



Contracting Authority: European Commission

European Union Office in Kosovo

Cross-border programme Kosovo* – North Macedonia under IPA III
(2023 allocation)

Guidelines for grant applicants

Budget line(s): BGUE-B2023-15.020300-C1-NEAR DELKOS

Reference: EuropeAid/182814/DD/ACT/XK

**Deadline for submission¹ of concept notes:
9 December 2024 at 12:00**

¹ Online submission via PROSPECT is mandatory for this call for proposals (see Section 2.2.2). In PROSPECT all dates and times are expressed in Brussels time. Applicants should note that the IT support is open Monday to Friday from 08:30 to 18:30 Brussels time (except during the European Commission public holidays in Belgium as published in the Official Journal). Applicants should take note of the weekly maintenance hours mentioned in the PROSPECT user manual.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

NOTICE

This is a restricted call for proposals. In the first instance, only concept notes (Annex A.1) must be submitted for evaluation. Thereafter, lead applicants who have been pre-selected will be invited to submit a full application (Annex A.2). 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.

To apply to this call for proposals organisations must register in PADOR and submit their application in PROSPECT (see Section 2.2.2 of the guidelines). The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations through a new panel of functionalities such as the on-line submission and the possibility to follow up online the status of their application.

All organisations may find more information regarding PROSPECT in the [user’s manual](#) and the [e-learning videos](#). You may also contact our technical support team via the online support form in PROSPECT².

² If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via email: INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu.

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1. CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMME KOSOVO-NORTH MACEDONIA UNDER IPA III – 2023 ALLOCATION

1.1 BACKGROUND

These guidelines are intended to be used by those applying for grants under the 1st call for proposals for the 2021-2027 cross-border cooperation programme Kosovo- North Macedonia (hereinafter ‘the programme’). The programme is implemented under the framework of the third instrument of pre-accession assistance (IPA III) and is the result of joint planning efforts made by the governments and other stakeholders of the two participating beneficiaries. IPA III supports cross-border cooperation with a view to promoting good neighbourly relations, fostering Union integration and promoting socio-economic development through joint local and regional initiatives. The legal provisions for its implementation are stipulated in the following pieces of legislation:

- Regulation (EU) no 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III);
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) no 2021/2128 of 1 October 2021 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council, as regards setting out certain specific objectives and thematic priorities for assistance under the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III);
- Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)8914 of 10.12.2021 adopting the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027; and
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no 2021/2236 of 15 December 2021 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) no 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III).

Following a detailed analysis of the socio-economic situation of the border region, the programme sets out a common strategy for remedying problems identified and formulates joint thematic priorities for development. As specified in the programme document and in Article 71(2) of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement between the Commission and the governments of the participating countries, its implementation is carried out through calls for proposals such as this one. These calls will be launched at regular intervals to fund cross-border cooperation operations that will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives agreed upon by the participating countries.

More details about this 2021-2027 IPA III cross-border cooperation programme can be found on the web page www.cbc-kosovo-northmacedonia.eu

The programme is implemented jointly by both countries. In Kosovo, the responsible institution is:

- Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) in charge of the overall coordination of the programme, is the cross-border cooperation structure (CBCS) in this country;

In North Macedonia, the responsible institution is:

- Ministry of Local Self Government (MLSG) responsible for the overall coordination of the programme, is the CBCS in this country.

All contract and payment issues are the responsibility of the European Union Office in Kosovo acting as the Contracting Authority (CA).

Moreover, the implementation of the programme is overseen by a joint monitoring committee (JMC) composed of representatives of both participating countries' institutions and civil society. The JMC will examine and provide an advisory opinion on the list of operations selected through this call for proposals before the grant award decision.

The CA, the CBCS of both beneficiaries and the JMC are assisted by the joint technical secretariat (JTS) based in Pristina (Kosovo, main office) and Antenna office based in Skopje (The Republic of North Macedonia). The

JTS is the administrative body responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme including support and advice to potential applicants as well as grant beneficiaries. The JTS will assist potential applicants in partner search and project development, organising information days and workshops; develop and maintain a network of stakeholders; advise grant beneficiaries in project implementation; and prepare, conduct and report on monitoring visits to cross-border cooperation operations.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

In line with the objectives specified in the programme document, the overall objective (OO) of this call for proposals is: *To promote good neighbourly relations, foster Union integration and strengthen the social, economic and territorial development of the programme cross-border area by improving environment protection, and preservation of resources, and competitiveness and business development.*

As a result of a decision made by the JMC of the programme on 14 February 2024, two thematic priorities of the programme document are selected for this call:

- Thematic Priority 2 - Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management

- Thematic Priority 8 - Competitiveness, business environment and SME development, trade and investment

the following are the specific objectives and the corresponding results that the applications submitted under this call will contribute to attaining:

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	RESULTS
<p>Thematic Priority 2 - Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management</p> <p>Specific objective/outcome 2.1: The cross-border territory is more environmentally sustainable</p>	<p>2.1.1 Increased awareness of cross border inhabitants in environment protection/climate change/nature protection to promote sustainability among target groups</p> <p>2.1.2 Joint management plans and capacities on environmental protection and disasters</p> <p>2.1.3 Circular economy practices are fostered</p>
<p>Thematic Priority 8 - Competitiveness, business environment and SME development, trade and investment</p> <p>Specific objective/outcome 1.1: Increased levels of cross border trade and tourism service</p> <p>Specific objective/outcome 1.2: Increased employment/ number of new businesses created</p>	<p>1.1.1 New local products with cross-border tourism potential developed</p> <p>1.1.2 Marketing and commercialisation of products and services locally and internationally improved</p> <p>1.1.3 Increased capacities of trade and tourism organisations and local authorities on promotion strategies</p> <p>1.2.1 Interns gained practical experience to enter the workforce</p> <p>1.2.2 Increased support to business start-ups</p> <p>1.2.3 Increased supply of professional training courses</p>

Mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues³:

This call for proposals will consider the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues at project level. When developing a project to address any of the specific objectives of the call, cross-cutting issues need to be mainstreamed in the following manner:

- a) Improved capacity of local and regional authorities to tackle local challenges

To mainstream the thematic cluster 5 as stipulated in the Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)8914 of 10.12.2021 adopting the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027, every application should **demonstrate that regional and local authorities have been involved** in their development and their future implementation. Every operation should describe how it has been developed, how it is aligned to and contributes to local development plans or how its implementation will be monitored and evaluated.

- b) Gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities.

Equality between sexes must be taken into consideration when setting the project objectives, defining activities (e.g., participation in capacity building activities) and expected results. Equal opportunity prevails when women and men have the same rights, obligations and opportunities.

- c) Protection and promotion of ethnic minority rights, including their participation in decision making processes.

Enforcement of equal opportunities has to be secured in the project design in order to promote the integration of ethnic minorities and ensure their participation in decision-making processes in line with project activities and expected results.

- d) Integration of persons with physical and mental disabilities.

Enforcement of equal opportunities has to be secured in the project in order to promote integration of persons affected by disabilities and in securing their participation in project activities (e.g. accessibility to buildings and project sites) and in decision-making processes in line with project activities and expected results.

- e) Safeguard and promotion of children's rights and promotion of children's participation in decision-making processes.

The project should involve children as relevant stakeholders where and if appropriate (e.g. in case the specific project objective is in a sector mainly relating to children's needs, such as education, health, sports and culture, but also in sectors in which the project can indirectly influence their lives).

- f) Democratic standards, anti-discriminatory practices and good governance.

Activities and operations cannot set up barriers in relation to religion or belief, age, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, racial or ethnic origin particularly regarding employment and HR policy pursued towards persons who will be employed within the projects implemented under this grant scheme. Actions must secure a wide public participation and consultation, where appropriate, throughout project activities. This may include setting up consultative processes in developing strategies/policies; executing infrastructural works; ensuring inclusion of target groups and a wide range of different stakeholders.

³ Please see recommendation no. 14 of the final report of the 2007-2013 CBC evaluation:

https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d38b63c4-b185-482f8c5fa844620a908f_en?filename=follow_up_action_plan_ipa_cbc_evaluation.pdf

- g) Protection of environment and preservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

The project needs to describe how it will contribute to a better environment or otherwise have a neutral impact on the environment. The concept of environment involves not only issues of pollution, but issues sustainable development (e.g., waste supply chain management and recycling), nature protection and biodiversity, renewable energy, etc.

As the IPA III CBC programmes must push forward the goals of the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) and the Green Agenda (GA) for the Western Balkans, applicants are encouraged to embed in the design of their project such goals. This must be evident in their application, especially when describing its relevance to the objectives of the IPA III CBC programme Kosovo - North Macedonia.

Please note that mainstreaming cross-cutting issues will be scored in the evaluation methodology of this call as formulated in Section 2.3 below.

1.2. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 3,240,000.00** The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

More specifically, the contracting authority might cancel the call completely or partially when only few good quality applications can be contracted and relaunch the unallocated assets in the next call for the thematic priority/specific objective concerned.

Indicative EU - funded allocations by lot / thematic priority:

Lot / Thematic priority	Allocation
LOT 1 / Thematic priority 2: Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	EUR 1,620,000.00
LOT 2 / Thematic priority 8: Competitiveness, business and SME development, trade and investment	EUR 1,620,000.00
Total	EUR 3,240,000.00

The applications will compete for the financial resources available within each lot/thematic priority separately.

When the remaining funds per lot/thematic priority will not allow financing another application, the evaluation committee may recommend to the contracting authority to pool these funds and award a grant to the application or applications with the highest scores in the ranking of a separate reserve list under the lot/thematic priority that is/are considered more important than the other under this call for proposal OR in the ranking of a sole reserve list irrespective of the lot/thematic priority.

If the allocation indicated for a lot/thematic priority cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to those application/s being higher in the ranking of a separate reserve list under the lot/thematic priority that is considered more important than the other under this call for proposal OR in the ranking of a sole reserve list irrespective of the lot/thematic priority.

Moreover, the contracting authority may increase the funds allocated to the call to fund all or part of those applications qualifying for funding.

Size of grants

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

Lot/Thematic priority	Minimum amount of EU - funded grant	Maximum amount of EU - funded grant
LOT 1/Thematic Priority 2: Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	EUR 300,000.00	EUR 700,000.00
LOT 2/Thematic Priority 8: Competitiveness, business and SME development, trade and investment	EUR 150,000.00	EUR 400,000.00

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

- Minimum percentage: **60%** of the total eligible costs of the action.
- Maximum percentage: **85%** of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.5)

The balance (i.e., the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union.

Please note that for applicants effectively established in the Republic of North Macedonia, their Ministry of Local Self-government (MLSG) may provide as co-financing up to a maximum of the 15% of the total eligible costs of the action. Applicants established in Kosovo shall cover by their own resources the co-financing amount. The CA of the programmes MK-AL, KS-MK and RS-MK should indicate here where applicants can find information on the conditions and implications of this co-financing by the MLSG, for instance, in terms of grant amount or special reporting requirements for the government in the Republic of North Macedonia.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?locale=en>).⁴

2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

(1) the actors (2.1.1. & 2.1.2.):

- The **'lead applicant'**, i.e., the entity submitting the application form,
- 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)'**),
- and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s);

(2) the actions (2.1.4.):

Actions for which a grant may be awarded;

(3) the costs (2.1.5.):

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

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:

LOT 1/Thematic Priority 2: Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management

- be a legal person, and
- be non-profit-making, and
- be effectively established in⁵ either Kosovo or North Macedonia and
- 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 one of the following institutions or organisations:
 - Local authorities (municipalities);

⁵ 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. The effective establishment of applicants should be proved not only with the statutes but with the registration certificate. 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.

- National and regional centres for disaster management, emergency services (e.g.: firefighting brigades), national parks and monitoring structures and other public organizations for nature protection;
- Formal education and training institutions (e.g. primary schools, VET schools, Universities, etc.) including research, development and innovation centres. If education and training institutions do not have statutes as legal persons, the local government unit upon which they depend should be the applicant or co-applicant;
- Central and local cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, institutions for protection of cultural heritage, etc. If these institutions do not have statutes as legal persons, the local government unit upon which they depend should be the applicant or co-applicant.

HIGHLY IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS FOR LOT 1

1. Minimum of 50 % of subtotal eligible costs may be dedicated to investments (fixed assets, works and equipment including design and supervision);
2. Local authorities are encouraged to establish partnerships with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) aiming at addressing interests and lack of capacities of the relevant stakeholders, especially those of regional and local authorities;
3. NGOs can assist applicants listed in Section 2.1.1 (i.e., Local authorities, national and regional centres for disaster management, national parks, formal education and training institutions, central and local cultural institutions, public enterprises, etc.) **ONLY as co-applicants.**

The grant beneficiary will be strongly advised to use only PRAG rules and procedures (version August 2022) for implementation of their action.

Please note that profit making organisations and political parties are not eligible, neither as lead applicants, as co-applicants or affiliated entities.

Ministries from both countries are not allowed to apply for this call as lead applicants, co-applicants nor as affiliated entities.

LOT 2/Thematic Priority 8: Competitiveness, business and SME development, trade and investment

- be a legal person;
- be 100% privately owned small or medium sized enterprise (according to the Kosovo⁶ and North Macedonia⁷ definition and law);
- be effectively established in⁸ either Kosovo or North Macedonia;
- operate in the following industries: **tourism and/or agriculture (agro-tourism and/or agro-food)**;

⁶ <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=8982>

<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=16268&langid=2>

⁷ <http://www.economy.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/Company Law.pdf>

⁸ 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. The effective establishment of applicants should be proved not only with the statutes but with the registration certificate. 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

HIGHLY IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS FOR LOT 2

1. Minimum of 50% of eligible costs may be dedicated to investments (fixed assets, works and equipment including design and supervision);
2. Maximum 20% of eligible costs may be dedicated to human resource and travel, and equipment and supplies.
3. Maximum 30% of eligible cost may be dedicated for activities such as supporting cross border joint activities (fairs, new joint tourist products/services, tourist offers and new itineraries etc.)

- (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 or those placed in the reserve list are obliged to declare that they are not in one of the exclusion situations through a signed declaration on honour (Annex H). For grants of EUR 60 000 or less, no declaration on honour is required.

In Section 2 of the Annex A.1 ‘concept note’ and Section 5.1 of the Annex A.2 ‘full application form’ (‘Declaration 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 must act with co-applicant(s) as specified hereafter.

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 coordinates the design and implementation of the action. The lead beneficiary shall ensure the implementation of the entire operation, monitor that the operation is implemented in accordance with the conditions set out in the contract and lay down the arrangements with other beneficiaries to guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid⁹.

Co-applicant(s)

The lead applicant must act with at least one co-applicant as specified hereafter.

If the lead applicant is established in Kosovo, at least one co-applicant must be established in North Macedonia and vice versa.

The maximum number of co-applicants that could be involved in the action is three (3). However, CBC partners must carefully bear in mind the most appropriate conditions to ensure an intra-project efficient

⁹ As stipulated in Article 72(2) of the FFPA.

coordination when deciding on this. The number of partners and the composition of the partnership should be coherent with the envisaged objectives and activities of the action (see Section 2.1.4 below).

In genuine cross-border operations, the applicant and co-applicant(s) shall cooperate in the development and implementation of action. In addition, they shall cooperate in either the staffing or the financing of operation or both (see Section 2.1.4 below). The lead applicant and co-applicant(s) must represent different legal entities.

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-applicant(s) must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself, with the following exemptions:

Lot 1: Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are eligible as co-applicants;

Lot 2: Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as: Business Support Centres, Chambers of Commerce; Sectorial business organisations/associations, Vocational Education and Training Centres in the targeted sector (tourism and/or agriculture), professional tourism and/or agriculture associations are eligible as co-applicants;

Co-applicant(s) must sign the mandate in Section 5.2 of Annex A.2 ‘full application form’.

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

- (3) In addition, please note that contracts cannot be awarded to or signed with applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG).

2.1.2. Affiliated entities

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 and subcontractors) 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 Section 5.3 of Annex A.2 'full application form'.

2.1.3. Associates and contractors

The following entities are neither 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 Section 4 'Associates participating in the action' of Annex A.2 'full 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 an action may not be shorter than **12 months** nor exceed **24 months**.

In their application, the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) will have to refer to the programme's thematic priorities/specific objective under which their action is meant to contribute, as well as the programme's result(-s) affected by the action, and the programme's core and specific indicators that will be instrumental to measure the action's success. For the sake of consistency and aggregation, applicants must have the same units to quantify their output, outcome and impact indicators in line with the programme output, outcome and impact indicators. The programme indicators should be prioritised within the long list of potential indicators (from the regional monitoring system) provided in annex M.

The following illustrates the list of indicators that the applicants will have to include, where appropriate, to estimate the project's contribution to the programme's objectives. Applicants should confine the choice of indicators in their operation to the list provided below and in annex M, and add exceptionally some other indicators that could be necessary under their operation:

Table of core indicators for all IPA III CBC programmes displayed in the section 3.1 of the programme document:

IPA III Strategic Objective for CBC	Indicators
Reconciliation, confidence building and good neighborly relations	Number of organisations participating in cross-border networks/partnerships formed, disaggregated by type of organisation
	Number of cross-border networks/partnerships formed
	Number of organisations directly involved in the implementation of the projects, disaggregated by type of organization
Economic, social and territorial development of border areas	Number of new jobs resulting from programme activities, disaggregated by the sex and type of vulnerable group of the new employees
	Number of new businesses established, disaggregated by the sex and age of the owner
Capacity building at all levels	Number of organisations/institutions with increased capacities, disaggregated by the type of organisation (special mention of women's associations)

Tables of indicators for the 2021-2027 cross-border programme Kosovo – North Macedonia displayed in section 3.2 of the programme document are provided below for each thematic priority:

LOT 1/Thematic Priority 2: Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management indicators:

IMPACT INDICATORS	Number of harmonised environmental education curricula and/or an extracurricular programme introduced in elementary and secondary education on both sides of the border
	Percentage of residues recycled in agriculture, forestry and wood industry
	Percentage of the programme area covered by strategies and action plans
	Number of agreements/MoUs signed and entered in force at local and/or regional level on protecting the nature in the eligible area
OUTCOME INDICATORS	Percentage of the population of the geographic area has been reached by an information campaign
	Percentage of area covered by joint management measures for environment protection
	Number of strategies/plans adopted on prevention and mitigation of natural disasters and human-made hazards
	Number of local communities being beneficiaries of capacity building activities on prevention and mitigation of human-made hazards and natural disasters
OUTPUT INDICATORS	Percentage of the population of the programme area has been target of environment awareness raising activities
	Number of joint and harmonised management plans to foster environmental protection developed
	Number of joint and harmonised management plans to prevent natural disasters of flooding developed
	Number of training events organised for those bodies of the public administration responsible to manage environment
	Number of training events organised for those bodies of the public administration responsible to manage emergency flooding situations

LOT 2/Thematic priority 8: Competitiveness, business environment and SME development, trade and investment indicators:

IMPACT INDICATORS	Number of businesses still active after two years of their establishment
	Number of new jobs resulting from programme activities disaggregated by the sex and age of the new employees
OUTCOME INDICATORS	Number of new brands recognised by the market
	Number of cross-border partnerships between trade promotion institutions formalised
	Number of institutions and organisations with improved competence on international marketing

	Number of participants with increased employability and employment competence, disaggregated by gender
OUTPUT INDICATORS	Number of local products with cross-border tourism potential developed
	Number of tourism facilities/sites with improved infrastructure
	Number of agro-food products commercialised
	Number of tourism products commercialised
	Number of local markets with improved infrastructure
	Number of businesses/enterprises participating at trade fair, exhibitions for organised in cross border area and internationally
	Number of organisations/ institutions with increased capacities
	Number of interns involved with private companies in agricultural sector
	Number of interns involved with private companies in tourism sector
	Number of business plans/ strategies prepared
	Number of people trained on entrepreneurship established their own business

The contracting authority will discuss with the would-be beneficiaries the **indicators** included in their application form and eventually agree upon their revision preferably prior to the contract signature or otherwise in the very beginning of the period of implementation. This is meant to improve the quality of the project indicators to capture all results at the level of overall objective/impact, specific objective(s)/outcomes and outputs.

Applicants are advised that according to the provisions of the Article 4.x of the special conditions of the grant contract they will quarterly have to report on the achievement of indicators through an information system. These reports will be submitted at regular intervals on 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December every year and then upon the submission of the final report. The Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) of the programme will be available for technical support while using this information system and will carry out a sort of validation of the submitted data.

Baseline data surveys: All applicants are advised to devote some time while preparing their application to collect statistics from relevant bodies or conduct surveys by their own in order to determine the baseline data of their indicators. Applicants are reminded that expenses such as these, related to the preparation of the application, are ineligible. However, during the period of implementation of the action, the expertise costs associated to the launch of surveys (particularly recommendable for qualitative indicators) and the collection and analysis of statistics to refine or amend the baseline data of the operation indicators may be eligible. The contracting authority strongly recommends that the applicants envisage an amount in the budget for this purpose.

Location

Actions or operations must have as final beneficiaries the population of the programme area. They must take place in one or more of the following territorial units:

Kosovo:

- East Economic Region, composed of the municipalities of Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Viti/Vitina, Novo Bërdë/Novo Brdo, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Shtërpçë/Štrpce, Hani i Elezit/Elez Han, Ranillug/Ranilug, Partesh/Parteš and Kllokot/Klokot .
- South Economic Region, composed of the municipalities of Prizren, Suharekë/Suva Reka, Malishevë/Mališevo, Dragash/Dragaš, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Mamusha/Mamuša.

North Macedonia:

- Polog Region, includes nine municipalities: Bogovinje, Brvenitsa, Gostivar, Jegunovtse, Mavrovo and Rostusha Teartse, Tetovo, Vrapchishte, and Zhelino.
- Northeast Region, includes six municipalities: Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Kumanovo, Lipkovo, Rankovtse and Staro Nagorichane.
- Skopje Region, includes 17 municipalities: Arachinovo, Chucher-Sandevo, Iliden, Petrovets, Sopsishte, Studenichani, and Zelenikovo. The City of Skopje is an administrative unit and includes 10 municipalities: Aerodrom, Butel, Chair, Centar, Gazi Baba, Gjorche Petrov, Karposh, Kisela Voda, Saraj and Shuto Orizari.

Types of action

Actions or operations selected under this cross-border cooperation programme shall deliver clear cross-border impacts and benefits, that is, they must:

- take place in the specific programme area of Kosovo and North Macedonia
- have cross-border impacts and benefits in parts of the programme area of Kosovo and North Macedonia
- foresee cooperation of the cross-border applicant and co-applicant(s) in both:
 - joint development: applicant and co-applicant(s) cooperate in designing the action, filling in a joint application form and drawing up their respective budget;
 - joint implementation: grant beneficiaries coordinate, in the frame of the operation, their activities across the border, and carry out most of the project activities together and not as independent, unrelated, mechanically reproduced and country-bound initiatives;
- foresee cooperation of the cross-border applicant and co-applicant(s) in either:
 - joint staffing: staff on both sides of the border act as one project team (e.g. some staffers carry out their duties for all entities in the partnership: procurement, financial management, overall coordination, training planning, etc.); or
 - joint financing: activities are financed by the applicant's and co-applicant(s)'s own budget;
 - or both joint staffing and financing.

Briefly, following the joint development of an operation by at least two cross-border partners, **full cross-border cooperation would mean the joint implementation and financing of activities by the partners**

resulting in the intensification of neighborly relations, sustainable partnerships for socio-economic development and/or the removal of obstacles to this development.

The following types of action are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses (or research);
- actions containing preparatory studies or the preparation of preliminary design for works to be carried out as part of the operation;
- actions without genuine cross-border impacts and benefits¹⁰;
- actions linked to political parties;
- actions concerned only or mainly with commercial and profit-making activities¹¹;
- actions exclusively confined to charitable donations;
- actions covered and financed by other EU funded programmes.

Types of activity

Indicative types of activities, which may be financed under this call for proposals, are given below. The following list, extracted from the IPA III CBC programme document, is not exhaustive and appropriate innovative activities that are not mentioned below may also be considered for financing when they can clearly contribute to the achievement of the call's priorities. By way of illustration, applications could contain a range of the following activities in relation to the programme's results targeted in the call:

LOT 1/Thematic Priority 2: Environment protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management

Specific Objective 2.1 The cross border territory is more environmentally sustainable

- Joint environmental awareness campaign on cross border territory in environment protection/climate change/nature to promote sustainability;
- Development of joint management plans to foster environmental and nature protection;
- Implementation of the joint management measures/investments for environmental and nature protection ;
- Development of joint management plans, research and studies, maps of floods to prevent natural disasters;
- Capacity building activities for public administration to manage emergency flooding situation;

¹⁰ The cross-border partnership **must produce a tangible added value** (i.e., the problems of the target groups and final beneficiaries are solved more efficiently and effectively by utilizing the partnership than they would be solved if applicants and affiliated entity(ies) would have acted independently.

¹¹ In case the project generates revenue, it shall be used to finance the operation, together with the other sources of funding. Revenue of an operation means cash in-flows directly paid by users for the goods and services provided by the operation, such as charges borne directly by users for the use of infrastructure, sale or rent of land or buildings, or payment for services incurred during the period of implementation of the operation.

- Training, education or other capacity building activities (transfer of know-how, mapping of target area, exchange of good practices and networking activities to promote a sustainable cross border area)
- Joint planning and study approaches to address the opportunities for use and re-use of residues (agriculture, forestry, wood industry and tourism)
- Exchanging experience of good business models on circular economy (use or reuse of residues and waste)
- New jointly planned Cross Border Cooperation investment promoting a sustainable use of residues and waste in cross border region

LOT 2/Thematic Priority 8: Competitiveness, business environment and SME development, trade and investment

Specific objective/outcome 1.1: Increased levels of cross border trade and tourism service

- Development of agro-food products
- Development of joint tourism products /services
- Connecting tourism with sectors of agriculture, agro-processing and crafts
- Introduction of quality standards in product/service
- Renovation of tourism facilities, restoration and/or preservation of cultural and historical site
- Digitalisation for promotion of local products, tourism, culture heritage, crafts, as well as development of specific apps for touristic activities (maps, paths, etc.)
- Joint marketing/branding activities to optimize product /service development
- Joint initiatives and missions to promote business cooperation, targeting in particular women-led businesses
- Visibility activities to promote new tourism products and services
- Promotion of products/service in trade fairs locally and internationally
- Capacity building for institutions and organizations on international marketing
- Exchanges and study visits to experienced organizations promoting trade / tourism

Specific objective/outcome 1.2: Increased employment/ number of new businesses created

- Cooperation with Vocational Education and Training (VET) schools and Vocational Centres (VC) and private sector to internship programmes in agriculture/agro processing
- Cooperation with VET schools and VCs and private sector to internship programmes tourism and hospitality
- Joint initiative to provide business services and coaching on business planning
- Joint training activities for women to promote entrepreneurship
- Professional training in agriculture, bio-foods
- Professional training in services and in the hospitality services tourism area (tourist guides, adventure, sport guides, rescue team, etc)

Financial support to third parties¹²

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties. In other words, **sub-granting is not allowed** under this call for proposals.

Visibility:

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission. If applicable, communication activities may be undertaken 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.

All measures and activities relating to visibility and, if applicable, communication, must comply with the latest Guidance for External Actions 2022, laid down and published by the European Commission (Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions (europa.eu))

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.

All applications failing to comply with the above requirements on number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities will be rejected from the evaluation.

2.1.5. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Union contributions under this call for proposals take the following form(s):

- Reimbursement of eligible costs that may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:

- (i) actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);
- (ii) one or more simplified cost options (see below).

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'.

Simplified cost options (SCOs) 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.

¹² These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

- **flat-rate financing:** covering specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by applying a percentage fixed ex ante. This form is not applicable to output or result based SCOs.

Simplified costs options which can be proposed are the following:

"output or result based SCOs": they include 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 or unit costs 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 (Grant application form – Full application). 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.

Please 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', 'LUMPSUM' 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 and/or lump sums, 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 SCO.

Where SCOs are proposed 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.

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**.

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.

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, regional or local administrations, as well as those of other publicly owned or controlled institutions or enterprises, 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 or operation were not undertaken.

These personnel shall not receive for the engagement in the project activities any other remuneration than their standard, regular salaries in their respective institutions.

The total sum of the salaries of these personnel shall not exceed the amount of co-financing provided by the applicant, co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies).

Prior to the signature of a grant contract, the contracting authority may require from the relevant beneficiaries the appointment of these staffers by their authorised representative in writing (indicating their names, project function and gross salaries).

Please note that this does not apply to professional staff recruited by the national, regional or local administrations, as well as other publicly owned or controlled institutions or enterprises, for the sole purpose of managing this project resulting from the grant award.

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 not eligible costs (except for personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or an operating grant if so authorised).

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.

NB: Given the difficulty of evaluating contributions in kind if accepted as co-financing, the contracting authority should only accept contributions in kind as co-financing other than volunteer's work in exceptional cases, subject to possible evaluation of such contributions. However, refusal of co-financing in kind for low value grants (i.e., any grant up to EUR 60 000) – if proposed but not considered appropriate or necessary – should be clearly justified.

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

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible¹³:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses, debts or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union grant (including through European Development Fund);
- purchase of land and existing buildings, except where justified by the nature of the programme in the financing decision, 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;
- credits to third parties, unless otherwise specified in the special conditions;
- in kind contributions (except for volunteers' work);
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations, unless otherwise specified in the special conditions and only 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;
- bonuses included in costs of staff;
- negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
- bank charges, costs of guarantees and similar charges;
- fines and financial penalties;
- expenses of litigation.

¹³ The list encompass the provisions of Section 2.1.5 of the standard PRAG June 2022 template for the guidelines for applicants, the provisions of Article 14.11 of the general conditions for grant contracts (PRAG version June 2022), the provisions of Article 6 of the annex II – general conditions of the IPA III financing agreement and the provisions of Article 29(3) of the FFPA for IPA III.

2.1.6. 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.

Applicants (and affiliated entities) other than (i) natural persons, (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies, whose application has been provisionally selected or placed in a reserve list shall assess their internal policy against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) through a self-evaluation questionnaire (Annex L). For grants of EUR 60 000 or less no self-evaluation is required. Such self-evaluation questionnaire is not part of the evaluation of the full application by the contracting authority, but is an administrative requirement. See Section 2.5.6 of the PRAG.

(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 contracting authority 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

To apply for this call for proposals, lead applicants need to:

- I. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action. To this end, lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities should register in PADOR. Lead applicants must register at the concept note step. Co-applicants and affiliated entities must register at the full application step; lead applicants must make sure that their PADOR profile is up to date. Please note that the registration of this data in **PADOR is obligatory** for this call for proposals.

PADOR is an on-line database in which organisations register and update information concerning their entity. Organisations registered in PADOR get a unique ID (EuropeAid ID), which they must mention in their application. PADOR is accessible via the website: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/pador>.

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, lead applicants, co-applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) must complete the 'PADOR registration form'¹⁴ attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent **together with the application**, by the submission deadline (see section 2.2.5.).

- II. Provide information about the action in the documents listed under sections 2.2.2. (Where and how to send concept notes) and 2.2.5. (Full applications). Please note that online submission via **PROSPECT is obligatory** for this call.

It is strongly recommended to register in PADOR well in advance and not to wait until the last minute before the deadline to submit your application in PROSPECT.

Before starting using PADOR and PROSPECT, please read the user guides available on the website. All technical questions related to the use of these systems should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu via the online support form in PROSPECT.

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.1). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the concept note and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

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, except for the changes described below:

- 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 add, remove or replace one or more co-applicant(s) or affiliated entity (ies) only in duly justified cases.

¹⁴ Which corresponds to Annex F – PADOR off-line form of these guidelines.

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

An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in Annex A.2 – Instructions for drafting the Full Application, section 2.1.1, point viii. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.

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.

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

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.

2.2.2. Where and how to send concept notes

The concept note together with the declaration by the lead applicant (Annex A.1 Section 2) **must be submitted online via PROSPECT** <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT user manual.

Upon submission of a concept note online, the lead applicant will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in its PROSPECT profile.

Please note that incomplete concept notes may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their concept note is complete using the checklist for concept note (Annex A.1, Instructions).

2.2.3. Deadline for submission of concept notes

The deadline for the submission of concept notes is **9 December 2024 at 12:00 hrs** (Brussels date and time). In order to convert this deadline to local time you can use any online time converter tool that takes into account timezones and winter/summer time changes (example available [here](#))¹⁵. **The lead applicant is strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit** its concept note, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The contacting authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

Any concept note submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.4. Further information about concept notes

Information sessions on this call for proposals will be held on:

- **12 November 2024 from 11:00 hrs** – Municipality building Ferizaj, Kosovo

¹⁵ For example: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>.

- **14 November 2024** from **11:00 hrs** – Municipality building Cair / Skopje, North Macedonia

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

E-mail address: DELEGATION-KOSOVO-FINCON@eeas.europa.eu

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

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

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of 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 where the call was published: website of DG International Partnerships https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/looking-for-funding_en or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>, the programme website <http://www.cbc-kosovo-northmacedonia.eu/> and the Contracting Authority website https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo_en?s=321, as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT**: Please note that the working languages of the IT support are: English, French and Spanish. Therefore users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

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 Annex A.2 'full application form' annexed to these guidelines. Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

Please note that the elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application, except for the changes described below:

- 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 add, remove or replace one or more co-applicant(s) or affiliated entity(ies) only in duly justified cases.
- 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. Own contributions by the applicants can be replaced by other donors' contributions at any time.

An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in Annex A.2 – Section 2.1.1. of the full application form, point viii. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the application may be rejected on that sole basis.

The elements outlined in the concept note that cannot change in the full application are:

- The number and title of the specific objective of the call under which the concept note was submitted;
- the objective(s) of the action;
- its intended results;
- its target groups and final beneficiaries.

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 (Annex A.2, Instructions) 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.

Please note that only the full application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget – annex B, logical framework – annex C) 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.

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, the lead applicant has to submit with the application the completed PADOR registration form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each co-applicant and each affiliated entity (if any).

Please note that the following documents¹⁶ shall be uploaded in PADOR by the application deadline or submitted together with the PADOR registration form with the application form:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity. 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 meantime. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.
2. Legal entity form (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e., by the lead applicant and by each co-applicant, if any), 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.
3. 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.

In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted:

¹⁶ No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000.

1. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants exceeding 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 lead 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 an applicant to the contracting authority in any one financial year.

The external audit report as well as the self-declaration certifying the validity of the accounts are not required from the co-applicant(s) or affiliated entities (if any).

This obligation does not apply to secondary and higher education establishments.

2. 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). A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) (if any) nor from affiliated entity(ies) (if any).

The requested supporting documents (uploaded in PADOR or sent together with the PADOR registration form) must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e., showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals. Originals should be kept on file for controls.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European, 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.

Applicants have to take into consideration the time necessary to obtain official documents from national competent authorities and to translate such documents in the authorised languages while registering their data in PADOR.

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided by the deadline for the submission of the application form, the application may be rejected.

No additional annexes being part of the application package should be sent by the applicant. However, when the application includes the undertaking of works, please refer to the provisions under paragraph 3 of section 2.4 of these guidelines which deals with specific supporting documents that must be submitted with the full application.

2.2.6. Where and how to send full applications

Full applications (i.e., the full application form, PADOR registration form (where applicable), the budget, the logical framework matrix, and the declaration by the lead applicant) must be submitted online via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/prospect> following the instructions given in the users' manual.

Upon submission of the full application online, the lead applicants will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in their PROSPECT profile.

Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions).

2.2.7. Deadline for submission of full applications

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. This letter will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

Lead applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their full applications, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The contracting authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such aforementioned difficulties.

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.8. Further information about full applications

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: DELEGATION-KOSOVO-FINCON@eeas.europa.eu

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

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the submission of 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 where the call was published: website DG International Partnerships: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_en or Funding and Tender Opportunities (F&T Portal): <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>, the programme website <http://www.cbc-kosovo-northmacedonia.eu/> and the Contracting Authority website https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo_en?s=321, as appropriate. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned websites regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT**: Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English, French and Spanish. Therefore, users are invited to send their questions in those languages should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

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.

2.3. 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 at any time 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: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Annex A.1, Instructions of the concept note 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 Annex A.1.

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.

Evaluation Grid

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 eligible programme area and/or relevant sector (including synergy with other EU initiatives, in particular with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the one for the Adriatic and Ionian Region ¹⁷ , as well as 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)? <i>[and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the guidelines for applicants]</i>	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 interests and 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 improved capacity of local and regional authorities to tackle local challenges, environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and children, support to youth, democratic standards and good governance?	5	

TOTAL SCORE 50

¹⁷ Please note that in many applications where the lead applicant or a co-applicant is effectively established in Kosovo the linkage with these two macro-regional strategies is not possible as this IPA III Beneficiary is a member of neither of them.

* Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the concept note clearly demonstrates how it specifically addresses one of the specific objectives of the call 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 per lot/thematic priority, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to at least 200% of the available budget for this call for proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot/thematic priority, where relevant.

Lead applicants will receive a letter indicating the reference number of their application and the respective results. This letter will automatically appear online in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications.

STEP 2: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK AND EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

- If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (Annex A.2, Instructions of the full 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).

For the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, lead applicants must ensure that the relevant information and documents (i.e., accounts of the latest financial year and external audit report, where applicable) are up to date either in their PADOR profile or when submitting the requested documents with PADOR registration form. If the information and documents in PADOR are outdated and do not allow for a proper evaluation of the financial capacity, the application may be rejected.

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 <u>experience of project management</u> ?	5
1.2 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house <u>technical expertise</u> ? (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 <u>management capacity</u> ? (Including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.4 Does the lead applicant have <u>stable and sufficient sources of finance</u> ?	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)? ¹⁸	5
3.2 Does the full application contain objectively verifiable indicators (at impact, outcome and output level)? Are the project indicators likely to contribute to the achievement of programme indicators? Does the full application/logical framework matrix 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	20
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? Does the proposal involve genuine cross-border cooperation	5x2

¹⁸ The score of this question will be seriously affected if the application includes the execution of works and the information included in Section 2.1.1 of the application form will call into question whether all preconditions to undertake works have been met by the applicants.

(joint development, joint staffing, joint implementation, joint financing)? Are the activities proposed likely to have a clear cross-border benefit and impact?	
5. Sustainability of the action¹⁹	15
5.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups at cross-border level? Have assumptions and risks been well assessed?	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	10
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? Are the expenses well justified?	/ 5
6.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory? Are the costs estimated based on real market prices?	/ 5
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.

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.[Please see Section 1.3 above for more details.

¹⁹ If the project is not able to demonstrate that it will intensify neighbourly relations, create sustainable cross-border partnerships for socio-economic development and/or remove cross-border obstacles to sustainable development, it is unlikely to have a tangible effect, multiplier effects or sustainable results, and hence should be marked to zero, irrespective of any other merits of the proposal.

(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 Sections 2.2.5 & 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 5 of Annex A.2) 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 and 2.1.2.

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. Please see the provisions of Section 1.3 above for more details.

2.4. SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR PROVISIONALLY SELECTED APPLICATIONS

The lead applicant should submit the documents listed in Section 2.2.5.

In addition, 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 documents²⁰ via PROSPECT:

1. Declaration on honour: 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) where the amount of the grant exceeds EUR 15 000. Please note that the declaration on honour shall be submitted via PROSPECT.
2. Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in the self-evaluation questionnaire assessing the organisation's internal policy and procedure against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) (Annex L) where the amount of grant exceeds EUR 60 000 (see Section 2.5.6 of the PRAG)²¹. Please note that the self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H shall be submitted via PADOR.
3. **Please bear in mind when an operation contains the execution of works, the following supporting documents, submitted along with the full application form, will be necessary:**
 - a. Proof of ownership or long-term lease (at least for 10 years after the signature of the contract) of the land/assets where the works are to be executed;
 - b. A positive decision on environmental impact assessment or otherwise a statement from the relevant public authority(ies) that the latter assessment(s) are/is not needed for the specific project activities;
4. **Furthermore, when an operation contains the execution of works, the following supporting documents shall be submitted before the contract signature:**
 - a. All necessary legal authorisations (e.g.: location and construction permits).
 - b. Approved/certified detailed work design or otherwise a statement by the relevant national institution(s) confirming that the national legislation(s) do/does not require the design's approval for this type of works;
 - c. An indicative priced bill of quantities drawn not earlier than 2 years prior to the deadline for submission of full applications – calculated in euro.
5. For Lot 2 applicants only - Proof of documents that you are small or medium sized enterprise (according to the Kosovo²² and North Macedonia²³ definition and law);

If it is impossible for the lead applicants to supply the abovementioned documents via PROSPECT or PADOR for technical reasons, they must submit the requested supporting documents in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery to the postal address described in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.6. and according to the instructions therein.

²⁰ No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000.

²¹ Applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities who are (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies do not have to submit the self-evaluation questionnaire.

²² <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=8982>

<https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=16268&langid=2>

²³ <http://www.economy.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/Company Law.pdf>

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. This letter will be sent by e-mail and will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the user who submitted the application. Lead applicants who, in exceptional cases (see Section 2.2), had to submit their application by post, private courier or hand-delivery, will be informed by email or by post if they did not provide any e-mail address. Therefore, please check regularly your PROSPECT profile, taking into account the indicative timetable below. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See further Section 2.12 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)	<p>12 Nov 2024 – Municipality building Ferizaj</p> <p>14 Nov 2024 – Municipality building Cair / Skopje</p>	From 11:00 hrs
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	18 Nov 2024	-
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	28 Nov 2024	-

4. Deadline for submission of concept notes	9 Dec 2024	12:00 hrs
5. Information to lead applicants on administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)	Feb 2025	-
6. Invitations to submit full applications	Mar 2025	-
7. Deadline for submission of full applications and supporting documents for the execution of works	Apr / May 2025	-
8. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)	May / Jun 2025	-
9. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)	Jun / Jul 2025	-
10. Contract signature	Sep 2025	-

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 where the call was published: website of DG International Partnerships: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>, the programme website www.cbc-kosovo-northmacedonia.eu and the Contracting Authority website https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo_en?s=321.

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 (Annexes A.1 and A.2 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.1: Concept note application form (Word format)
Annex A.2: Full application form (Word format)
Annex B: Budget (Excel format)
Annex C: Logical framework (Word format)
Annex D: Legal entity sheet
Annex E: Financial identification form
Annex F: Organisation data or PADOR registration form (*ONLY IF IMPOSSIBLE TO REGISTER IN PADOR*)

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION

- 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 of Honour
- Annex I: Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address:
https://internationalpartnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en
- Annex J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call
- Annex K: Guidelines for assessing simplified cost options
- Annex L: Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H
- Annex M: List of potential indicators

Useful links:

Project Cycle Management Guidelines

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en

The implementation of grant contracts

A Users' Guide

<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=48169235>

Financial Toolkit

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/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 their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

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