



Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS)

Call for proposals

RFCS-2026-Steel-Big tickets
(RFCS-2026-BT-Steel)

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EUROPEAN RESEARCH EXECUTIVE AGENCY (REA)

REA.B – Green Europe
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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU action grants in the field of Coal under the **Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS)**.

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

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))¹
- The basic act (RFCS Decision [2008/376](#))².

The call is launched in accordance with the 2026 Work Programme³ and will be managed by the **European Research Executive Agency (REA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **RFCS-2026-BT-Steel — RFCS-2026-Steel-Big Tickets**

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:

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

² [Council Decision of 29 April 2008 2008/376/EC](#) amended by the [Council Decision \(EU\) 2017/955 of 29 May 2017](#) and [Council Decision \(EU\) 2021/1094 of 28 June 2021](#) (OJ L 130, 20.5.2008, p. 7).

³ Commission Implementing Decision [C\(xxxx\)xx](#) concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2026 and the financing decision for the implementation of the RFCS programme.

- detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

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

1. Background

RFCS policy objectives

This RFCS work programme is in line with the objectives set out by the European Commission in the Competitiveness Compass⁴, the Clean Industrial Deal⁵, the Steel and Metals Action Plan⁶, the European Green Deal⁷, the Fit for 55 package⁸ and the REPowerEU plan⁹. It reinforces the European Union's commitment to achieving climate neutrality and a modern, competitive industrial base.

Adopted on 11 December 2019, the Commission's European Green Deal Communication is in line with the Paris Agreement and constitutes a cornerstone of the RFCS programme. It sets out a growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into an equal-opportunity and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy and no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, in which economic growth is decoupled from resource use. Climate neutrality is at the heart of the European Green Deal and is a legally binding objective set out in the European Climate Law. The Communication also states that all EU actions and policies should work towards enabling the EU to achieve a successful and just transition towards a sustainable future.

The European Green Deal has also been supported by the 'Fit for 55' legislative package, which amended existing EU legislation to help cut the EU's net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared with 1990 levels and speed up progress towards climate neutrality.

Operating within this EU policy context, the RFCS programme complements activities carried out in the Member States and within the existing EU framework programme for research, technological development and demonstration. The Commission encourages complementarity and sequencing among research programmes and supports the exchange of information between the RFCS programme and projects financed under national and other EU financial instruments for research and innovation, including Horizon Europe, cohesion policy funds (in particular the European Regional Development Fund¹⁰ and the Just Transition Fund¹¹), the Innovation Fund¹² and the LIFE programme¹³.

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0030>

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0085>

⁶ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7807ca8b-10ce-4ee2-9c11-357afe163190_en?filename=Communication%20-%20Steel%20and%20Metals%20Action%20Plan.pdf

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019DC0640>

⁸ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fit-for-55/>

⁹ [Key documents: REPowerEU - European Commission](#)

¹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1058>

¹¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1056&qid=1694610663421>

¹² https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-funding-climate-action/innovation-fund_en

¹³ https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en

The RFCS legislation is fully aligned with the objectives of the European Green Deal and enables the Fund to tackle the sector's climate and environmental challenges and to assist the steel industry in decarbonising, boosting the EU's competitiveness and economic growth.

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, on 18 May 2022 the Commission presented REPowerEU, a plan to rapidly reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels and accelerate the green transition. The plan highlights that around 30% of primary steel production in the EU is expected to be decarbonised by 2030 using renewable hydrogen.

In early 2023, the Commission proposed two additional pieces of legislation: the Net Zero Industry Act¹⁴ and the Critical Raw Materials Act¹⁵. The Net Zero Industry Act aims to support the scale-up of net-zero technology manufacturing in the EU to ensure it can meet at least 40% of the EU's annual deployment needs for strategic net-zero technologies by 2030. The clean technologies covered by the act, which include commercially available equipment and technologies that will be available on the market soon, rely on steel products, often with specific characteristics, to support their deployment. The deployment of these technologies (especially hydrogen and renewable energy) is also essential for decarbonising the steel production process in the EU. The final version of the Net Zero Industry Act now also covers industrial carbon management and the value chain for steel-related products from 2024 onwards.

The Critical Raw Materials Act addresses the European Union's dependence on critical raw materials and the associated vulnerabilities of EU supply chains that depend on those materials. It will help ensure the EU has sufficient access to rare earths, precious metals and other critical raw materials, which are vital for manufacturing key technologies for the green transition. EU research and innovation is crucial in ensuring that net-zero technologies use fewer resources and are more circular in their use of critical raw materials. It aims to support the development of innovative solutions for their recycling, substitution and reuse. In this context, the circularity of steel and the recovery of rare earths and other critical raw materials beyond iron are crucial for the European economy and security.

Building on the policy developments following the 2024 Draghi report on a competitiveness strategy for Europe, the Commission delivered the most recent Clean Industrial Deal and the Steel and Metals Action Plan during the first months of 2025.

The Clean Industrial Deal focuses on energy-intensive industries, such as steel, and the clean-tech sector, and represents a joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation in the European Union.

The initiative aims to:

- accelerate decarbonisation, reindustrialisation, and innovation across the continent, while reinforcing Europe's resilience;
- increase access to affordable energy, lead markets for clean technologies, and public and private investments;
- promote the uptake of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen, which can play a crucial role in decarbonising the steel industry.

¹⁴ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/publications/net-zero-industry-act_en

¹⁵ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/critical-raw-materials/critical-raw-materials-act_en

The Clean Industrial Deal also announced the Steel and Metals Action Plan, which was adopted on 19 March 2025. The plan focuses on six main pillars to support the steel and metals industry:

- (i) ensuring access to clean and affordable energy;
- (ii) preventing carbon leakage;
- (iii) promoting and protecting European industrial capacities;
- (iv) enhancing circularity for metals;
- (v) defending quality industrial jobs; and
- (vi) de-risking decarbonisation projects through lead markets and public support.

Key actions include:

- lowering energy costs;
- creating lead markets for low-carbon products;
- increasing circularity;
- providing support for decarbonisation investments;
- preventing carbon leakage and promoting fair trade practices.

Most importantly for the RFCS work programme for 2026, the action plan announced flagship initiatives, which are implemented by the following calls: the RFCS Big Tickets for 2026 and 2027 and the Clean Industrial Deal call, which incorporates the steel-related recycling technology component of the 2026 Big Tickets call. The plan stated that these flagship initiatives could also contribute to strengthening the European defence research dimension of the sector. This will be reflected in the 2026 Big Tickets call for steel through the inclusion of dual-use research.

The RFCS Research Programme (Council Decision 2021/1094)¹⁶ has the following research objectives for the steel sector:

Article 8: New, sustainable and low-carbon steelmaking and finishing processes

Research and technological development shall aim to develop, demonstrate and improve near-zero-carbon steel production processes with a view to raising product quality and increasing productivity.

Article 9: Advanced steel grades and applications

Research and technological development shall focus on meeting the requirements of steel users to develop new near-zero-carbon products and on creating new market opportunities while reducing emissions and environmental impacts.

Article 10: Conservation of resources, protection of the environment and circular economy

In both steel production and steel utilisation, the conservation of resources, the preservation of ecosystems, the transition to a circular economy and safety issues shall form an integral part of the research and technological development work.

¹⁶ Council Decision of 29 April 2008 2008/376/EC amended by the Council Decision (EU) 2017/955 of 29 May 2017 and Council Decision (EU) 2021/1094 of 28 June 2021 (OJ L 130, 20.5.2008, p. 7).

Article 10a: Management of work force and working conditions

Research projects shall address developing and disseminating competencies to keep pace with new near-zero-carbon steel production processes, and improving working conditions, including health, safety and ergonomics in and around the workplace.

The Big Tickets – Steel calls are dedicated calls for proposals under the RFCS programme. In accordance with Article 17a of Council Decision 2008/376/EC, these calls provide funding for activities under the European Partnership for Clean Steel. They implement a specific part of the research programme, namely research into innovative technologies reducing CO₂ emissions in the steel industry.

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

RFCS-2026-BT-Steel-CID - RFCS-2026-Steel-Big Tickets under the Clean Industrial Deal

Objectives

Recycling technologies

Proposals should cover at least one of the following aspects:

- technologies for metal or mineral recovery from pyrometallurgical, leaching or electrochemical processes, possibly including the recovery of critical raw materials from iron and steelmaking residues;
- residue valorisation in low-carbon production routes;
- scrap detection, separation, and management technologies and approaches combined with digitalisation / AI techniques;
- recycling at steel production facilities: rethinking recycling processes for new low-carbon installations;
- technologies and approaches for secondary carbon carriers in iron and steelmaking processes;
- applications of slags from BF-BOF, LF, and DR-EAF/ESF;
- dynamic environmental impact analysis, simulation and optimisation of by-product pre-treatment evaluation, digital tracking of secondary raw materials, and new management systems for circularity performance;
- use of raw materials with low iron content in smelting processes;
- scrap upcycling through the adaptation of efficient know-how-based metallurgy and downstream processes and products;
- repurposing of existing coking plant infrastructure at steel facilities for processing bio-based secondary carbon carriers (pyrolysis processes to produce biochar and a H₂-rich syngas).

Themes and priorities (scope)

There are no priorities for this topic.

Activities that can be funded (scope) — Type of action

- Applicants may submit proposals for either pilot or demonstration projects (see Articles 15 and 16 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC).
- Proposals must relate to the application of innovative technologies related to at least one of the objectives.
- Proposals are expected to achieve TRL 7-8 by the end of the project.

- Proposals must be consistent with the general and specific objectives listed in the memorandum of understanding¹⁷ for the European Partnership on Clean Steel launched under Horizon Europe¹⁸.
- Proposals must include an exploitation strategy outlining the possible industrial integration of the outcomes of the project (including the pilot/demonstrators) and a preliminary assessment of their economic viability.
- Targeted improvements (relative to existing installations or, for new projects, the relevant Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) benchmark) must be clearly quantified and demonstrated through energy system and material balance assessments (including emissions), which must be clearly defined by the applicants.

Expected impact

Project results are expected to contribute to all the following outcomes¹⁹.

- quantify the CO2 reduction and other positive environmental effects achieved in the steel sector;
- make it technically and economically feasible for novel technologies and processes to produce products of at least the same quality as that achieved using current industrial processes, as demonstrated and validated on a suitable scale;
- demonstrate, where relevant, positive health and safety effects of the technology and/or the approach pursued;
- outline a scalable deployment plan for the technology, supported by a viable business case;
- disseminate results widely and contribute to the development of skills and the creation/conversion of jobs.

Project results are expected to contribute to the following impacts²⁰:

- progress towards the goals of the European Green Deal in line with the European Commission policy guidelines applicable to the steel industry for the full decarbonisation of the steel sector;
- progress towards the goals of the Clean Industrial Deal;
- support innovation and competitiveness in the steel sector as a strategic element for strengthening the European industrial base and autonomy.

¹⁷ <https://www.estep.eu/assets/Uploads/signed-2021-09-08-MoU-Clean-Steel-Low-Carbon-Steelmaking.pdf>

¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_2943

¹⁹ The *expected outcomes* are the expected effects, over the medium term, of projects supported under a given call objective. The results of a project should contribute to these outcomes, fostered by the dissemination and exploitation measures. Outcomes generally occur during or shortly after the end of the project.

²⁰ Expected impacts are the broader long-term effects on society (including environmental aspects), the economy and science, enabled by the outcomes of research and innovation investments. Impacts generally materialise sometime after the end of the project.

RFCS-2026-BT-Steel-SMAP - RFCS-2026-Steel-Big Tickets under the steel and metals action plan

Objectives

Proposals should address one of the following objectives:

1. New, sustainable and low-carbon steelmaking and finishing processes (Article 8)
Proposals should address objectives listed in Article 8 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC.
2. Advanced steel grades and applications (Article 9)
Proposals should address objectives listed under Article 9 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC.

If the objectives of a proposal focus on recycling, it should be submitted under the topic RFCS-2026-Steel-Big Tickets under the Clean Industrial Deal.

Themes and priorities (scope)

There are no priorities for this topic.

Activities that can be funded (scope) — Type of action

- Applicants may submit proposals for either pilot or demonstration projects (see Articles 15 and 16 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC).
- Proposals must address the application of innovative technologies related to at least one of the objectives.
- Projects are expected to achieve TRL 7-8 by completion.
- Proposals must be consistent with the general and specific objectives listed in the memorandum of understanding for the European Partnership on Clean Steel launched under Horizon Europe.
- Proposals must include an exploitation strategy outlining the possible industrial integration of the outcomes of the project (including the pilot/demonstrators) and a preliminary assessment of their economic viability.
- Targeted improvements (relative to existing installations or, for new projects, the relevant ETS benchmark) must be clearly quantified and demonstrated using energy system and material balance assessments (including emissions), which must be clearly defined by the applicants.

Expected impact

Project results are expected to contribute to all the following outcomes.

- quantify the CO₂ reduction and other positive environmental effects achieved in the steel sector;
- make it technically and economically feasible for novel technologies and processes to produce products of at least the same quality as that achieved using current industrial processes, as demonstrated and validated on a suitable scale;
- demonstrate, where relevant, positive health and safety effects of the technology and/or the approach pursued;
- outline a scalable deployment plan for the technology, supported by a viable business case;
- disseminate results widely and contribute to the development of skills and the creation/conversion of jobs.

Project results are expected to contribute to the following impacts:

- progress towards the goals of the European Green Deal in line with the European Commission policy guidelines applicable to the steel industry for the full decarbonisation of the steel sector;
- progress towards the goals of the Clean Industrial Deal and the relevant areas of the steel and metals action plan;
- support innovation and competitiveness in the steel sector as a strategic element for strengthening the European industrial base and autonomy.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 75,000,000**.

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

Topic	Topic budget
RFCS-2026-Big Tickets – Steel – Clean Industrial Deal	EUR 50,000,000
RFCS-2026-Big Tickets – Steel – Steel and Metals Action Plan	EUR 25,000,000

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call publishing	03 February 2026
Call opening:	17 February 2026
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>06 May 2026 – 17:00:00 CET</u> <u>(Brussels)</u>
Evaluation:	May - July 2026
Information on evaluation results:	September - October 2026
GA signature:	October - December 2026

5. Admissibility and documents


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

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) 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 (former Form B3) (*template available in the Submission System*)
 - CVs of core project team: not applicable
 - activity reports of last year: not applicable
 - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years in the area of the topic) (*template available in Part B*)

 Please note that other documents will NOT be accepted and any additional documents uploaded will NOT be evaluated.

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.

The application must be **readable, accessible and printable** (please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded).

Proposals are limited to maximum **70 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, e.g. undertakings, public bodies, research organisations, higher or secondary education establishments or other legal entities) which carry out an RTD activity or substantially contribute to such an activity
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries :
 - countries associated to the RFCS ([list of participating countries](#)).

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 that, in RFCS, associated partners may participate only if their participation is in the EU interest.


Specific cases

Natural persons — Natural persons are eligible.

International organisations — International organisations are not eligible.

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 persons²¹.

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'²².  Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

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

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU)*)

²¹ See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

²² For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)²³ and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)²⁴). 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 a consortium of:

- minimum 2 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 2 different eligible countries

Independent — Independent means that none of the entities must be under the direct or indirect control of the other or under the same direct or indirect control as the other. For this purpose, control may, in particular, take either of the following forms:

- the direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the issued share capital, or of a majority of the voting rights
- the direct or indirect holding, in fact or in law, of decision-making powers.

The following relationships do not in themselves constitute control:

- if the entities have the same public investment corporation, institutional investor or venture-capital company with a direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the issued share capital or a majority of voting rights
- if the entities are owned or supervised by the same public body.

Eligible activities

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

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

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

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

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

²³ 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](#).

²⁴ 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).

Geographic location (target countries)

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

Duration

Projects should normally range between 36 and 54 months.

Projects of longer duration may be accepted in duly justified cases. Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

Project budget

The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of EUR 5 million to EUR 25 million would allow the objectives of this call to be addressed appropriately. This does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

Proposals under the Big Tickets calls should relate only to the objectives indicated in the relevant topic descriptions.

Ethics

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards (including highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable EU, international and national law.

Projects involving ethics issues will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific ethics rules (which become part of the Grant Agreement in the form of ethics deliverables, *e.g. ethics committee opinions/notifications/authorisations required under national or EU law*).

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)
- 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 and efficiency of the implementation' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

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

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

- description of the consortium participants
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years in the area of the topic) (*template available in Part B*).

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

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate²⁵:

- 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)

²⁵ See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

- guilty of grave professional misconduct²⁶ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted²⁷ an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that²⁸:

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

8. Evaluation and award procedure

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

An **evaluation committee** (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be

²⁶ 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

²⁷ 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

²⁸ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

evaluated (for each budget envelope; see *section 3*) against the operational capacity and award criteria (see *sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their scores.


The evaluation process will include a Hearing step that will support the evaluation committee to establish the final assessment and scores. All the applicants are invited to participate in the Hearing step during the central evaluation week for a physical meeting in Brussels. Information on the set up of the Hearing will be provided at the RFCS Big Tickets Info Day.

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

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

- 1) Proposals will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion 'Impact'; when these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for 'Excellence' and lastly 'Quality and efficiency of the implementation'.
- 2) If two proposals with the same overall score have the same scores for all 3 criteria:
 - the proposal with the highest percentage of participants of private for profit organisations will be ranked first
 - the proposal with the highest percentage of budget assigned in the proposal to private for profit organisations will be ranked first.

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

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

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

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

9. Award criteria

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

- **Excellence (5 points)**: clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning; extent to which they match the themes and priorities and objectives of the call; extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art; soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches

- **Impact (5 points):** viability of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the call, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project; suitability and quality of the measures to maximise the expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities
- **Quality and efficiency of the implementation (5 points):**
 - **Project design and implementation:** technical quality; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, management, procedures, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation); feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall; cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money)
 - **Project team and cooperation arrangements:** quality of the consortium and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium; capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Excellence	3	5
Impact	3	5
Quality and efficiency of the implementation	3	5
Overall (pass) scores	10	15

Maximum points: 15 points.

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

Overall threshold: 10 points.

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

To ensure a balanced portfolio, the ranking list may be adapted to ensure that also proposals under the other call objectives (*see section 2*) are funded, provided that they have passed all thresholds.

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: *see section 6 above*

Milestones and deliverables

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

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

- communication and dissemination plan
- comprehensive overview of the project (month 6)
- public publishable report (last month of the project)

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 (requested grant amount): *see section 6 above*

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

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement: **50 %**

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.2 Equipment
 - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost²⁹ Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation + full cost for listed equipment (*— full costs allowed only for PDP actions*)
- costs for other goods, works and services (operating costs):
 - raw materials
 - consumables
 - energy
 - transportation of raw materials, consumables, equipment, products, feedstock and fuel
 - maintenance, repair, alteration or transformation of existing equipment
 - IT and other specific services
 - analysis and tests
 - dedicated workshop organisation
 - costs for the certificate on the financial statements (CFS) and bank guarantee
 - protection of knowledge
 - assistance from third parties
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
- indirect cost flat-rate: 35% of the eligible personnel costs (category A, except volunteers costs, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)

²⁹ 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).

- 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
 - other ineligible costs: No


Reporting and payment arrangements

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

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **20%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more **interim payments** (with cost reporting through the use of resources report). **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. The Grant Agreement contains additional record-keeping rules (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 20*).

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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

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

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

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

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

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

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

- background and list of background: Yes
- protection of results: Yes
- exploitation of results: Yes
- additional information obligations relating to possible standardisation: Yes
- right to object to transfers and licensing: Yes
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access to results for policy purposes: Yes
- access to results in case of public emergency: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: No

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

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- dissemination of results: Yes
- additional dissemination obligations: Yes
- additional communication activities: Yes

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

- recruitment and working conditions for researchers: Yes

Other specificities

Consortium agreement: Yes

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):

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

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

Contact

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: REA-RFCS@ec.europa.eu.

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

13. Important



IMPORTANT

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

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

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

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc.*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants; projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **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](#).

Annex 1

Technological readiness levels

Where the call conditions require a specific Technology Readiness Level (TRL), the following definitions apply, unless otherwise specified:

TRL 1 — Basic principles observed

TRL 2 — Technology concept formulated

TRL 3 — Experimental proof of concept

TRL 4 — Technology validated in a lab

TRL 5 — Technology validated in a relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 6 — Technology demonstrated in a relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 7 — System prototype demonstration in an operational environment

TRL 8 — System complete and qualified

TRL 9 — Actual system proven in an operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies, or in space)

Annex 2

Evaluation form questions

Excellence (5 points)

Clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning.

- Are the objectives of the proposal Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound (SMART)?

Extent to which the proposal matches the themes, priorities and objectives of the call.

Extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art.

- To what extent do the applicants demonstrate their knowledge of the international state-of-the-art?
- To what extent the proposed work is ambitious and innovative (does it include novel concepts and/or novel approaches)?

Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches

- Are the proposed methods and techniques clearly described? Is the scientific and technical feasibility of the proposed work, convincingly addressed?
- Do the initial and final technology readiness levels (TRL) meet the requirements of the call?

Impact (5 points)

Viability of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the call, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project.

- Are there relevant and substantial expected benefits for the European Coal /Steel sector? Are their scale and significance quantified and credible?
- What are the expected wider scientific, economic, environmental and/or societal effects of the project? Are their scale and significance quantified and credible?

Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise the expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

- Are the target groups, potential users, stakeholders, and multipliers clearly identified and described?
- Are the proposed communication and dissemination measures suitable for the project, ambitious and of good quality?
- Are the exploitation measures to maximise the expected outcomes and impacts adequately and convincingly addressed?

Quality and efficiency of the implementation (5 points)

Technical quality. Logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept). Methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, management, procedures, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation). Feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame. Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.

- Are the work packages, allocation of tasks, milestones, deliverables clearly described and appropriate?
- Is the overall schedule suitable for achieving the project objectives?
- Are claimed financial resources well defined and appropriate? Are the subcontracted tasks justified?
- Are the risks related to the implementation of the project adequately identified? Are the mitigation measures appropriate?

Quality of the consortium and project teams. Appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium. Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

- Is the quality of the consortium adequate for achieving the project objectives?
- Is the interaction of the partners clearly defined and functional to achieving the project objectives?
- Do individual partners have the necessary operational capacity to carry out the proposed action?