

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Call for proposals EACEA 33/2014

Key Action 3: Support for policy reform - Initiatives for policy innovation

European Forward Looking Cooperation Projects

in the fields of Education and Training, and Youth

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1. INTRODUCTION - BACKGROUND

1.1 Initiatives for policy innovation

A sharper need to support policy reform in European countries, brought about by the Europe 2020 strategy¹, has led to the creation of a new specific action - Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform under the Erasmus+ programme², with the overall aim to strengthen the programme's direct impact on reforms in education, training and youth.

Initiatives for policy innovation offer to participating countries the opportunity to tackle the challenges from the perspective of EU policy by stimulating direct impacts at system level.

Initiatives for policy innovation are projects selected through calls for proposals and co-funded through grants with a dual purpose:

- To support trans-national cooperation on forward thinking for developing new policies. This (*ex-ante*) stimulation of policy development is implemented through the Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects;
- To support trans-national cooperation for testing the implementation of innovative policies. This testing is implemented through the European Policy experimentation Projects.

The 2015 Annual Work Programme for the implementation of 'Erasmus+': the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport provides under section 8.3 financing Initiatives for Policy Innovation and within this context for **Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects**³.

1.2 Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects – definition and expected results

Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects are co-operation projects proposed and managed by a partnership of key stakeholders in view of identifying, testing, developing, assessing new innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth, that have the potential of becoming mainstreamed and giving input for improving educational and youth policies.

The projects should focus on innovation in practices and policies across educational and youth fields. The specific aim of these activities is to provide in-depth knowledge on target group(s), learning, teaching, training or youth work situations and effective methodologies and tools that help policies to develop, as well as conclusions relevant for policy makers in education, training and youth at all levels.

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1. Europe 2020 strategy: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm
 2. The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, in particular Articles 9 and 15 - Support for policy reform - constitutes the legal basis for the present call: - http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-legal-base_en.pdf
 3. 2015 Annual Work Programme, Section 8.3.2: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/awp/docs/c_2014_6856_en.pdf

The projects proposed under the present call should lead to significant results in particular in the following areas:

- (i) Improvement and/or development of new policies in the fields of education, training or youth through the identification, testing, development and assessment of innovative approaches that have the potential to become mainstreamed and having direct impact on European policy making in the fields of education and training, or youth;
- (ii) In-depth evidence and knowledge on target group(s), learning, teaching or youth work situations and effective methodologies and tools to innovate at a system level that will help to initiate new policy actions and/or policies to develop under the call priorities (see Section 2.2)
- (iii) Potential of long-term impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of education and training systems through the mainstreaming of advanced and innovative policy approaches;
- (iv) European added-value through the joint cooperation and mutual learning between stakeholders having impact on European policy making.

The outcomes of the Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects should draw from and feed into the Open Methods of Coordination in the field of education and training and in the field of youth.

These projects will be managed and led by key stakeholders with a proven record of excellence and state of the art knowledge, capacity to innovate or reaching a systemic impact through their activities and the potential to drive the policy agenda in the fields of education, training and youth.

The present Call for Proposals supports projects in two strands:

- **Strand 1** - Education and Training field
- **Strand 2** – Youth field

Under **Strand 1**, 6 specific priorities are identified (see Section 2.2) and a specific budget is allocated (see Section 4). Under **Strand 2**, only one priority is identified (see Section 2.2) and a specific budget is allocated (see Section 4).

The management of this call is delegated by the European Commission to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency⁴, hereinafter referred to as "the Agency".

1.3 Policy context

The economic and financial crisis is having dramatic socio-economic effects in Europe. It is threatening Europe's economic growth and employment and the sustainability of Europe's social welfare model.

4. Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu>

The Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, endorsed by the European Council in 2010, aims at helping Member States to overcome the economic downturn and to boost economic recovery, employment and competitiveness. By supporting the responsible public authorities in carrying out policy reforms in the fields of education and training and of youth, the Erasmus+ programme, and specifically Initiatives for policy innovation under Key Action 3, aims at helping eligible countries⁵ to use the potential of Europe's human capital and talent efficiently in order to achieve the Europe 2020 goals.

In practice, this involves supporting the preparation, implementation and follow-up of the European Semester as far as education, training and youth are concerned through the Open Methods of Coordination in the fields of education and training and of youth, in particular the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020)⁶ and the Renewed Framework for cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)⁷, as well as other EU sector-specific policy agendas.

European programmes have been supporting policy development – in particular through the Open Methods of Coordination in education, training and youth – for many years via trans-national action and mutual learning activities.

However, in order to support policy development towards *longer term changes and innovation* in the fields of education, training or youth more work is needed on policy innovation. Emphasis has to be given to the development of novel ideas, concepts and approaches that propose new and/or improved solutions to current or future core challenges in education, training and the youth field; to test these innovations in practices and providing elements for improving or reforming policies.

Innovation can drive policy improvement, either incrementally by advancing existing practices or more radically by introducing new practices. While innovation is generally recognized as critical to the continuous improvement of education and the delivery of increased learning outcomes, equity, cost-efficiency and learner satisfaction (OECD, 2014)⁸, it is not yet systematically part of education policy development. No efficient measurement tools exist to assess the impact of possible innovative policies and practices. No guiding methodologies are available on how to create and develop novel ideas into policy development, etc.

In order to generate genuine improvements in their education and training and youth systems and policies, programme countries need more attention to development and testing of novel ideas - beyond the state of the art with a clear potential to innovate educational practices and viable implementation options - and with ground-breaking objectives responding to current and future challenges in education, training and youth field. This all should be built on a solid evidence base of in-depth knowledge and experiences, be translated into concrete policy actions and be transferred to the policy level with sustainable and systemic impact on Europe's education and youth systems

5. For definition of 'eligible countries' see Section 6.1

6. 'ET 2020': [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN)

7. Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018): [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219(01)&from=EN)

8. OECD (2014) Measuring Innovation in Education: A new perspective: <http://www.oecd.org/education/measuring-innovation-in-education.htm>

Cooperation mechanisms have to be stimulated between those building up the evidence-base and those using it for advancing or reforming policies. Work on innovative practices in education, training or youth fields should ideally be executed by key actors active in the fields of education, training or youth; able to build partnerships bridging analysis, practices and policy making; possessing a state of the art knowledge and proven record of excellence in the fields of education, training or youth; having the capacity to translate results into concrete policy actions and the potential to transfer these to policy making; and having the potential to influence the European policy Agenda.

2. OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this call are to:

- Propose and field-test innovative solutions to current or future challenges in the education, training or youth field which have the potential to improve and/or transform policies and practices and which can have a sustainable and systemic impact on Europe's education, training and youth systems;
- Identify, test, develop, and assess new innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth, that have the potential of becoming mainstreamed;
- Support trans-national cooperation and mutual learning on forward-looking issues between key stakeholders to provide solutions to current challenges in the education, training and youth sectors and impact on the design of new policies in those fields;
- Facilitate the collection and analysis of substantive evidence allowing the responsible authorities to develop new, innovative and effective policies and practices in the education and training field or in the youth field and elaborating concrete methodologies for a practical implementation of these in the future;
- Provide in-depth knowledge on target group(s), learning, teaching, training or youth work situations and effective methodologies and tools that help policies to develop, as well as conclusions relevant for policy makers in education, training and youth at all levels;
- Reinforce increased attention to policy innovation in education, training or youth field.

2.2 Priorities

Proposals submitted under the present call must tackle at least one of the priorities listed under this present Section 2.2. Applicants are free to consider any specific aspect or measure within a priority.

These priorities are exclusive. Proposals not addressing one of the seven call priorities will not be considered for funding.

There are two separate strands addressed in this call. Applicants must indicate clearly in the application form which strand they are addressing. Under strand 1, the proposals may address one or several priorities.

If the applicant addresses several priorities, one priority must be chosen as the "main priority"

and must be satisfactorily addressed⁹. Applications that do not address satisfactorily the "main priority" will not be considered for funding.

- **Strand 1** - Priorities 1 to 6 apply to the *Education and Training* field
- **Strand 2** - Priority 7 applies to the *Youth* field

Strand 1 - Education and training

Priority 1 - Reducing disparities in learning outcomes affecting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds

Success in education is crucial for both economic and social progress. Education systems should enable all citizens to succeed and to develop their full potential. "Promoting equity, social inclusion and active citizenship" is one of the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training¹⁰ and the focus of specific Council Conclusions¹¹. These stress the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC), targeted support, inclusive education, second-chance and personalised learning to enable all learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs, to succeed in education. They also stress that education should promote tolerance and help combat discrimination.

Inequalities and prejudice persist in European education systems –in access, treatment and outcomes. Socio-economic background, disability, migrant/traveler status, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation or care status impact on people's chances to access and succeed in education. These factors often interplay creating multiple disadvantages. For example: early school leaving of foreign-born pupils is higher; learners with disabilities are often placed in segregated institutions or in mainstream settings with inadequate support and many leave school with inadequate learning outcomes; Roma and migrant-background pupils are overrepresented in segregated and special needs settings and few Roma go beyond primary education; discrimination and violence in educational institutions lead to higher drop-out rates and lower outcomes.

Projects are encouraged to pilot creative, inventive and unconventional pioneering approaches that help create learning environments that foster equity and inclusion, where disadvantaged learners receive the support they need to succeed and feel respected and valued. The proposed actions can be system-wide or people-focused, e.g. address the organisation of education systems, pedagogies, institutional practices, learning environment or resource allocation - in any type or level of education. For example, projects could develop actions to: combat segregation and discrimination; promote the success of migrant-background learners; provide effective personalised learning support; foster motivation and resilience and reduce drop-out among disadvantaged learners ; strengthen the links between education institutions and home; introduce innovative inclusive pedagogies; tackle geographic disparities in education; encourage marginalised groups such as Roma to participate in ECEC; support people with disabilities to

9. The number of indicated priorities will not influence the scoring of the Relevance criterion.

10. ET 2020: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN)

11. See: a) 2010 Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:135:0002:0007:EN:PDE>; b) 2013 Council Conclusions on the social dimension of higher education: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/137144.pdf

obtain higher qualifications and facilitate their transition to the labour market; re-engage young people disengaged from education; prepare and deploy the education professional workforce for equity, diversity and inclusion; promote citizenship in education, measure and monitor inequalities in education; implement cross-policy synergies and multi-professional partnerships for effective intervention against educational disadvantage.

The target group(s) are heterogeneous and there is no single recipe. Projects are expected to offer original, integrated approaches and innovative forms of collaboration between different actors (e.g. policy makers, institutions, learners, teachers and trainers, families, communities, researchers) that can potentially generate new policy orientations and/or to help upscale concrete measures that are shown to have potential for positive impact.

Priority 2 - Raising the quality of education through the use of learning analytics and learning semantics

It is expected that learning analytics (analysing of learning process data) and learning semantics (enabling digital systems and human users to understand the 'meaning' of resources, their relation among each other and their connection to curricula and learning objectives) to provide fundamental breakthroughs in education and training quality, effectiveness and equity, each when used on its own and particularly when used in conjunction. Analytics and semantics can also make assessment more meaningful and useful, giving educators and learners direct feedback how and in which areas improvement is required, and can shape learning steps and curricula for improved results.

The recent interest in the use of data (especially large-scale data, so called "Big Data") for assessment in the education and training field through 'learning analytics' offers new perspectives to adapt the ongoing assessment methods and approaches in all educational sectors. Learning analytics could further directly impact the quality of learning. Used on a large-scale level with vast amounts of detailed learner data, learning materials can be constantly improved, the learning process can be streamlined, likely-to-fail or highly achieving individuals can be identified, educators can receive concrete data on learning styles and progress, etc.

The particular application for assessment has a powerful influence on teaching and learning. Current assessment usually emphasises subject knowledge and doesn't measure skills or attitudes which can be equally crucial for future employability. Further, current assessment is usually 'summative' (takes place at the end of the learning process), comparative (evaluates learners relative to peer performance) and often predictable in timing and content. European education is beginning to shift from the traditional 'test culture' towards a 'broad assessment culture' where assessment with immediate feedback to both learner and educator is an integral part of the learning process. The use of learning analytics holds the potential to introduce and mainstream formative assessment which measures learning throughout the learning process, measures individual rather than relative achievement and demands constant engagement. This type of assessment guides their learning to help them effectively gain knowledge, skills and attitudes through feedback mechanisms.

Learning semantics in turn will enable the wider use of digital and open educational materials as their discoverability and specificity can increase. It can particularly aid self-guided learning and self-chosen learning paths. Both, but especially the joint use of analytics and semantics will aid the personalisation and adaptability of all types of learning paths, addressing directly each

learner's needs, preferences and interests. Other uses of learning analytics and learning semantics for more relevant and better quality education may also be explored under this priority.

The projects under this priority should identify, test, develop and assess new and innovative concepts and approaches to include learning analytics and semantics in learning situations (including assessment). They should have a clear potential for mainstreaming and should provide input for improving education policies. The projects should have holistic approaches and include all elements from a theoretical and scientific underpinning to the development of implementation pathways and execution of field-trials. As projects should respect the complexity of the issue, the proposed concepts should not be just applicable to individual subjects and learner groups but need to hold potential for large-scale and multi-subject mainstreaming across vastly different educational systems. Outcomes should include policy recommendations and conclusions highlighting potential future pathways and further trial or mainstreaming suggestions.

Priority 3 - Promoting innovative collaborative teaching and learning

In the Education and Training 2020 strategic framework, raising the level of basic skills (reading, mathematics and science) and ensuring that all learners – including those from disadvantaged backgrounds – complete their education are identified as important challenges for European education systems. This is underlined by specific benchmarks: by 2020, the share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%, and the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%. While improvement can be seen in many Member States, the situation is still serious and demands an innovative, knowledge-based and broad effort on all levels.

Many research studies have demonstrated that pupils in cooperative learning environments perform significantly better than those in competitive or individualistic situations. Collaborative approaches to teaching and learning have proved effective in improving student engagement and student achievements for all learners, and specifically for disadvantaged students who are more at risk of low achievement in basic skills and early school leaving. Research also highlights the benefits of collaboration among teachers both for their own professional development and for the development of a school culture based on shared responsibilities and values. Classroom practices based on group settings, where learners collaborate as an explicit part of the learning environment; interdisciplinary teaching, which requires collaboration among teachers; out-of-school activities more systematically integrated in the curriculum (which implies establishing stable contacts with a wide range of actors around the school) and involvement of the broader surrounding community as a partner in children's education are some examples of collaborative practices which can have a positive impact on the learning conditions of all students. In a context of increasing migration and mobility within and into the EU, recognising the multicultural and linguistic diversity of learners in the teaching methodologies could make education more socially inclusive and effective. For example, methods of reciprocal learning can be explored to raise engagement of learners. Collaboration between different levels of education can also help ensure continuity and ease transition to the next educational stage.

Collaborative practices exist but are not wide-spread, and often solely rest on the goodwill of motivated and engaged teachers and school principals. For collaborative teaching and learning

practices to be effective, teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to use them. This includes relational expertise for establishing collaborative partnerships with peers as well as with other professionals and actors outside the school boundaries. Furthermore, the potential of these collaborative approaches can only be fully realised if supported by forms of assessment that are consistent with the learning objectives and which will foster the learners' involvement.

The projects should identify, test, develop and assess new and innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment which favour collaborative learning. This includes:

- innovative ways of integrating the competences to create and work in collaborative settings in teacher education (both initial teacher education and induction, and continuous professional development);
- innovative diagnostics and assessment tools, combining both summative and formative approaches, that allow teachers to monitor and respond rapidly to what children are learning in a collaborative way. The assessment methods should also provide solutions for how to inform parents, schools and policy makers about the progress made by learners. Furthermore, projects should focus on solutions for how to incorporate the new assessment tools into existing evaluation and verification paths. The objective of these projects would be to ensure coherence of the education systems and allow for permeability between schools using new methods and more traditional schools, allowing for assessing students levels and progress irrespectively of the methods applied.

The proposed approaches should have a clear potential for mainstreaming and should provide input for improving school education policies.

The outcomes should provide in-depth knowledge on target group(s), teaching and learning situations, effective methodologies and tools that help policies to develop, as well as conclusions relevant for policy makers in school education at all levels. Promotion and dissemination among high-level public authorities at European level will increase the quality of learning approaches and foster transfer of innovation between different education and training systems.

Priority 4 - Opening up (virtual or physical) infrastructures of education and training institutions to adult learning and provision of modular certified learning opportunities

The European Agenda for Adult Learning calls for improving the quality and efficiency of the adult learning sector and increasing participation, in particular by low qualified (and disadvantaged) adults. Reducing the number of low skilled/low qualified adults was also defined as a policy priority in the Council Conclusions on Investing in education and training – a response to the Commission Communication on “Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes”¹². Investing in up-skilling adults (particularly unemployed

12. Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes:
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/com669_en.pdf

people, low-skilled people and migrants) remains essential, if the employment and social goals of the EU strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth are to be achieved.

More than ever before, skills must be maintained and renewed throughout working life, and career change must be supported by continuing education and development. However, education and training systems have not been developing in tune with individuals' and employers' needs, nor have they been responding to differing regional needs by tailoring provision to meet them. The main challenge is to develop a scenario that meets adults' training needs due to a wide range of circumstances, such as: regional transformation; company restructuring; start-ups; environmental protection; alternative energies and production methods; individuals' needs to acquire or further develop basic skills, career advancement, career change, etc. Approaches are needed which leverage existing resources and infrastructure in innovative ways.

Projects should aim to increase the quality, efficiency and participation rate of adults in education and continuing vocational education and training by opening up initial VET centres/schools/ higher education institutions - whether virtual or physical places - to cater for a wider range of adult learners and/or by providing flexible modular pathways, in which each module would be organised around a set of agreed learning outcomes to be assessed and certified. Learning should primarily be linked to regional skills needs in support of regional growth strategies and involve partnerships between relevant actors (for example, public employment services, guidance services employers and trade unions). Other innovative forms for widening learning opportunities for adult learners may also be explored.

The expected outcomes should allow the supply of learning opportunities to be more closely matched to regional demand for skills, including basic skills, and ensure development in existing adult education and training systems to increase their capacity and activities, hence enabling more adults to learn.

Priority 5 - Improve quality and raise excellence in vocational education and training

Building up excellence in VET was identified as a priority in the Commission Communication on "Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes". It calls for VET policies to be aligned with regional/local economic development strategies, the development of short cycle tertiary qualifications focused on identified areas of skills shortage and the strengthening of local, national and international partnerships and networks between companies, especially SMEs, and VET providers.

VET policies and reform efforts at both European and national levels have mainly focused on issues of employability, labour market relevance and quality assurance. This has been a somewhat reactive approach in supplying skill needs. The potential for VET to proactively support economic growth by re-defining its role in fostering innovation, productivity and competitiveness, was not sufficiently acknowledged until 2012 when the Rethinking education Communication put forward the concept of "VET excellence".

The aim is to fully exploit the potential of VET in supporting growth, job creation, productivity, competitiveness and innovation. This can be done through the alignment of VET with regional/local economic development strategies, the promotion of higher VET to respond to identified skills shortages, support to new types of partnerships for smart growth and innovation (such as opening up the facilities of VET providers for basic business services, co-location

partnerships with creation of joint facilities/technologies, technology diffusion centres or virtual demonstration centres for new technologies or assistance to companies in incubation/development of new products or services), the promotion of cross-disciplinary and multi-level partnerships with other education and training providers (such as universities, universities of applied sciences or schools).

Project activities should be piloted with a support of performance-based and demand-led funding, as well as through opportunities to create public-private partnerships which allow cost-sharing as well as generating income. They should increasingly use innovative ICT based simulations, Open Educational Resources (OER) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) with the aim of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of training. At an institutional level, activities as defined above can be facilitated through the establishment of local/regional VET excellence centres. Other forms of innovation aimed at promoting excellence in VET may also be explored.

The expected outcomes will explore the above mentioned approaches, developing in-depth knowledge, methodologies and innovative practices. Forward Looking Cooperation Projects will have the potential to become mainstreamed for improving VET excellence and influence the policy agenda in the field of VET and allow the responsible public authorities to explore the scalability of the initiative to become mainstreamed practice (including with the support of ESIF).

Priority 6 - Reforming higher education to make it more diversified, responsive and competitive

EU higher education policy supports the modernisation of higher education systems to make them more responsive to the needs of the knowledge society and to equip the European workforce with high quality skills. Further steps are required to make systems more diversified, responsive and competitive to enable them to increase the level and relevance of graduate skills and to handle successfully the challenges of globalisation.

Proposals for Forward Looking Cooperation Projects are welcome in any of the five priority reform areas identified in the EU Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education¹³ to help meet these challenges. In that context, the challenge of improving the quality and the relevance of higher education is critical. Another challenge is to develop the strategic capacities of higher education institutions, as the capacity of institutions to draw in funding from diverse sources and manage resources efficiently is particularly important for more responsive, sustainable and internationalised systems. Removing obstacles and increasing the cost effectiveness of student and staff mobility is also crucial for embedding internationalisation in institutions.

Through this initiative, relevant stakeholders will propose new ways to address these gaps by developing innovative practices across higher education systems in Europe. Forward Looking Cooperation Projects are expected to kick-start longer-term changes in policies and practices, which will produce a sustainable and systemic impact on Europe's higher education systems.

13. Supporting growth and jobs - An agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems (COM (2011) 567 final): http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/policy/modernisation_en.pdf

The aim is to address at least one of the five priority areas identified in the EU Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education. Expected outcomes may include: developing relevant and innovative learning and teaching strategies¹⁴ to reinforce the role of excellent teachers in student success and promote new, innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning¹⁵, for example by offering web-based training for the development of professional skills and exploring the use of new and creative pedagogies; reinforcing the learning outcomes-based approach in higher education, including their role in assessment of graduate skills; developing new strategies at system or institutional level for enhancing the effective autonomy of institutions and their ability to set strategic direction, while ensuring adequate accountability; and facilitating the development of innovative ICT-based services to improve the cost effectiveness of learning mobility, allowing easy sharing, exchange or transfer of data, for example by enabling digital student data portability; facilitating learning mobility, by promoting and extending best practices in the provision of affordable accommodation for Erasmus+ students in the various countries

Strand 2 - Youth field

Priority 7- Using e-participation as an instrument to foster young people's empowerment and active participation in democratic life

The EU Youth Strategy promotes participation as one of its fields of action, calling i.a. for ensuring quality mechanisms for dialogue, listening to different groups, making good use of ICTs and supporting activities to 'learn to participate'. The Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015 foresees the EU's political cooperation in the youth field to concentrate on empowerment, which includes participation.

Recent studies¹⁶ show that young people want to participate, but increasingly feel insufficiently heard in the political arena. Reasons for them not to vote often include beliefs that their votes do not count or that politicians do not pay attention to their concerns. Representative organisations are seen to be quite distant from the concerns of ordinary young people, and disadvantaged groups tend to be underrepresented.

E-participation offers opportunities to involve greater numbers of young people, and involve more diverse groups thereby improving the social inclusion of all young people. However, success crucially depends on how systems are designed, as not all young people have easy access to online tools or certain groups might require additional support or reassurances before being willing to engage in e-participation. One of the challenges is for example scaling up from handling the interaction and evaluation of the input from tens or hundreds of people to dealing with potentially thousands or tens of thousands of participants. The traditional approach has been to simplify the feedback mechanism to enable evaluation to be carried out in an automated manner (e.g., simple survey answers), but this diminishes the participation experience for those who care enough about the subject to take part. Another challenge is that the digital divide is

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14. See Report by the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education on “Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe’s higher education institutions”:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/modernisation_en.pdf
 15. See Report by the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education on “Modernising Higher Education: New Modes of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education” published in October 2014
http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/modernisation-universities_en.pdf
 16. Youth Participation in Democratic Life, LSE, 2013
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/businessAndConsultancy/LSEEnterprise/pdf/YouthParticipationDemocraticLife.pdf>

still a reality for excluded young people who are not in education; not all young people have access to Internet, or possess the necessary digital literacy.

The projects should identify, test, develop and assess major enhancements to existing e-participation systems or new and innovative systems in using e-participation as an instrument to foster young people's empowerment and active participation in democratic life on a large scale. The outcomes should ensure that e-participation systems are fit to cover the full spectrum of dialogue, including consultation modules, processing reactions (in great numbers, in different languages and multi-media formats) and feedback mechanisms. The developed systems should enable users to engage in something that they feel offers them a satisfying and fulfilling participation experience from end-to-end (from initial involvement through to receiving feedback on the final outcomes of the process), and, where relevant, complement offline participation processes. Furthermore, any challenges in terms of obstacles for specific groups of young people should be more precisely identified and addressed by adequate technical and organisational solutions. E-participation initiatives should ensure that all potential users effectively have the right access and skills and that they meet the highest standards with regards to users' privacy and personal data.

The aim is to use of information and communication technologies to broaden and deepen political and social participation of young people at local, regional, national, European or global level; enabling young people to connect and dialogue with, express their opinions to and influence elected policy-makers, public administrations, interest groups, civil society organisations, or individual citizens within any of the political or social processes affecting their lives. Using e-participation to foster inter-generational relations may also be explored.

3. TIMETABLE AND PROCEDURE

The table below provides information on the main stages and dates of the selection process

	Stages	Date and time or indicative period
1	Publication of the call	27 November 2014
2	Deadline for submitting applications	24 February 2015 - 12.00 noon CET
3	Evaluation period	March to June 2015
4	Notification of selection results	July 2015
5	Signature of grant agreement	October 2015
6	Project start date	Between 1 November 2015 and 1 January 2016

The present call is set up in a unique submission/evaluation stage. Proposals will be assessed on the basis of admissibility requirements (Section 5), eligibility criteria (Section 6), exclusion criteria (Section 7), selection criteria (Section 8) and the award criteria (Section 9). Only applications that comply with admissibility requirements will pass at evaluation stage and only

applications that fulfill the eligibility criteria will be considered for further evaluation.

All eligible applications will undergo an assessment by external independent experts according to the award criteria. The award criteria and their respective weightings for the proposals are (see details under Section 9):

- Relevance (30%)
- Quality of the project design and implementation (30%)
- Quality of the partnership and cooperation arrangements (20%)
- Impact, dissemination and sustainability (20%)

The assessed proposals considered compliant with eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria will be ranked in order of merit according to the total score obtained. Two final ranking lists will be constituted, one for each strand of the call (see Section 2.2).

In relation to the list of Strand 1 - "Education and training", the final ranking of the proposals may be adjusted by the Evaluation Committee¹⁷ to ensure a more equal number of projects per policy priority in the call. A proposal (above the quality threshold of 70%) with a lower score may be placed in a higher position in the ranking list if this ensures better coverage of all policy priorities of Strand 1 and provided that the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination are duly taken into account.

The coordinators of eligible proposals will be notified in writing about the selection results and will receive an evaluation report of their proposal.

The selected applicants will receive a proposal to enter into a multi-beneficiary grant agreement.

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget available for the co-financing of projects under the present call is EUR **17.000.000**, and is divided in the following way:

- **Strand 1 - Education and Training: EUR 15.000.000**
- **Strand 2 - Youth: EUR 2.000.000**

Financial contribution from the EU cannot exceed **75%** of the total eligible project costs.

The maximum grant per project will be **EUR 500.000**.

17. The Evaluation Committee includes representatives from the Agency and from the relevant Directorates-Generals of the European Commission. The role of the Evaluation Committee is to supervise the overall assessment procedure, to guarantee the equal treatment of all applications through a fair and transparent application of the procedures and to make a grant award proposal to the Agency's Director in charge of taking the grant award decision.

The Agency reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available for this call.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applications shall comply with the following requirements:

- they must be sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in Section 3 of the present call for proposals;
- they must be submitted online (see Section 15 of the present call guidelines), using the electronic application form and its compulsory annexes;
- they must be drafted in one of the EU official languages.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

In order to submit an application, applicants and partners must provide their Participant Identification Code (PIC) in the application form. The PIC can be obtained by registering the organisation in the Unique Registration Facility (URF) hosted in the Education, Audiovisual, Culture, Citizenship and Volunteering Participant Portal. The Unique Registration Facility is a tool shared by other services of the European Commission. If an applicant or partner already has a PIC that has been used for other programmes (for example the Research programmes), the same PIC is valid for the present call for proposals.

The Participant Portal allows applicants and partners to upload or update the information related to their legal status and attach the requested legal and financial documents (see Section 15.2 for more information).

Only applications that comply with admissibility requirements will pass at evaluation stage.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The proposals which comply with the below criteria will be the subject of a content evaluation. Only applications that fulfill the eligibility criteria will be considered for a grant. If an application is deemed ineligible, a letter indicating the reasons will be sent to the applicant.

The eligibility criteria will be assessed on the basis of the information provided in the application form.

6.1 Eligible applicants

The term 'applicants' refers to all organisations and institutions participating in a proposal regardless of their role in the project.

Eligible applicants are public and private organisations active in the fields of education, training and youth or other socio-economic sectors, or organisations carrying out cross-sectoral activities.

Applicants considered eligible to respond to this call are:

- public authorities at national/regional/local level responsible for education, training and youth policy;
- non-profit organisations (NGOs), private or public;
- research centres;
- universities;
- chambers of commerce;
- networks;
- recognition centers;
- evaluation institutions;
- trade organisations and social partners;
- schools or other educational institutions;
- civil society and cultural organisations;
- companies;
- international organisations.

Furthermore, for the implementation of this call for proposals, National Agencies or other structures and networks of the Erasmus+ Programme, receiving a direct grant from the Commission in accordance with the legal basis of the Programme¹⁸ are not eligible to participate. Nevertheless, the legal entities hosting the Erasmus+ National Agencies or the structures and networks mentioned above, as well as entities affiliated¹⁹ to these legal entities, are considered eligible applicants.

Applicants should clearly demonstrate that they comprise partners that are key actors active in the fields of education, training or youth; being able to build partnerships bridging analysis, practices and policy making; possessing a state of the art knowledge and proven record of experience in the fields of education, training or youth; having the capacity to provide results that have the potential to be transferred into policy making and influence the European Policy Agenda.

Only applications from legal entities established in the following **eligible countries** are eligible:

- the 28 Member States of the European Union;
- the EFTA/EEA countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway;
- EU candidate countries: Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

18. Erasmus+: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-legal-base_en.pdf

19. See Article 122 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union and its rules of application: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations_en.cfm

The **minimum partnership composition requirement** for this call is **3 organisations** representing **3 eligible countries**.

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, the following supporting documents are requested:

- **for a private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- **for a public entity:** copy of the resolution or decision establishing the public company, or other official document establishing the public-law entity.

Role of applicants:

Applicant/coordinator: an organisation that submits the project proposal on behalf of all the partners. The coordinator has the full responsibility to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with the grant agreement. When the project is granted, the applicant/coordinator will become the main EU grant beneficiary and will sign a multi-beneficiary grant agreement on behalf of the partnership.

Its coordinating role stands for the following duties:

- represents and acts on behalf of the group of organisations involved in the partnership vis-à-vis the Agency;
- bears the financial and legal responsibility for the proper operational, administrative and financial implementation of the entire project;
- coordinates the project in cooperation with all other project partners.

Partners: organisations participating in the partnership which contribute actively to the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the project. Each partner must sign a mandate by which the signatory grants power of attorney to the coordinator to act in his name and for his account during the implementation of the project.

Applicants must submit letters from all partner organisations involved in the partnership confirming their participation. This is done in the format of mandate letters (see Section 15).

6.2 Eligible activities and project duration

Activities must start between 1 November 2015 and 1 January 2016.

The project duration must be between 24 and 36 months. However, if after the signing of the agreement and the start of the project it becomes impossible for the beneficiaries, for fully justified reasons beyond their control, to complete the project within the scheduled period, an extension to the eligibility period may be granted. A maximum extension of 6 additional months will be granted, if requested before the deadline specified in the grant agreement. The maximum

duration will then be 42 months.

The activities to be financed under this call may include (not exhaustive list):

- Needs analysis, studies, mapping exercise;
- Research activities;
- Training activities;
- Drafting of report(s), project conclusions, policy recommendations;
- Workshop(s);
- Conferences/seminars;
- Exchanges/mobilities;
- Concrete tests and assessments of innovative approaches at grass-root level;
- Awareness and dissemination actions;
- Actions aiming at the creation and improving of networks, exchanges of good practices;
- Development of ICT tools (software, platforms, apps, etc.) or learning resources;
- Development of other intellectual outputs.

Only activities taking place in eligible countries (see Section 6.1) will be considered eligible for funding. Any costs relating to activities undertaken outside these countries or by organisations that are not registered in the eligible countries are not eligible unless they are necessary for the completion of the project and duly explained and justified in the application form. Any Amendment to the activities that involves other countries than the eligible countries must have the prior specific authorization from the Executive Agency.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1 Exclusion from participation

Applicants will be excluded from participating in this Call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of *res judicata*;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the responsible authorising officer can justify including by decisions of the EIB and international organisations;
- (d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the responsible Authorising Officer or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;
- (e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any

- other illegal activity, where such illegal activity is detrimental to the Union' financial interests;
- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 109(1) of the Financial Regulation.

7.2 Exclusion from award

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interests;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Agency as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure, or fail to supply this information.
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in Article 106 (1) of the Financial Regulation;

In accordance with Article 109 of the Financial Regulation, administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on beneficiaries who are guilty of misrepresentation or are found to have seriously failed to meet their contractual obligations under a previous contract award procedure.

7.3 Supporting documents

Applicants for a grant exceeding EUR 60.000 must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in any of the situations referred to in Sections 7.1 and 7.2. This declaration is part of the Application Package (see Section 15).

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants must submit a declaration on their honour, completed and signed, attesting to their status as a legal person and to their financial and operational capacity to complete the proposed activities.

8.1 Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed project. In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour, and must include in the Application Package:

- a description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation (accompanied, where appropriate, by a list of relevant publications) within each partner institution showing all their relevant professional experience;
- a list of projects connected to the selected policy priority (ies) of the call implemented by the applicants in the three last years.

8.2 Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the project is being carried out and to participate in its funding.

In order to allow an assessment of their financial capacity, organisations applying for a grant must submit:

1. Low value grants (equal or inferior to EUR60.000)

- a declaration on their honour

2. Grants more than EUR 60.000

- a declaration on their honour;
- the financial statements (including the balance sheet, the profit and loss accounts and the annexes) of the coordinator, for the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed;
- a completed financial capacity form, (see Section 15) filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.

The verification of financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies, or to international organisations.

For the purpose of this call, public bodies, as well as schools, higher education institutions and organisations in the fields of education, training, youth and sport that have received over 50 % of their annual revenue from public sources over the last two years shall be considered as having the necessary financial, professional and administrative capacity to carry out activities under the Programme. They shall not be required to present further documentation to demonstrate that capacity. Such organisations are required to state in a signed declaration on honour (included in the Application Package - see Section 15) that their organisation complies with the above-mentioned definition of public body. The Agency reserves the right to request documentation to prove the veracity of this declaration.

If, on the basis of the documents submitted, the Agency considers that financial capacity has not been proved or is not satisfactory, it may:

- request further information;
- propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;
- propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing paid in instalments (against an interim report);
- propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee;
- reject the application.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible proposals will be assessed on the basis of the below criteria.

Relevance (30%)

- The objectives of the project are clear and pertinent to the call objectives and the selected call "main priority". If other priorities are indicated, their relation(s) with project objectives are clearly explained.
- The concept is sound and the proposed approach is credible.
- The project work is ambitious, has a clear innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches).
- The proposal demonstrates the potential for transferring results to European policy development.
- Transnational cooperation allows achieving results that would not be achieved at country level alone, and there is potential for transferring results to other sectors or to countries not involved in the project or other sectors.

Quality of the project design and implementation (30%):

- The project design is clear, coherent, organized in different phases, with appropriate milestones and pertinent deliverables/outputs/results.
- The needs and target group(s) are defined and adequate results are described.
- The project management plan is sound with adequate resources allocated to different tasks, clear cooperation and decision-making processes. The monitoring strategy includes risk identification and a mitigating actions plan.
- There is a clear quality assurance plan which also covers project management adequately. The implementation refers concretely to how the evidence base built can be transferred into policy actions.
- The budget shows cost effectiveness and value for money. There is coherence between tasks, roles and financial resources allocated to partners. The financial management arrangements are clear and appropriate for the consortium and the design of the proposal.

Quality of the partnership and cooperation arrangements (20%):

- The partnership is composed of organizations, and institutions that are capable of ensuring full achievement of the objectives of the call with due regard to the priority selected by the applicants.
- The partnership is composite and ensures coverage of all necessary skills and expertise (bridging analysis, practice and policy making) with adequate allocation of time and input. Skills and competences of the partnership are complementary.
- The cooperation arrangements within the partnership are balanced. The roles attributed to each partner guarantee a good balance between analysis work and exploitable outputs for policy making.
- The partnership demonstrates its capacity to translate results into policy actions and transfer these to policy makers.
- The partnership should demonstrate the potential to influence the European policy Agenda.

Impact, dissemination and sustainability (20%):

- There is a clearly defined potential impact at European level related to the priority/ies addressed.

- There is a clear awareness-raising, dissemination and communication strategy that ensures reaching the relevant target group(s) as well as the relevant stakeholders and the general public during the lifetime of the project. This strategy includes plans for making any educational materials²⁰ accessible through open licenses.
- The exploitation approach is clearly described and the proposed measures to exploit the project results are effective.
- The project outcomes are strengthening the educational landscape by developing innovations which meet the needs of the Education and Training field or the Youth field related to the chosen priority and where relevant by delivering such innovations to the practice.
- The project outcomes have the potential for long-term impact on improving, advancing or developing new policy action(s) in the related field.

Only proposals having reached the minimum quality thresholds:

- at least the threshold of 50% of each criterion (i.e minimum 15 points for respectively "Relevance" and "Quality of the project design and implementation"; 10 points for respectively "Quality of the partnership and cooperation arrangements" and "Impact, dissemination and sustainability"; and
- at least the threshold of 70% on the total score (i.e. aggregate score of the 4 award criteria)

will be considered for EU funding. Applications falling below those thresholds shall be rejected.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENT

In the event of definitive approval by the Agency, a grant agreement drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding will be sent to the applicant coordinating institution (hereafter 'the coordinator') representing all other project partners (hereafter 'other beneficiaries') in view to formalize the obligations of the parties.

The two copies of the original agreement must be signed first by the legal representative of the coordinator and returned to the Agency immediately. The Agency will sign them last. The agreement will be a multi-beneficiary agreement.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1 General Principle

An EU grant is an incentive to carry out activities that would not be possible without the support of the European Union. It is based on the principle of co-financing. The EU grant supplements the applicants own financial involvement and/or any national, regional or private

20. For this purpose, educational materials should be understood as any materials meant to provide support to teaching and learning processes, such as course syllabi, class notes, presentations, exercises, textbooks, interactive materials or other. Open licenses for these materials should guarantee, as a minimum, free access for any individual or organization. Applicants are allowed to include limitations in the open licenses as appropriate. In terms of open access policy, wherever relevant, the proposal will describe how the materials and documents will be made freely available and promoted through open licenses. and do not contain inappropriate limitations

support they may have obtained.

Acceptance of the proposal by the Agency does not constitute an undertaking to award a grant equal to the amount requested by the applicants. Furthermore, under no circumstances may the amount awarded exceed the amount requested.

a) Non-cumulative award

A project may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate in the application form the sources and amounts of European Union funding received or applied for the same project or part of the project or for its functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same project.

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for projects already completed. A grant may be awarded for a project which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the project before the grant agreement is signed. In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the resources which are necessary to carry out the project may not be entirely provided by the EU grant. Part of the total estimated eligible expenses must therefore be financed from sources other than the Union grant.

Co-financing of the project may take the form of:

- the beneficiary's own resources;
- income generated by the action;
- financial contributions from third parties;

d) Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the project is to be attached to the application form. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants which foresee that costs will not be incurred in euros shall use the exchange rate published on the Infor-euro website available at http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm on the date of the publication of this call for proposals.

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where implementation of the project requires sub-contracting or the awarding of a procurement contract, the coordinator and, where applicable, the other beneficiaries, must follow the following principles:

- award the contract to the bid offering best value for money;
- ensure that the award process is fully transparent and based on equal treatment of potential contractors;
- take care to avoid conflicts of interests.

In the event of procurement exceeding EUR 60 000, the coordinator and, where applicable, the other beneficiaries must obtain competitive tenders from at least 5 potential contractors, unless national rules prescribe differently. In the latter case, national rules will apply provided that the contracting authority is able to demonstrate, if requested, the coherence between the procedure followed and the national rules applied.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2004/18/EC²¹ or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2004/17/EC²² shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules.

Sub-contracting, i.e. the externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action as described in the proposal and which cannot be performed by the beneficiary itself must satisfy the conditions applicable to any implementation contract (as specified above) and in addition to them the following conditions:

- it may only cover the implementation of a limited part of the action;
- it must be justified having regard to the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- it must be clearly stated in the proposal or prior written authorisation from the Agency must be obtained.

The total costs for subcontracting may not be more than 30 % of the total direct costs of the project. The management and the general administration of the project may not be subcontracted.

f) Financial support to third parties

The applications may not envisage provision of financial support to third parties.

11.2 Funding forms

General provisions

21. Directive 2004/18/EC on the coordination of procedures for the award of public work contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32004L0018>

22. Directive 2004/25/EU coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014L0025>

The grants financed through reimbursement of eligible costs in combination with flat rate covering overheads are calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget, indicating clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding.

The maximum amount requested will be EUR 500.000.

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-financing rate of 75% of eligible project costs. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimated budget must be financed from sources other than the Union grant.

The grant amount may neither exceed the total eligible costs nor the grant amount requested.

Acceptance of an application by the Agency does not constitute an undertaking to award a grant equal to the amount requested by the beneficiary.

Eligible costs

Eligible costs are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary of a grant which meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred during the duration of the action as specified in the grant agreement, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and certificates.
The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement or grant decision. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application (see section 11.1b).²³
- they are indicated in the estimated overall budget of the action;
- they are incurred in connexion with the action which is the subject of the grant and are necessary for its implementation of the action;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost-accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Eligible direct costs

23. Art.130 FR: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations_en.cfm

The eligible direct costs for the project are those costs which, with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly. In particular, the following direct costs are eligible, provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in the previous paragraph:

- The cost of staff assigned to the project, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in their remuneration, provided that this cost does not exceed the rates corresponding to the usual remuneration policy of the coordinator or, where applicable, the other beneficiaries. NB: this cost must be actual cost incurred by the coordinator or the other beneficiaries, and staff cost of other organisations is eligible only if it is paid directly or reimbursed by the coordinator or other beneficiaries. The corresponding salary costs of personnel of national administrations are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities that the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned was not undertaken;
- Subsistence allowances (for meetings, European conferences, etc.) provided that they are in line with the beneficiaries' usual practices;
- Travel allowances (for meetings, European conferences, etc.), provided that they are reasonable, justified, and that they comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency, and provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiaries usual practices;
- Purchase cost of equipment (new or second-hand), provided that it is written off in accordance with the tax and accounting rules applicable to the beneficiaries and generally accepted for items of the same kind. Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be taken into account by the Agency, except where the nature and/or the context of its use justifies different treatment by the Agency;
- Costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
- Costs entailed by other contracts awarded by the beneficiaries for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met;
- Costs arising directly from requirements linked to the performance of the project (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the project, audits, translations, reproduction, etc.), including, where applicable, the costs of any financial services (especially the cost of financial guarantees);
- Non-deductible VAT unless it is related to activities of public authorities in the Member States;
- Costs relating to a pre-financing guarantee lodged by the beneficiary of the grant, where required;
- Costs relating to the external audits in support of the requests for payments.

Eligible indirect costs (administrative costs)

A flat-rate amount, up to 7% of the eligible direct costs of the project, is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiaries' general administrative costs that can be regarded as chargeable to the project. Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget category. Applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that in the case of organisations receiving an operating grant, indirect costs are no longer eligible under the present call for those organisations.

Ineligible costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- Return on capital;
- Debt and debt service charges;
- Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- Interest owed;
- Costs of transfer from the Agency charged by the bank of the beneficiary;
- Doubtful debts;
- Exchange losses;
- Costs declared by the beneficiaries and covered by another project or work programme receiving a European Union grant. In particular, indirect costs shall not be eligible under a grant for a project awarded to the beneficiary who already receives an operating grant financed from the Union budget during the period in question;
- Contributions in kind;
- Excessive or reckless expenditure;
- Expenses for travel to or from countries outside eligible countries, unless explicit prior authorisation is granted by the Agency.

Calculation of the final grant amount

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the action, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents:

- A final report providing details of the implementation and results of the project;
- A financial statement of project costs actually incurred.

In case of grant for an action equal or inferior to EUR 60.000, the beneficiary is required to submit the following sample of supporting documents:

Budget item/heading	Sample to be annexed to the Final Financial Report
Staff	5% of all costs declared under this budget item.
Subcontracting	The three highest value subcontracts
Travel and subsistence	25% ²⁴ of the highest costs declared under this budget item

In case of grant for an action more than EUR 60.000, the beneficiary is required to submit in support of the final payment, a “report of factual findings on the final financial report – type I” produced by an approved auditor or in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer.

²⁴ The beneficiary can choose the sample of supporting documents. However, the RAO has the right to increase the verification percentage for travel and subsistence costs if the associated risk for the Programme/Strand is particularly material.

The procedure and the format to be followed by an approved auditor or in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer are detailed in the “Guidance Notes” available under the following link: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/document-register_en#audit

The use of the report format set by the Guidance Notes is compulsory.

The calculation of the final grant amount by the Agency is based on a detailed final financial statement of the beneficiary, accompanied, if requested, by supporting documentation for the incurred expenditure.

In the event of non-execution or clearly inadequate execution of an activity planned in the application attached to the grant agreement, the final grant will be reduced accordingly.

After analysis of the declared costs, if the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary are lower than anticipated, the Agency will apply the rate of co-financing stated in the grant agreement to the expenditure actually incurred.

Non-profit rule:

EU grants may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action of the beneficiary. Profit shall be defined as a surplus of receipts over the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary, when the request is made for payment of the balance. In this respect, where a profit is made, the Agency shall be entitled to recover a percentage of the profit corresponding to the Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to carry out the action.

Where applicable, the beneficiaries will be required to reimburse any excess amounts paid by the Agency in the form of pre-financing(s). The verification of non profit rule does not apply to grant equal or inferior to EUR60.000.

11.3 Payment arrangements

A pre-financing payment of 30% of the grant amount will be transferred to the coordinator within 30 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement, provided all possible guarantees are received. Pre-financing is intended to provide the beneficiaries with a float.

A second pre-financing payment of 40% of the total grant amount will be made within 60 days after the Agency receives a request for payment accompanied by a progress report on the project's implementation, provided the Agency approves the report. This second pre-financing payment may not be made until at least 70% of the previous pre-financing payment has been used up. Where the consumption of the previous pre-financing is less than 70%, the amount of the new pre-financing payment shall be reduced by the unused amounts of the previous pre-financing.

The account or sub-account indicated by the coordinator must make it possible to identify the funds transferred by the Agency.

The Agency will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the coordinator on the basis of the final report. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the

beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the Agency through a recovery order.

Beneficiaries, who have been found in serious breach of their contractual obligations may be subject to financial penalties representing 2% to 10% of the total value of the grant awarded. That rate may be increased to 4% to 20% in the event of a repeat infringement within five years of the date on which the infringement is established, as confirmed following a contradictory procedure with the beneficiary.

11.4 Pre-financing guarantee

The Agency may require any organisation for which the financial capacity is not satisfactory to provide a guarantee in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The purpose of this guarantee is to make a bank, a financial institution, or third party stand as irrevocable collateral security for, or first-call guarantor of, the grant beneficiaries' obligations. This financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union.

The guarantee may be replaced by joint and several guarantees by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of a project who are parties to the same grant agreement. The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the beneficiaries, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

This requirement does not apply to:

- > public bodies and international organisations under public law established by inter-governmental agreements, specialised agencies created by such organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies;
- > beneficiaries who have entered into a framework partnership agreement may also be released from that obligation.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1 By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

Furthermore, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and logo of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project. To do this, they must use the format and the logo of the relevant programme, which is provided by the Agency at the following webpage: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/eacea_logos_en.php. If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

12.2 By the Agency and/or the Commission

All information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year must be published on the Internet site of the European Union institutions no later than 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded. The information may also be published using any other appropriate medium, including the Official Journal of the European Union.

The Agency and/or the European Commission publish the following information in any form and medium, including via the Internet:

- The beneficiaries' name and locality;
- The amount awarded;
- Nature and purpose of the grant.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

13. DATA PROTECTION

All personal data (such as names, addresses, CVs, etc.) will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the European Union institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless marked as optional, the applicants' replies to the questions in the application form are necessary to evaluate and further process the grant application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposals. Personal data will be processed solely for that purpose by the department or Unit responsible for the Union grant programme concerned (entity acting as data controller). Personal data may be transferred on a need to know basis to third parties involved in the evaluation of proposals or in the grant management procedure, without prejudice of transfer to the bodies in charge of monitoring and inspection tasks in accordance with European Union law. In particular, for the purposes of safeguarding the financial interests of the Union, personal data may be transferred to internal audit services, to the European Court of Auditors, to the Financial Irregularities Panel or to the European Anti-Fraud Office and between authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies. The applicants have the right of access to, and to rectify, the data concerning them. For any question relating to these data, please contact the Controller. Applicants have the right of recourse to the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time. A detailed Privacy statement, including contact information, is available on EACEA's website:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/documents/calls_gen_conditions/eacea_grants_privacy_statement.pdf 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 mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (EWS) for the use of authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies (OJ, L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 125), or

- the Commission Regulation of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database - CED (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 12),

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 EWS only or both in the EWS and CED, and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above-mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract or a grant agreement or decision.

14. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION

Activities serving the dissemination and exploitation of results are a way to showcase the work that has been done as part of the Erasmus+ project: sharing results, lessons learned, outcomes and findings beyond the participating organisations will enable a wider community to benefit from a work that has received EU funding, as well as to promote the organisation's efforts towards the objectives of Erasmus+, which attaches fundamental importance to the link between the Programme and policies.

For more information on dissemination and exploitation of project result requirements, please refer to the Erasmus+ Programme guide available under this link:

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

15. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

15.1 Publication

The call for proposals is published in the Official Journal of the European Union and on the following website:

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-3-support-for-policy-reform/prospective-initiatives/forward-looking-cooperation-projects-2014_en

15.2 Registration in the Participant Portal

Before submitting an electronic application, applicants will have to register their organisation in the Education, Audiovisual, Culture, Citizenship and Volunteering Participant Portal and receive a Participant Identification Code (PIC). The PIC will be requested in the application form.

The Participant Portal is the tool through which all legal and financial information related to organisations will be managed. It is accessible via the Education, Audiovisual, Culture, Citizenship and Volunteering Participant Portal. Information on how to register can be found in the portal under the following address: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/participants/portal>

The tool also allows applicants to upload different documents related to their organisation. These documents have to be uploaded once and will not be requested again for subsequent applications by the same organisation.

The relevant documents to be uploaded for the purpose of this call for proposals are the following:

- Legal entity form: this document summarises the legal details of the coordinating organisation. For public-law entities the legal resolution or decision established in respect of the public company, or other official document established for the public-law entity needs to be submitted with the legal entity form. For private-law bodies, the statutes and official registration of the company are requested.

More details on the supporting document that need to be uploaded in the portal can be found on the following website: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-3-support-for-policy-reform/prospective-initiatives/forward-looking-cooperation-projects-2014_en

The Agency can propose an agreement only on the basis of acceptance of documents which make it possible to define the beneficiary's legal personality (public administration, private company, or non-profit organisation, etc.), and on the provision of financial identification/ bank details.

15.3 Submission of the grant application

Applicants are requested to read carefully all information about the call for proposals, the submission procedure and to use the documents forming part of the application ('Application Package') at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-3-support-for-policy-reform/prospective-initiatives/forward-looking-cooperation-projects-2014_en

The application form is available on the Internet at the following address: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/PPMT/>.

The full Application Package must be submitted online by the deadline set out in Section 3 on the correct E-form, duly completed and containing all relevant and applicable annexes and supporting documents. Application forms which do not include all the necessary information and which are not submitted online by the deadline will not be considered. Application forms sent by e-mail, by paper and/or fax will not be accepted.

No changes to the application are allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or for the correction of clerical mistakes, the Agency may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process.

All applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

15.4 Applicable rules

- Regulation (EU) N° 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC;
- Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p.1);

- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 362, 31.12.2012, p.1).

15.5 Contacts

If you have any questions, please contact:

EACEA-Policy-Support@ec.europa.eu