



Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

Invitation to submit a proposal

CEF-T-2024-TACOENEA-IBA

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EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)

CINEA.B – Sustainable networks and investments
CINEA. B1 – CEF Transport: Northern Europe, Austria + MOS and ERTMS

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0. Introduction

This is an invitation to submit proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of Transport under the **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)**.

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

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

The invitation is launched in accordance with the 2021-2027 Work Programme², including the amended Work Programme³, and will be managed by the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)** ('Agency').

It concerns the direct award to the Member States of the European Union for the European Transport Corridors, urban nodes, Rail Freight Corridors and CEF related activities in the form of lump sum contributions.

The call covers the following **topic**:

CEF-T-2024-TACOENEA-MS-LS-IBA– Technical Assistance to Member States for CEF activities, ETCs and urban nodes – Cohesion envelope

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

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

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
 - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - award criteria (section 9)
 - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)

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

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)5763 final of 5.8.2021 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2027 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2023) 4886 of 25.7.2023 amending Implementing Decision C(2021) 5763 final on the financing of the Connecting Europe Facility - Transport sector and the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2027.

- how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
 - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

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

1. Background

Work Package 1: Cooperation with European Transport Corridors

Regulation (EU)2024/1679 on the revised TEN-T Regulation⁴, hereafter referred to as the TEN-T Regulation, defines the European Transport Corridors (ETCs) as an instrument to facilitate the coordinated implementation of parts of the TEN-T core network and extended core network. The regulation identifies nine European Transport Corridors, which include transport infrastructure of all modes of transport.

European Coordinators are designated to facilitate the coordinated and timely implementation of the European Transport Corridors, as well as the ERTMS and European Maritime Space (the so-called "horizontal priorities", which concern all Member States with a rail network or access to the sea).

Member States play a key role in cooperation with the European Coordinators to ensure an effective implementation of the ETCs and the TEN-T horizontal priorities.

This CEF technical assistance will support the Member States in the Cohesion countries in cooperation with the European Coordinators.

Work Package 2: Support to urban nodes:

In order to ensure effective functioning of the network, the TEN-T Regulation recognized the importance of ensuring the seamless flow of passengers and goods to, from within and through urban nodes. Therefore, it designated 432 urban nodes and required that urban nodes adopt a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) by end 2027, covering the entire functional urban area. Member States will designate a national SUMP contact point and put in place a national SUMP support programme for urban nodes to help them prepare and implement their SUMPs. The Commission Recommendation to Member States on national SUMP support programmes sets out a wide range of activities and a possible governance framework for such programmes.

According to the TEN-T Regulation, Member States shall collect and submit to the Commission data covering each urban node related to urban mobility indicators in the field of accessibility, sustainability and safety by end 2027.

⁴ Regulation (EU)2024/1679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on Union guidance for the development of the trans-European transport network, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1153 and (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013

This technical assistance will support the Member States in the Cohesion countries in the implementation of the above requirements for urban nodes.

Work Package 3: Cooperation within the Rail Freight Corridors ensuring adequate coordination with the European Transport Corridors

The TEN-T Regulation defines the European Transport Corridors (ETCs) as an instrument for infrastructure development of the TEN-T core network and extended core network and adjusts the organisation and governance of the freight corridors.

Regulation (EU) 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight aims to support the provision of seamless and competitive cross-border rail freight services. The governance under the Regulation involves Member States, assigning them with the responsibility to define the framework for the allocation of infrastructure capacity and to supervise development of the corridors.

The TEN-T and RFC Regulations require cooperation between the respective governance structures, both on questions of infrastructure development, e.g. the identification of capacity bottlenecks and/or specific investments needs of cross-border rail freight, and on the operational performance of rail transport services along the corridors.

Regulation (EU) 913/2010 may be repealed and replaced with a more general EU framework for the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, following a legislative proposal from the Commission⁵ which is currently subject to the ordinary legislative procedure⁶. The scope of this new rules is not limited to rail freight transport but includes passenger services, thereby supporting an even broader coordination between TEN-T policy and the management and operation of rail infrastructure.

This CEF technical assistance will support the participation of Member States in Cohesion countries in coordinating their contributions in the context of the RFCs with the ETCs, including to rail capacity and traffic management, with a view to ensure complementarity with their contributions to TEN-T policy.

Member States in Cohesion countries can apply for technical assistance related to the **Work Package 4 CEF 2021-2027: Communication, appraisal of CEF project proposals and technical monitoring of CEF 2 projects** and **Work Package 5 CEF 2014-2020: Legacy management for technical and financial monitoring in Cohesion countries**.

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

CEF-T-2024-TACOENEA-MS-LS-IBA– Technical Assistance to Member States for CEF activities, ETCs and urban nodes – Cohesion envelope

Objectives (expected outcome)

In accordance with section 9 the CEF Transport work programme and its amendment of 25 July 2023, the objective is to award accompanying measures (“technical assistance”) pursuant to Article 9(1) of the CEF Regulation (EU) 2021/1153.

⁵ COM (2023) 443 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023PC0443>.

⁶ See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/procedure/EN/2023_271.

Work package 1: Cooperation with the European Transport Corridor

The objective of the CEF technical assistance provided under this work package is to support Member States in Cohesion countries in efficient cooperation with European Coordinators and their staff to ensure implementation of the European Transport Corridors and the TEN-T horizontal priorities (HP).

Work Package 2: Support to urban nodes

This work package aims at supporting Member States in implementing the requirements for urban nodes set out within the revised TEN-T Regulation, namely:

- Developing and adopting a national SUMP Support Programme for urban nodes and adopting a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) for each urban node by the end of 2027, covering the entire functional urban area, in line with guidance included in Annex 5 of the revised TEN-T Regulation.
- Assessing the available and missing urban mobility data per each urban node in line with Article 41(1) and (2) of the revised TEN-T Regulation; setting up the processes and structures to collect urban mobility data for each urban node and submit them to the European Commission by 2027.

The above activities, brought about by the revised TEN-T Regulation for urban nodes, imply the need to allocate the necessary human resources and skills at national, regional and local level. This technical assistance will feed into the required resources and facilitate the implementation of the new requirements of the TEN-T Regulation for urban nodes.

Work Package 3: Cooperation within the Rail Freight Corridors ensuring adequate coordination with the European Transport Corridors

This work package aims to establish an effective coordination between Member States' contributions on infrastructure development in the context of TEN-T policy, in particular at the level of the European Transport Corridors, including on rail capacity and traffic management in accordance with Regulation (EU) 913/2010 and other EU legislation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area.

Work Package 4 CEF 2021-2027: Communication, appraisal of CEF project proposals and technical monitoring of CEF 2 projects

The work package aims to support Member States in effective communication on CEF programme, in providing resources for the appraisal of CEF project proposals and for the monitoring of the selected projects under CEF2.

Work Package 5 CEF 2014-2020: Legacy management for technical and financial monitoring in Cohesion countries.

This work package aims to support Member States in ensuring effective financial control and technical monitoring of the CEF1 projects.

Themes and priorities (scope)

This technical assistance will support activities related to the support of urban nodes mobility, cooperation within European Transport Corridors (CNC and RFC) and, CEF activities, carried out by Member States in Cohesion countries.

The Identified Beneficiaries of this TA are EU Member States who are eligible under the Cohesion Fund.

They can apply for one or more work packages among the following:

- Work package 1. Cooperation within European Transport Corridors
- Work package 2. Support to urban nodes
- Work package 3. Cooperation within the Rail Freight Corridors ensuring adequate coordination with the European Transport Corridors
- Work package 4. CEF 2021-2027: Communication, appraisal of CEF project proposals and technical monitoring of CEF 2 projects in Cohesion countries
- Work package 5. CEF 2014-2020: Legacy management for technical and financial monitoring in Cohesion countries

In accordance with section 2.2 of the lump sum decision⁷, the beneficiaries will have to submit a final report on the activities of the work package(s) being part of the Grant Agreement.

Work package 1: Cooperation with European Transport Corridors

Participation of the EU Member States in the activities listed above will require allocation of the necessary human resources and will generate travel costs related to participation in the relevant Corridor and/or HP meetings.

Work package 2: Support to urban nodes

This work package addresses two priorities:

Priority A: Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (SUMP): Developing Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans for urban nodes in line with Article 41(1)(b)(i) and (2) of the TEN-T Regulation

Priority B: Urban Mobility Indicators (UMI): Collecting and submitting to the Commission urban mobility data per urban node in line with Article 41(1) and (2) of the TEN-T Regulation

The tasks within each priority are implemented via the national SUMP contact point, to be designated by each Member State in line with Article 41(4).

Work Package 3: Cooperation within the Rail Freight Corridors ensuring adequate coordination with the European Transport Corridors

This work package addresses contributions of the EU Member State authorities on rail capacity and traffic management, with a view to support consistency with TEN-T policy and to ensure cross-border coordination:

Priority A: Coordination between Member States at cross-border level, including in the context of European Transport Corridors - in accordance with the Activities 3.a, 3.b and 3.d in the Lump Sum Decision.

⁷ Decision of 26 August 2024 ARES(2024)6034911 authorising the use of lump sum contributions for technical assistance under the Connecting Europe Facility – Transport Sector

Priority B: Coordination between Member States authorities and stakeholders at national level - in accordance with the Activity 3.c in the Lump Sum Decision.

The tasks will be coordinated by Member States' representatives appointed in accordance with relevant legislation, including in particular Regulation (EU) 913/2010 and other relevant rail legislation.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

In accordance with the lump sum decision, the Technical Assistance to the EU Member States in Cohesion countries can address one or more Work Packages among the following:

Work package 1: Cooperation within the European Transport Corridors

The activities include:

1. Participation of Member States in the meetings organised by the European Coordinator, such as Corridor/HP Forums, working groups and Corridor-related conferences.
2. Involvement of relevant Member States in consultation and approval of the new generation of Corridor/HP Work Plans; consultation of the related Corridor implementing acts or implementing acts for specific cross-border sections or for the horizontal priorities.
3. Involvement of relevant Member States in consultation of implementing acts defining the reference water levels related to the Good Navigation Status of the TEN-T inland waterways.
4. Regular and efficient cooperation of Member States and the CEF associated third countries with the European Coordinators, national stakeholders and other Member States.

Work package 2: Support to urban nodes

The activities include:

Task 2.a - Adopting a national SUMP support programme

This task is geared to help Member States to develop and adopt a national SUMP support programme, as defined in Article 41(4) of the revised TEN-T Regulation. These programmes should identify a set of measures aimed at supporting urban nodes for adopting, implementing and monitoring their SUMPs. The programme should designate a team in charge of implementing the measures included, allocating appropriate resources (human and financial) to carry out the activities. In case of larger or federal Member States, the development of additional regional SUMP support programmes could also be considered.

Task 2.b - National network of urban nodes

This task offers support to the national SUMP contact points to develop a national network of urban nodes. Three physical/hybrid meetings per year are foreseen to allow networking, identifying common challenges and sharing good practice. In total minimum 9 coordination meetings are recommended during the period 2025-2027, with at least one physical meeting per year.

Task 2.c - Preparation of national SUMP Guidance

This task will focus on developing a national guidance to urban nodes that serves as a basis for assessing and ensuring alignment with the Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning guidelines for Urban Nodes presented in Annex V of the TEN-T Regulation. This task could include updating existing guidance or legislation as well as developing new guidance. It is estimated that this national guidance will set out criteria for improving alignment of SUMPs with the EU guidelines set out in Annex V of the revised TEN-T Regulation.

Task 2.d - Assessing the preparedness of urban nodes

This task will build upon the national SUMP guidance developed within the above task. During this task, Member States can assess the preparedness of urban nodes and alignment of their SUMPs with the TEN-T requirements and identify areas that require further work.

Task 2.e - Expert support to urban nodes

Through this task Member States could offer expert support to urban nodes to implement the steps identified in task 2.d. to improve alignment of SUMPs for each urban node with the SUMP guidelines for urban nodes included in Annex V of the revised TEN-T Regulation and the national SUMP guidance.

Task 2.f - Analysis of data availability

This task will allow Member States to support their urban nodes to:

- undertake a data gap analysis assessing availability of data, existing / potential data sources, data collection methods, processes as well as resources available / needed;
- draft a data generation plan, based on that analysis.

Task 2.g - Support to implement the data generation plans

Based on the data availability analysis (task 2.f), this task will allow Member States to support their urban nodes in implementing the data generation plan by e.g. setting up and implementing procedures for data generation, collection, and processing covering all indicators set out in the implementing act on urban mobility indicators (expected to be adopted mid 2025).

Work Package 3: Cooperation within the Rail Freight Corridors ensuring adequate coordination with the European Transport Corridors

The activities include:

1. Preparation of, participation in and follow-up to meetings at corridor level involving stakeholders of the rail freight corridor and cooperation with the European Coordinator responsible for the corresponding European Transport Corridor;
2. Preparation of, participation in and follow-up to meetings for coordination between several or all rail freight corridors;
3. Coordination activities within the Member State involving in particular the infrastructure manager(s), railway undertakings, terminal owners and managers, regional and local authorities and other relevant stakeholders;

4. Preparation of the report pursuant to Article 22 of the Regulation aligned with the guidance of the Commission on the structure and content of the report.

Work Package 4: CEF 2021-2027 - Communication, appraisal of CEF project proposals and technical monitoring of CEF 2 projects in Cohesion countries

The activities include:

- a) Communication actions relating to the CEF Programme, its actions and results in national languages, incl. organisation of national “Info days”, distribution of newsletters, social media communication and updated information on official websites with links to relevant EU websites;
- b) Appraisal of CEF project proposals: assessment of the compliance of project proposals with Call requirements and national priorities and signature of Member State agreement before project submission;
- c) Technical monitoring of the selected ongoing projects to ensure maximum absorption of the national Cohesion allocation.

Work Package 5: CEF 2014-2020 - Legacy management for technical and financial monitoring in Cohesion countries

The activities include:

- a) Technical monitoring and financial control of ongoing projects selected under CEF 2014 – 2020 for the period 2025-2027.

This includes the certification that the expenditure incurred in respect of projects or parts thereof has been disbursed and that the disbursement was in conformity with the relevant rules.

- (b) Communication.

This includes activities related to the promotion of project results and success stories.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 16 537 000**.

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	12 September 2024
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>12 November 2024 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	November-December 2024

Information on evaluation results:	December 2024 - January 2025
GA signature:	March/April 2025

5. Admissibility and documents

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

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the link in the invitation letter). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table per WP/calculator
 - timetable/Gantt chart

Please be aware that since the detailed budget table serves as the basis for fixing the lump sums for the grants (and since lump sums must be reliable proxies for the actual costs of a project), the costs you include **MUST** comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see [AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6](#)). This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must comply with best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and be free of any conflict of interests. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the grant may be reduced (even later on during the project implementation or after their end).


Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **120 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc.*).

 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

6. Eligibility

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

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

According to section 9 of the Work Programme for 2021-2027, the grant is to be awarded to the Member States eligible for funding from the Cohesion Fund.

The identity of the applicant (and compliance with general eligibility conditions) will be verified through the documents provided in the [Participant Register](#) during legal entity validation (copy of the resolution, decision or other official document establishing the entity, etc).

Consortium composition

n/a

Eligible activities

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

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

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

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Geographic location (target countries)

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

Duration

Projects should normally last until 31.12.2027 (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Project budget

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
 - an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
 - prefinancing paid instalments
 - (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)
- or
- propose no prefinancing
 - request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

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

Operational capacity

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

Entities that have been identified as named beneficiaries in the Work Programme in accordance with Article 195 of the Financial Regulation are in principle considered to have sufficient operational capacity to carry out the action. In case of doubt, the granting authority will however undertake an operational capacity check.

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate⁸:

⁸ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct⁹ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that¹⁰:


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

8. Evaluation and award procedure

Invited proposals will be checked against the formal requirements (admissibility and eligibility) and then evaluated by an evaluation committee for operational capacity and award criteria (*see sections 7 and 9*). If successful, they will be invited for grant agreement preparation.

⁹ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

¹⁰ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

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

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

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

9. Award criteria

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

- 1. Priority and urgency:** evaluating correspondence of the proposal with the sectoral policy objectives and priorities, measuring its EU added-value and where applicable assessing the possible synergies with other sectors (5 points)
- 2. Maturity:** assessing the maturity of the action in the project development. The criterion will measure, among others: the readiness/ability of the project to start by the proposed start date and to complete by the proposed end date, the status of the contracting procedures and of the necessary permits, and information on the financial availability needed to complement the CEF investment (5 points)
- 3. Quality:** evaluating the soundness of the implementation plan proposed, both from the technical and financial point of view, the architecture and design approach, the organisational structures put in place (or foreseen) for the implementation, the risk analysis, the control procedures and quality management and the communication strategy. Moreover, when applicable, it will also assess the information related to the maintenance strategy for the completed project (5 points)
- 4. Impact:** assessing, when applicable, the economic, social and environmental impact, including the climate impact, and other relevant externalities. In addition, assessing the need to overcome financial obstacles such as those generated by insufficient commercial viability, high upfront costs or the lack of market finance. This criterion may be substantiated by a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA or CEA) or, in the absence of such tool, other forecast of end-user take-up, in which case the evaluation will look at the soundness, comprehensiveness, and transparency of the analysis as well as proposed means to monitor its impact. Moreover, when applicable, the criterion will assess, among others, the innovation and digitalisation, safety and interoperability and accessibility aspects of the proposal, as well as its cross-border dimension, effect/contribution to the network territorial accessibility (5 points)
- 5. Catalytic effect:** evaluating the financial gap, the capacity to mobilise differentiated investments sources, the capacity to trigger important overall investments with limited EU support and when appropriate the extent to which externalities justify the CEF financial assistance. It also assesses the catalytic effect of the EU financial assistance (5 points).

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

Maximum points: 25 points.

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

Overall threshold: 15 points.

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

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

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

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

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

Starting date and project duration

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

Project duration: *see section 6 above*.

Milestones and deliverables

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

Beneficiaries will also be invited to check and update information from the MAP-IT tool regarding network allocation and output indicators.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (*maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc*) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5*).

Project budget (maximum grant amount): *see section 6 above*.

The grant will be a lump sum grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount, based on a lump sum or financing not linked to costs. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the variable amounts it has prefixed and the estimates indicated by the beneficiaries in their project budget.

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules


The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3, art 6 and Annex 2*).


Budget categories for this call:

- Lump sum contributions¹¹

Specific cost eligibility rules for this call:

- the lump sum amount must be calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the lump sum authorising decision and using the calculator provided.
- the lump sum calculation should respect the following conditions:
 - the estimated budget must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6](#))
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
 - eligible cost country restrictions: Yes, only costs/contributions for activities carried out in eligible countries or target countries are eligible

 Please be aware that in case of significant changes to the circumstances that have an impact on the project budget, you may be asked to request an amendment to reduce the grant awarded. If you do not comply with this request, we may have to terminate the grant and reduce it from our side (see *art 28 and 32*).

 Similarly, you may be asked to request an amendment to reduce the grant awarded, if your project encounters major delays during the project implementation. If you do not comply with this request, we may have to terminate the grant (see *art 28 and 32*).

Reporting and payment arrangements

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

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project. The amount will be established based on the grant type or estimated project duration at the time of grant signature and will vary between 25% and 50%. The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required — whichever is the latest).


There will be no interim payments.

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

¹¹ Decision of 26 August 2024 ARES(2024)6034911 authorising the use of lump sum contributions for technical assistance under the Connecting Europe Facility – Transport Sector ([europa.eu](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/infographic/infographic-ares-2024-6034911.pdf))

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (see *art 22*).

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done.

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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

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

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

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

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

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

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

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

- Member State information: Yes
- specific rules for digital infrastructure projects: No
- specific rules for ATM common projects: No
- durability: Yes
- specific rules for blending operations: No

Other specificities

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

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

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

11. How to submit an application

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

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

a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

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

b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

12. Help

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

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

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

Contact

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: CINEA-CEF-TRANSPORT-CALLS@ec.europa.eu.

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

13. Important



IMPORTANT

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

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding).

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

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them).
Organisations may participate in several proposals.
BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application.

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

This includes:

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

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

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