



Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS)

Call for proposals

RFCS-2024-JT-Big tickets for Coal

(RFCS-2024-JT)

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EUROPEAN RESEARCH EXECUTIVE AGENCY (REA)

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction	5
1. Background.....	6
RFCS policy objectives.....	6
2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact	7
RFCS-2024-JT - RFCS-2024-JT-Big Tickets for Coal.....	7
Objectives	7
Themes and priorities (scope)	10
Activities that can be funded (scope) — Type of action	11
3. Available budget.....	12
4. Timetable and deadlines	12
5. Admissibility and documents	12
6. Eligibility	13
Eligible participants (eligible countries).....	13
Consortium composition	15
Eligible activities.....	15
Geographic location (target countries).....	15
Duration	15
Project budget.....	15
Ethics.....	16
7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion.....	16
Financial capacity	16
Operational capacity	17
Exclusion	17
8. Evaluation and award procedure	18
9. Award criteria.....	19
10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements.....	20
Starting date and project duration	20
Milestones and deliverables.....	20
Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount.....	21

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules.....	21
Reporting and payment arrangements.....	22
Prefinancing guarantees	23
Certificates	23
Liability regime for recoveries	23
Provisions concerning the project implementation.....	23
Other specificities	24
Non-compliance and breach of contract	24
11. How to submit an application.....	24
12. Help	25
13. Important	27
Annex 1	30
Annex 2	31

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 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (RFCS Decision [2008/376](#)¹).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2024 Work Programme² and will be managed by the **European Research Executive Agency (REA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **RFCS-2024-JT — RFCS-2024-JT-Big Tickets for Coal**

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

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

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
 - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - award criteria (section 9)
 - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
 - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
 - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

¹ [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).

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2024)386 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2024 and the financing decision for the implementation of the RFCS programme.

You are also encouraged to visit the [Funding & Tenders Portal](#) (Projects & Results section) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

RFCS policy objectives

In line with the Paris Agreement, on 11 December 2019, the Commission published the Communication on the European Green Deal³, committing to tackle climate and environmental-related challenges and to transform the Union into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.

The communication, supported by the Fit for 55 set of legislative proposals and amendments to existing EU legislation that will help the EU cut its net greenhouse gas emissions and reach climate neutrality, also states that all Union actions and policies should pull together to help the Union achieve a successful and just transition towards a sustainable future. In line with the 'do no harm' principle referred to in the communication, the objectives of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel are being revised, so as to no longer cover activities that perpetuate the extraction, processing and unabated use of coal.

Following the EC communication on the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan and the European Green Deal Investment Plan⁴ the Council Decision 2008/376/EC⁵ for the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS) has been revised and updated, with the aim of enabling the funding of large clean steelmaking R&I breakthrough projects as well as research activities in the coal sector in line with the principles of the Just Transition Mechanism, meaning to provide support to the people and regions most negatively affected by the transition to climate neutrality and to help alleviate the socioeconomic costs of the transition. The RFCS Research Programme shall support collaborative research in the coal sector and shall also provide support for research projects for managing the just transition of formerly operating coal mines or coal mines in the process of closure and related infrastructure in compliance with Article 4(2) of Council Decision 2021/1094⁶.

The present Call is in line with the Council Decision (EU) 2021/1094⁶, together the other Council Decisions (EU) 2021/1207⁷ and 2021/1208 which constitute the new legal basis for the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS), with the newly adopted objectives of the RFCS programme. Additionally, the present Call is also aligned with the existing and incoming relevant legislative initiatives, such as REPowerEU, the Just Transition Mechanism, the Critical Raw Material Act, the EU strategy to reduce methane emissions, the EU Biodiversity

³ [European Green Deal](#)

⁴ [Sustainable Europe Investment Plan European Green Deal Investment Plan](#)

⁵ [Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel](#)

⁶ [Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel](#)

⁷ [Council Decision \(EU\) 2021/1207 of 19 July 2021 amending Decision 2003/77/EC laying down multiannual financial guidelines for managing the assets of the ECSC in liquidation and, on completion of the liquidation, the Assets of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel](#)

Strategy for 2030, the EU Soil Strategy for 2030 and the Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe'.

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

- Supporting the just transition of the coal sector and regions (Art. 4);
- Improving health and safety (Art. 5);
- Minimising the environmental impacts of coal mines in transition (Art. 6).

Special attention shall be given to proposals focusing on repurposing of former coal and lignite mines as well as coal-related infrastructure, including power supply services, in line with a climate-neutral and environmentally friendly transition in compliance with Article 4(1.d) of Council Decision 2021/1094).

Proposals will aim to build and strengthen synergies with other EU initiatives when relevant, including but not limited to an increased cooperation with cohesion policy (incl. the Just Transition Fund, the European Regional and Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund Plus), LIFE, Processes4Planet Partnership, Clean Energy Transition Partnership, and Clean Hydrogen Partnership, as well as seeking complementarity with projects funded under Horizon Europe.

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

RFCS-2024-JT - RFCS-2024-JT-Big Tickets for Coal

Objectives

This topic focuses on the following objectives:

1. Repurposing of former coal and lignite mines and coal-related infrastructure including power supply services

Proposals addressing this objective shall support the just transition of the coal sector and regions, as described in Art. 4 of the RFCS Decision 2021/1094, and in line with the goals set by the REPowerEU Plan. Research projects shall support the transition towards a climate-neutral Union economy by 2050, the phasing out of fossil fuels and developing alternative activities on former mine sites.

Proposals are expected to demonstrate and/or deploy viable technical solutions that contribute to the repurposing of former coal and lignite mines and coal-related infrastructure. These solutions must accelerate the development and prepare the deployment of climate neutral, clean, socially responsible and economically viable alternative uses of existing infrastructure.

When possible, the solutions will look for complementarity to existing projects under Horizon Europe Cluster 5 (Destination: Sustainable, secure and competitive energy supply).

Proposals addressing this objective should cover at least one of the following areas:

- 1.1. Use of geothermal energy on former coal and lignite sites. Project results are expected to contribute to at least one of the following expected outcomes:

- 1.1.1. Advanced exploration technologies for geothermal energy adapted to the specific environmental concerns and challenges posed by coal and lignite sites, with a focus on improving the performance and reliability and circularity of deep geothermal systems. Projects must include the development and application of new tools and techniques specific for coal and lignite sites.
- 1.1.2. Smart use of geothermal electricity and heating and cooling in the energy system. The focus will be on improving system integration of geothermal heat and former coal power plants coping with changing demand for electricity, heat and cooling and intermittent renewable power generation.
- 1.1.3. Development of geothermal resources in former coal mines or coal mines in the process of closure. Projects must demonstrate energy efficient, environmentally sound and economically viable generation of electricity, and/or heating and cooling from geothermal resources in an operating or former coal or lignite mine.
- 1.2. Use of energy storage solutions on former coal and lignite sites. Proposals must include deliverables addressing possible solutions to existing market barriers such as regulatory barriers, permitting and environmental concerns. Proposals are expected to contribute to at least one of the following expected outcomes:
 - 1.2.1. Demonstrate the use of energy storage addressing the specific adaptability challenges to former operating coal and lignite sites. Energy storage solutions can include but are not limited to: thermal energy storage, compressed air storage and gravitational batteries.
 - 1.2.2. Deployment of pumped storage hydropower addressing the specific adaptability challenges to former operating coal and lignite sites.
- 1.3. Deployment of renewable and sustainable energy on former and operating coal and lignite sites, other than geothermal.
- 1.4. Demonstrate the use of small and/or medium-sized modular nuclear reactors in an operating coal power plant site connected to the electric grid. SMRs could play a role through dispatchable and flexible low-carbon electricity and heat, and increased energy efficiency of the associated processes.
- 1.5. Demonstrate and/or deploy breakthrough viable technical solutions for the processing of methane emissions (either by destroying/oxidising the methane molecules or by recovering and using them as an energy source) from operating, closed and abandoned coal mines. Proposals must demonstrate a significant reduction of emissions, and when relevant, a reduction in overall environmental and atmospheric pollution.

2. Materials and waste reuse, and development of alternative materials, including recovery of critical raw materials

Proposals addressing this objective shall support the non-energetic uses and production of raw materials (minerals and metals) from mining wastes and residues from formerly operating coal mines or those in the process of closure, as described in Art. 4 (c) and Art. 6 (c) of the RFCS Decision 2021/1094.

Proposals are expected to demonstrate and/or deploy viable technical solutions that contribute to the development of alternative materials, or demonstrate and/or deploy

alternative drilling, extraction, recovery and/or processing techniques of Critical Raw Materials⁸ in coal-related sites.

Alternatively, proposals can instead demonstrate and/or deploy viable technical solutions that contribute to the on the reuse of materials related to the exploitation of mines and/or use of coal-related infrastructure, refurbishing waste heaps and using industrially residues from coal production and consumption in coal regions.

These solutions must prove a significant holistic reduction of environmental impacts on soil, water, and air quality, biodiversity and climate, in line with the European Green Deal, the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030, the EU soil strategy for 2030 the EU zero pollution action plan. Projects must also demonstrate circularity and economic potential.

When possible, the solutions will look for complementarity to existing projects under Horizon Europe Cluster 4 (Destination: Climate neutral, Circular and Digitised Production)⁹.

Proposals addressing this objective should address at least one of the following areas:

- 2.1. Demonstrate and/or deploy economically viable exploitation operations within coal and lignite sites for extraction of critical raw materials, in particular strategic raw materials⁸. Proposals are encouraged to leverage on existing infrastructure. In line with the Green Deal aim, proposal activities will not worsen environmental status within the facilities and will not produce a negative environmental impact outside the facilities.
- 2.2. Demonstrating non-energetic uses and the production of raw materials (minerals and metals) from mining wastes and residues from coal and lignite sites. Proposals must pursue circularity and ensure a climate, environmental and health impact that is lower than alternative solutions.
- 2.3. Demonstrate environmentally friendly and circular solutions on the reutilization of mining waste, fly ash and desulphurisation products as well as, where relevant, other forms of waste in coal and lignite sites.

3. Land monitoring, modelling, stabilisation and/or restoration

Projects under this objective will support the minimising the environmental impacts of coal mines in transition, as described in Art. 6 of the RFCS Decision 2021/1094¹. In particular, projects under this objective will support environmental restoration of formerly operating coal mines or those in the process of closure, as well as affected adjacent areas and communities.

Projects are expected to demonstrate and/or deploy viable technical solutions that contribute to the land restoration, in particular surrounding and nearby water, land, soils and biodiversity affected by the activity of mines and related infrastructure. When relevant, these solutions must address potential secondary issues indirectly linked to land restoration that have relevant environmental damage, such as methane emissions or soil acidification.

Proposals addressing this objective should address at least one of the following areas:

⁸ [Critical Raw Materials](#)

⁹ [HORIZON-CL4-2024-RESILIENCE-01-01](#), [HORIZON-CL4-2023-RESILIENCE-01-03](#), [HORIZON-CL4-2024-RESILIENCE-01-04](#), [HORIZON-CL4-2023-RESILIENCE-01-07](#), [HORIZON-CL4-2024-RESILIENCE-01-11](#)

- 3.1. Demonstration and/or deployment of technological solutions aiming at restoring the environment of closed or in the process of closure coal and lignite mines and their surroundings, in particular water, land, soils and biodiversity.
- 3.2. Demonstration and/or deployment of technological solutions aiming at protecting surface infrastructure against the effects of subsidence, ground movements in the short and long term and extreme weather events.

4. Processing of methane emissions

Proposals under this objective shall support the reduction of environmental impacts of coal mines in transition, as described in Art. 6 of the RFCS Decision 2021/1094¹. In particular, proposals shall aim to process methane emissions, included low concentration emissions, either by destroying / oxidising the methane molecules or by recovering and using them as an energy source.

Proposals are expected to demonstrate and/or deploy breakthrough viable technical solutions for the energy recovery or the mitigation of methane emissions from operating, closed or abandoned coal mines. In the case of operating coal mines, proposals should submit ventilation air methane (VAM) processing solutions that do not impact the lifetime of the production asset but rather reduce the overall amount of the greenhouse gases associated with that asset.

When possible, the solutions will look for complementarity to existing projects under Horizon Europe Cluster 5 (Destination: Sustainable, secure and competitive energy supply) and Cluster 6 (Destination: Clean environment and zero pollution).

Proposals addressing this objective should demonstrate and/or deploy new and improved breakthrough technologies for capturing and utilising of greenhouse gas emissions, in particular methane, in the relevant coal and lignite sites. Alternatively, proposals should demonstrate and/or deploy new and improved breakthrough technologies for mitigating methane emissions. In both cases, proposals must demonstrate a significant reduction of emissions, and when relevant, a reduction in overall environmental and atmospheric pollution. Proposals must also guarantee that they will not lead to any delay in the planned closures of the mines.

5. Monitoring, management and/or treatment of mine water and water tables in coal mines in the process of closure and formerly operating mines

Proposals under this objective shall support the reduction of environmental impacts of coal mines in transition, as described in Art. 6 of the RFCS Decision 2021/1094¹. In particular, proposals shall aim at demonstrating and/or deploy environmentally sustainable and viable technical solutions that contribute to the monitoring, management and/or treatment of mine water and water tables in closing or closed coal or lignite mines.

Proposals addressing this objective should cover at least one of the following areas:

- 5.1. Demonstration and/or deployment of breakthrough technological solutions for the repurpose of formerly operating coal and lignite mines as water storage facilities, especially deployment of these technologies in regions risking droughts.
- 5.2. Demonstration and/or deployment of breakthrough technological solutions for the purification of mine drainage water and/or protection of water tables.

Themes and priorities (scope)

There are no annual priorities for this topic.

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

This topic concerns RFCS Pilot and Demonstration Projects (PDPs).

Pilot Projects target the construction, operation and development of (significant parts of) installations on an appropriate scale and using suitably large components in order to examine the potential for putting theoretical or laboratory results into practice and/or increasing the reliability of the technical and economic data needed to progress to demonstration stage, and in certain cases to industrial and/or commercial stage.

Demonstration Projects cover the construction and/or operation of (significant parts of) an industrial-scale installation, in order to bring together all the technical and economic data in order to proceed with the industrial and/or commercial exploitation of the technology at minimum risk.

Both Pilot and Demonstration Projects aim to bridge the gap between Research and Innovation.

Applicants may submit proposals for either Pilot or Demonstration projects (see Art. 15 and Art. 16 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC¹⁰).

Proposals should be in line with Council Decision (EU) 2021/1094.

In line with Art. 2 of the RFCS Decision 2021/1094, research and technological development funded under the RFCS must be in line with the Just Transition Mechanism goals, meaning to provide support to the people and regions most negatively affected by the transition to climate neutrality and to help alleviate the socioeconomic costs of the transition.

Proposals are expected to include activities to:

- Facilitate the promotion of the development of efficient reskilling and upskilling programmes for workers affected by a coal phase-out, including research on the training and reskilling of workers employed or previously employed in the coal sector, in accordance with Art. 4 (e) of the RFCS Decision 2021/1094.
- Address potential solutions that improve the working conditions of employees of the phasing-out coal mines, in particular health, safety and ergonomics in and around the workplace, in accordance with Art. 10 (a) of the RFCS Decision 2021/1094.

Proposals should address the application of innovative technologies related to one or two of the five call objectives listed. If addressing two call objectives, proposals should clearly identify which Work Packages address which call objective(s).

Activities are expected to start at TRL 4-5 and achieve TRL 7-8 by the end of the project.

¹⁰ 2008/376/EC: Council Decision of 29 April 2008 on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel and on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme, (OJ L 130, 20.5.2008, p. 7). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32008D0376>.

Expected impact

Proposals are expected to include an exploitation strategy outlining possible integration of the deliverables of the project (including the pilot/demonstrators) in an industrial environment and a preliminary assessment of their economic viability. When relevant, activities related to economic analysis in the direction of a business case or new business models can also be described.

Proposals will have to demonstrate how they will support the social and economic revitalization of the former coal mines regions, in line with the relevant Territorial Just Transition Plans. Proposals shall involve the local community and focus on the communication to the stakeholders, including citizens.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 35.000.000**.

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 opening:	01 February 2024
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>25 April 2024 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	April - July 2024
Information on evaluation results:	September - October 2024
GA signature:	October - December 2024

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**.

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 organizations, higher or secondary education establishments or other legal entities*) which carry out an R&D 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 or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#)).

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. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons¹¹.

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'¹².  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 (*see above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*¹³ and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)¹⁴). 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).

¹¹ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹² For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹³ 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](#).

¹⁴ Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).



For 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

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

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

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

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Geographic location (target countries)

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

Duration

Projects should normally 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

Project budgets (requested grant amount) are expected to range between EUR 5 and EUR 9 million per project (and exceptionally up to EUR 18 million for large demonstrators).

This does not however preclude the submission/selection of a proposal requesting other amounts. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

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).

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 participate¹⁵:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct¹⁶ (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,

¹⁵ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹⁶ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

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).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that¹⁷:

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

8. Evaluation and award procedure

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

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

¹⁷ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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 cost¹⁸ 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

¹⁸ 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).

- 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)
- 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 **40%** 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 formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc*). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

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

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

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

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

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

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



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

11. How to submit an application

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

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

a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

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

b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

12. Help

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

- 1) [Online Manual](#)
- 2) FAQs 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).
- **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).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).
Organisations may participate in several proposals.
BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).

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

This includes:

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

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

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

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)

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

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 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?