



Contracting Authority: European Commission

CIVIL SOCIETY FACILITY AND MEDIA PROGRAMME 2014-2015

Support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations

Guidelines
for grant applicants

Budget line: BGUE-B2015-22.020401

Reference: EuropeAid/150147/DH/ACT/PMO

Deadline for submission¹ of Concept Note:
06/07/2015 at 16:00 (Brussels date and time)

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

Notice

This is a restricted Call for Proposals. In the first instance, only Concept Notes must be submitted for evaluation. Thereafter, applicants who have been pre-selected will be invited to submit a Full Application Form. After the evaluation of the Full Applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the Contracting Authority and the signed 'Declaration by the Applicant' sent together with the application.

If possible, **applicants are encouraged to inform the Contracting Authority whether they intend to submit an application for this Call for Proposals** by sending an email to NEAR-CSF-applications@ec.europa.eu by 15/06/2015. This is not obligatory and does not affect the evaluation of the application. However, it will enable the Contracting Authority to mobilise the necessary resources for the evaluation of the applications.

Online submission via PROSPECT

To apply to this call organisations must use the new electronic system (PROSPECT) developed by EuropeAid to facilitate the submission of applications (see Section 2.2.2 of the Guidelines). The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the Call for Proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations through a new panel of functionalities such as the on-line submission and the possibility to follow up online the status of their application.

All organisations can find the PROSPECT users' manual on the publication website. You may also contact our technical support team: EuropeAid-IT-support@ec.europa.eu

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1. CIVIL SOCIETY FACILITY AND MEDIA PROGRAMME: SUPPORT TO REGIONAL THEMATIC NETWORKS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

1.1. BACKGROUND

Civil society activities encourage citizens to organise themselves and to collaborate in their common interest in a constructive and structured dialogue with public institutions, contributing to a more open, participatory and consequently a more dynamic democratic society.

Through their lobbying, advocacy and oversight activities at national, regional and local level, civil society can make a substantial contribution to addressing many of the main challenges IPAlI beneficiaries are faced to, especially in fields like the democratic governance, the rule of law and fundamental rights, including freedom of expression & association and minority rights. In these and other priority areas identified in this call for proposals (i.e. migration and asylum, reconciliation and social inclusion, etc.), civil society actors and thematic networks can demand for and stimulate enhanced transparency, accountability and effectiveness from public institutions, and facilitate a greater focus on the needs of citizens in policy-making.

Support to civil society and media is considered in the *Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-20*² one of the priorities to improve democracy and rule of law through horizontal support:

An enabling legal and financial environment should be promoted while also ensuring that the necessary structures and mechanisms are in place for civil society to cooperate effectively with public authorities, including social dialogue. At the same time, to fulfil their role and become credible, civil society organisations (CSOs) need to improve their autonomy, representativeness and accountability. To participate effectively in the political process, they have to strengthen their capacity for analysis, monitoring and advocacy while also becoming better at networking, partnership and coalition building. [...]The enlargement countries must guarantee an open and pluralistic media landscape which allows for a culture of critical and independent journalism. [...]Capacity building of Civil Society should be reinforced, with a particular focus on further empowerment of Civil Society Organisations, as well as on enhancing their role in the Enlargement Strategy. There is a need for over-arching regional scale.

Support to civil society is also consistently considered a priority and included in the conclusion and recommendations of the Enlargement Strategy 2014-15³, where the creation of an enabling environment for civil society is considered as a key factor to enhance political accountability and promote a deeper and wider understanding of accession-related reforms in the Enlargement countries.

The Civil Society Facility (CSF), in place since 2008⁴, focuses on Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)⁵ and has proven to be a powerful means to strengthen participatory democracies and freedom of media in the Western Balkans and Turkey both at regional and national level.

² C(2014) 4293 final: Commission Implementing Decision of 30.6.2014 adopting a Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper for the period 2014-2020

³ Communication COM(2014) 700 final "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-15" available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-strategy-paper_en.pdf

⁴ COM (2008) 127 – "Western Balkans: Enhancing the European Perspective".

⁵ As defined in the REGULATION (EU) No 233/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020 "The EU considers CSOs as non-State, non-profit making actors operating on an independent and accountable basis. They include: non-governmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, organisations representing national and/or ethnic minorities, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations in partner countries, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, women's and youth organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations, the media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations [...]"

The Mid-term Review of the "Partnership Programmes for Civil Society Organisations", financed under the CSF 2012-2013, has revealed that more needs to be done to reinforce the sharing of skills and knowledge, the networking and communication among CSOs in the Western Balkan region and in Turkey, in order to maximise CSOs potential and allow the state civil society dialogue to become an effective and engaging two-way communication.

This Call for Proposals (CfP) is part of the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2014-2015 (CSF Programme 2014-2015), adopted by the European Commission in December 2014, with the overall objective to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process in the Western Balkans and Turkey by empowering civil society to actively take part in decision making and by stimulating an enabling legal and financial environment for civil society and pluralistic media.

This CfP aims at awarding long-term grants to create and/or support regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations active in a number of sectors identified as relevant for the region. The final aim is to strengthen their capacities to advocate and effectively dialogue with Governments in order to influence policy and decision making processes, and to produce lasting change in the society.

By financing this programme, the European Commission is confirming towards the authorities and the citizens of the Western Balkans and Turkey that CSOs are essential sources of information and expertise; that they are essential communication channels to obtain feedback on policies as well to identify the main concerns and needs upon which new policies and programmes should be based. As such CSOs are essential for governments to exercise their functions.

The priorities of this Call for Proposals are based on the *Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-20⁶* (hereinafter referred to as EU Guidelines) prepared in coordination with all Delegations and endorsed by DG Enlargement end-2013. The EU guidelines translate the political objectives of the European Commission as indicated in the Indicative Strategy Papers (ISPs) and in the Enlargement package into a concrete "results' framework" containing the outcomes to be achieved in the next financing period as well as the indicators to monitor them.

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The **global objective** of this Call for Proposals is to stimulate an enabling legal and financial environment for civil society and pluralistic media, as well as to empower civil society and media organisations to be effective and accountable independent actors, and to improve their capacity to dialogue with Governments influencing policy and decision making processes and holding them accountable for their performance towards citizens and society at large.

The **specific objective** of this Call for Proposals is:

To foster **regular networking** of CSOs at regional and EU level, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, skills and connections, and increasing and widening their impact in campaigning and advocacy. This Call for Proposals aims at strengthening **CSOs capacities** related to **advocacy, long-term strategic organisational planning** and funding diversification. This will ensure sustainability increasing the **recognition by public institutions** of the role of CSOs, thus fostering the **level of involvement and inclusion** of CSOs in decision making and reform processes.

The specific grants to be awarded through this call for proposals will contribute to the achievement of the above specific objective aiming at the specific results 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2 as identified in the *Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020* (hereinafter referred to as *EU Guidelines*), through engaging with one or more of the priorities and thematic areas listed below:

⁶ the Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries 2014-2020 available at the following link: http://www.tacso.org/doc/doc_guidelines_cs_support.pdf

The following **Priorities** summarise the above mentioned results of the EU guidelines:

- Strengthening CSOs watchdog role, advocacy capacities and credibility towards public authorities in order to facilitate the creation of an enabling legal and policy environment for volunteering and employment in CSOs, for grass-roots organisations⁷, for stimulating donations, and promoting a higher level of transparency, accountability, fairness and non-discrimination in public institutions' procedures and practices to support civil society.
- Strengthening CSOs' capacities of advocacy, networking and co-operation with public authorities (to be possibly involved as associates in the proposals) to increase the level of recognition by public institutions of the importance of including CSOs in decision-making processes to improve good governance.
- Improvement of CSOs' capacities and internal governance structures in order to increase transparency on activities and financial management, accountability to members/constituents/beneficiaries, funding base diversification, including membership fees, corporate/individual giving and social entrepreneurship.
- Strengthening CSOs capacities to elaborate a strategic long-term organisational plan (including stable fund-raising activities), to use research and other forms of evidence to underpin their activities, to effectively and broadly communicate results to the public, and to monitor and evaluate the results and impact of their activities.

The Applicants and the Co-applicants will devote the first three to six months of implementation (inception phase) to refine their strategy and plans for implementation in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the European Commission. At the end of the inception phase an inception report has to be produced and submitted to be reviewed and approved by the European Commission.

Several criteria will be used to evaluate the representativeness and relevance of the applicants (applicants + co-applicants): presence in a significant number of IPA Beneficiaries (at least 5); number and diversity of different co-applicants (i.e. not exclusively branches of the same organisation), affiliated entities and associates (public sector participation is encouraged); level of expertise and track record in a specific sector; systems and procedures to ensure transparency and accountability; operational mechanisms to ensure consultation with stakeholders, including beneficiary citizens.

Allocating funds for financial support to third parties (minimum 20% of the action total eligible costs) with the purpose of reaching/building capacities for grass-root and other types of non-governmental local organisations will constitute a significant advantage.

1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this Call for Proposals is EUR 16.100.000 to be financed under the Commission Implementing Decision C(2014) 9571 (Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the years 2014-2015) by budget line 22.020401: "Multi-country programmes, regional integration and territorial cooperation" The Contracting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

This Call for Proposals is launched with suspension clause: EU assistance under the action can only be granted to an IPA II Beneficiary after the framework agreement between the IPA II Beneficiary and the European Commission on the arrangements for implementation of Union financial Assistance to IPA II Beneficiary under IPA II has entered into force. Therefore no activities can take place for the benefit of an IPA II beneficiary until the related Framework agreement has entered into force.

⁷ A grass-roots organisation is a self-organised group of individuals pursuing common interests through a volunteer-based, non-profit organisation. Grassroots organisations usually have a low degree of formality but a broader purpose than issue-based self-help groups, community-based organisations or neighbourhood-associations.

The following Lots are envisaged:

Lot 1: Integration of Roma⁸ men, women and children

Lot 2: Non-discrimination (protection of the rights of national, religious, sexual or other minorities)

Lot 3: Media freedom (with a special focus on media / journalist professional organisations)

Lot 4: Social inclusion (with a special focus on inclusive education, youth employment, support to the elderly and the disabled, and improvement of labour conditions)

Lot 5: Irregular migration and asylum

Lot 6: Dialogue and reconciliation (inter-ethnic dialogue; prevention of radicalisation; cultural heritage)

Lot 7: Rule of law and good governance (with a special focus on anti-corruption, transparency and access to information, data protection, use of public funds and fight against organised crime and human trafficking)

Lot 8: EU integration and public sectors reform (with a special focus on CSOs' involvement in consultations and decision-making processes)

Lot 9: Sustainable socio-economic development (natural resources , environmental protection and climate change; rural development; social economy and social innovation, including corporate social responsibility)

The Applicants should clearly identify on the application form the lot under which they are submitting their proposal, even if the suggested activities cover themes present in other lots.

Under lot 1, the contracting authority encourages applications from organisations that have a predominantly Roma board and members (at least 60 % of Board members and at least 50% of regular members are of Roma origin).

Applicants are requested to indicate before the title of the action (in PROSPECT and in the Application Form) the number of the lot under which the proposal is submitted (ex. Title of the action: "Lot x – Xyz xyz xyz xyz xyz")

The contracting authority will select the first ranked application for each lot, provided that the minimum required score is reached. Additional grants will be selected following the general priority ranking (no distinction per lot) and in accordance with the available financial envelope.

Size of grants

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

- minimum amount: EUR 600.000,00
- maximum amount: EUR 1.200.000,00

⁸ As it is most commonly used in EU policy documents and discussions, the term "Roma" here refers to a variety of groups of people who describe themselves as Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, Manouches, Ashkali, Egyptian, Lom, Dom, Sinti and other titles.

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

- Minimum percentage: 50 % of the total eligible costs of the action.
- Maximum percentage: 90 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.5).

The initial amount of the awarded grant will be indicative. In case the final work programme is reduced following the inception phase, and the submission of an Inception Report after 6 months from the action start date, this might in parallel lead to a reduction in the budget. Applicants should be aware that the grant amount initially awarded cannot be increased.

Any grant requested under this Call for Proposals must further be limited to a percentage of the estimated total accepted costs⁹ to be defined at the moment of the award, to ensure the co-financing. In case that the total accepted costs are equal to the total eligible costs, the percentage applicable to the total accepted costs applies to the total eligible costs to ensure the required co-financing.

Wherever in the Call for Proposal a reference to the percentage of eligible costs is made, the further limitation to the percentage applicable to the total accepted costs will apply. As a reminder, before sending your proposal please check that the requested contribution is equal or less than maximum percentage of the estimated total accepted costs allowed.

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the Contracting Authority) must be financed from sources other than the European Union Budget or the European Development Fund¹⁰.

9 Estimated total accepted costs = estimated total eligible costs + in kind contributions, non-eligible taxes, etc.

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

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this Call, in conformity with the Practical Guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the Internet at this address: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?locale=en>).

2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

(1) the actors:

- The **applicant**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form (2.1.1),
- if any, its **co-applicant(s) (where it is not specified otherwise the applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as the "applicants")** (2.1.1),
- and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s). (2.1.2);

(2) the actions:

Actions for which a grant may be awarded (2.1.4);

(3) the costs:

- types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (2.1.5).

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

Applicant

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

In order to be eligible for a grant, applicants **must**:

- be legal persons **and**
- be non-profit-making **and**
- be a civil society organisation (CSOs)¹¹ or representative network of CSOs¹² working on one or more thematic areas of relevance to this Call for Proposals (see Section 2.1.4 of these Guidelines) **and**
- be established¹³ in a Beneficiary under the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (hereafter referred to as "IPA Beneficiary")¹⁴, or in the case of co-applicants in an IPA Beneficiary and/or in a Member State of the European Union **and**
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with their co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary **and**

¹¹ See footnote 4

¹² A network with legal personality must submit an application under the name of the network. If the network is an informal grouping without legal personality, members of the network can apply individually as applicant and/or co-applicants, provided that they have legal personality.

¹³ To be determined on the basis of the organisation's statutes, which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a 'Memorandum of Understanding' has been concluded.

¹⁴ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99

- (2) The potential applicant may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if it is in any of the situations listed in Section 2.3.3 of the Practical Guide ;

In Part A, section 3 of the grant application form ('Declaration by the applicant'), the applicant must declare that the applicant himself, the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies) are not in any of these situations.

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

If awarded the Grant contract, the applicant will become the Beneficiary identified as the Coordinator in annex E3h1 (Special Conditions). The Coordinator is the main interlocutor of the Contracting Authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the Action.

Co-applicant(s)

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

Co-applicant(s) must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the applicant himself.

Co-applicant(s) must sign the Mandate in Part B section 4 of the grant application form.

If awarded the Grant contract, the co-applicant(s) (if any) will become beneficiaries in the Action (together with the Coordinator)

This Call for Proposals has very specific requirements for Applicants and Co-applicants.

Applicants must act with co-applicant organisations as specified hereafter:

- **Applicant (Coordinator):** a CSO or CSOs Network from an IPA Beneficiary as defined in section 2.1.1 above, in conjunction with
- **Co-applicant(s) (Co-beneficiaries):** CSOs or CSOs Network from the IPA Beneficiaries and/or from EU Member States.

Applicants and Co-applicants must be CSOs or CSOs networks from at least five (5) IPA Beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Turkey. EU CSO or EU CSOs networks can be involved only as co-applicants.

When the applicant is a CSOs **network with legal personality**, it must act with co-applicant(s) fulfilling the criteria set out in section 2.1.1. Member organisations of a CSOs network with legal personality which play an active role in the design and implementation of an action can be co-applicants. Also other CSOs non-member of the CSOs network may be involved as co-applicants.

NB: Applicants (applicant + co-applicants) composed principally of branches of the same organisation, albeit located in different countries will not be considered as eligible. At least 50% of the co-applicants should be external to the applicant's existing network.

Organizations with ongoing financial support from Civil Society Facility Multi-country programmes (i.e. Lead CSOs in a Framework Partnership Agreement (Commission Implementing Decisions C(2011) 9081 and C(2012)5705, Call reference: EuropeAid/132438/C/ACT/Multi), and beneficiaries of operating grants (Commission Implementing Decisions C(2012)5705, Call reference: EuropeAid/136034/C/ACT/Multi) are not eligible as Applicants under this CFP.

2.1.2. Affiliated entities

Affiliated entity(ies)

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

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

Only entities having a structural link with the applicants, in particular a legal or capital link.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

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

Entities affiliated to a beneficiary may hence be:

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

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

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

What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to a beneficiary:

- Entities that have entered into a (procurement) contract or subcontract with a beneficiary, act as concessionaires or delegates for public services for a beneficiary,
- Entities that receive financial support from the beneficiary,
- Entities that cooperate on a regular basis with the beneficiary on the basis of a memorandum of understanding or share some assets,
- Entities that have signed a consortium agreement under the grant contract.

How to verify the existence of the required link with the beneficiary?

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

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

If the applicants are awarded a contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become Beneficiary(ies) of the Action and signatory(ies) of the Contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the implementation of the Action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for Implementation Contracts and Financial Support to third parties) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the Beneficiary(ies) under the Grant Contract.

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

2.1.3. Associates and Contractors

The following entities are not applicant(s) nor affiliated entity(ies) and do not have to sign the "mandate" or "affiliated entities' statement":

- Associates

Other organisations may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Part B section 6 — ‘Associates of the Applicant participating in the Action’ — of the Grant Application Form.

CSOs/CSOs Networks from countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Instrument Policy can be associates in the proposed actions. Participation of national and local public authorities and bodies as associates is encouraged.

- Contractors

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

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

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of an action may **not be lower than 36 nor exceed 48 months**. The duration of the actions could **in no case be extended beyond 31/12/2019**.

Sectors or themes

The current Call for Proposals seeks to establish partnerships with CSOs and networks of CSOs working in one or more of the following thematic areas:

Fundamental rights and media freedom

- Integration of Roma¹⁵ men, women and children
- Non-discrimination (with a special focus on LGBTI)
- Media freedom (with a special focus on media / journalist professional organisations)

Social inclusion

- Social inclusion (with a special focus on inclusive education, youth employment, support to the elderly and the disabled, and improvement of labour conditions)

Migration

- Irregular migration and asylum

Dialogue and reconciliation

- Inter-ethnic dialogue
- Prevention of radicalisation
- Cultural heritage

Rule of law and good governance

- Governance and transparency (with a special focus on anti-corruption, transparency and access to information, data protection and use of public funds)
- Rule of law (with a special focus on the fight against organised crime and human trafficking)

EU integration and public sectors reform

- platforms for CSOs – government consultations on matters related to the EU integration process

Sustainable socio-economic development

- Natural resources, environmental protection and climate change (including sustainable and organic farming)
- Rural development
- Social economy and social innovation (including corporate social responsibility)

For actions falling under all thematic areas a special attention will have to be paid to communication, visibility and to the relations with the media by **dedicating funds for media visibility actions** (events, press events and articles).

Applicants (applicant + co-applicants) including CSOs or networks of CSOs working on other themes in addition to one or more of the thematic areas listed above may also be considered eligible. Actions addressing other themes in addition to one or more of the thematic areas listed above may also be considered eligible.

Considering the objective and the priorities for this Call for Proposals, an Applicant (applicant + co-applicants) at regional level is understood as a network/coalition or a confederation of CSOs gathered either (i) by type of actor or (ii) by sector of cooperation.

Location

¹⁵ As it is most commonly used in EU policy documents and discussions, the term "Roma" here refers to a variety of groups of people who describe themselves as Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, Manouches, Ashkali, Egyptian, Lom, Dom, Sinti and other titles.

Actions must take place in at least 5 of the IPA beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Turkey where the applicants (applicant + co-applicants) are based and active. A limited number of activities could take place in EU Member States.

Types of action

Types of action which may be financed under this call comply with the objective and priorities described in point 1.2 of these Guidelines and relate to one or more of the thematic areas listed above in this same Section 2.1.4.

The following types of actions and/or a combination of them may qualify for financing (the list is not exhaustive):

The main characteristic of the actions should be **advocacy** and in particular cover the following types:

- Establishment of working groups and other means of direct cooperation, advocacy and dialogue with the government structures to provide recommendations and credible advice, thus influencing policy making and producing concrete change
- Establishment of formal and/or informal dialogue and consultation platforms, and animation of the public debate on specific topic related to the thematic areas concerned by this Call, to promote the interaction between CSOs and public authorities at local, national and regional level;
- Capacity building actions for civil society organisations on advocacy and lobbying, research and analysis, in particular on the thematic areas concerned by this Call;
- Establishment and/or improvement of monitoring systems related to the creation of a legal and financial conducive environment for the approval and enforcement of the specific laws and regulations mentioned in the Priorities of this Call;
- Establishment of formal and/or informal fora, networking structures and platforms to promote knowledge and skills sharing among CSOs at national and regional level;
- Raising public and governments awareness on the importance of civil society organisations involvement in and contribution to policy-making and decision-making processes;
- Capacity building actions for civil society organisations on internal governance, financial and project management, funding diversification, advocacy and lobbying, research and analysis.

In order to reach grass-root and other types of non-governmental local organisations, we strongly recommend that **a minimum of 20% of the action total eligible costs will be dedicated to provide financial support to third parties**.

Special attention will have to be paid to communication, visibility and to the relations with the media by **dedicating funds to contract media visibility actions** online and offline to a communication expert or specialised press and media agency/service provider.

The following types of action are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with “one-off” conferences, and similar events;
- actions concerned only or mainly with academic research and/or feasibility studies;

- actions concerned only or mainly with infrastructure investments and/or the procurement of equipment;
- actions linked to political parties or of political/partisan nature;
- actions dealing with emergency relief or charitable donations;
- actions that fall within the general activities of competent state institutions or state administration services, including local government;
- actions in relation to: the tobacco industry (CAEN code 16), production of alcoholic distilled beverages (CAEN code 1591), arms and munitions (CAEN code 296).

Types of activity which may be financed under this call (the list is not exhaustive):

- Desk research (research cannot be the main purpose of the action)
- Baseline-studies
- Training actions, study visits, field trips and internships
- Facilitation of contacts, consultations and discussions between different stakeholders
- Communication and information activities aimed at supporting consultation with stakeholders
- Organisation of conferences, roundtables, workshops and seminars (**a very limited number per proposed action**)
- Promotion of the implementation of adopted laws and regulations
- Advocacy for the revision of existing legislation and adoption of new legislation in accordance with EU standards and requirements
- Establishment of dialogue with political parties, groups of parliamentarians or legislative bodies
- Monitoring activities, for example in the context of the accession process, as well as monitoring international commitments
- Publication of monitoring reports
- Drafting policy or legislation recommendations
- Public awareness raising campaigns
- Publication of leaflets, manuals on best practice

Financial support to third parties¹⁶

Applicants may propose financial support to third parties. In order to reach grass-root and other types of non-governmental local organisations, **a minimum of 20% of the action total eligible costs may be dedicated to provide financial support to third parties.**

Applicants may propose financial support to third parties in order to help achieving the objectives of the action.

The maximum amount of financial support per third party is EUR 60 000 or a threshold below EUR 60 000 can be set if appropriate.

Under this Call, financial support to third parties may not be the main purpose of the action.

In compliance with the present guidelines and notably of any conditions or restrictions in this section, applicants should define mandatorily in section 2.1.1 of the grant application form:

¹⁶ These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

- (i) the objectives and results to be obtained with the financial support
- (ii) the different types of activities eligible for financial support, on the basis of a fixed list
- (iii) the types of persons or categories of persons which may receive financial support
- (iv) the criteria for selecting these entities and giving the financial support
- (v) the criteria for determining the exact amount of financial support for each third entity, and
- (vi) the maximum amount which may be given.

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

Specific conditions or restrictions apply to this Call for Proposal:

Legal or natural persons or categories of persons eligible for financial support will have to be based and be active¹⁷ in one of the seven IPA Beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Turkey and be working on one or more of the thematic areas of relevance to this Call for Proposals (see Section 2.1.4 above)

Third parties financially supported by grantees awarded under this Call for Proposals guarantee the visibility of the EU-financing (see the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU external actions laid down and published by the European Commission at (see http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/visibility/index_en.htm).

All the types of activity which may be financed under this call are also eligible for financial support to third parties (see above).

The following types of activity are not eligible for financial support:

- actions linked to political parties or of political/partisan nature;
- actions that fall within the general activities of competent state institutions or state administration services, including local government;
- actions in relation to the tobacco industry (CAEN code 16); production of alcoholic distilled beverages (CAEN code 1591) and arms and munitions (CAEN code 296).

Visibility

The Applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the Action. As far as possible, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must incorporate information and communication activities designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

Applicants must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing (see the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU external actions specified and published by the European Commission at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/communication-and-visibility-manual-eu-external-actions_en).

The above provisions apply also to third parties receiving financial support in the framework of the grants awarded under this Call for proposals.

¹⁷ To be active in a country includes: having offices, being registered, having implemented recently and/or at present activities in a given country.

Applicants (applicant + co-applicants) are requested to pay a special attention to communication, visibility and on the relations with the media by dedicating funds to contract media visibility actions online and offline to a communication expert or to a specialised press and media agency/service provider.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Actions should foresee planning, human resources, budget and other appropriate measures for the monitoring of the proposed action. Applicants should also make planning provision for a mid-term review towards the end of the first two years of implementation (mid-term review planned to start in month 18, covering a period of three months) and for a final evaluation at the end of the grants. The costs related to the mid-term review and to the final evaluation should be budgeted in the proposals: at least 2% of the total eligible cost of the action should be devoted to cover the costs related to the mid-term review and to the final evaluation.

Upon completion of each of the two evaluation exercise (mid-term review and final evaluation) the related report will have to be submitted to the Contracting Authority.

Number of applications and grants per applicants

The applicant may not submit more than 1 application under this Call for Proposals.

The applicant may not be awarded more than 1 grant under this Call for Proposals.

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

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may submit more than 1 application under this Call for Proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be awarded more than 1 grant per lot under this Call for Proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may not be the applicant or an affiliated entity in another application at the same time.

2.1.5. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

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

The reimbursement of eligible costs may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:

- actual costs incurred by the Beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies)
- one or more simplified cost options.

Simplified cost options may take the form of:

- **unit costs:** covering all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by reference to an amount per unit.
- **lump sums:** covering in global terms all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance.
- **flat-rate financing:** covering specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by applying a percentage fixed ex ante.

The amounts or rates have to be based on estimates using objective data such as statistical data or any other objective means or with reference to certified or auditable historical data of the applicants or the affiliated entity(ies). The methods used to determine the amounts or rates of unit costs, lump sums or flat-rates must comply with the criteria established in Annex K, and especially ensure that the costs correspond fairly to the actual costs incurred by the Grant Beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies), are in line with their accounting practices, no profit is made and the costs are not already covered by other sources of funding (no double

funding). Refer to Annex K for directions and a checklist of controls to assess the minimum necessary conditions that provide reasonable assurance for the acceptance of the proposed amounts.

The applicant proposing this form of reimbursement, must clearly indicate in worksheet no.1 of Annex B, each heading/item of eligible costs concerned by this type of financing, i.e. add the reference in capital letters to "UNIT COST" (per month/flight etc), "LUMPSUM" or "FLAT RATE" in the Unit column. (see example in Annex K)

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

- describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of unit costs, lump sums and/or flat-rates, to which costs they refer, etc.
- clearly explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount¹⁸
- identify the beneficiary who will use the simplified cost option (in case of affiliated entity, specify first the beneficiary), in order to verify the maximum amount per each beneficiary (which includes if applicable simplified cost options of its affiliated entity(ies))

At contracting phase, the Contracting Authority decides whether to accept the proposed amounts or rates on the basis of the provisional budget submitted by the applicant, by analysing factual data of grants carried out by the applicant or of similar actions and by performing checks established by Annex K.

The total amount of financing on the basis of simplified cost options that can be authorised by the Contracting Authority for any of the applicants individually (including simplified cost options proposed by their own affiliated entities) cannot exceed EUR 60 000 (the indirect costs are not taken into account).

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

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

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under the Call for Proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the General Conditions to the Standard Grant Contract (see Annex G of the Guidelines).

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

The proposals will have to make provisions for one inception, one mid-term and one final conference involving at minimum one representative and maximum three representatives (1 for the applicant and 1 for each of max 2 different co-applicants) per successful applicant (applicant + co-applicants).

Contingency reserve

18 Examples:- for staff costs: number of hours or days of work * hourly or daily rate pre-set according to the category of personnel concerned;- for travel expenses: distance in km * pre-set cost of transport per km; number of days * daily allowance pre-set according to the country;- for specific costs arising from the organization of an event: number of participants at the event * pre-set total cost per participant etc.

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

Eligible indirect costs

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

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

Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to a Beneficiary(ies) or affiliated entity(ies) free of charge by a third party. As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for a Beneficiary(ies) or affiliated entity(ies), they are not eligible costs.

Contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing.

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the Beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a Union (including through EDF) grant;
- purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred to the final beneficiaries and/or local Beneficiary(ies), at the latest at the end of the action;
- currency exchange losses;
- credit to third parties.

2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

Prior registration in PADOR for this Call for Proposals is obligatory

PADOR is an on-line database in which organisations register and update information concerning their entity. Organisations registered in PADOR get a unique EuropeAID ID (EID) which they must use when they submit an application.

PADOR is accessible via the website: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/pador_en

- **Phase 1, concept note:** Registration in PADOR is obligatory for an applicant applying for grants above EUR 60 000.

Registration is optional though strongly recommended for:

- An applicant applying for grants of EUR 60 000 or less;
- co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies).

- **Phase 2, full proposal:** Registration in PADOR is obligatory for all pre-selected applicants, co-applicant(s) and all their affiliated entity(ies).]

It is strongly recommended to register in PADOR before you start drafting your proposal and not to wait until just before the deadline of submission. Before starting to register your organisation in PADOR, please read the 'Quick guide' on the website. It explains the registration process.

When submitting your proposal you must indicate your EuropeAid ID (EID). However, if it is impossible for the organisation to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, the applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) concerned must complete the 'PADOR off-line form'¹⁹ attached to these Guidelines and send it by the submission deadline, together with the application. The registration in PADOR will then be carried out by the European Commission service in charge of the Call for Proposals. If, at a later stage, the organisation wishes to update its data itself, it will have to send an access request to the PADOR helpdesk.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at EuropeAid-IT-support@ec.europa.eu.

2.2.1. Concept Note content

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the Concept Note instructions in the Grant Application Form annexed to these Guidelines (Annex A).

Applicants must apply in English.

In the Concept Note, applicants must only provide an estimate of the amount of contribution requested from the Contracting Authority and an indicative percentage of that contribution in relation to the total amount of the Action. Only the applicants invited to submit a full application in the second phase will be required to present a detailed budget. The elements outlined in the Concept Note may not be modified by the applicant in the full application form. The EU contribution may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%. Applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these Guidelines in section 1.3. Own contributions by the applicants can be replaced by other donors' contributions at any time.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the Concept Note instructions may lead to the rejection of the Concept Note.

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

Hand-written Concept Notes will not be accepted.

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

2.2.2. Where and how to send Concept Notes

Online submission:

The Concept Note together with the Checklist for the Concept Note (Part A section 2 of the grant application form) and the Declaration by the applicant for the Concept Note (Part A section 3 of the grant application form) **must be submitted online via PROSPECT** <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT users' manual.

¹⁹ Which corresponds to Sections 3 and 4 of Part B of the application form.

Applicants must verify that their Concept Note is complete using the Checklist for Concept Note (Part A section 2 of the grant application form). Incomplete concept notes may be rejected.

Upon submission of a Concept Note online, applicants will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in their PROSPECT profile.

If it is impossible for applicants to submit their Concept Note online via PROSPECT for technical reasons, they must send their proposal in a sealed envelope and attach the Concept Note together with the Checklist and Declaration by the applicant (to be found in **Part A sections 2 and 3** of the grant application form). In particular, the applicant must send, in a sealed envelope as described below, the following items:

a. One original of the Concept Note. The Checklist (Part A section 2 of the grant application form) and the signed Declaration by the applicant (Part A section 3 of the grant application form) must be printed and stapled separately and enclosed in the envelope

b. 3 additional copies in A4 size, each bound.

c. An electronic version (e.g CD-Rom) of the items under point (a) . The electronic file must contain **exactly the same** application as the paper version enclosed.

The outer envelope must bear the **reference number and the title of the call for proposals**, together with the lot number and title the full name and address of the applicant, and the words ‘Not to be opened before the opening session’.

To reduce expense and waste, we strongly recommend that you do not use plastic folders or dividers. Please also use double-sided printing if possible.

Concept Notes must be submitted in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) to the address below. Where applicants send several Concept Notes (if allowed to do so by the Guidelines of the Call), each one must be sent separately:

Postal address

European Commission

DG NEAR

Unit D5, Regional Cooperation and Programmes

For the attention of Ms Maria Esposito

Office: LOI 15 - 03/080

1049 Brussels

Belgium

Address for hand delivery or by private courier service

European Commission

DG NEAR

Unit D5, Regional Cooperation and Programmes

For the attention of Ms Maria Esposito (Office: LOI 15 - 03/80)

Tel: +(32) 2 2979973

Central Mail Department (DAVI)

Avenue du Bourget 1

1140 Evere

Belgium

Concept Notes sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

Applicants must verify that their Concept Note is complete using the Checklist for Concept Note (Part A section 2 of the grant application form). Incomplete concept notes may be rejected.

2.2.3. Deadline for submission of Concept Notes

The deadline for the submission of applications is 06/07/2015 at 16:00 (Brussels date and time). Applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their Concept Notes, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The Contracting Authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

In the exceptional case of submission by post or by hand delivery (see section 2.2.2), the date of submission is evidenced by the date of dispatch, the postmark or the date of the deposit slip. In the case of hand-deliveries, the deadline for receipt is at 06/07/2015 at 16:00 (Brussels date and time) as evidenced by the signed and dated receipt.

Any Concept Note submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

However, for reasons of administrative efficiency, the Contracting Authority may also reject any Concept Note sent in due time but received after the effective date of approval of the Concept Note evaluation (see indicative calendar under section 2.5.2).

2.2.4. Further information about Concept Notes

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of Concept Notes to the address(es) below, indicating clearly the reference of the Call for Proposals:

E-mail address: NEAR-CSF-applications@ec.europa.eu

The Contracting Authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

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

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the Contracting Authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with answers and other important notices in the course of the evaluation procedure, will be published on the EuropeAid website <http://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome>, as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at EuropeAid-IT-support@ec.europa.eu

2.2.5. Full Application forms

An applicant invited to submit a full application form following pre-selection of its Concept Note must do so using Part B of the application form annexed to these Guidelines (Annex A). Applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

The elements outlined in the Concept Note cannot be modified by the applicant in the full application form. The EU contribution may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%, although applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these Guidelines under section 1.3.

Applicants must submit their full applications in the same language as their Concept Notes.

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

Any error related to the points listed in the Checklist (Part B, Section 7 of the Grant Application form) or any major inconsistency in the full application form (e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

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

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that only the full application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be transmitted to the evaluators (and assessors, if used). It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action. **No supplementary annexes should be sent.**

2.2.6. Where and how to send Full Application forms

Online submission:

Full Applications must be submitted online via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prospect> following the instructions given in the users' manual

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

Upon submission of the Full Application online, applicants will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in their PROSPECT profile.

Exceptions:

(a) If the applicant submitted the Concept Note by post / hand delivery (see Section 2.2.3) it must send the Full Application by the same means (by post / hand delivery).

(b) If the applicant submitted the Concept Note online via PROSPECT but it is technically impossible for the organisation to submit the Full Application online:

In the above two cases the applicant must send by post the application, i.e the Full Application, the Budget and the Logical framework. In particular, the applicant must send, in a sealed envelope as described below, the following items:

a. One original signed copy of the Full Application form, the budget and the logical framework. The Checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form) and the Declaration by the applicant (Section 8 of Part B of the grant application form) must be printed and stapled separately and enclosed in the envelope

b. 3 additional copies in A4 size, each bound.

c. An electronic version (e.g CD-Rom) of the items under point (a). The electronic file must contain exactly the same application as the paper version enclosed.

To reduce expense and waste, we strongly recommend that you use only paper for your file (no plastic folders or dividers). Please also use double-sided printing if possible

Applications must be submitted in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) to the address below. Where applicants send several applications (if allowed to do so by the Guidelines of the Call), each one must be sent separately:

Postal address

European Commission

DG NEAR

Unit D5, Regional Cooperation and Programmes

For the attention of Ms Maria Esposito

Office: LOI 15 - 03/080

1049 Brussels

Belgium

Address for hand delivery or by private courier service

European Commission

DG NEAR

Unit D5, Regional Cooperation and Programmes

For the attention of Ms Maria Esposito (Office: LOI 15 - 03/80)

Tel: +(32) 2 2979973

Central Mail Department (DAVI)

Avenue du Bourget 1

1140 Evere

Belgium

The outer envelope must bear the **reference number and the title of the Call for Proposals**, together with the number and title of the lot, the full name and address of the applicant, and the words ‘Not to be opened before the opening session’.

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

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

2.2.7. Deadline for submission of Full Application forms

The deadline for the submission of applications will be indicated in the letter sent to the applicants whose application has been pre-selected. This letter will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the applicant. Applicants who, in exceptional cases (see Section 2.2.6) had to submit their application by post or hand-delivery, they will receive the letter by post.

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

In the case of submission by post, (see section 2.2.6), the date of submission is evidenced by the date of dispatch, the postmark or the date of the deposit slip. In the case of hand-deliveries, the deadline for receipt will be indicated in the letter sent to the applicants whose application has been pre-selected as evidenced by the signed and dated receipt.

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

However, for reasons of administrative efficiency, the Contracting Authority may also reject any Full Application sent in due time but received after the effective date of approval of the Full Application evaluation (see indicative calendar under section 2.5.2)

2.2.8. Further information about Full Application forms

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

E-mail address: NEAR-CSF-applications@ec.europa.eu

The Contracting Authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

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

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the Contracting Authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants, affiliated entity(ies), or an action.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure, will be published on the website <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome>. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the Contracting Authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All actions submitted by applicants will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

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

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

The following will be assessed:

- Compliance with the submission deadline. If the deadline has not been met, the application will automatically be rejected.
- The Concept Note satisfies all the criteria specified in points 1-5 of the Checklist Section 2 of Part A of the grant application form). If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The Concept Notes that pass the first administrative check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The Concept Note will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on the Concept Note, which can be found in Part A of the Application Form.

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

Scores

1. Relevance of the action	Sub-score	30
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the Call for Proposals?*	5x2**	
1.2 How relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies) or region(s) is the proposal (including synergy with other EU initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5x2*	
1.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5	
1.4 Does the proposal contain specific added-value elements, such as environmental issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, or innovation and best practices, and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2 of these Guidelines?	5	
2. Design of the action	Sub-score	20
2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the action? In particular, does it reflect the analysis of the problems involved, take into account external factors and relevant stakeholders?	5x2**	
2.2 Is the action feasible and consistent in relation to the objectives and expected results?	5x2**	

TOTAL SCORE

50

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

**these scores are multiplied by 2 because of their importance

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

Firstly, only the Concept Notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the number of Concept Notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of Concept Notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to at least 200% of the available budget for this Call for Proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot.

After the evaluation of Concept Notes, the Contracting Authority will send letters to all applicants, indicating whether their application was submitted by the deadline, informing them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether the Concept Note was evaluated and the results of that evaluation. The pre-selected applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications

STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

Restricted Call for Proposals

- Compliance with the submission deadline. If the deadline has not been met, the application will automatically be rejected.
- The full application form satisfies all the criteria specified in points 1-9 of the Checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form). If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The quality of the applications, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

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

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

The award criteria help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the Call for Proposals. They help to select applications which the Contracting Authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the Call for Proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

Scoring:

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

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Financial and operational capacity	20
1.1 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient experience of project management?	5
1.2 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical expertise? (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)	5
1.3 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management capacity? (Including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.4 Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?	5
2. Relevance of the action	30

<i>Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation</i>	
3. Effectiveness and feasibility of the action	20
3.1 Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results?	5
3.2 Is the action plan clear and feasible?	5
3.3 Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for the outcome of the action? Is any evaluation planned?	5
3.4 Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	5
4. Sustainability of the action	15
4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5
4.2 Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects? (Including scope for replication, extension and information sharing.)	5
4.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable?: - financially (<i>how will the activities be financed after the funding ends?</i>) - institutionally (<i>will structures allowing the activities to continue be in place at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?</i>) - at policy level (where applicable) (<i>what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. will it lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods, etc?</i>) - environmentally (if applicable) (<i>will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?</i>)	5
5. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	15
5.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	/ 5
5.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?	/ 10
Maximum total score	100

Note on section 1. Financial and operational capacity

If the total score for section 1 is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

Provisional selection

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score and within the limits of the funds available. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria to be used if more funds should become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

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

The eligibility verification, based on the supporting documents requested by the Contracting Authority (see Section 2.4) will only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available financial envelope.

- The Declaration by the applicant (Section 8 of Part B the grant application form) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the Declaration by the applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of applicants, the affiliated entity(ies), and the action will be verified according to the criteria set out in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available financial envelope.

2.4. SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR PROVISIONALLY SELECTED APPLICATIONS

An applicant that has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the Contracting Authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents in order to allow the Contracting Authority to verify the eligibility of the applicant, (if any) of the co-applicant(s) and (if any) of their affiliated entity(ies)²⁰:

Supporting documents may/must be provided through PADOR, see Section 2.2

1. The statutes or articles of association of the applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant(s) and (if any) of each affiliated entity(ies)²¹. Where the Contracting Authority has recognised the applicant's, or the co-applicant(s)'s, or their affiliated entity(ies)'s eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it should be submitted, instead of the statutes or articles of association, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former Call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred in the meantime²². This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.
2. An external audit report produced by an approved auditor, certifying the applicant's accounts for the last financial year available where the total amount of the grant exceeds EUR 750 000 (EUR 100 000 for an operating grant). The external audit report is not required from (if any) the co-applicant(s).

This obligation does not apply to public bodies and international organisations provided that the international organisation in question offers the guarantees provided for in the applicable Financial Regulation, as described in Chapter 6 of the Practical Guide.

3. A copy of the applicant's latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed)²³. A copy of the latest account is neither required from (if any) the co-applicant(s) nor from (if any) affiliated entity(ies).
4. Legal entity sheet (see annex D of these Guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the applicant and (if any) by each co-applicant(s)), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the Contracting Authority, instead of the legal entity sheet and supporting documents, the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.
5. A financial identification form of the applicant (not from co-applicant(s)) conforming to the model attached at Annex E of these Guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the applicant is established. If the applicant has already submitted a financial identification form in the past for a contract where the European Commission was in charge of the payments and intends to use the same bank account, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead.

20 No supporting document will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60000.

21 Where the applicant and/or a co-applicant(s) and or an affiliated entity(ies) is a public body created by a law, a copy of the said law must be provided.

22 To be inserted only where the eligibility conditions have not changed from one call for proposals to the other.

23 This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received a scholarship or that are in most need in receipt of direct support, nor to public bodies and to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to Section 2.4.2.

Where the requested supporting documents are not uploaded in PADOR they must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals. However, the Legal entity sheet and the financial identification form must always be submitted in original.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union a translation into English of the relevant parts of these documents proving the applicant(s)'s eligibility, must be attached for the purpose of analysing the application.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than English, it is **strongly** recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the applicants' eligibility, into English..

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided before the deadline indicated in the request for supporting documents sent to the applicant by the Contracting Authority, the application may be rejected.

After verifying the supporting documents, the Evaluation Committee will make a final recommendation to the Contracting Authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

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

2.5. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

2.5.1. Content of the decision

The applicants will be informed in writing of the Contracting Authority's decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See further Section 2.4.15 of the Practical Guide.

2.5.2. Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME*
Information meeting (if any)	Not applicable	Not applicable
Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the Contracting Authority	15 June 2015	16:00 CET
Last date on which clarifications are issued by the Contracting Authority	25 June 2015	16:00 CET-
Deadline for submission of Concept Notes	6 July 2015	16:00 CET
Information to applicants on opening, administrative checks and concept note	30 July 2015*	-

evaluation (Step 1)		
Invitations to submit Full Application Form]	31 July 2015*	-
Deadline for submission of Full Application Form	30 September 2015*	-
Information to applicants on the evaluation of the Full Application Form (Step 2)²⁴	31 October 2015*	-
Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)	November 2015*	-
Contract signature²⁵	November 2015*	-

***Provisional date.** All times are in the time zone of the country of the Contracting Authority.

This indicative timetable may be updated by the Contracting Authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the EuropeAid web site

<http://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome>

2.6. CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AFTER THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION TO AWARD A GRANT

Following the decision to award a grant, the Beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the Contracting Authority's grant contract (see Annex G of these Guidelines²⁶). By signing the application form (Annex A of these Guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract.

Implementation contracts

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

2.7. EARLY WARNING SYSTEM AND CENTRAL EXCLUSION DATABASE

The applicants and, if they are legal entities, the persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- Commission Decision of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (EWS) for the use of authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies (OJ, L 344, 20.12.2008, p.125) or

²⁴ Note that according to the financial regulation, in direct management, applicants must be notified the outcome of the evaluation of their applications within 6 months following the submission deadline of the full application. This time-limit may be exceeded in exceptional cases, in particular for complex actions (including Multi-beneficiary calls), large number of proposals or in case of delays attributable to the applicants.

²⁵ Note that according to the financial regulation, in direct management the grant contract must be signed within 3 months following the notification of the award decision. This time-limit may be exceeded in exceptional cases, in particular for complex actions (including Multi-beneficiary calls), large number of proposals or in case of delays attributable to the applicants

²⁶ Complemented by the provisions in Annex e3h11 where at least one of the beneficiaries is an international organisation.

- Commission Regulation of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (CED) (OJ L344, 20.12.2008, p.12),

their personal details (name, given name (if natural person), address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control (if legal person)) may be registered in the EWS only or both in the EWS and CED, and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above-mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a grant agreement or decision.]

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

Annex A: Grant Application Form (Word format)

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical Framework (Excel format)

Annex D: Legal Entity Sheet

Annex E: Financial identification form

Annex F: PADOR offline Form²⁷

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION

Annex G: Standard Grant Contract

- Annex II: General conditions
- Annex IV: contract award procedures
- Annex V: standard request for payment
- Annex VI: model narrative and financial report
- Annex VII: model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action
- Annex VIII: model financial guarantee
- Annex IX: standard template for transfer of ownership of assets

Annex H: Daily allowance rates (Per diem), available at the following address:
https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-calls-tender/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag/diems_en

Annex K: Guidelines and Checklist for assessing Budget and Simplified cost options.

ANNEX J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.

Useful links:

Project Cycle Management Guidelines

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-guidelines-vol-1_en

The implementation of grant contracts

A Users' Guide

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

Financial Toolkit

²⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/pador-line-form-0_en . Only applicable in calls under direct management where PADOR is used.

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/procedures-beneficiary-countries-and-partners/financial-management-toolkit_en

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