or more calls targeting SMEs in the retail and agri-food sectors who are interested in establishing local renewable energy communities (the so-called 'REC projects'). The project proposal must outline the consortium's communication strategy for the REC call(s) in order to reach a maximum number of SMEs (see Activity 3). The REC call(s) must in any case be publicised among all agri-food and retail business organisations in the geographic areas which the consortium has committed to cover in its project proposal. Groups of SMEs can apply to those REC calls by proposing projects for renewable energy communities and outlining their needs for support. Projects funded under the present call for proposals will assess the applications for REC projects and provide support to the best proposals that have technical support needs (see next Activities).

Projects funded under the present call for proposals shall publish the call(s) for expressions of interest for third party support within the first four months of the project after the start of the project. The REC projects must aim at establishing a renewable energy community, which will have to be a legal entity according to the Renewable Energy Directive. These REC projects, that have to set up a renewable energy community (REC projects), will have to make use of biogas, biomethane, biomass-based heating, green hydrogen, solar PV, wind turbines or other renewable energy technologies. The REC projects should also assess the feasibility of installing an energy storage system, such as batteries, to store the renewable energy produced.

The REC projects applying to the call for expression of interest for third party support must refer to a defined geographical area and must include at least two local agri-food SMEs¹⁰ and/or retail SMEs¹¹, that have committed to joining the renewable energy community, to be eligible. The projects should also involve local partners who can offer support, such as business, networking or technical assistance, and clearly outline the

¹⁰ For the purposes of this call for proposals, an agri-food SME means a small and medium-sized enterprise, according to Commission Recommendation 2003/316 of 6 May 2003, that operates in a field that is related to food industry.

¹¹ For the purposes of this call for proposals, a retail SME means small and medium-sized enterprise, according to Commission Recommendation 2003/316 of 6 May 2003, that has retail as its main operation.

specific support needed for local implementation. In addition to the retail and agrifood SMEs (as defined in the EU definition of SMEs¹²), the members of the REC projects could include:

- Small businesses (as defined in the EU definition of SMEs¹³) in other sectors may also be part of the REC project, even if there is no obligation to extend the REC into other sectors than food and drink or retail.
- Complementary larger companies with a significant energy production or storage capacity in the same area (although they should not be the primary beneficiaries of the technical support, as they typically have better technical capabilities)
- Local authorities, including municipalities
- Associations or cooperatives operating at local level

Each project funded under this call for proposals is expected to support around 10 to 15 REC projects. If the initial call for expressions of interest for third party support does not attract enough REC project proposals, the consortium may launch additional calls.

Activity 2: Providing technical assistance and financial support to the selected beneficiaries of REC projects

The consortium applying to the present call for proposals will provide business and technical assistance to the REC projects selected through its call(s) for REC projects.

The proposal to the present call will explain in detail how the consortium intends to provide each type of business or technical support: either centrally, directly by the members of the consortium, or through third parties, coordinated by members of the consortium. These third parties could include members or branches of consortium members, affiliated organisations, or independent third parties. The providers of the business or technical assistance must have demonstrated the necessary knowledge, expertise and experience to provide the technical assistance in question.

The selected REC projects will receive the consulting/advisory services either directly from the projects selected under the present call for proposals, or through or in combination with a voucher system (via sub-contractors). Recipients of the vouchers could use those to access services both within and outside their region, making consulting capacity that is typically unavailable locally more accessible. At the same time, this would enhance the project's European added value, by transferring knowledge from more advanced Member States or regions to SMEs in areas where such expertise is still limited.

The total combined value of vouchers and/or services provided to a REC project selected under a project implementing this call shall not exceed EUR 60,000 (in total for all members of a REC project).

Applicants must explain clearly how the proposed voucher system will be implemented, how the quality of support providers under the voucher scheme will be ensured and

¹² Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (Text with EEA relevance) (notified under document number C(2003) 1422)

¹³ Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (Text with EEA relevance) (notified under document number C(2003) 1422).

controlled, and how they intend to monitor the impact of the services acquired through the voucher scheme.

Types of technical assistance can be chosen based on the needs and preferences of the REC projects. Technical assistance could include:

- Comprehensive needs analysis: Creating a viable renewable energy community requires a clear understanding of the specific needs involved. Evaluating the competencies and capacities of the REC applicants and identifying their knowledge gaps will be crucial. It will also be important to assess the types of support already available in the region through local support offices – such as the Enterprise Europe Network¹⁴ or existing regional public advisory bodies – that offer free services to SMEs, potentially making vouchers unnecessary. While the consortium could conduct the needs analysis centrally, it could also be carried out by local bodies or organisations like EEN members or members of umbrella organisations within the consortium.
- Optimisation of each REC project: Optimising each REC project could involve providing support in finding a balance between different production, storage, or network options. It could also include identifying the best sites and technologies for renewable energy production and storage and recommending potential complementary opportunities.
- Technical analysis of the best specific technological options for equipment: A technical analysis could be conducted to determine the best specific technological options for equipment to be deployed by the REC project. This could include providing recommendations on the most cost-efficient solutions and supporting the identification and selection of equipment providers.
- Development and negotiation of optimal grid access conditions: Support could be offered for planning and negotiating optimal grid access conditions to facilitate energy transportation between the members of the REC project. This could also include assisting with negotiations for selling excess energy production and purchasing additional energy from energy operators.
- Legal and regulatory support: This would only include legal and regulatory support not included in Activity 2. Therefore, this would not cover legal and regulatory support related to the establishment of the legal entity and any administrative work related to it, but support related to regional/national legal frameworks for renewable energy.
- Assistance for finalisation of business plans: This could include the evaluation of the financial investment needs for each SME and for the REC project as a whole.
- Support regarding funding opportunities: Support could be provided to leverage regional, national or EU funding opportunities for the creation of a REC. This funding could be used for small technology infrastructures or services needed for the technical operations of the REC project.
- Identification of financing possibilities: The identification of various financing options, including securing loans from financial institutions or attracting potential third-party investors, could be another possible action. This assistance would help in obtaining the necessary capital for larger-scale projects or investments that are not covered by traditional funding programs, thereby facilitating the creation and expansion of a REC project.

14 Enterprise Europe Network at <https://een.ec.europa.eu>.

- Selected consortia will have to help SMEs establish renewable energy communities by providing consulting and advisory services that are not available or not accessible to SMEs in the region.
- The projects should not only increase the capacity of SMEs to create RECs, but also help them leverage regional funding opportunities, such as those deriving from the European Regional Development Fund or the Recovery and Resilience Facility, to create more impact.

Activity 3: Communicating and disseminating results and best practices

The project proposal under the present call for proposals must outline the consortium's communication strategy that will be used for the call(s) for REC projects described in Activity 1 with the aim of reaching as many SMEs as possible. The call(s) for REC projects must in any case be publicised to all agri-food and retail business organisations within the geographical areas that the consortium has committed to cover in its project proposal. The consortium must perform extensive communication activities aimed at agri-food and retail SMEs in this geographical area when the call for REC projects is announced. This might include online publications, local or regional webinars or workshops, or other activities at events during which the calls for REC projects are explained to possible interested organisations. To achieve this, the consortium must have an already established network through one or more of its members.

In addition, the consortium must enable collaboration with the Citizen Energy Advisory Hub (CEAH) (see page 8 for more details) to allow for exchanges regarding the best practices and impacts achieved by their respective projects. Other networks such as the Enterprise Europe Network¹⁵ or the European Clusters Collaboration Platform¹⁶ shall also be involved.

Activity 4: Managing the project

All projects applying under the present call for proposals are expected to set up adequate project management procedures. In addition, the role of the consortium coordinator is further explained in section 13 of this call for proposals and in the relevant provisions of the grant agreement.

Each partner organisation in the consortium must ensure efficient management of their project team and the implementation of their part of the project.

The consortium coordinator is responsible to coordinate and provide the required interim and final reports on behalf of the consortium within the deadlines specified in the grant agreement.

The reports shall include a summary of the activities conducted, the development of the projects promoted and – for the final report - the impact that each has had in its local or regional area. The recipients of services/vouchers must be consulted in a structured way to allow them to contribute to the collection of information.

Applicants shall describe how the activities will be implemented and how deliverables will be reached.

Projects funded under this call for proposals shall inform the granting authority of the list of projects approved under the call(s) for REC projects (support to third parties).

¹⁵ Enterprise Europe Network at <https://een.ec.europa.eu>

¹⁶ European Cluster Collaboration Platform at www.clustercollaboration.eu

Project coordinators may be invited to join regular steering meetings with the granting authority and the European Commission in order to provide updates on the progress of their activities.

Compulsory Deliverables

Activities	Mandatory Deliverables (Applicants must include these deliverables in their project application but may add additional ones where needed)
1. Supporting the establishment of RECs through calls for proposals	1.1 Set up one or more calls for expressions of interest for third party support. The first call shall be published within the first four months after the signature of the Grant Agreement. 1.2 A detailed list of the projects and recipients of support services selected under the call(s) for third-party support, including the individual REC project budgets. This will be provided after the evaluation of each call for expressions of interest for third party support.
2. Providing technical assistance and financial support to the selected REC project beneficiaries	2.1 A detailed list of the expertise provided and the beneficiaries. 2.2 A detailed account of the vouchers provided, the services or resources obtained, the recipients, and the impact generated. This should include clear numerical indicators.
3. Communicating and disseminating results and best practices	3.1 A detailed list of the communication and dissemination activities that have been carried out, e.g. linked to the call for proposals, project results, the Citizen Energy Advisory Hub, the European Energy Network or the European Clusters Collaboration Platform.

Expected impact

The impact of the mandatory activities listed above will be assessed during and after project implementation against the following mandatory Key Performance Indicators:

- Number of successful projects that managed to create a REC
- Number of agri-food and retail SMEs engaged in the REC projects
- The proportion of the total energy needs of SMEs involved in the selected REC projects which will be covered by the renewable energy obtained through the projects
- The total value of vouchers and directly delivered support services awarded to the REC projects
- The number of communication and dissemination activities carried out as well as the size of the target audience, e.g. to attract possible beneficiaries and explain the impact of the **projects'** activities

Applicants are expected to provide targets for these indicators in their proposal.

Other indicators are not mandatory but if applicants intend to propose further indicators, these must be SMART (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely).

Indicators and targets must be coherent with the proposed activities included in the proposal.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is EUR 2 900 000. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

We expect to fund around 3 projects under this call for proposals.

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


4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	28 November 2024
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>20 February 2025</u>
Evaluation:	February-May 2025
Information on evaluation results:	June 2025
GA signature:	September 2025
Start of projects	September 2025

5. Admissibility and documents

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

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

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

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

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)

- mandatory annexes and supporting documents (*to be uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table/calculator (*template available in the Submission System; Tpl_Detailed Budget Table (SMP COSME GFS 90)*)
 - CVs of core project team of the coordinator and other project partners

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

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 50 pages (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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



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

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) 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:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Single Market 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](#))

Typically eligible applicants can be:

Enterprise Europe Network host organisations, umbrella organisations specialising in renewable energy communities, specialised consultancy/advisory organisations, organisations representing local authorities and other organisations with competencies relevant for this call for proposals.

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 and definitions

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).

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 persons¹⁷.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as **'sole beneficiaries'** or **'beneficiaries without legal personality'**¹⁸.  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 to 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)¹⁹ and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)²⁰). 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 2020/2092²¹. 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](#).

¹⁷ See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁸ For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁹ 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](#).

²⁰ Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJ C 205 of 19.07.2013, p. 9-11).

²¹ 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).

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium composed of applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- at least three partners from at least three different eligible countries
- the coordinator of the consortium must be a provider of services relevant to the purpose of this call for proposals, a business support organisation, an association/umbrella organisation in the area of renewable energies/renewable energy communities or a national, regional or local institution/authority.

EEN host organisations are typically best placed to act as coordinators for projects under this call for proposals, but the consortium can propose a different organisation, if duly justified.

The consortium coordinator may NOT participate and must NOT submit more than one proposal under this call for proposals. Multiple proposals from the same consortium coordinator will be rejected.

Applicants – *other than consortium coordinators* - may participate in more than one proposal under this call for proposals. But if the same applicant is participating in more than one proposal selected for a grant, the applicant will be asked to withdraw from all except one or the applicant will be rejected from all proposals.

Eligible activities

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

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above, in order to help SMEs in the agrifood and retail sectors establish renewable energy communities by providing consulting and advisory services that are not available or not accessible to SMEs in the region.

Applications must clearly specify how any potential voucher scheme will be managed and it must also clearly describe the results to be obtained.

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

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

Direct 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*).

Proposals must address a clearly defined and coherent geographical area in the EU and/or in eligible countries (*see above*).

Duration

Projects are normally expected to last for 24 months (extensions are possible, only if duly justified and through an amendment of the Grant agreement).

Project budget

Project budgets (requested grant amount) are expected to be up to EUR 1.000.000 per project. This does however not preclude the submission/selection of proposals requesting other amounts. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

Proposals shall present a detailed budget table. The share of the budget for management and coordination activities should ideally not exceed 25% of the overall budget, although flexibility may be granted based on the quality of the proposal submitted.

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 beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the individual 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).

In particular, any consortium applying to this call for proposals must demonstrate the ability to effectively manage a network of recipients of third-party support, including SMEs in the agri-food and retail sectors, and to operate at EU, regional and local levels.

At the same time, partners within the consortium must possess the technical expertise required to support the establishment of RECs and be able to provide advice on potential funding options to support the necessary investments in renewable energy infrastructure and have access, eg through the members and/or network of its partners, to regional capacities in consulting on renewable energy communities in terms of technical and legal implications of setting up an REC, as well as the business and financing aspects.

Project coordinators must have the technical and financial capacity to effectively manage a transnational project.

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 action 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 in Part B (description of the action) of the Application Form via the following information:

- profiles (qualifications and experience) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- list of relevant previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

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

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 participate²²:

- 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)

²² See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

- guilty of grave professional misconduct²³ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [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 resisted²⁴ 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 refused if it turns out that²⁵:

- 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.

²³ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

²⁴ **'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.

²⁵ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a priority order will be determined according to the following approach:

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

- 1) Projects focusing on a theme that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked projects will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) The *ex aequo* proposals within the same theme 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 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Quality'.
- 3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different themes in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

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 are 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:

- **Relevance:** clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning; extent to which they match the themes and priorities and objectives of the call; 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 to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation (30 points).

- **Quality:**
 - **Project design and implementation:** technical quality; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, management, procedures, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation); feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money) (30 points).
 - **Project team and cooperation arrangements:** quality of the consortium and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium (30 points).
- **Impact:** credibility, ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; sustainability of results after EU funding ends; ambitious, objectively verifiable and achievable key performance indicators to measure project outcomes and expected impact (10 points).

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 16/30, 16/30, 16/30 and 6/10 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding – within the limits of the available call 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 the 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. A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: *see section 6 above*.

Milestones and deliverables

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

The list of mandatory deliverables is mentioned in section 2.

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 budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rates fixed in the Grant Agreement (75%).

Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc*).

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:

- A. Personnel costs
 - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
 - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
 - C.1 Travel and subsistence
 - C.2 Equipment
 - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories: not applicable

- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost²⁶: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost²⁷: Yes²⁸
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
 - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
 - kick off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
 - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' **websites or social media accounts** are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible
 - other ineligible costs: No.

Reporting and payment arrangements

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

After grant signature, you will normally receive a prefinancing to start working on the project (float of normally 50% of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more interim payment (with detailed cost reporting).

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

²⁶ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

²⁷ Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

²⁸ See [EU Grants AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#), art 6 on eligible costs: travel and subsistence costs must be declared using the unit cost according to Annex 2a of the grant agreement. If a particular instance of travel, accommodation or subsistence in the action is not covered by one of the unit costs mentioned in Decision C(2021)35 the actual costs may be used.

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 and the costs declared.

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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):*

- list of background: No
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: No

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

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5):*

- specific rules for PPI Grants for Procurement: No
- specific rules for blending operations: No

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 3 parts, as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

12. Help

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

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

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

Contact

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent at the latest 5 working days before the call submission deadline to the following email address: EISMEA-SMP-COSME-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu.

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

13. Important



IMPORTANT

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

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

- Coordinator — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- Affiliated entities — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any). 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; 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** —
Please note: Consortium coordinator may NOT participate and can NOT submit more than one proposal under this call for proposals. Multiple proposals from the same consortium coordinator will be rejected.

Applicants – *other than consortium coordinators* - may participate in more than one proposal under this call for proposals. But if the same applicant is participating in more than one proposal selected for a grant, the applicant will be asked to withdraw from all proposals except one or the applicant will be rejected from all proposals.
- **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 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](#).