



Contracting Authority:

**GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR FINANCING AND CONTRACTING OF EU,
WORLD BANK AND OTHER DONOR FUNDS**

CENTRAL FINANCE AND CONTRACTING UNIT

Ministry of Finance and Economy

**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CIVIL SERVANTS OF THE PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION, INCLUDING TRAININGS/INTERNSHIPS IN
EU MEMBERS STATE ADMINISTRATIONS AND
SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME ("YOUNG CELLS")**

Guidelines
for grant applicants

Budget line(s): 22.02.01.01

IPA II European Union Integration Facility 2020

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Deadline for submission of concept note: **14.10.2021, at 16:00 hrs local
time**

NOTICE

This is a restricted call for proposals. In the first instance, only concept notes (Part A of the grant application form) must be submitted for evaluation. Thereafter, lead applicants who have been pre-selected will be invited to submit a full application. After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed 'declaration by the lead applicant' sent together with the full application.

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1. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CIVIL SERVANTS OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, INCLUDING TRAININGS/INTERNSHIPS IN EU MEMBERS STATE ADMINISTRATIONS AND SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME ("YOUNG CELLS")

1.1. BACKGROUND

Public administration reform (PAR) in Albania remains a necessary and ongoing process, closely associated with the process of European Integration. PAR is continuously placed among Albanian Government priorities as a key instrument for improving the quality of services to citizens and businesses and as a condition for the country's integration processes. The enhancement of the Albanian public administration's capacity can be achieved through continuous work on the administrative framework, and, equally important, good management practices for the management and co-ordination of the integration process.

Over the years, the European Union has provided substantial assistance to Albania Integration process. The priority sectors for funding are:

- democracy and governance;
- rule of law and fundamental rights;
- environment and climate action;
- transport;
- competitiveness and innovation;
- education, employment and social policies;
- agriculture and rural development;
- regional and territorial cooperation

As for the public administration reform and especially the civil service reform, the following EU funded projects can be mentioned:

- IPA 2008 - "Support to the Albanian Civil Service/Department of Public Administration";
- IPA 2012 – the twinning project Support to Albanian Civil Service Reform;
- IPA 2015/ Sector Reform Contract for Public Administration Reform;
- IPA 2015 - Young Civil Servants Scholarship Scheme (YCSSS);
- IPA 2014 – Service contract "Implementation of civil service reform across the public administration" – currently under implementation;
- IPA 2014 – Supply contract "Establishment of computer based solutions to enable implementation of several components and control mechanisms"
- IPA 2015: Support to the Reform of Subordinated Institutions and Agencies in Albania.
- IPA 2015: Technical Assistance for improving Regulatory framework and Public Consultation
- IPA 2015: Technical Assistance to Integrated Policy Management Groups (IPMGs) for policy dialogue and coordination

One of the key players is OECD/SIGMA, an initiative co-funded by the EU and which made a significant contribution to developing the current administrative framework in Albania (Policy Coordination, Human Resource Management, Accountability and Service Delivery, Public Finance Management);

This call for proposals is developed following the above-mentioned Young Civil Servants Scholarship Scheme (YCSSS). The overall objectives of the project were to support the civil service reform and to enhance the attractiveness of the civil service through the development and implementation of a scholarship programme dedicated to young civil servants.

Taking into consideration the success of the pilot phase of the YCSSS, and the added value that such project brought to our new civil servants in terms of capacity, knowledge, skills and motivation, during 2019 a second call for proposals was prepared and launched under the IPA 2015 Programme with the aim at contributing to the development of a professional, efficient and highly skilled public administration in Albania in a more sustainable and permanent way. The lessons learned from the pilot phase provided valuable feedback for the optimal solutions that can be efficiently implemented in a long term perspective.

The call for proposals was published¹ in the European Commission website in April 2019 with the purpose to select an organisation that would further support the Department of Public Administration in the civil service reform through the development and implementation of a scholarship programme dedicated to young civil servants. That call was however closed without receiving any application.

The main objective of this call for proposals remains the same due to the continued importance of raising capacities of the Albanian public administration by targeting newly integrated civil servants who work in the main areas of the administration.

Thus, this guideline aims to support Albania's European Integration process and maintain the on-going public administration reform by providing to the civil service employees strong skills and knowledge in the main fields of the reforms.

The beneficiaries of this programme are new civil servants of Category III² and Category IV³ of the state administration, independent institutions and local government units that have from 3 to 8 years' experience in the civil service.

Reviewing the country reports issued for Albania by the European Commission in the last years, the monitoring report published by OECD-SIGMA and other relevant documents⁴ one of the main problems highlighted refers to the reduced institutional capacity for policy coordination, review and monitoring,. Albania has registered progresses in the assessed fields. However, there are still structural reforms that need to be implemented and enforced. Along with these, capacity building solutions need to be strengthened and implemented in a systemic manner. Some of the main problems are:

- The low implementation rate and effectiveness of public administration reforms;
- The quality of policy making and related analysis is weak;
- The financial management and control system is weak.

The following structural causes have been identified:

- Lack of skills and knowledge inside the institutions;
- Inefficient allocation of the resources;
- Lack of coordination mechanisms;
- Lack of clear regulation and procedures;
- Reduced commitment at the managerial level.

By not addressing properly the causes that generate the main problem, the effects will continue to be amplified and will affect in a negative way the progress in the strategic areas including those related to EU integration process. Therefore, the need to increase the overall capacity of the public administration and especially of those involved in the EU integration process and the need to invest in good management practices for management and co-ordination of the integration process should be among the main areas to be addressed.

¹<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1568613341012&do=publi.detPUB&orderbyad=Desc&page=1&nbPubliList=15&aoref=164379&searchtype=QS&orderby=upd&userlanguage=en>

² Category III in the civil service includes Civil Servants in the Low Management Level, according to DoCM no. 142 dated 12.03.2014 as amended, accessible in the link <http://dap.gov.al/legjislacioni/per-sherbimin-civil/117-vendim-nr-142-date-12-3-2014-per-pershkrimin-dhe-klasifikimin-e-pozicioneve-te-punes-ne-institucionet-e-administrates-shteterore-dhe-institucionet-e-pavarura>

³ Category IV in the civil service includes Civil Servants in the executive level, according to DoCM no. 142 dated 12.03.2014 as amended, accessible in the link <http://dap.gov.al/legjislacioni/per-sherbimin-civil/117-vendim-nr-142-date-12-3-2014-per-pershkrimin-dhe-klasifikimin-e-pozicioneve-te-punes-ne-institucionet-e-administrates-shteterore-dhe-institucionet-e-pavarura>

⁴ For more details, see Monitoring report: The principles of Public Administration, Albania", OECD-SIGMA; the published European Commission's Progress Reports for Albania and the conclusions and recommendations from the High-Level Dialogue – PAR Special Groups, in the DoPA official website <http://dap.gov.al/publikime/dokumenta-strategjik>

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The purpose of the call is to select an organisation that will support further the Department of Public Administration in the civil service reform through the development and implementation of a scholarship programme dedicated to young civil servants.

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is to contribute to the development of an effective, efficient and transparent public administration in Albania, able to support the progress in the priority areas linked to the EU accession.

The **specific objective(s)** of this call for proposals is/are:

- i) To improve the professional capacity and expertise of civil servants of category III and category IV of the state administration, independent institutions and local government units in key sectors of the Albanian public administration by providing the confirmed civil servants with the opportunity to undertake practical training and internships in EU Member States schools and public administration. This will further enable them to support the Albanian Government in meeting the obligations and challenges arising from the EU Integration Process and other strategic commitments at national and international level.
- ii) To develop sustainable mechanisms aimed at supporting the career development of the skilled young civil servants, enabling them to significantly contribute to the efficiency and innovativeness of the Albanian public administration and to the main reforms. This project calls for a special focus on new civil servants (civil servants of Category III and Category IV of the state administration, independent institutions and local government units that have from 3 to 8 years' experience in the civil service) from posting upon completion of the program, as well as in their subsequent career, so as to make the best use of the enhanced capability that they represent. Also identified is the encouragement of networking and esprit de corps among alumni.

The programme should address the key priorities⁵ of the government and not focus on particular institutional needs. As example, among the governmental priorities can be included all the aspects related to EU Integration process; public administration reform; policy coordination and decision-making process, etc. The strategic priorities of the Government for the upcoming years are in fields such as: legal approximation process; preparation for coordination of the EU negotiations; overall policy coordination; developing or implementation of an important reform etc, areas in which further professional development and capacity raising is needed. The priority of this call for proposals is to enhance the capacity and expertise of civil servants of category III and category IV of the state administration, independent institutions and local government units in key sectors in line with the Government priorities and to EU accession.

1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 700,000**. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Size of grants

The grant covers the entire eligible cost of the action.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

⁵ These key priorities will be assessed as an added value element under STEP 1 Evaluation Grid point 1.4.

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?locale=en>).⁶

2.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE AWARDING OF THE CONTRACT IS SUBJECT TO THE CONDITION OF APPROVAL FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION OF THE REQUEST FOR EXCEPTION TO MODIFY THE GUIDELINES FOR GRANT APPLICANTS' TEMPLATE WITH REGARDS TO THE ELIGIBLE ACTIONS AND PORTION OF SCHOLARSHIPS.

THERE ARE THREE SETS OF ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, RELATING TO:

(1) the actors:

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

(2) the actions:

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

(3) the costs:

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

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

Lead applicant

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

- be a legal person, **and**
 - be a specific type of organisation such as: public or private Universities / advanced Education training institutes, public sector operator (such as Ministries, Public Agencies, Official Councils and Committees involved in the field of Public Administration), Schools of Public Administration of Member States, **and**
 - be established in⁷ a Member State of the European Union
- and**

⁶ Note that a lead applicant (i.e. a coordinator) whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission and who is awarded a grant will not sign the standard grant contract published with these guidelines but a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. All references in these guidelines and other documents related to this call to the standard grant contract shall in this case be understood as referring to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement template.

⁷ To be determined on the basis of the organisation's statutes, which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a 'Memorandum of Understanding' has been concluded.

- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary

and

- be experienced in training delivery and internships for different civil servants' target groups at international level.

(2) Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide;

Lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entities and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant, the co-applicants and the affiliated entities are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion according to Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract. In this respect, provisionally selected lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities are obliged to declare that they are not in one of the exclusion situations through a signed declaration on honour (PRAG Annex A14) to be sent together with the full application. For grants of EUR 60 000 or less, no declaration on honour is required. See section 2.4.

In Part A, Section 3 and Part B Section 8 of the grant application form ('declaration(s) by the lead applicant'), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself, the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies) are not in any of these situations.

The lead applicant may act individually or with co-applicant(s).

If awarded the grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in Annex G (special conditions). The coordinator is the main interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

Co-applicant(s)

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

Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself.

Co-applicants must sign the mandate in Part B Section 4 of the grant application form.

If awarded the grant contract, the co-applicant(s) (if any) will become beneficiary(ies) in the action (together with the coordinator).

(3) Applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG) at the moment of the award decision cannot be awarded the contract⁸.

⁸ The updated lists of sanctions are available at www.sanctionsmap.eu.

Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

2.1.2. Affiliated entities

Affiliated entity(ies)

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

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

Only entities having a structural link with the applicants (i.e. the lead applicant or a co-applicant), in particular a legal or capital link.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

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

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

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

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

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

What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

- Entities that have entered into a (procurement) contract or subcontract with an applicant, act as concessionaires or delegates for public services for an applicant,
- Entities that receive financial support from the applicant,
- Entities that cooperate on a regular basis with an applicant on the basis of a memorandum of understanding or share some assets,
- Entities that have signed a consortium agreement under the grant contract (unless this consortium agreement leads to the creation of a 'sole applicant' as described above).

How to verify the existence of the required link with an applicant?

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

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

If the applicants are awarded a grant contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become beneficiary(ies) of the action and signatory(ies) of the grant contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the implementation of the action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for implementation contracts and financial support to third parties) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the beneficiary(ies) under the grant contract.

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

2.1.3. Associates and contractors

The following entities are not applicants nor affiliated entities and do not have to sign the 'mandate for co-applicant(s)' or 'affiliated entities' statement':

- Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Part B Section 6 — 'Associates participating in the action' — of the grant application form.

- Contractors

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

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

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of the action may not be lower than 12 months nor exceed 15 months.

Sectors or themes

See section 1.2 of the present Guidelines

Location

Actions must take place in Albania and in the EU member states countries

Types of action

Types of action which may be financed under this call:

- Prioritization at the national level of key areas, drawing upon a range of existing expertise in Government sectors;
- Actions to implement successfully the training programme and internship;

- Actions that promote mechanisms for follow-up, monitoring and assessment of the job performance and promotion of civil servants' part of this scheme and also part of the entire civil service;
- Actions that promote and support the Albanian government in coordinating, retaining and motivating the graduates;
- Actions aiming to increase the capacities of young civil servants and prepare them for the EU integration process;
- Actions such as sharing information on public administration reform or EU integration in various events, round tables, public information and visibility and communication actions.

The following types of action are ineligible:

Please note that the awarding of the contract is subject to the condition of approval from the European Commission of the request for exception to modify the guidelines for grant applicants' template with regards to the ineligible actions and portion of scholarships as per following actions:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses.

Types of **action** which may be financed under this Call, which are **eligible** and may be financed, are those directly contributing to the achievement of the objectives and priorities (as per section 1.2 above):

Types of activity

Types of activity which may be financed under this call:

- Design of training programmes according to the strategic priorities of the government⁹;
- Organising the pre-selection and selection procedures of 25 civil servants of category III and category IV of the state administration, independent institutions and local government units which will benefit from the programme;
- Conducting training needs assessments;
- Developing tailor-made training programmes for the target groups;
- Delivering training programmes, study visits and internships for the target groups, in the country and abroad
- Designing and printing the training materials and other documents related to the training programme;
- Visibility and advertising activities;
- Workshops and networking activities for the alumni of the programmes

Financial support to third parties¹⁰

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties.

Visibility

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

Applicants must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing (see the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU external actions specified and published by the

⁹ <http://dap.gov.al/publikime/dokumenta-strategjik/278-strategjia-kombetare-per-zhvillim-dhe-integrim>

¹⁰ These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

European Commission at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/communication-and-visibility-manual-eu-external-actions_en).

Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

The lead applicant **may not** submit more than **1 (one)** application under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant **may not** be awarded more than **1 (one)** grant under this call for proposals.

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

A co-applicant/affiliated entity **may not** be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in more than **1 (one)** application under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity **may not** be awarded more than 1 (one) grant under this call for proposals.

2.1.5. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

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

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

- financing not linked to costs of the relevant operations based on:
 - (i) either the fulfilment of conditions set out in sector specific legislation or Commission Decisions;or
 - (ii) the achievement of results measured by reference to the previously set milestones or through performance indicators;
- actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);
- one or more simplified cost options.

Simplified cost options may take the form of:

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

Simplified costs options (SCOs) are divided in two categories:

1/ "output or result based SCOs": this category includes costs linked to outputs, results, activities, deliverables in the framework of a specific project (for example the determination of a lump sum for the organization of a conference, or for the realisation of a determined output/activity). Where possible and appropriate, lump sums, unit costs or flat rates shall be determined in such a way to allow their payment upon achievement of concrete outputs and/or results. This type of SCO can be proposed by the Beneficiary (no threshold is applicable) at proposal's stage. In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

2/ "other SCOs" . This second category, which is only applicable to pillar assessed entities, entails simplified cost options embedded in the cost accounting practices of the beneficiary, for which an ex-ante assessment is

deemed necessary, considering the need of a consistent application of the conditions required. In order to enable the use of these SCOs, the beneficiary's cost accounting practices need to have been positively assessed by an audit firm based on standard Terms of Reference provided by the Commission. To obtain reimbursement of this category of SCOs, the beneficiary shall make reference to the previously obtained ex-ante assessment in the budget justification sheet (annex B).

The amounts or rates have to be based on estimates using objective data such as statistical data or any other objective means or with reference to certified or auditable historical data of the applicants or the affiliated entity(ies). Determining SCO is possible also through 'expert judgement' provided by internally available experts or procured in accordance with the applicable rules. Experts must be either commissioned auditors or chartered accountants, or staff of the Commission but cannot be staff of the beneficiary. The methods used to determine the amounts or rates of unit costs, lump sums or flat-rates must comply with the criteria established in Annex K, and especially ensure that the costs correspond fairly to the actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies), are in line with their cost accounting practices, no profit is made and the costs are not already covered by other sources of funding (no double funding). Refer to Annex K for the details of the procedure to be followed depending on the type and amount of the costs to be declared as SCO.

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

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

- describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of unit costs, lump sums and/or flat-rates, to which costs they refer, etc for output or result based SCO.
- clearly explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount for output or result based SCO¹¹
- make reference to the previously obtained ex-ante assessment for other SCOs.

In case of output or result based SCOs the evaluation committee and the contracting authority decide whether to accept the proposed amounts or rates on the basis of the provisional budget submitted by the applicants, by analysing factual data of grants carried out by the applicants or of similar actions. In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

No threshold is set ex-ante for the total amount of financing that can be authorised by the contracting authority on the basis of simplified cost options. Other SCOs can be declared only if previously successfully ex-ante assessed.

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

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

¹¹ Examples: - for staff costs: number of hours or days of work * hourly or daily rate pre-set according to the category of personnel concerned; - for travel expenses: distance in km * pre-set cost of transport per km; number of days * daily allowance pre-set according to the country; - for specific costs arising from the organization of an event: number of participants at the event * pre-set total cost per participant etc.

The grant may take the form of a single lump-sum covering the entire eligible costs of an action or a work programme.

Single lump sums may be determined on the basis of the estimated budget, which should comply with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Compliance with these principles shall be verified ex ante at the time of evaluation of the grant application.

When authorising single lump sums, the authorising officer responsible shall comply with the conditions applicable to output or result based SCOs.

When using this form of financing, the description of the action shall include detailed information on the essential conditions triggering the payment, including, where applicable, the achievement of outputs and/or results.

The responsible authorising officer may consider that the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary are compliant with the conditions applicable to simplified cost options, if they are accepted by national authorities under comparable funding schemes. In this case the grant beneficiary shall demonstrate that the national authority accepted the cost accounting practices and will have to specify in which context this acceptance is given.

The evaluation committee and the contracting authority will assess if the funding scheme is comparable and in case of positive outcome will consider these practices as if they were ex-ante assessed by an external auditor.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines).

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

Contingency reserve

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

Eligible indirect costs

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

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

Contributions in kind

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

As an exception, contributions in kind may include personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or work programme (which are eligible costs).

Volunteers' work may comprise up to 50 % of the co-financing. For the purposes of calculating this percentage, contributions in kind in the form of volunteers' work must be based on the unit cost provided by

the contracting authority. This type of costs must be presented separately from other eligible costs in the estimated budget. The value of the volunteer's work must always be excluded from the calculation of indirect costs.

When the estimated costs include volunteers' work, the grant shall not exceed the estimated eligible costs other than the costs for volunteers' work.

Other co-financing shall be based on estimates provided by the applicant.

Contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing

However, if the description of the action as proposed includes contributions in kind, the contributions have to be made.

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant;
- purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred in accordance with Article 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;
- currency exchange losses;
- credit to third parties.

Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular, and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The European Commission reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, 'corrupt practices' are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

d) Unusual commercial expenses

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

e) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

Information in PADOR will not be drawn upon in the present call.

2.2.1. Concept note content

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the concept note instructions in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A).

Applicants must apply in English.

Please note that:

1. In the concept note, lead applicants must only provide an estimate of the requested EU contribution as well as an indicative percentage of that contribution in relation to the eligible costs of the action. A detailed budget is to be submitted only by the lead applicants invited to submit a full application in the second phase.
2. The elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application. The EU contribution may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%. Lead applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and

percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these guidelines in Section 1.3. The lead applicant may replace a co-applicant or an affiliated entity only in duly justified cases (e.g. bankruptcy of initial co-applicant or affiliated entity). In this case the new co-applicant/affiliated entity must be of a similar nature as the initial one. The lead applicant may adjust the duration of the action if unforeseen circumstances outside the scope of the applicants have taken place following the submission of the concept note and require such adaptation (risk of action not being carried out). In such cases the duration must remain within the limits imposed by the guidelines for applicants. An explanation/justification of the relevant replacement/adjustment shall be included in an accompanying letter or email.

Own contributions by the applicants can be replaced by other donors' contributions at any time.

3. Only the concept note form will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that this document contains ALL relevant information concerning the action. No additional annexes should be sent.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the concept note instructions may lead to the rejection of the concept note.

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

Hand-written concept notes will not be accepted.

2.2.2. Where and how to send concept notes

The concept note together with its relating checklist and declaration by the lead applicant (to be found in **Part A Sections 2 and 3** of the grant application form) must be submitted in **one original** and **(three) copies** in A4 size, each bound.

An electronic version of the concept note must also be submitted. A CD-Rom or USB with the concept note in electronic format will be included, along with the paper version, in a sealed envelope as described below. The electronic file must contain **exactly the same** application as the paper version enclosed.

Where lead applicants send several different concept notes (if allowed to do so by the guidelines of the call), each one must be sent separately.

The envelope must bear the **reference number** and the **title of the call for proposals**, together with the full name and address of the lead applicant, and the words 'Not to be opened before the opening session' and "*Të mos hapet përpara sesionit të hapjes*".

Concept notes must be submitted in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) to the address below:

Postal address

General Directorate for Financing and Contracting of EU, World Bank and Other Donor Funds/ (CFCU)
Ministry of Finance and Economy, Third floor (CFCU's protocol office),
Bulevardi Deshmoret e Kombit, No. 3
1001 Tirana, Albania

Address for hand delivery or by private courier service

General Directorate for Financing and Contracting of EU, World Bank and Other Donor Funds/ (CFCU)
Ministry of Finance and Economy, Third floor (CFCU's protocol office),
Bulevardi Deshmoret e Kombit, No. 3
1001 Tirana, Albania

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

Lead applicants must verify that their concept note is complete using the checklist for concept note (Part A Section 2 of the grant application form). Incomplete concept notes may be rejected.

2.2.3. Deadline for submission of concept notes

The applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that there are two different systems for sending concept notes: one is by post or private courier service, the other is by hand delivery.

In the first case, the concept note must be sent before the date for submission, as evidenced by the postmark or deposit slip¹², but in the second case it is the acknowledgment of receipt given at the time of the delivery of the concept note which will serve as proof.

The deadline for the submission of concept notes is **14.10.2021** as evidenced by the date of dispatch, the postmark or the date of the deposit slip. In the case of hand-deliveries, the deadline for receipt is at **14.10.2021, before 16:00 hrs local time**, as evidenced by the signed and dated receipt. Any concept note submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

The contracting authority may, for reasons of administrative efficiency, reject any concept note submitted on time to the postal service but received, for any reason beyond the contracting authority's control, after the effective date of approval of the concept note evaluation, if accepting concept notes that were submitted on time but arrived late would considerably delay the evaluation procedure) or jeopardise decisions already taken and notified (see indicative calendar under Section 2.5.2)

2.2.4. Further information about concept notes

An information session on this call for proposals will be organised through web streaming.

The exact date and the hour of streaming will be published in the website of EU Delegation to Albania, CFCU and Department of Public Administration before the deadline for submission of the concept notes.

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of concept notes to the address(es) below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: Veronika Korkaj, General Director CFCU: veronika.korkaj@financa.gov.al

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

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

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

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

¹² It is recommended to use registered mail in case the postmark would not be readable.

Please note that the contracting authority may decide to cancel the call for proposals procedure at any stage according to the conditions set out in Section 6.5.9 of the PRAG.

2.2.5. Full applications

Lead applicants invited to submit a full application following pre-selection of their concept note must do so using Part B of the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

The elements outlined in the concept note cannot be modified by the lead applicant in the full application. The EU contribution may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20 %, although lead applicants are free to adapt the percentage of co-financing required within the minimum and maximum amount and percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these guidelines under Section 1.3. The lead applicant may replace a co-applicant or an affiliated entity only in duly justified cases (e.g. bankruptcy of initial co-applicant or affiliated entity). In this case the new co-applicant/affiliated entity must be of a similar nature as the initial one. The lead applicant may adjust the duration of the action if unforeseen circumstances outside the scope of the applicants have taken place following the submission of the concept note and require such adaptation (risk of action not being carried out). In such cases the duration must remain within the limits imposed by the guidelines for applicants. An explanation/justification of the relevant replacement/adjustment shall be included in an accompanying letter or email.

Lead applicants must submit their full applications in the same language as their concept notes.

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

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

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

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that only the full application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be transmitted to the evaluators (and assessors, if used). It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

With the full application the lead applicant also has to submit completed EuropeAid offline registration form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each (if any) co-applicants and each (if any) affiliated entities¹³.

No additional annexes should be sent.

2.2.6. Where and how to send full applications

Full applications (i.e. the full application form, the budget, the logical framework and the declaration by the lead applicant) must be submitted in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) to the address below:

Postal address

General Directorate for Financing and Contracting of EU, World Bank and Other Donor

¹³Please ensure the veracity of the data provided which will be subject of verification during the step III eligibility check.

Funds/ (CFCU)
Ministry of Finance and Economy, Third floor (CFCU's protocol office),
Bulevardi Deshmoret e Kombit, No. 3
1001 Tirana, Albania

Address for hand delivery or by private courier service

General Directorate for Financing and Contracting of EU, World Bank and Other Donor
Funds/ (CFCU)
Ministry of Finance and Economy, Third floor (CFCU's protocol office),
Bulevardi Deshmoret e Kombit, No. 3
1001 Tirana, Albania

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

Applications must be submitted in **one original** and **3 (three) copies** in A4 size, each bound. The full application form, budget and logical framework must also be supplied in electronic format (CD-Rom or USB) in a separate and single file (i.e. the full application must not be split into several different files). The electronic file must contain **exactly the same** application as the paper version.

The checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form) and the declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 of Part B of the grant application form) must be stapled separately and enclosed in the envelope

Where lead applicants send several different applications (if allowed to do so by the guidelines of the call), each one must be sent separately.

The envelope must bear the **reference number and the title of the call for proposals**, together with the number and title of the lot, the full name and address of the lead applicant, and the words 'Not to be opened before the opening session' and "*Të mos hapet përpara sesionit të hapjes*".

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

2.2.7. <i>Deadline for submission of full applications</i>
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The applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that there are two different systems for sending full applications: one is by post or private courier service, the other is by hand delivery.

In the first case, the full application must be sent before the date for submission, as evidenced by the postmark or deposit slip, but in the second case it is the acknowledgment of receipt given at the time of the delivery of the full application which will serve as proof.

The deadline for the submission of full applications will be indicated in the letter sent to the lead applicants whose application has been pre-selected.

The contracting authority may, for reasons of administrative efficiency, reject any application submitted on time to the postal service but received, for any reason beyond the contracting authority's control, after the effective date of approval of the full application evaluation, if accepting applications that were submitted on time but arrived late would considerably delay the award procedure or jeopardise decisions already taken and notified (see indicative calendar under Section 2.5.2).

2.2.8. <i>Further information about full applications</i>

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

E-mail address: Veronika Korkaj, General Director CFCU: veronika.korkaj@financa.gov.al

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

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

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), or an action.

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

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

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

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

During the opening and administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Section 2 of Part A of the grant application form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The concept notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note, which can be found in Part A of the grant application form.

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

Scores*

1. Relevance of the action		Sub-score	20
1.1	How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5	
1.2	How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5	
1.3	How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5	
1.4	Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)?	5	
2. Design of the action		Sub-score	30
2.1	How coherent is the overall design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results?	5x2**	
2.2	Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5	
2.3	Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)?	5	

2.4 Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic?	5	
2.5 To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth, combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)?	5	
TOTAL SCORE		50

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

**this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

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

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

Secondly, the number of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to **200%** of the available budget for this call for proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot, where relevant.

After the evaluation of concept notes, the contracting authority will send letters to all lead applicants, indicating whether their application was submitted by the deadline, informing them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether the concept note was evaluated and the results of that evaluation. The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications.

STEP 2: OPENING & ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

- If the submission deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will automatically be rejected.
- If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form). This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The full applications that pass this check will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

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

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

The award criteria help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

Scoring:

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

Evaluation grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Financial and operational capacity	20
1.1 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house experience of project management?	5
1.2 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house technical expertise? (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)	5
1.3 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house management capacity? (Including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.4 Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?	5
2. Relevance	20
<i>Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation</i>	
3. Design of the action	15
3.1 How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)?	5
3.2 Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification? If not, is a baseline study foreseen (and is the study budgeted appropriately in the proposal)?	5
3.3 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5
4. Implementation approach	15
4.1 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic?	5
4.2 Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)?	5
4.3 Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	5
5. Sustainability of the action	15
5.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5

5.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing?	5
5.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financially (<i>e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs</i>) - Institutionally (<i>will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?</i>) - At policy level (where applicable) (<i>what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods</i>) - Environmentally (if applicable) (<i>will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?</i>) 	5
6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	15
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	/ 5
6.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory?	/ 10
Maximum total score	100

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the lead applicant applies without co-applicants or affiliated entities the score for point 4.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of co-applicants or affiliated entities is mandatory according to these guidelines for applicants.

Provisional selection

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

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

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.4). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

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

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals.

2.4. SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR PROVISIONALLY SELECTED APPLICATIONS

A lead applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents in order to allow the contracting authority to verify the eligibility of the lead applicant, (if any) of the co-applicant(s) and (if any) of their affiliated entity(ies)¹⁴:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity¹⁵. Where the contracting authority has recognised the lead applicant's, or the co-applicant(s)'s, or their affiliated entity(ies)'s eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it should be submitted, instead of the statutes or articles of association, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred in the meantime¹⁶. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.
2. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants above EUR 100 000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available. In all other cases, the applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by a beneficiary to an authorising officer responsible in any one financial year.

3. The external audit report is not required from (if any) the co-applicant(s) or affiliated entities.
4. A copy of the lead applicant's latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed)¹⁷. A copy of the latest account is neither required from (if any) the co-applicant(s) nor from (if any) affiliated entity(ies)).
5. Legal entity sheet (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and (if any) by each co-applicant), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the contracting authority, instead of the legal entity sheet and supporting documents, the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.
6. A financial identification form of the lead applicant (not from co-applicant(s)) conforming to the model attached as Annex E of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the lead applicant is established. If the lead applicant has already submitted a financial identification form in the past for a contract where the European Commission was in charge of the payments and intends to use the same bank account, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead.

¹⁴ No supporting document will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000.

¹⁵ Where the lead applicant and/or a co-applicant(s) and or an affiliated entity(ies) is a public body created by a law, a copy of the said law must be provided.

¹⁶ To be inserted only where the eligibility conditions have not changed from one call for proposals to the other.

¹⁷ This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received a scholarship or that are in most need in receipt of direct support, nor to public bodies and to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to Section 2.4.2.

7. The lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in and sign the declaration on honour certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.6.10.1 of the PRAG).

Documents must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union or in the Albanian language, a translation into English language of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, must be attached for the purpose of analysing the application.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than English language, it is **strongly** recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, into English language.

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

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

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

2.5. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

2.5.1. Content of the decision

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

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

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm

2.5.2. Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME
1. Information meeting (if any)	As defined in Section 2.2.4 of this Guideline for Applicants	
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	23.09.2021	16:00
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	01.09.2021	-
4. Deadline for submission of concept notes	14.10.2021	16:00
5. Information to lead applicants on opening, administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)	December 2021	-
6. Invitations to submit full application	December 2021	-
6. Deadline for submission of full applications	January 2022	-
7. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)	May 2022	-
8. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)	July 2022	-
9. Contract signature	September 2022	-

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site of DG International Cooperation and Development: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome> and CFCU website: <http://cfcu.financa.gov.al/>.

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

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract. Where the coordinator is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed, it will sign a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. In this case references to provisions of the standard grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the grant contract shall be understood as references to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement.

Implementation contracts

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

In this context, a distinction should be made between awarding implementation contracts and subcontracting parts of the action described in the proposal, i.e. the description of the action annexed to the grant contract , such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

Awarding implementation contracts: implementation contracts relate to the acquisition by beneficiaries of routine services and/or necessary goods and equipment as part of their project management; they do not cover any outsourcing of tasks forming part of the action that are described in the proposal, i.e. in the description of the action annexed to the grant contract.

Subcontracting: Subcontracting is the implementation, by a third party with which one or more beneficiaries have concluded a procurement contract, of specific tasks forming part of the action as described in annex to the grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

- Annex A: Grant application form (Word format)
Annex B: Budget (Excel format)
Annex C: Logical framework (Word format)
Annex D: Legal entity sheet¹⁸
Annex E: Financial identification form
Annex F: EuropeAid offline registration form

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION¹⁹

- Annex G: Standard grant contract
- Annex II: general conditions
 - Annex IV: contract award rules
 - Annex V: standard request for payment
 - Annex VI: model narrative and financial report
 - Annex VII: model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action
 - Annex VIII: model financial guarantee
 - Annex IX: standard template for transfer of ownership of assets
- Annex H: Declaration on Honour
- Annex I: Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address:
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-procurement-contracts/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag/diems_en
- Annex J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.
- Annex K: Guidelines for assessing simplified cost options.

Useful links:

Project Cycle Management Guidelines

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

The implementation of grant contracts

A Users' Guide

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

Financial Toolkit

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

Please note: The toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with

¹⁸ Only applicable where the European Commission will make the payments under the contracts to be signed.

¹⁹ These documents should also be published by the contracting authority.

their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

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