



# Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

## Call for proposals

CEF 2 Digital - Coordination and Support Actions  
(CEF-DIG-2021-TA)

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## HEALTH AND DIGITAL EXECUTIVE AGENCY (HaDEA)

HaDEA B - Digital, Industry and Space  
 HaDEA B1 - Connecting Europe Facility - Digital

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of “Operational digital platforms and 5G connectivity” under the Digital strand of the **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)**.

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

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (CEF Regulation [2021/1153](#)<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the [2021-2025 Work Programme](#)<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European Health and Digital Executive Agency, (HaDEA)** (hereafter ‘the Agency’).

The call covers the following **topics**:

<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (OJ L 249, 14.7.2021, p. 38).

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 9463 final of 16 December 2021 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2025 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

- **CEF-DIG-2021-TA-PLATFORMS — Preparation of works for Operational digital platforms**
- **CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GAGENDA — 5G Strategic Deployment Agenda coordination**
- **CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GINTEGRA — Integration of 5G corridors and 5G communities with edge computing and federated cloud facilities**

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

NOTE: The term 'project' used in the call documentation is synonymous to the term 'action' used in the CEF Regulation 2021/1153.

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

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

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

## 1. Background

CEF Digital will fund Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs) in the field of connectivity, implemented through grants, which aim at maximising the impact of the

EU intervention. This call covers three CSAs: one CSA in the field of Operational digital platforms and two CSAs in the field of 5G connectivity infrastructures.

### Operational digital platforms

To reduce carbon dioxide emissions and achieve the digital transformation of the EU economy there is a need for greater convergence of the transport, energy and digital sectors. Synergies between these three sectors could be improved through more efficient and effective use of European Union funds.

CEF Digital will fund Operational Digital Platforms (ODPs) to support digital services in the energy and/or transport sectors to be implemented across borders in the European Union. These synergies will have a leverage effect on the innovation of the energy and transport infrastructures. They will also provide spill-over opportunities, for the public and private sector to re-use the underlying digital connectivity infrastructures for multiple purposes.

Due to the national and regional nature of stakeholder activities in the energy and transport sectors, the market has failed to deploy the necessary cross-border infrastructure for an EU level exchange of data in real-time. To fill this gap, in a 2-phased approach, CEF Digital will support a Coordination and Support Action for an exploratory phase (phase 1), launched in this call, to identify the type of intervention, which yields the highest impact and addresses the highest degree of market failure. This CSA will prepare for one or more works project(s) to be launched in future call(s) (phase 2).

ODPs are physical and virtual information communication technology resources, operating via the communication infrastructure, which support the flow, storage, processing and analysis of transport or energy infrastructure data, or both. Examples of potential use cases include:

- Energy sector: a platform with information on available energy from renewable sources to optimise the use of such energy generated throughout the EU and across its borders. The platform would build on high-capacity low latency cross-border connectivity, energy efficient cloud and edge data centres and smart electricity grids. Such a platform would help reduce the environmental footprint, balance the grid and facilitate exchange and collection of information. Future scenarios include bi-directional EV-charging, to help balance the grid and shave peak consumption by enabling energy to be fed back to the electricity grid from the batteries of electric vehicles.
- Mobility sector: a platform to facilitate the efficient real-time cross-border use of available transport and intermodal routes and logistics for freight and passengers. It would enable the exchange and collection of information and help to reduce the environmental footprint of cross-border transport, shorten the travel times and improve users' experience. Much like in the energy case, the platform would build on high-capacity low latency cross-border connectivity and energy efficient and trustworthy cloud and edge. Such a platform would interact with the electricity grid to minimise the inactivity time of electric vehicles, reduce charging costs and help balance the grid through flexible demand.

ODPs build on and integrate, where relevant, with existing and emerging platforms as well as data exchange frameworks (including ones established according to EU law and in the context of EU expert groups and initiatives), emerging European data, cloud and edge computing infrastructures and 5G connectivity infrastructures along corridors and in smart communities. They include hardware (sensors, actuators, servers, storage subsystems, and networking devices like switches, routers and firewalls) and software (e.g. databases, analytics, artificial intelligence algorithms, simulation, data management, cybersecurity tools, software platforms). Where

relevant, the project(s) shall further build on previous EU funded research and infrastructure projects.

### 5G connectivity infrastructures

In its Annex to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the CEF Digital for the 2021-2025, the Work Programme provides the guidance regarding the general scope and objectives of the supported of actions, as well as the eligible actions and award criteria.

CEF Digital will support in particular the deployment of 5G systems, including, if appropriate, integrated edge computing facilities, along major transport paths as well as in local communities. An integrated approach encompassing active as well as passive network components (e.g. masts, antennas, distributed antenna systems), federated cloud and edge infrastructures, as well as relevant operational service platforms will be ensured by complementary deployment actions funded under CEF Digital and Digital Europe and other programmes such as InvestEU and RRF. The aim is to enable service continuity and the interoperability of 5G services along transport paths across the continent.

In that respect, two CSA will aim in particular to support and facilitate the implementation of actions regarding 5G corridors and 5G communities as follows:

#### (1) Strategic Deployment Agenda coordination

The CSA will support the Smart Network and Services Joint Undertaking (SNS) in its tasks to provide guidance to and coordination of 5G deployment activities funded under CEF and other EU and national programmes such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility<sup>3</sup> (RRF). This guidance will contribute to consistency and best practice exchange among the projects, set-up project pipelines and community building. It will also contribute to the definition of deployment scenarios and cooperation models with the view to stimulate and facilitate the preparation of 5G corridors projects and steer the overall process in a direction that is in line with the objectives set by the Commission in its CEF Digital Work Programme 2021-2023.

The work of the CSA will build on the work already conducted as part of the two 5G Strategic Deployment Agendas that were released in 2020 in the areas of road and rail<sup>4</sup>, under the coordination of the 5G Public-Private Partnership (5G-PPP) for road and European rail industry associations for rail.

#### (2) Integration of 5G corridors and 5G communities with edge computing and European federated cloud infrastructure

CEF Digital will support the deployment of 5G systems, including, if appropriate, integrated with edge computing and European federated cloud facilities, along major transport paths, as well as in local communities. 5G edge computing deployments are expected in the last phase of these projects based on a common approach to be supported by this CSA. Such a common integrated approach encompassing federated cloud and edge infrastructures, as well as relevant operational service platforms needs to be coordinated across relevant actions funded under CEF Digital and other programmes such as Digital Europe, InvestEU and RRF.

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<sup>3</sup> Recovery and Resilience Facility | European Commission (europa.eu)

<sup>4</sup> <https://5g-ppp.eu/europe-sets-5g-sda-for-cam/> and Strategic Deployment Agenda for 5G Connectivity and Spectrum for Rail | CER:Home

The EU Data Strategy and the Member States' Joint Declaration on Cloud acknowledge the strategic role of a federated cloud-to-edge infrastructure and services for the successful digital transformation of the EU economy and society.

In particular, the CEF Digital programme will be the catalyst to deploy cross-border and national cloud-to-edge infrastructure interconnections at both the physical and functional levels (e.g. management systems and software-defined infrastructures) among public sector end users across the EU. In this context, these federated cloud-to-edge infrastructures 'as a product' will need to cope with the latest digital and sustainability challenges, in particular supporting the operationalisation of data spaces and specific use cases, notably in the public sector area or services of general economic interest, including notably mobility and health.

Complementary to CEF actions in the area of cloud, the actions foreseen under the topic European common data infrastructure and services of the Digital Europe Programme<sup>5</sup> complemented by other investment programmes aim at equipping Europe with world class interconnected (i.e. federated), trusted, interoperable and sustainable cloud-to-edge capabilities (infrastructures, platforms, marketplaces, services and testing and experimentation facilities for edge AI). The targeted infrastructures and services will also serve common data spaces supported by the programme.

Large-scale pilot projects are planned aiming at the deployment at scale of innovative, sustainable, secure and cross-border cloud-to-edge based services applied in a set of well-chosen application sectors. These deployments will serve the double objective of, first, being the first actual concrete implementations and deployments of the middleware platform and its different open source middleware solutions serving the needs of a specific application sector and use case and the gained experience should feedback into this separate process. Diversity, both in geography and use cases, of the retained large scale pilot projects will therefore be key in testing the versatility and robustness of the platform.

The second objective is to deploy additional cloud-to-edge services that are particularly innovative and/or not (yet) of enough general interest to be procured for the common good.

Such activities will be co-designed and co-created in close cooperation between all the involved stakeholders representing well both the supply and the demand side and addressing concrete services and solutions.

They will act as showcases for the whole of the Union, providing concrete examples of how they could be taken up and implemented in other application sectors by clearly demonstrating their added-value.

The CEF programme aims at maximising different use cases in the public sector or of general public interest ideally addressing the health sector, the mobility sector with focus on 5G Corridors as well as the common data spaces supported, public administrations, and smart cities and communities.

The programme support action selected under this call should contribute to an integrated approach encompassing 5G corridor and community infrastructure, federated cloud and edge infrastructures, as well as relevant operational service platforms.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/work-programmes-digital>



In order to accelerate the development of edge computing solutions as part of 5G corridors and Communities the programme support action selected under this call will have the task to accompanying the 5G corridor and community projects to develop concepts and facilities for the interconnection of newly deployed 5G corridor sections as well as 5G community infrastructure with edge computing facilities and federated cloud infrastructures as described above, as well as other relevant operational service platforms.

## **2. Objectives – Themes and priorities – Scope (including digital security requirements) – Expected impact**

### **2.1 CEF-DIG-2021-TA-PLATFORMS – Preparation of works for Operational digital platforms**

#### Objectives

Operational digital platforms (including this CSA), as one of CEF Digital Synergy actions, aim to support EU environmental and energy targets, by providing both technologies and connectivity to enable a cyber-secure Internet of Energy and an optimised transport system along the major European paths, as per the 5G objectives in the Gigabit Society Communication and in the Directive on measures to reduce the cost of deploying high-speed electronic communications networks (2014/61/EU<sup>6</sup>). This will optimise energy use of ICT and reduce the environmental impact, while increasing the benefits enabled by ICT.

This topic will be funded on the basis of the eligible “*actions implementing digital connectivity infrastructure requirements related to cross-border projects in the areas of transport or energy and/or supporting operational digital platforms directly associated to transport or energy infrastructures*” (Article 8.4(e) and Article 9.4(e) of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153).

It will be dedicated to “retro-fitting” the existing energy and/or transport infrastructures with the required cross-border digital infrastructure. ODPs will build on and integrate with existing and emerging European data, cloud and edge computing and connectivity infrastructures, in particular those supported in other parts of CEF Digital, the Digital Europe Programme, and Horizon Europe.

#### Themes and priorities

This CSA will prepare the future works project(s) by identifying the most appropriate cases to be funded and by delivering the building blocks (such as governance, detailed design, etc.) needed for immediate deployment of the cross-border infrastructure within the works project(s). It will consist of four stages and it should last 27 months. These four stages include:

1. exploratory study to prepare the baseline and identify and shortlist lead use cases in energy, mobility and cross-sector energy/mobility (5 months);
2. feasibility study for the shortlisted cases (7 months);
3. detailed preparations for the shortlisted cases (9 months); and
4. assistance to projects coming from the first call for works (6 months).

Under guidance of the Commission (The Directorates-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (co-ordination), for Energy and for Mobility and

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<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32014L0061>

Transport), the successful applicants will co-operate closely with the relevant national and EU authorities, as well as associations and multipliers across the relevant sectors.

### Scope

The proposal submitted under this topic should cover all four stages of the CSA, to be implemented within 27 months' period, as follows:

#### **Stage 1**

The first stage will consist of an exploratory study and will last 5 months. It will provide the following outcomes:

- Define the needs in digitalising the cross-border energy and/or transport infrastructure between Member States
- Identify criteria and recommendations for selecting appropriate and most credible, within standard constraints (e.g. of budget, timing, complementarity to emerging European infrastructures in the targeted sectors), lead use cases and potential project(s), (i.e. the most mature and realistic, with the highest degree of market failure, the most impactful, etc.)
- Identify relevant technologies, architectures and standards
- Identify relevant stakeholders
- Identify possible governance options
- Develop the design principles and architecture for connecting the ODPs to the 5G infrastructures along transport corridors and smart communities; the emerging dataspace in particular in the energy, mobility and related sectors; and the federation of European Cloud and edge services. In that context, the tenderers will collaborate closely with the Co-ordination and Support Actions and implementation projects supported under CEF Digital and Digital Europe Programmes
- Identify at least 10 lead cases involving at least 9 member states (and preferably at least 12) in energy, mobility and cross-sector energy/mobility
- Shortlist six cases, based on the criteria and recommendations identified earlier, while trying to maintain at least relative balance between energy, mobility and combined projects (priority given to combined projects).

#### **Stage 2**

The second stage will consist of a feasibility study for the six shortlisted cases from the first stage and it will last 7 months. It will deliver the following outcomes:

- For each case, create a high-level description, solution architecture and governance scheme
- Based on these, create a cost-benefits analysis
- Define the feasibility of each proposal i.e. how realistic is each case within the constraints
- Shortlist three proposals, which are feasible and with the best cost-benefits outcome. For cases with similar characteristics, priority should be given to cross-sector cases between energy and mobility
- Prepare a draft for the call text for the works call to be handed over to the Commission.

#### **Stage 3**

The third stage will consist of the detailed preparations for the three shortlisted cases from the second stage and it will last 9 months. It will deliver, to the extent possible, the following outcomes:

- Create detailed design/architecture for each of the cases
- Define key performance indicators for each of the cases

- Create detailed governance scheme and get feed-back and buy-in from the identified stakeholders
- Set up governance bodies with the most relevant stakeholders and have a governance agreement signed for each of the three cases
- Prepare procurement templates and framework agreements
- Prepare purchasing orders for potential suppliers for the final deployment including integration and SLAs
- Deploy testing environment from willing suppliers and test the solution
- Deploy pilot solutions from willing suppliers involving at least 2 and preferably 3 member states and pilot the solution

#### **Stage 4**

The fourth and final stage will provide the assistance to the works projects and it, will last six months. This phase will run in parallel with the first six months of the works project(s) and it will serve to transfer the outcomes to the work project(s) and to assist them in the start of implementation. It will consist of the following tasks:

- Transfer all documentation and know-how
- Fine-tune the documentation according to the works project reality
- Prepare recommendations for future work

It is expected that the proposal is submitted by a consortium made up of representatives or participants well balanced across the relevant stakeholder groups and covering the three CEF sectors i.e. digital, transport and energy. In case the consortium does not have enough participants to provide the required balanced representation then these participants should be neutral i.e. in that case they should have no self-interest in a particular outcome of the CSA. Some third parties could be subcontracted for the purpose of building an advisory group, attracting additional expertise from outside the consortium, participation in governance bodies, preparation of the works, etc.

The governance body for the emerging infrastructure should be set up by the CSA (and described in the proposal), and include several entities of each major category of stakeholders, including in particular representatives involved in the long term operations of the infrastructure such as energy companies, data centre operators, transport, telecom and/or platform operators, public authorities, etc. It shall be open to new members and in particular foresee eventual participation by all Member States. It could leverage existing structures as long as this does not counter the interest of participating stakeholders.

The governance body will be responsible for defining ownership of the ODP, at any given time, based on the size of the infrastructure and operations as well as the number of parties involved. The Commission shall not be a member of the body, but shall be granted an observer role. Subject to approval by the Commission, the governance body shall propose a legal and financial framework for the operational and financial details of the infrastructure and services support. Provisions for open and fair access to the infrastructure shall be made, including related to new entities joining at a later stage.

#### **Digital security requirements**

For all the proposals submitted under this topic, to be eligible, all participating legal entities must provide security guarantees approved by the Member State<sup>7</sup> in which they are established, on the basis of national law.

These guarantees, will certify that the legal entity:

- a) Exercises full control over its corporate structure and decision-making process in a manner that does not restrain or restrict in any way its ability to perform and complete the action and is not subject to foreign jurisdiction obligations that may undermine the security of the Union;
- b) Effectively prevents access by non-eligible third countries or by non-eligible third country entities to classified and non-classified sensitive information relating to the action; and
- c) Ensures that the results of the CEF funded action shall remain within the beneficiary/beneficiaries and shall not be subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible third countries or other non-eligible third country entities during the action and for a specified period after its completion, as defined in this call conditions.

#### Expected impact

This CSA will identify and prepare for deployment cross-border digital infrastructure that will accelerate the digitalisation of the energy/mobility sector by enhancing interoperability and standardisation and trigger a public-private partnership virtuous circle of investment. This infrastructure will build on and integrate with existing and emerging European data, cloud and edge computing and connectivity infrastructures.

The resulting works projects will lead to substantial reduction in GHG and improvement in the energy and environmental performance of the European digital infrastructure.

## **2.2 CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GAGENDA - 5G Strategic Deployment Agenda coordination**

### Objectives

This CSA will - in close cooperation with the Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking - coordinate the development of 5G Strategic Deployment Agendas in the area of 5G for CAM.

This includes the development of deployment roadmaps, cooperation models and regulatory approaches.

Related objectives include the achievement of common deployment approaches among projects in view of a consistent deployment of 5G Corridors across the EU, monitoring and reporting on deployment progress, and the build-up of a pipeline of future projects to be funded by CEF.

### Themes and priorities

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<sup>7</sup> The approval can be provided in the context of Art 11.6 of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153, which states: "To be eligible, proposals shall be submitted: (a) by one or more Member States; or (b) with the agreement of the Member States concerned, by international organisations, joint undertakings, or by public or private undertakings or bodies, including regional or local authorities. If the Member State concerned does not agree with a submission under point (b) of the first subparagraph, it shall communicate that information accordingly."

The CSA should facilitate the cooperation among the key stakeholders involved in 5G corridor preparation and CEF-funded deployment projects including the 5G Automotive Association (5GAA) as well as key stakeholders of the SNS Joint Undertaking towards the development and adoption of non-binding SDA documents and related guidance by the Working Groups and Governing Board of the SNS JU.

This guidance shall include strategic elements relevant for SDAs such as evolving deployment roadmaps, cooperation models and relevant regulatory issues, e.g. cross-border roaming, spectrum use, network sharing, specialised services, etc.

The CSA should also work with ongoing CEF-funded deployment and preparation projects to keep track of deployments executed in projects, planned for future projects and evaluate the progress as compared to planned roadmaps.

It should also gather best practice in ongoing deployment and preparation projects including technological solutions used, use cases envisaged, service requirements for coverage and performance, etc.

The CSA should also support the building of future project pipelines for CEF funding by facilitating the information of the community with regards to upcoming CEF Digital calls, networking opportunities for building project consortia, engaging stakeholders to consider project proposals in line with planned deployment roadmaps and in close cooperation with the Commission and Member States.

### Scope

The proposal should cover the following activities:

- (1) Support to the organisation of stakeholder engagement activities, involving, amongst others mobile network operators, operators deploying infrastructure and associated facilities such as tower companies, telecom backhaul operators, road operators, rail infrastructure managers, automotive manufacturers, and mobility service providers, including SNS working group secretariat, workshops, information days, seminars, conferences and online social networks
- (2) Proactive outreach to stakeholders and public authorities to stimulate interest in proposal submission to CEF Digital calls in line with deployment roadmap and planned project pipeline
- (3) Support and coordination to the building of project pipelines for CEF funding and community building, across sectors and cross-border
- (4) Gather and develop information among projects in terms of corridor length, mode of transport, service requirements for safety and non-safety services, technologies and systems including edge nodes, overall costs and funding, etc.
- (5) Elaboration of best practices of CEF-funded studies within 5G corridor preparation and CEF-funded deployment projects to cover common challenges (e.g. cross-border CAM business continuity, local breakout)
- (6) Performance evaluation across CEF-funded 5G corridor deployment projects and assessment of legal and regulatory constraints
- (7) Progress monitoring of 5G corridor deployment projects, including geographic mapping of EU and non EU-funded 5G corridor projects and facilitate reporting with the European 5G Observatory
- (8) Liaison with European regulatory authorities such as the Body of European Regulators in Electronic Communications (BEREC), European agencies such as

the European Rail Agency, public-private-partnerships implementing EU funding programmes such as the Smart Network and Services Joint Undertaking (SNS) and the Cooperative, Connected and Automated Mobility PPP (CCAM)

Additional activities can be proposed to support implementation of this CSA.

### Digital security requirements

For all the proposals submitted under this topic, to be eligible, all participating legal entities must provide security guarantees approved by the Member State<sup>8</sup> in which they are established, on the basis of national law.

These guarantees, will certify that the legal entity:

- a) Exercises full control over its corporate structure and decision-making process in a manner that does not restrain or restrict in any way its ability to perform and complete the action and is not subject to foreign jurisdiction obligations that may undermine the security of the Union;
- b) Effectively prevents access by non-eligible third countries or by non-eligible third country entities to classified and non-classified sensitive information relating to the action; and
- c) Ensures that the results of the CEF funded action shall remain within the beneficiary/beneficiaries and shall not be subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible third countries or other non-eligible third country entities during the action and for a specified period after its completion, as defined in this call conditions.

### Expected impact

This CSA is expected to contribute to the effective and consistent deployment of 5G corridors across the EU. This should be a major enabler for the economic recovery and the digital and green transition of the EU economy.

## **2.3 CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GINTEGRA - Integration of 5G with edge computing and federated cloud facilities**

### Objectives

The main objective of this CSA is to accelerate the development of edge computing solutions as part of 5G corridors and 5G local communities and to ensure an integrated approach with the development of European federated cloud and edge infrastructures funded under CEF Digital and Digital Europe.

The objective is to develop - in cooperation with different stakeholder communities and various ongoing projects in the relevant deployment programmes - concepts and

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<sup>8</sup> The approval can be provided in the context of Art 11.6 of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153, which states: "To be eligible, proposals shall be submitted:(a)by one or more Member States; or (b)with the agreement of the Member States concerned, by international organisations, joint undertakings, or by public or private undertakings or bodies, including regional or local authorities. If the Member State concerned does not agree with a submission under point (b) of the first subparagraph, it shall communicate that information accordingly."

facilities for: (1) the interconnection of newly deployed 5G corridor sections and 5G infrastructure for local communities with edge computing facilities and federated cloud infrastructures; (2) relevant operational service platforms that enable the provision of CAM and commercial 5G connectivity services; and (3) the support of services of general interest in local communities.

Furthermore, the objective is to accompany CEF-funded 5G deployment projects during their edge node deployment and service platform integration phase in order to adopt the common concepts developed.

### *Themes and priorities (scope)*

The CSA should gather and consolidate information on the various planned actions under European and national programmes as well as the main private sector initiatives in the field and raise awareness to the stakeholders involved in the various relevant ongoing or future projects.

Based on this information it should – in close cooperation with stakeholders - deliver principles and network architecture concepts for connecting 5G infrastructures along transport corridors and 5G local communities to the edge node and federated cloud infrastructure with the aims (i) to meet service requirements for connected and automated mobility, in particular the stringent requirements for road safety and digital train operations, (ii) and to generate economic efficiencies, whereby the overall 5G-edge-cloud platform would serve the vertical needs of various communities and sectors, in particular mobility and socio-economic drivers.

Once the concepts are agreed, the CSA should accompany the ongoing CEF-funded 5G Corridor and Community projects to deploy and integrate the solutions in the later phase of these deployment projects.

The CSA should also monitor and report on the planned, ongoing and completed deployment of edge nodes with these projects and facilitate reporting in the European 5G Observatory.

### *Scope*

The following activities are in the scope of this CSA:

- (1) Desk research and stakeholder outreach to gather and report on comprehensive information on ongoing relevant activities in the area of European federated cloud infrastructures
- (2) Identification and definition of use cases in the areas of connected and automated mobility and 5G communities covering several sectors whose provision will be enabled by integrated 5G-edge-cloud infrastructure
- (3) Gather requirements for business continuity across the border meeting CAM service requirements
- (4) Definition of functional and operational network architectures enabling the provision of the selected use cases and building on European federated cloud infrastructures and other relevant initiatives
- (5) Proof of concept, tests and pilots in cooperation with selected CEF-funded 5G deployment projects
- (6) Outreach, engagement and advisory services for 5G Corridor (all ongoing CEF-funded projects) and Community (at least 10 CEF-funded projects) to integrate the developed solutions



### Digital security requirements

For all the proposals submitted under this topic, to be eligible, all participating legal entities must provide security guarantees approved by the Member State<sup>9</sup> in which they are established, on the basis of national law.

These guarantees, will certify that the legal entity:

- a) Exercises full control over its corporate structure and decision-making process in a manner that does not restrain or restrict in any way its ability to perform and complete the action and is not subject to foreign jurisdiction obligations that may undermine the security of the Union;
- b) Effectively prevents access by non-eligible third countries or by non-eligible third country entities to classified and non-classified sensitive information relating to the action; and
- c) Ensures that the results of the CEF funded action shall remain within the beneficiary/beneficiaries and shall not be subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible third countries or other non-eligible third country entities during the action and for a specified period after its completion, as defined in this call conditions.

### Expected impact

The CSA is expected to enable new synergies across the digital value chain, in particular the integration of 5G and Gigabit network deployment with cloud-to-edge solutions, and help creating new and innovative business models for the European telecom and IT sectors, as well as vertical sectors including automotive, rail, transport and logistics, as well as for local communities.

### **3. Available budget**

The available call budget is **EUR 7 000 000**.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below.

Topic	Topic budget
CEF-DIG-2021-TA-PLATFORMS	<b>EUR 4 000 000</b>
CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GAGENDA	<b>EUR 1 000 000</b>
CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GINTEGRA	<b>EUR 2 000 000</b>

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

<sup>9</sup> The approval can be provided in the context of Art 11.6 of the CEF Regulation 2021/1153, which states: *"To be eligible, proposals shall be submitted:(a)by one or more Member States; or (b)with the agreement of the Member States concerned, by international organisations, joint undertakings, or by public or private undertakings or bodies, including regional or local authorities. If the Member State concerned does not agree with a submission under point (b) of the first subparagraph, it shall communicate that information accordingly."*



#### 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	12 January 2022
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>20 April 2022 – 17:00:00 CEST</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	May-July 2022
Information on evaluation results:	August 2022
GA signature:	November-December 2022

#### 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 per WP (*template available in the Submission System*)
  - activity reports of last year (unless exempted from operational capacity check; see *section 7*)
  - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*)
  - timetable/Gantt chart (*template available in the Submission System*)
  - letters of support (MS agreement) (*template available in the Submission System*)
  - security guarantees (*to be submitted in the Submission System in "Other annexes"*)

NOTE: If by the deadline for submission, the security guarantees are not yet approved by the respective Member States, the applicants must submit by the deadline for submission: 1) a copy of the request (containing the text of the security guarantees) sent for approval to their respective Member States; and 2) the acknowledgment of receipt by the Member States. The security guarantees approved by the Member States must be sent by the proposal coordinator to [HADEA-CEF-DIGITAL-CALLS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:HADEA-CEF-DIGITAL-CALLS@ec.europa.eu) by **23 May 2022, 17:00:00 CEST (Brussels)** at the latest, identified with the proposal ID in the email subject.

- other annexes.


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 **120 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))

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*).

Please note however that this call is subject to restrictions due to security reasons. This means: only the following countries are eligible: EU Member States.

Moreover:

- participation in any capacity (as beneficiary, affiliated entity, associated partner, subcontractor or recipient of financial support to third parties) is limited to entities from eligible countries
- project activities (included subcontracted work) must take place in eligible countries (*see section geographic location below and section 10*)
- the Grant Agreement may provide for IPR restrictions (*see section 10*).

### *Specific cases*

Exceptional funding — Entities from other countries (not listed above) are exceptionally eligible for projects of common interest in the field of transport, energy and digital and for cross-border projects in the field of renewable energy, if the granting authority considers their participation essential for the implementation of the action.

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

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

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

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

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (*see above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*<sup>11</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>12</sup>). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

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

### *Consortium composition*

Proposals must be submitted by:

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<sup>10</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>11</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>12</sup> 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 (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

for topics: CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GAGENDA — 5G Strategic Deployment Agenda coordination and CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GINTEGRA — Integration of 5G corridors and 5G communities with edge computing and federated cloud facilities

- n/a

for topic CEF-DIG-2021-TA-PLATFORMS — Preparation of works for Operational digital platforms:

- minimum 5 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 3 different eligible countries

### Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

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

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

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

### Geographic location (target countries)

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

### Duration

Projects should normally have a duration up to 36 months (for CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GAGENDA — 5G Strategic Deployment Agenda coordination and CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GINTEGRA — Integration of 5G corridors and 5G communities with edge computing and federated cloud facilities topics) and 27 months for CEF-DIG-2021-TA-PLATFORMS — Preparation of works for Operational digital platforms; longer duration is possible if duly justified (extensions are also possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

### Project budget

Project budgets (maximum grant amount) are expected to be around: EUR 1 000 000 per project for CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GAGENDA — 5G Strategic Deployment Agenda coordination; EUR 2 000 000 per project for CEF-DIG-2021-TA-5GINTEGRA — Integration of 5G corridors and 5G communities with edge computing and federated cloud facilities; and EUR 4 000 000 per project for CEF-DIG-2021-TA-PLATFORMS — Preparation of works for Operational Digital Platforms.

## **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 responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
- prefinancing paid in instalments
- (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)

or

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

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

### Operational capacity

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

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

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

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

- description of the consortium participants
- applicants' activity reports of last year
- list of 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.

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

### Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>13</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>14</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- 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, decisionmaking- 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, decisionmaking- 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, decisionmaking- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>15</sup>:

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

## **8. Evaluation and award procedure**

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

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<sup>13</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>14</sup> 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.


<sup>15</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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 (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria (3 phases: individual evaluation, consensus phase and panel review) and then ranked according to their scores (*see sections 7 and 9*).

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

1. Score obtained under the 'Priority and urgency' criterion
2. Score obtained under the 'Maturity' criterion
3. Score obtained under the 'Catalytic effect' criterion
4. Score obtained under the 'Impact' criterion
5. Score obtained under the 'Quality' criterion.

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

- **Priority and urgency:** evaluating correspondence of the proposal with the sectoral policy objectives and priorities, measuring its EU added-value and where applicable assessing the possible synergies with other sectors or CEF Digital topics and ensuring a geographical balance of the CEF digital support in the respective area. (5 points)
- **Maturity:** assessing the maturity of the action in the project development. The criterion will measure, among others, i) the readiness/ability of the project to start by the proposed start date and to complete by the proposed end date, ii) the status and planning of the contracting procedures and the necessary permits, and iii) information on the availability of the financial resources needed to complement the CEF investment. (5 points)



- **Quality:** evaluating the soundness of the implementation plan proposed, both from the technical and financial point of view, the architecture and design approach, the organisational structures put in place (or foreseen) for the implementation, the risk analysis, the control procedures and quality management and the communication strategy of the applicant. Moreover, when applicable, it will also assess the information related to the operations/maintenance strategy proposed for the completed project. (5 points)
- **Impact:** assessing, when applicable, the economic, social, competition and environmental impact, including the climate impact, and other relevant externalities. This criterion may be substantiated by a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), in which case the evaluation will look at the soundness, comprehensiveness, and transparency of the analysis as well as proposed means to monitor its impact. The criterion will also assess the safety, security, cybersecurity of telecommunication networks, interoperability and accessibility aspects of the proposal, innovation and digitalisation, as well as its cross-border dimension, and contribution to network integration and territorial accessibility, including particular for Outermost Regions and islands. Moreover, the criterion will assess, where applicable, potential complementarities with other public funding programmes. (5 points)
- **Catalytic effect:** evaluating the financial gap (for instance the need to overcome financial obstacles generated by insufficient commercial viability, high upfront costs or the lack of market finance), ii) the capacity to mobilise different investments sources, iii) the capacity to trigger important overall investments with limited EU support, and where appropriate iv) the extent to which externalities justify the CEF financial support. It shall be used to assess the catalytic effect of the EU financial support and determine whenever possible the actual co-funding rate to be granted. (5 points).

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Priority and urgency	3	5
Maturity	3	5
Quality	3	5
Impact	3	5
Catalytic effect	3	5
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25</b>

Maximum points: 25 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 3/5, 3/5, 3/5, 3/5 and 3/5 points.

Overall threshold: 15 points.

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

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



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

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

#### Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: up to 31.12.2026 (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).


#### 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.

#### 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): projects of any budget are admitted. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

 Please be aware that you may be asked to request an amendment to reduce the grant awarded if your project encounters major delays during the project implementation. If you do not comply with this request, we may have to terminate the grant (*see art 32*).

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 rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (maximum **100%**).

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
  - D.1 Financial support to third parties
- E. Indirect costs

*Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:*

- personnel costs:
  - average personnel costs (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>16</sup> : Yes
- subcontracting costs:
  - country restrictions for subcontracting costs: Yes, subcontracted work must be performed in the eligible countries or target countries
- travel and subsistence unit cost<sup>17</sup>: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs: full cost
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
- indirect cost flat-rate :0% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: VAT is NOT eligible
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - 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
  - eligible cost country restrictions: Yes, only costs for activities carried out in eligible countries or target countries are eligible

***Reporting and payment arrangements***

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

<sup>16</sup> 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).

<sup>17</sup> 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).


After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project. The amount will be established based on the grant type or estimated project duration at the time of grant signature and will be up to 50% of the maximum grant amount. The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required — whichever is the latest).

There will be no **interim payments**.

In addition, you will be expected to submit one or more progress reports not linked to payments.

**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).

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 formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us 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

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- communication and dissemination plan: No
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes
- special logos: No

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

- Member State information: Yes
- specific rules for digital infrastructure projects: Yes
- specific rules for ATM common projects: No
- durability: Yes
- specific rules for blending operations: No
- special obligations linked to restrictions due to security:
  - implementation in case of restrictions due to security: Yes

#### Other specificities

n/a

#### Non-compliance and breach of contract

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

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

## 11. How to submit an application

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

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

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

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

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

### b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 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)
- call information on the [HaDEA website](#).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates.

### Contact

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

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

- **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).
- **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).
- **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 double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double 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 declared to two different EU actions.
- **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).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

Organisations may participate in several proposals.

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

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



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

This includes:

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

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

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