

European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)
Social Innovation Plus Initiative (SI+)

Strengthening the European Child Guarantee national governance systems and supporting access to the labour market for Roma NEETs

ESF-SI-2026-ECG-01

ESF-SI-2026-ROMA NEETs-01

Call Conditions



Abstract

Call identifier: Lithuanian European Social Fund Agency (also referred to as 'the Granting Authority') implementing the European Social Fund Plus Social Innovation Plus Initiative on behalf of the European Commission as an entrusted entity.

Open Call title: Strengthening the European Child Guarantee national governance systems and supporting access to the labour market for Roma NEETs

Open publication date: Publication date is specified in the Call announcement.

Deadline:

- **Strand I** 15/10/2026 at 17:00 CEST,
- **Strand II** 30/09/2026 at 17:00 CEST.

Indicative overall grant budget for the Call: EUR 17 000 000, of which EUR 12 000 000 for the strengthening the European Child Guarantee governance systems, and EUR 5 000 000 for supporting access to the labour market for Roma NEETs.

The form of grant: a lump sum grant.

Expected duration of a project: 18–24 months.

The size of a grant: The estimated size of a grant is between EUR 800 000 and EUR 2 000 000 per project (but this does not preclude the submission/selection of applications requesting other amounts), constituting no more than 80% of the total project budget. Co-financing of at least 20% must thus come from sources other than the EU budget.

Official Call websites:

- <https://www.socialinnovationplus.eu>;
- <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/esf-social-innovation>.

For submission: All applications must be submitted directly online via the electronic portal and data exchange system eSINNIS (e-Social Innovation Information System) managed by the Granting Authority (hereinafter 'the Portal'). The connection link to the Portal will be specified in the Call announcement.

For support:

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Glossary

APPLICANT – a legal entity (organisation) which submits an application. The applicant assumes the role of **the coordinator**. The coordinator represents the consortium and serves as the central contact point for the Granting Authority.

ASSOCIATED PARTNERS – legal entities that participate in the project, but without the right to charge costs or claim contributions.

BENEFICIARIES – the signatories (an applicant and co-applicants) of the Grant Agreement (either directly or through an accession form). They shall collectively contribute to the smooth and successful implementation of the project (i.e. implement their part of the project properly, comply with their own obligations under the Grant Agreement, and support the coordinator in fulfilling their obligations).

CHILDREN IN NEED – persons under the age of 18 years who are either at risk of poverty or social exclusion¹.

CO-APPLICANT – a legal entity that participates in the project, is actively involved in the implementation of the project, and is financially engaged (either by hiring staff or by incurring other costs).

CONSORTIUM – an association of two or more entities with the goal of participating in a common project and combining their resources to achieve common project objectives.

COORDINATOR – a legal entity that represents the consortium and serves as the central contact point for the Granting Authority.

EUROPEAN CHILD GUARANTEE – Council recommendation (2021)² aiming to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing access of children in need to a set of key services, thereby also contributing to upholding the rights of the child by combating child poverty and fostering equal opportunities.

EUROPEAN COMPETENCE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION (ECCSI) – part of the European Social Fund Plus Social Innovation Plus Initiative, which aims to speed up the adoption and expansion of proven innovative solutions in employment, education, and social inclusion, acting as a hub for communication and collaboration within the European social innovation community, organising events, sharing news and good practices, providing guidance and support materials, and promoting collaboration among ESF+ Managing Authorities and stakeholders.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND AGENCY (ESFA) – Lithuanian European Social Fund Agency, the entrusted entity responsible for the implementation of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) Social Innovation Plus (SI+) Initiative. Under this Call, ESFA may also be referred to as **the Granting Authority**.

LUMP SUM – a form of simplified cost options that is determined during the case-by-case assessment of an application based on the submitted Detailed Budget Table and in accordance with the predefined terms of agreement on activities and/or outputs and on their completion.

PUBLIC AUTHORITY – any national, regional, or local government, or other administrative body established under national law, that exercises legislative, regulatory, or executive powers, or is responsible for the development and implementation of public policies or programmes. For the purposes of this Call, public authorities do not include public universities or other educational or training institutions.

PORTAL – the electronic portal and data exchange system managed by ESFA.

¹ As defined in Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 ([EUR-Lex - 32021H1004 - EN - EUR-Lex](#))

² [Council Recommendation \(EU\) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee](#)

PUBLIC BODY – any legal entity which is established as a public body by national law.³ The criteria listed below shall NOT constitute sufficient evidence for an entity to be recognised as a public body:

- The entity's mission or activity is in the general interest (public service mission).
- The entity's shares belong to a public body (even if the public ownership constitutes 100% of the share capital).
- The entity receives public financing.
- The entity is supervised and controlled by the state.

Public bodies may act according to and be subject to private law in some or most of their activities, provided that their existence and functioning are governed by public law.

ROMA NEETs – Roma individuals aged between 15 and 29 who are not in employment, education, or training.

SOCIAL INNOVATION – 'an activity that is social both as to its ends and its means and in particular an activity which relates to the development and implementation of new ideas concerning products, services, practices, and models, that simultaneously meets social needs and creates new social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society, or private organisations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act' (Article 2 paragraph 1 point (8) of the ESF+ Regulation).

3 Established as a public body by national law means: 1) incorporated as a public body in the act of creation or recognised as a public body by national law and 2) governed by public law. Both conditions must be fulfilled.

1. Introduction

1.1. Legal base of the Call

This Call is published under:

- Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013⁴, and in particular Articles 5(2) and 25 point (i) thereof.
- Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union⁵, and in particular Articles 184, 185 and 186 thereof.

This Call is financed by the ESF+ under the SI+ Initiative, launched by the European Commission. The SI+ Initiative is implemented under the EaSI strand of the ESF+, under indirect management (Article 25 point (i) of the ESF+ Regulation) by ESFA.

The ESF+ is the main European-level instrument for investing in people and supporting the implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. It targets employment, labour mobility, social inclusion, and skills. The ESF+ supports Member States of the European Union (EU) in achieving high levels of employment, fair social protection, the eradication of poverty, and a skilled and resilient workforce ready for the transition to a green and digital economy.

This Call is administered and implemented under the provisions of the Framework Agreement between the European Commission, on behalf of the European Union, and ESFA, signed on 7 November 2022.

1.2. Policy context

On 6 May 2026, the European Commission adopted a communication on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (APS, hereinafter 'the Strategy'). It sets out objectives and actions that aim to help people to gain access to the essential protections and services and to address the root causes of poverty. The APS includes actions that target different vulnerabilities and different age groups, starting with children.

The APS is accompanied by a European Commission Communication 'Breaking the cycle of child poverty – strengthening the European Child Guarantee' that aims to enhance the support provided to vulnerable children in the areas of education, social and health services, building on the implementation of the Council recommendation on the European Child Guarantee.

This Strategy sets out a comprehensive path to prevention and protection against poverty in the EU and underpins the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. It sets the direction for reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million between 2019 and 2030, including at least 5 million children, and to help eradicate poverty by 2050.

The Strategy aims to address the root causes of poverty and ensure, in a life cycle perspective that those experiencing poverty today, as well as those at risk of experiencing it tomorrow, are supported and equipped to escape poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, the Strategy builds on existing or announced policy initiatives, tools, and legislation, seeking to accelerate their implementation and strengthen their enforcement.

The persistent challenge of poverty remains a critical barrier to equitable development, undermining social cohesion, economic growth, and individual well-being. In response, this Call is launched to support innovative initiatives that directly address the root causes and consequences of poverty. This initiative

⁴ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1057 establishing the European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\) and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 1296/2013](#)

⁵ [Regulation - EU, Euratom - 2024/2509 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

recognises that sustainable solutions require collaboration across sectors (government, civil society, academia, and local communities) and aims to empower organisations with the resources to design and implement impactful anti-poverty programmes. By funding targeted interventions, it seeks to foster long-term resilience, reduce inequality, and ensure that marginalised groups have the opportunities they need to thrive. This Call aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and reflects the EU's dedication to creating measurable and scalable change where it is needed most.

This Call aims to support the implementation of the Anti-Poverty Strategy by supporting vulnerable children, in line with the objectives and actions set out in the Communication 'Breaking the cycle of child poverty – strengthening the European Child Guarantee', and to support youth, in line with the Council recommendation of 30 October 2020 on reinforcing the Youth Guarantee⁶. It will support a particularly vulnerable group of young people, Roma youth aged 15–29, who are not in employment, education or training (Roma NEETs), aiming to help them break the cycle of inter-generational poverty through increasing their access to employment and self-employment.

This Call comprises **two Strands**:

I. Strengthening the European Child Guarantee national governance systems

II. Supporting access to the labour market for Roma NEETs

2. Strand I. Strengthening the European Child Guarantee national governance systems

2.1. Strand I. Background / main purpose

According to the latest Eurostat data, 24.1% of children in the European Union (EU) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE⁷) in 2025, corresponding to approximately 19.1 million children⁸.

Despite the increasing political commitment to advancing children's rights and well-being, together with a strengthened legal framework and clearer policy direction, these developments have not yet led to progress at the scale envisaged. While some Member States with the highest risk levels have recently recorded reductions in poverty or social exclusion, significant numbers of children across the EU remain affected, particularly within vulnerable groups.

Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) affirms that ensuring affordable and high-quality early childhood education and protecting children against poverty, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is fundamental to measuring social progress in Europe. Prioritising children will not only grant them access to new opportunities but also help disrupt the intergenerational cycle of poverty, thereby generating long-term systemic benefits⁹. The EPSR Action Plan set as a target for 2030 to reduce the number of people in AROPE condition by at least 15 million¹⁰, including at least 5 million children, compared to the 2019 level. However, progress towards this target has not been satisfactory: the total number of children living in AROPE across the EU increased by around 0.2 million between 2019 and 2024.

⁶ [A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee 2020/C 372/01](#)

⁷ AT RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION (AROPE) - corresponds to the total number of persons who are either at risk of poverty, or severely materially and socially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity - (quasi-)jobless households. People are included only once even if they are in more than one of the situations mentioned above. The AROPE rate is the share of the total population who is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. It is the main indicator to monitor the EU 2030 target on poverty and social exclusion.

⁸ [Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

⁹ [The European Child Guarantee and Roma Children: Between Commitment and Practice. A Review of the Biennial Reports. 2025.](#)

¹⁰ [The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#)

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child¹¹, introduced by the European Commission to complement EPSR Principle 11, sets out a coordinated policy framework to strengthen the protection and promotion of children's rights both in the EU and globally. The Strategy, building on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child¹², emphasises a rights-based approach to children, ensuring that all policies and measures within the EU uphold their dignity, safety, and development – not just by addressing socio-economic conditions but also by safeguarding their active rights and inclusion. The EU Children's Participation Platform¹³, launched as one of the main actions under the Strategy, marks an important step in promoting children's voices and embedding them in the EU decision-making process. Following the launch of the Strategy, Recommendation on Developing and Strengthening Child Protection Systems in the Best Interest of the Child¹⁴ was adopted. The Recommendation, inter alia, emphasises the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to child protection, involving a wide range of actors in the field of the protection of children, including public bodies, civil society, private actors, families, carers, and children themselves, while highlighting the need to support families as primary carers. Strengthening cross-sectorial cooperation and coordination among national, regional and local authorities is essential to ensure equal access to key child protection services and to foster more integrated, child-centred systems.

In response to persistent child poverty and social exclusion across Europe, the European Child Guarantee (ECG) represents a landmark initiative proposed¹⁵ by the European Commission on 24 March 2021 and adopted by the Council¹⁶ on 14 June 2021. The establishment of the ECG framework marks a significant milestone in the EU's commitment to combating child poverty and social exclusion, particularly among children in need.

The Communication 'Breaking the cycle of child poverty – strengthening the European Child Guarantee' aims to reinforce the implementation and impact of the European Child Guarantee as a central instrument within a broader set of policies to address child poverty, by improving access to key services for children in need, closing persistent gaps, and ensuring more integrated and continuous support from childhood into early adulthood.

Building on this strong policy foundation, there is a growing opportunity to further enhance its implementation through social innovations. While promising practices already exist across participating countries, their transfer, adaptation, and scaling can be strengthened. Social innovation offers a valuable pathway to adapt, transfer, and further develop effective approaches, improve coordination among stakeholders, and enhance the effectiveness of policies supporting children in vulnerable situations.

This Call is launched under the ESF+ SI+ Initiative, which aims at promoting transnational cooperation between EU Member States and EaSI participating countries to test new approaches and to facilitate the transfer and scaling up of innovative solutions with a particular focus on supporting the implementation of the ECG. While the ECG provides a strong framework to ensure access to key services for children in need, its implementation remains uneven across Member States, with persistent gaps in access to services, fragmentation of support systems, and limited coordination among stakeholders.

Collaborative actions across countries are essential not only to disseminate best practices in various fields, including education, skills, and social inclusion, but also to address these challenges through testing new approaches and the transfer, adaptation and scaling of effective solutions. An established practice that effectively responds to the needs of children in need in one country or region can inform and inspire innovative solutions in other contexts, contributing to more integrated and effective policy responses that

¹¹ [The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee - European Commission](#)

¹² [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

¹³ [General Assembly 2023 | EU Child Participation](#)

¹⁴ [European Commission, Commission Recommendation of 23 April 2024 on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child](#)

¹⁵ [EUR-Lex - 52021DC0137 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

¹⁶ [EUR-Lex - 32021H1004 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

cannot be achieved at the national or regional level alone. Social innovation offers the opportunity to develop and test new approaches, scale up approaches that have proved to be successful in other countries, and strengthen cooperation between stakeholders, in order to strengthen the implementation of the ECG.

2.2. Strand I. Strengthening the European Child Guarantee national governance systems

The Council Recommendation of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee aims to mitigate the impact of poverty on children by guaranteeing for children in need effective access to a set of key services: (1) free early childhood education and care; (2) free education (including school-based activities and at least one healthy meal each school day); (3) free healthcare; (4) healthy nutrition; and (5) adequate housing.

While many children in the EU already have access to these services, inclusive and truly universal coverage is vital for ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged children. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the European Child Guarantee, it is necessary to address each of the key service areas in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The sections below present the main challenges and areas for action in each domain.

2.2.1 Free early childhood education and care

Equal access to quality and inclusive early childhood education and care is central to breaking the transmission of social exclusion and securing equal opportunities for children in a disadvantaged situation. However, the limited availability and high costs of early childhood education and care can form a barrier for children from low-income families. Their attendance rates are considerably lower, leading later in life to worse educational outcomes and higher school drop-out rates. Segregation of, and discrimination against children with disabilities or special educational needs in accessing mainstream education remain a challenge. The growing number of children with a migrant background in education systems calls for the prevention of segregated school settings and the adaptation of teaching methods, in accordance with national law and Member States' obligations under the relevant international instruments in the field.

2.2.2 Free education (including school-based activities and at least one healthy meal each school day)

An important part of learning, including acquiring social skills, takes place by means of sport, leisure or cultural activities. Such activities are proven to be beneficial, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, certain groups of children cannot afford them, or their participation is hindered by a lack of proper infrastructure, poor accessibility, or language problems. School meal schemes have been shown to bring substantial and lasting benefits for children, and their expansion is one of the main achievements of the European Child Guarantee in recent years, supported by EU funding.

2.2.3 Free healthcare

Despite nominally free healthcare for all children across the EU, children in need encounter barriers in access to certain healthcare services. In the post-COVID context, long waiting lists for mental health specialists in public healthcare have become a particular challenge, disproportionately affecting children in need who cannot resort to private providers. Income poverty and other social determinants significantly affect the overall development and health, including mental health, of children and increase the risk of ill-health in later years. Early intervention and prevention are essential, together with better access to public health prevention and promotion programmes, including vaccination, and parenting support, which can help achieve better outcomes.

2.2.4 Healthy nutrition

Access to healthy and sustainable nutrition is a challenge for low-income families in particular. Healthy food and nutrition programmes can help address problems such as poor diet, lack of physical activity,

obesity or use of alcohol and tobacco, thereby reducing malnutrition and poor nutrition, which is more prevalent among children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of school meal schemes for some children, who were suddenly deprived of a reliable source of nutrition during lockdown. Ensuring access of children in need to at least one healthy meal each school day is therefore paramount and could be achieved either by providing such meals or by ensuring that parents or guardians, or children, are in a position to cater for the meals, taking into account specific local circumstances and needs.

2.2.5 Adequate housing

Children from low-income families, with a migrant background or with a minority ethnic origin are at a higher risk of severe housing deprivation, overcrowding and energy poverty, and are more exposed to homelessness. Housing expenditure is a heavy burden for single-earner households, especially those headed by women. Providing adequate housing and ensuring that children and their families receive suitable temporary accommodation are important mechanisms for tackling social exclusion of children and minimising the risk of homelessness. The Council recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee calls for priority access to social housing for families with children in need, as well as for the de-institutionalisation of alternative care for children, and for the provision of support to young adults who leave alternative care.

2.3. Strand I. Objective - Priorities

Under Strand I – Strengthening the European Child Guarantee national governance systems – this Call will support transnational projects which aim at testing new approaches and transferring or scaling up social innovations that strengthen the governance and implementation of the European Child Guarantee, ensuring children in need have access to key services.

2.4. Strand I. Activities

Applicants shall design activities¹⁷ that directly contribute to the objective of the Call, as referred to in Section 2.3.

While applicants are encouraged to propose activities best suited to their specific context, the following activities should be covered:

- 1. Identification and framing of challenges to establishing and delivering integrated service delivery models.** For example, activities may include conducting a comprehensive mapping of barriers that prevent children in need from accessing key services, such as education, healthcare, nutrition, and housing. This may involve analysing systemic challenges (e.g. fragmented service provision, lack of coordination, socio-economic disadvantages, disability-related barriers, etc.), as well as collecting any other relevant qualitative and quantitative data from relevant stakeholders.
- 2. Scaling up the integrated service delivery models of the ECG and improving outreach to children in need.** For example, activities may include facilitating collaboration, including through the exchange of information and administrative data (e.g. via IT solutions), engaging and bringing together key stakeholders relevant to the ECG, such as public bodies (Child Guarantee Coordinators, Child Guarantee

¹⁷ More guidance on scaling up social innovations is available at: European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2022). Barnett, Stephen J. Scaling-up social innovation. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: [Social experimentation - Publications Office of the EU \(Scaling-up social innovation - Publications Office of the EU\)](#)
More guidance on social experimentation is available at: European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2022). Ledan, A. Social experimentation – A practical guide for project promoters. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: [Social experimentation - Publications Office of the EU \(Social experimentation - Publications Office of the EU\)](#).

Contact Points, or similar), social service providers, education and health providers, non-profit organisations, organisations representing children in need, professionals working with children, and private sector actors, as well as research institutions. This may also involve establishing structured cooperation mechanisms (e.g. working groups, co-creation platforms, memorandums of understanding, joint monitoring platforms, participatory reviews and multi-level dialogue spaces); organising joint workshops and capacity-building activities can also be envisioned. Strengthening both horizontal (e.g. across ministries and national authorities) and vertical (e.g. between national, regional, and local levels) coordination and governance, and promoting a systemic, holistic and coherent multi-policy approach to addressing child poverty, are also eligible for support.

3. **Piloting integration of services on the ground for a specific target group** (as mentioned in paragraph 5 of the ECG Recommendation) through testing or scaling-up a viable solution for integrated delivery of services. The number of children to be reached should be defined. The action can, for example focus on the interaction of the ECG and the Youth Guarantee¹⁸, supporting the transition to adulthood.
4. **Scaling-up: Identifying proven social innovation models, designing effective method(s) for scaling up and working towards mainstreaming social innovation.** For example, activities may include analysing proven social innovation models that improve access to key services for children in need. This may involve reviewing existing practices at the local, national, or European level, assessing their relevance to the identified challenges, engaging in knowledge exchange activities, and adapting selected models to new contexts; defining a clear scaling-up strategy; and preparing stakeholders and systems for the replication, expansion, or integration of the selected models. Activities may also include engaging public bodies and other key stakeholders to ensure the uptake of successful social innovation models. This may involve translating project results into actionable recommendations, integrating effective approaches into policies and service delivery systems, thereby strengthening a systemic, multi-policy approach to addressing child poverty, and promoting their use beyond the project duration. Where projects involve a testing component, activities should include developing an actionable strategy on supporting the replication, expansion, or integration of the selected method into the activities of key stakeholders relevant to the ECG.
5. **Improving monitoring and evaluation systems** to allow for evidence-based policy-making (in relation to policies impacting disadvantaged children). For example, activities may include strengthening or improving national monitoring and evaluation systems to support the central coordination of policies addressing child poverty or identifying efficient ways for data collection and data sharing, as well as interoperability of data collection, gathering feedback from children in need, their families and other relevant stakeholders, and assessing the effectiveness of the models. Where projects involve a testing component, they should include a proportionate evaluation methodology to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, with a view to informing possible future upscaling.
6. **Promoting mutual learning in addressing child poverty and monitoring across the participating EaSI countries.** This includes supporting the transfer and scaling-up of tested integrated service delivery and monitoring models through structured knowledge exchange, peer learning, and capacity-building activities among relevant stakeholders.
7. **Participation in mutual learning events organised by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation (established under the ESF+ SI+ Initiative).** It is crucial for mutual learning between beneficiaries and therefore mandatory. It is planned to organise three to four mutual learning events during the implementation of the projects (a maximum of two events will take place on site (provisionally in Vilnius and Brussels), and the others online).

¹⁸ [List of Youth Guarantee Coordinators](#)

2.5. Strand I. Expected Outcomes

Applicants, applying under Strand I, should demonstrate in their projects a focus on achieving the desired outcomes, specifically by targeting the following areas (please note that this list is not exhaustive):

1. Strengthened governance and coordination for the implementation of the ECG, for instance:

- Strengthened role and capacity of national ECG Coordinators and relevant public bodies.
- Improved central coordination mechanisms for policies addressing child poverty.
- Increased collaboration and capacity building among relevant stakeholders (e.g. public bodies, service providers, civil society, NGOs, the private sector, and research institutions).

2. Improved access to and integration of services for children in need, for instance:

- Improved integrated delivery of key services (e.g. education, healthcare, nutrition, and housing).
- Reduced administrative and structural barriers to accessing services.
- Increased reach and coverage of services for children in need.
- Concrete support provided to a defined number of children.
- Better coordination between service providers leading to more effective support.
- Identification and support of innovative solutions for the transition of (vulnerable) children to adulthood.

3. Evidence-based policy recommendation, for instance:

- Strengthened use of data and monitoring systems to inform policy decisions.
- Developed policy recommendations based on project results.
- Clear contribution to policy reform improving the implementation of the European Child Guarantee.
- Adapted/ transferred social innovation models (e.g. documented for further replication).

2.6. Strand I. Essential elements of the application

The following elements form the core of a project; that is each application shall cover **all the elements**. However, applicants are free to choose how to integrate or combine all these elements in the project framework (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Essential elements of the application

1. Conceptual framework

The application should articulate a clear conceptual framework that outlines the cyclical nature of social innovation and details the steps necessary to scale up the proposed innovative model. This includes drawing on existing proven experiences, specifying planned activities, and projecting anticipated long-term impact. Opportunities developed for children in need should supplement existing offerings and services, rather than merely reallocating them. Where projects involve a testing component (social experimentation), the application should articulate a conceptual framework for the proposed innovative solution for integrated delivery of services, outlining its key piloting mechanisms. The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

2. Relevance of social innovation

In the table 'Theory of Change' (Section 5, Part A of the Application Form), the applicant must explain why

it is reasonable to further develop (transfer and/or scale up) the chosen innovative approach. The application should demonstrate that the solution has already been implemented in at least one context and shows promising results, while allowing for further adaptation and validation in new contexts. Where projects involve a testing component, the applicant must explain why it is reasonable to test the chosen innovative approach. The applicant must also specify what positive impact the suggested innovative approach will generate on the target group, the participating entities, and the social service system supporting children in need. The application should explain the potential impact of the chosen intervention model on addressing key challenges in preventing and reducing child poverty and social exclusion within the designated transfer/scaling up context. It should demonstrate a clear need for inclusive social innovation and explain how the innovation in question will help to tackle the identified problem(s). The application should clarify how the proposed model will help to fill existing gaps and/or **complement available solutions**, where appropriate.

Where projects include a testing component (please refer to Activity 3 under Section 2.4 of the Call Conditions), in the table 'Theory of Change' (Section 5, Part A of the Application Form), the applicant must explain why it is reasonable to test the chosen innovative approach. The applicant must explain the social experimentation that the project aims to test, its objectives and expected results, as well as the assumptions underpinning the intervention logic. The application should clarify how the proposed model will help to fill existing gaps and/or **complement available solutions**, where appropriate, and how the evidence generated could inform future transfer and/or scaling-up.

The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

3. Transnational partnership

A consortium shall consist of at least three eligible entities representing at least two eligible countries (as detailed in Section 2.7 and Chapter 7 of the Call Conditions). The application should provide a clear and comprehensive account of how each consortium member will contribute to fulfilling the overarching objective of the Call (see Section 2.3), while at the same time promoting mutual learning, fostering collaborative efforts, and ensuring the successful execution of the project. The roles assigned to each consortium member should be in line with their demonstrated experience and expertise. The description of the partnership should be provided in the Application Form: Part B – Section 2.

4. Diversity of stakeholders

The project should involve a diverse range of stakeholders. The application should include measures to identify the relevant stakeholders and explain how their effective collaboration and active engagement will be organised. The application should elaborate on how the project will benefit from the expertise, networks, and resources of the actors whose participation is envisaged. This description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

5. People-based approach

The project design should prioritise the needs and interests of children in need and their families, who are the primary target groups of this Call. The project must detail how it intends to involve representatives of the target group in the design and development of the intended solution, with a strong focus on creating solutions that are tailor-made to meet their specific needs and circumstances. Additionally, it should delineate how the planned intervention model will support their involvement in the scaling-up process. The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

6. Impact measurement and management

An application should demonstrate that the solution proposed in the project is viable in terms of impact (i.e., it works better than other existing solutions). The methodology for collecting, evaluating and presenting evidence of the effectiveness of the proposed innovative approach shall be presented in the application. The methods must include provisional outcome indicators for monitoring the activities and

their impact on the target group and on the participating entities; they must be in line with the 'Theory of Change'.

Where projects include a testing component (please refer to Activity 3 under Section 2.4 of the Call Conditions), an application must set out ex-ante methods for collecting, assessing, and presenting evidence of the effectiveness of the innovative approach in question. In particular, it should be highlighted how the proposed innovative approach is expected to contribute to the expected outcomes. The applicant should present an evaluation methodology, appropriate to the scope, size and context of the project. This may include, where feasible and relevant, a counterfactual or comparable approach, such as a matched comparison group, or another justified method supporting credible conclusions on the results achieved.

Impact evaluation should be proportionate to the scope and size of the project. The expected impact of the project and the indicators for measuring it shall be provided in the Application Form: Part B - Section 3.

7. Dissemination and communication

The application should describe the dissemination and communication activities planned to promote the results of the project and maximise their impact at the local/regional/national/European level. Dissemination channels and the intended target groups should also be described. The information should be provided in the Application Form: Part B – Section 3.

8. Sustainability and scaling pathway

The application should describe how the results of the project could be sustained and further scaled beyond the project duration. This may include integration into policies, governance mechanisms, or service provision frameworks. Where projects include a testing component, the application should describe how the results and evidence generated by the social experimentation could be sustained and scaled up beyond the project duration, where the tested approach proves effective and relevant.

The information should be provided in the Application Form: Part B – Section 3.

2.7. Strand I. Consortium composition specific requirements

For general requirements regarding participant eligibility and consortium composition, please refer to Chapter 7 of the Call Conditions.

Only consortia are eligible; the consortium must include **an applicant (the coordinator) and at least two co-applicants**. Associated partners do not count towards this minimum requirement for the consortium.

The members of the consortium shall represent **at least two different eligible countries** (see Chapter 7 of the Call Conditions).

The consortium must include (minimum requirement):

1. An applicant (the coordinator of the consortium): the public authority within which the national Child Guarantee Coordinator¹⁹ is established to implement the Council recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee OR any other national public authority in collaboration²⁰ with the national Child Guarantee Coordinator, established in an EU Member State;

Each applicant can submit only one application as **the coordinator of the consortium**.

2. As co-applicants:

- at least one public authority within which the national Child Guarantee Coordinator is established to implement the Council recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee OR any other

¹⁹ [List of the Child Guarantee Coordinators](#)

²⁰ By submitting an application, the national public authority confirms that their participation is on the bases of mutual understanding with the national Child Guarantee Coordinator.

national public authority in collaboration²¹ with the national Child Guarantee Coordinator, established in an EU Member State other than that of the coordinator, **OR**

- the organisation within which the Child Guarantee Contact Point²² is established / a public body designated for the central coordination of the implementation of policies addressing child poverty, OR any other national public authority in collaboration²³ with the Child Guarantee Contact Point, established in the listed²⁴ third country,

and

- at least one regional and/or local public authority, responsible for the implementation of policies ensuring that children in need have access to key services, established in the same country as the applicant or one of the co-applicants, **OR**
- a non-governmental, non-profit organisation delivering social services and/or enabling access to goods and services related to the implementation of policies ensuring that children in need have access to key services, established in the same country as the applicant or one of the co-applicants.

In Section 2.3 of Part B of the Application Form, the applicant must clearly identify the entities constituting the required minimum consortium.

Consortia are encouraged to include as additional co-applicants or associated partners:

- **other** Child Guarantee Contact Points and/or public bodies designated for the central coordination of the implementation of policies ensuring that children in need have access to key services, OR any other national public authority which is in collaboration with the Child Guarantee Contact Point, established in the listed third country;
- **other national-level public authorities, which are implementing policies for children in need;**
- other regional and/or local public authority, responsible for the implementation of policies for children in need, **established in the same country as the applicant or one of the co-applicants,**
- other non-governmental, non-profit organisation delivering social services and/or enabling access to goods and services related to the implementation of policies for children in need, **established in the same country as the applicant or one of the co-applicants.**

The founding documents of each individual co-applicant (applicable if a co-applicant is a regional and/or local public authority or a non-governmental, non-profit organisation) must be provided with the application. These documents must clearly indicate that the purpose/ objective of the regional or local public authority, and/or non-governmental, non-profit organisation broadly addresses the prevention and combating of social exclusion among children in need. Where applicable, additional supporting documentation evidencing the co-applicant's expertise and experience in the implementation of projects and/or programmes for children in need may also be submitted together with the founding documents.

3. Strand II. Supporting access to the labour market for Roma NEETs

3.1. Strand II. Background / Main purpose

As part of its overall political priority to advance a Union of Equality, on 7 October 2020, the European

²¹ By submitting an application, the national public authority confirms that their participation is on the bases of mutual understanding with the national Child Guarantee Coordinator

²² [List of the Child Guarantee Contact Points](#)

²³ By submitting an application, the national public authority confirms that their participation is on the bases of mutual understanding with the Child Guarantee Contact Point.

²⁴ [List of Participating Countries in ESF+ \(3rd Country Participation_Esf\).pdf](#)

Commission adopted a new EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation (the EU Roma Strategic Framework²⁵). It marked a paradigm shift from socio-economic integration towards a more comprehensive approach to promoting equality, inclusion and the participation of Roma²⁶.

The EU Roma Strategic Framework focuses on fighting anti-gypsyism and discrimination and promotes the participation of Roma through empowerment, cooperation, and trust, and their involvement in all policy and decision-making processes that affect them. It sets out seven common EU objectives and, for the first time, proposes EU-level targets for 2030, to ensure progress, including in the area of employment.

The EU Roma Strategic Framework supports the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. EU Member States endorsed this approach in the Council Recommendation of 12 March 2021 on Roma equality, inclusion and participation²⁷. That Council recommendation sets out concrete measures that can help improve the situation of Roma through its focus on equality, stronger partnership and institutional capacity, better use of funds, and reinforced monitoring.

A high percentage of Roma are young people under 20 years of age. The fact that Roma populations include such a significant proportion of young people and children highlights the urgency of breaking the vicious circle of intergenerational transmission of poverty and severe social exclusion. Principle 4 ('Active support to employment') of the European Pillar of Social Rights states that 'young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship, or a job offer of good standing within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education'. In the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, Member States committed to ensuring that all young people under the age of 25 can realise that right.

The Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on reinforcing the Youth Guarantee²⁸ included a focus on NEETs. It invited Member States to recognise that NEETs require an individualised approach: for some NEETs, a lighter approach may be sufficient, whereas other, more vulnerable, NEETs may need more intensive, lengthy, and comprehensive interventions. It called for interventions to be based on differences between national, regional, and local circumstances.

The Council Conclusions of 2 December 2024 on improving access to enabling services and employment services in order to promote the social inclusion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including Roma, by reducing territorial inequalities invite Member States, in line with the EU Roma strategic framework, to implement their national Roma strategic frameworks to support Roma, including in employment as one of the seven key areas of focus.

The European Commission recommends in its guidelines for planning and implementing national Roma strategic frameworks that national Roma strategic frameworks target interventions territorially to ensure that they take into account local conditions and combine territorial and social group targeting in the form of broad interventions.

The Draghi report on EU competitiveness points to the underuse of existing talent as one of the causes of persistent skills shortages in the EU. NEETs, including Roma NEETs, represent an untapped potential.

3.2. Strand II. Supporting access to the labour market for Roma NEETs

²⁵ [The EU Roma Strategic Framework](#)

²⁶ The reference to 'Roma', as an umbrella term, encompasses a wide range of different people of Romani origin such as: Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels and Boyash/Rudari. It also encompasses groups such as Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as traveller populations, including ethnic Travellers or those designated under the administrative term gens du voyage and people who identify as Gypsies, Tsiganes or Tziganes, without denying their specificities.

²⁷ [The Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation](#)

²⁸ [EUR-Lex - 32020H1104\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

A significant portion of Roma are not in paid work within the formal economy or are less likely to be employed compared to the non-Roma population. The overall employment rate for Roma aged 20–64 across the EU stands at only 54%, according to the most recent 2024 survey²⁹ of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Such employment levels are far behind those of the general population (75%). The youth unemployment rate (15–24 years old) is substantially higher than the overall unemployment rate. It stood at 15.2% in 2025 and remains a major barrier to young people achieving financial stability and avoiding poverty. In 2025, the share of NEETs stood at 10.9% in the EU, but there are significant discrepancies in NEET rates among Member States, ranging from 5.3% in the Netherlands to 19.2% in Romania. These NEET rates reflect, among other issues, early leaving from school, skills mismatches, multidimensional barriers to integration into the labour market, care responsibilities as well as insufficient access to employment opportunities.

Some of the most vulnerable NEETs are young people from the Roma community. According to the FRA survey indicated above, in 2021, the rate of Roma NEETs in the category of the Roma population aged 16 to 24 was 56%. This NEET rate is nearly five times the EU average, while there are countries where it is even higher (Czechia, Ireland, Slovakia, Spain, and Hungary). The high NEET rate is problematic both for Roma and for the states from an economic perspective.

Roma NEETs often face multiple challenges combining housing insecurity, discrimination, and access to quality education. Generally, only about half of NEETs are registered with public employment services (PES) and they are often similarly unregistered with social services. They are hard to reach through the regular channels provided by education and training or employment systems. It is crucial that outreach activities take place in settings where young people gather (e.g. near schools, community organisations, online, or on the street) and in partnership with organisations trusted by young people (e.g. NGOs).

The findings of the 2021 Roma survey of the FRA show that Roma across Europe face high levels of deprivation, marginalisation, discrimination and social exclusion. As many as 80% of Roma are at risk of poverty (AROP). Regarding employment, only 43% of Roma aged 20–64 years were in paid work across the eight Member States³⁰ surveyed. The demographic potential of Roma for the labour market is untapped.

Helping NEETs find their way back into employment requires ensuring that they benefit from the activation supports available. This requires identification of the NEETs, offering of tailored support in labour market integration services and a more holistic approach to addressing the challenges they face.

The Reinforced Youth Guarantee called for an improved understanding of the diversity of NEETs and the tailored support they are likely to require through better mapping of the target groups. It called for interventions to be based on differences between national, regional, and local circumstances. That recommendation widened the age bracket to include young people aged 25–29 given that school-to-work transitions and sustainable labour market integration are taking longer because of the changing nature of work and to align it with EU Member States' youth-related measures and programmes, which are generally available to young people between the ages of 15 and 29. Social innovation offers the opportunity to develop and test new approaches, on mechanisms of cooperation between public authorities and stakeholders, and between public authorities, stakeholders, and representatives of Roma, to foster the employment of Roma NEETs.

3.3. Strand II. Objective – Priorities

Under Strand II – Supporting access to the labour market for Roma NEETs – this Call will support transnational social experimentation projects which test innovative approaches to improve Roma NEETs'

²⁹ EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024, [Rights of Roma and Travellers In 13 European Countries — Perspectives from the Roma Survey](#).

³⁰ Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

access to employment through tailored activation strategies.

3.4. Strand II. Activities

Applicants shall design activities³¹ that directly contribute to the objective of the Call, as referred to in Section 3.3 of the Call Conditions.

While applicants are encouraged to propose activities best suited to their specific context, at least the following key activities shall be covered in each proposal:

- 1. Mapping of the specific problems and challenges faced by Roma NEETs.** Activities include the identification of the target groups as well as the problems and challenges that those groups face, and which prevent them from being in employment. It requires conducting a comprehensive mapping of barriers that prevent Roma NEETs from accessing employment or self-employment. This also requires analysing systemic problems and challenges.
- 2. Designing a tailored job pathway support and activation model for Roma NEETs through strengthened stakeholder collaboration.** For example, activities may include engaging and bringing together key stakeholders relevant to Roma NEETs, such as organisations representing Roma, NGOs, and Public Employment Services. Involving young Roma in designing solutions would be a key element. The use of IT solutions should be a key element explored within this design process.
- 3. Reaching out and matching.** Activities should include matching Roma NEETs with concrete job opportunities or raising awareness about areas in which Roma NEETs could be self-employed. This includes reaching out to the target groups to raise their awareness of the support available and motivating and guiding them to take part in employment. Activities can include providing pre- and post-placement support (i.e. working with employers before and after the intervention); experts' support for preparing development and transition pathways; facilitating matching between the target group and potential employers.
- 4. Activities supporting employment or self-employment of the target group.** Such activities could include, for instance, organisational incentives to hire Roma NEETs and retain them in employment for at least six months (i.e., financial support in the form of wage subsidies, or non-financial support in the form of coaching, mentoring, mediation with employers).

Self-employment support could involve mentoring and counselling to encourage self-employment, including advice on access to finance.
- 5. Activities related to skilling.** Such activities can include delivering training relevant to the job, or on-the-job training, work experience, etc., or skills for managing a microenterprise with the aim of supporting sustainable employment.
- 6. Selecting an effective method for scaling-up the social experimentation tested through the project and defining a scaling-up strategy.** This includes preparing an actionable strategy on the replication, expansion, or integration of the selected method into the activities of PES, and on how to involve relevant public authorities, notably PES and, if needed, other stakeholders in view of scaling up, as well as an analysis of the conditions for scaling up (i.e. costs, resources and institutional capacity). Such activities can include designing improved outreach models for the target group (preferably, with the use of IT tools for a holistic assessment of target group needs, and for evaluation and monitoring systems to inform policy decisions); creating recommendations for more Roma-inclusive active labour

³¹ More guidance on social experimentation is available at:
European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2022). Ledan, A. Social experimentation – A practical guide for project promoters. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: Social experimentation - Publications Office of the EU ([Social experimentation - Publications Office of the EU](#)).

market policies, including suggestions for the integration of Roma mediators; designing inclusive recruitment and anti-discrimination practices in PES; integrated service delivery (employment, social and education services); or recommendations for regional and local Roma inclusion strategies.

- 7. Monitoring and evaluation systems.** Activities should include surveys of beneficiaries of matching and employment programmes, or of those who benefit from support for self-employment, for the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes, and identifying efficient ways for data collection and data sharing. Projects must include a monitoring and evaluation framework. Applicants must describe how they will assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Where feasible, this should include a counterfactual or comparable evaluation design, such as a matched comparison group, or another method allowing causal inference.
- 8. Raising awareness.** Activities should include organising events and dissemination actions to promote approaches to the labour activation of Roma NEETs (employment or self-employment). These activities should target relevant stakeholders, including PES, and public authorities (ministries of labour and social affairs, and municipal authorities), and should be aimed at raising awareness of the transnational project, the potential for upscaling, and the transferability of successful approaches.
- 9. Participation in mutual learning events organised by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation (established under the ESF+ SI+ Initiative).** It is crucial for mutual learning between beneficiaries and therefore mandatory. It is planned to organise three to four mutual learning events during the implementation of the projects (a maximum of two events will take place on site (provisionally in Vilnius and Brussels); the others will be held online).

3.5. Strand II. Expected Outcomes

Applicants should demonstrate in their projects a focus on achieving the desired outcomes, specifically by targeting the following areas (please note that this list is not exhaustive):

- 1. Improved access to employment and self-employment for Roma NEETs.**
- 2. Job retention of Roma NEETs for a minimum period of six months.**
- 3. Evidence-based policy recommendations for more Roma-inclusive active labour market policies** (covering also improved outreach models for the target group, including through the use of IT tools for a holistic approach).

3.6. Requirements for employment providers (related to Section 3.4 of the Call Conditions, activity No. 4)

Supporting the employment of the target group is a central element of the project. Employment support activities aim to promote sustainable labour market integration through a combination of direct employment opportunities and complementary measures that enhance employability, workplace inclusion, and retention.

3.6.1 Organisations employing the target group

Public and private organisations play a key role in offering job opportunities to individuals from the target group during the project. Employment providers may be identified at the application stage or added later, at the implementation stage, as project needs evolve:

a) Employment providers identified at the application stage:

- Should be included in the project consortium as beneficiaries.
- The remuneration costs for employed persons should be budgeted in a dedicated work package titled 'Employment support' and indicated in the Detailed Budget Table under the subcategory C.1 'Subsidised employment' of the category C 'Other cost categories'.

b) Employment providers to be added during the implementation stage:

- Employment providers that were not included in the application but wish to recruit the target group with the support of the grant must be incorporated as beneficiaries through an amendment to the Grant Agreement.
- The inclusion of those employment providers and the corresponding grant amount at a later implementation stage must be planned in advance and foreseen in the application.
- Their related remuneration costs should be planned in a separate work package titled 'Employment support (additional employment providers)' and attributed to the coordinator at the application stage. These costs will then be transferred to the new employment providers once they are formally added as beneficiaries.
- These costs cannot be used by the coordinator for any purpose other than those described above.

If both types of employment providers (identified at the application stage and newly added through an amendment during the implementation stage) are foreseen, they should be structured under two distinct work packages: 'Employment support' and 'Employment support (additional employment providers)'.

Private employment providers participating in the project and employing Roma NEETs must be legally established for **at least one year** prior to the date of their inclusion in the project, regardless of whether they are added at the application stage or during project implementation.

To substantiate the latter, private employment providers should submit evidence confirming the legal entity's official establishment and/or registration.

3.6.2 Eligible employment support measures

Employment support can take diverse forms, depending on the needs of the target group and of employers. The following types of measures are eligible under this component (non-exhaustive list):

- Subsidised or supported employment (e.g., minimum wage subsidies for at least six months);
- On-the-job training, mentorship, or coaching to facilitate job integration and retention.

All employment support measures, whether direct employment or complementary incentives, must be described in a dedicated work package titled 'Employment support'.

In the Detailed Budget Table (Annex 1), costs must be indicated separately as follows:

- **Subsidised employment** under category C 'Other cost categories';
- **Other employment support** (e.g., training or mentoring) under category A 'Direct personnel costs' or B.2 'Other goods and services'.

Applicants should describe in the application form which combination of measures will be implemented and justify their relevance and proportionality to the project objectives.

3.6.3 Duration and conditions of employment support

- Each person employed must stay in employment for at least six months within the project's duration.
- Employment may be full-time or part-time, tailored to individual capacities and needs, with flexible working arrangements where appropriate.
- Organisations may combine wage subsidies with other eligible support measures (e.g., training, adaptation, or mentoring) to promote sustainable integration.
- Organisations will be required to submit supporting documents verifying employment duration and working time in full-time equivalents (person-months).

Adherence to minimum wage laws. Remuneration costs must be calculated in line with the minimum wage laws of the specific country or the collective-bargaining minimum wage of the specific employment provider where the Roma NEETs are to be employed. Only the minimum wage (including any applicable

wage taxes under national law) is eligible and must be included in the project budget. This does not preclude employment providers from offering higher remuneration for Roma NEETs from their own funds.

3.7. Strand II. Essential elements of the application

The following elements form the core of a project, which means that each application shall cover **all the elements**. However, applicants are free to choose how to integrate or combine all these elements in the project framework (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Essential elements of the application

1. Conceptual framework

The application should articulate a conceptual framework for the proposed innovative solution targeting Roma NEETs, outlining its key piloting mechanisms. It should clearly describe the planned activities, expected results, and anticipated long-term impact, explaining how and why the tested approach is expected to produce these results. The application should also demonstrate how the proposed approach addresses identified needs and gaps within the target group. The innovative solution should complement existing offerings and services by testing new or improved approaches and generating evidence on their effectiveness before any potential scaling-up or wider implementation. The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

2. Relevance of social innovation

In the table 'Theory of Change' (Part A, Section 5 of the Application Form), the applicant has to explain why it is reasonable to test the chosen innovative approach. The applicant must explain the social experimentation that the project aims to test, its objectives and expected results, as well as the assumptions underpinning the intervention logic. The application should clarify how the proposed model will help to fill existing gaps and/or **complement available solutions**, where appropriate, and how the evidence generated could inform future transfer and/or scaling-up. The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part A, Section 5; Part B.

3. Transnational partnership

A consortium shall consist of at least three eligible entities representing at least two eligible countries. The application should provide a clear and comprehensive account of how each consortium member will contribute to fulfilling the overarching objective of the Call (see Section 3.3.), while at the same time promoting mutual learning, fostering collaborative efforts, and ensuring the successful execution of the project. The roles assigned to each consortium member should be in line with their demonstrated experience and expertise. The description of the partnership should be provided in the Application Form: Part B, Section 2.

4. Diversity of stakeholders

The project should involve a diverse range of stakeholders in its implementation, including public and private sector actors as well as civil society organisations engaged in implementing policies and activities aimed at addressing the situation of Roma NEETs and social exclusion. The application should include measures to identify the relevant stakeholders and explain how their effective collaboration and active engagement will be organised. The application should elaborate on how the project will benefit from the

expertise, networks, and resources of the actors whose participation is envisaged. This description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

5. People-based approach

The project design should prioritise the needs and interests of Roma NEETs. The project must detail how it intends to involve representatives of the target group in the design and development of the intended solution, with a strong focus on creating solutions that are tailor-made to meet their specific needs and circumstances. Additionally, it should delineate how the planned intervention model will support their involvement in the scaling-up process. The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

6. Impact measurement and management

An application must set out ex-ante methods for collecting, assessing, and presenting evidence of the effectiveness of the innovative approach in question, in particular highlighting how the proposed innovative approach is expected to contribute to the expected outcomes. The methodology for collecting, evaluating and presenting evidence of the effectiveness of the proposed innovative approach shall be presented in the application. The methods must include provisional outcome indicators for monitoring the activities and their impact on the target group and on the participating entities; they must be in line with the 'Theory of Change'. The applicant should present an evaluation methodology, appropriate to the scope, size, and context of the project. This may include, where feasible and relevant, a counterfactual or comparable approach, such as a matched comparison group, or another justified method supporting credible conclusions on the results achieved. The expected impact of the project and the indicators for measuring it shall be provided in the Application Form: Part B, Section 3. Impact evaluation should be proportionate to the scope and size of the project.

7. Dissemination and communication

The application should describe the dissemination and communication activities planned to promote the results and evidence generated by the social experimentation and to maximise their impact at the local/regional/national/European level. The dissemination channels and the intended target groups should also be described, including relevant public authorities, PES, policymakers, and stakeholders who may support the transfer, scaling-up, or policy uptake of successful approaches. The information should be provided in the Application Form: Part B, Section 3.

8. Sustainability and scaling pathway

The application should describe how the results and evidence generated by the social experimentation could be sustained and scaled up beyond the project duration, where the tested approach proves effective and relevant. This may include integration into policies, governance mechanisms, or service provision frameworks, as well as an initial assessment of the conditions that may be required, such as costs, resources, institutional capacity, and the involvement of relevant public authorities. The information should be provided in the Application Form: Part B, Section 3.

3.8. Strand II. Consortium composition requirements

For general requirements regarding participant eligibility and consortium composition, please refer to Chapter 7 of the Call Conditions.

Only consortia are eligible; the consortium must include **an applicant (the coordinator) and at least two co-applicants**. Associated partners do not count towards this minimum requirement for the consortium.

The members of the consortium shall represent **at least two different eligible countries** (see Chapter 7 of the Call Conditions).

The consortium must include (minimum requirement):

- 1. An applicant (the coordinator)** who shall be an **EU-level network**, in the form of a separate legal

entity, or **national-level Roma organisation**. The coordinator should be established as a non-profit legal entity **in an EU Member State**, whose purpose/objective, clearly specified in the entity's founding documents, contains Roma rights advocacy, policy engagement, and community empowerment.

To substantiate the specified purpose/objective (engagement in above mentioned Roma policies), the applicant must submit, along with the application, the founding documents of its entity clearly stating the required purposes/objectives and status as an EU-level network or national-level Roma organisation. These documents must have been registered or have entered into force no later than March 2026. In addition, where applicable, to substantiate the aforementioned level of operation, the applicant can submit the additional supporting documentation evidencing their performance as EU-level network or national-level Roma organisation.

An entity may only participate **as the coordinator in one consortium**.

2. At least one entity listed below **as a co-applicant**, registered **in an EU Member State** in which the EU-level network is operating, or the national-level Roma organisation is established:

- PES, job centres, and private employment agencies, **OR**
- National, local, and regional public authorities which have a mandate to implement labour, social inclusion, and education policies, including policies for Roma NEETs.

To substantiate the specified mandate, the national, local, and regional public authorities must submit, along with the application, the founding documents of their entity clearly stating their mandate to implement labour, social inclusion, and education policies.

3. At least one entity listed below **as a co-applicant**, established **in an EU Member State or a listed³² third country**:

- Private companies (especially SMEs), social enterprises;
- National, local, and regional authorities (labour, social inclusion, and education);
- Social partners, representative bodies linked to the labour market, including chambers of commerce and other trade associations;
- Vocational education and training (VET) providers;
- Local community centres and hubs;
- NGOs/third sector/voluntary non-profit entities providing employment activation;
- PES, job centres, and private employment agencies, or national, local, and regional public authorities which have a mandate to implement labour, social inclusion, and education policies, **located in an EU Member State other than the one in which the co-applicant referred to in point 2 above is established**, or located in a listed third country.

Other entities specified in this Section might participate as co-applicants or associated partners.

In Section 2.3 of Part B of the Application Form, the applicant must clearly identify the entities constituting the required minimum consortium.

4. General requirements for applicants / proposals (Strand I and Strand II)

4.1. Social Innovation Match

Coordinators of projects selected under this Call are required to upload key information to the **Social**

³² [List of Participating Countries in ESF+ \(3rd Country Participation_Esf\).pdf](#)

Innovation Match³³ database (SIM). This includes two parts:

1. Organisation profile: information about the organisation, its overall activities, mission, a short description of what the organisation could offer to other organisations, and contact details.
2. Project profile: information about the project, including the problem addressed, the innovative approach introduced, a short description of ongoing activities, key results and benefits, and the potential for mainstreaming.

This information will be validated for quality and appropriateness by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation before publication.

SIM is a platform developed by the European Commission to promote the transfer and/or scaling-up of social innovations across Europe. It is managed by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation under the ESF+ SI+ Initiative. The thematic focus of SIM is on initiatives related to employment, education and training, and social inclusion.

SIM provides the following opportunities:

- Helps organisations to find potential partners for European calls for transnational projects.
- Allows interested stakeholders to search for initiatives developed and tested in other countries.
- Helps organisations to identify other entities whose work is a source of inspiration.
- Facilitates contacts between social innovation stakeholders and other entities.
- Allows project promoters to showcase their successful and inspiring examples of social innovation.

SIM offers project promoters additional visibility and recognition for their entities across the European Union. For more information on SIM please visit the [SIM user guides page](#).

4.2. Budget available and co-financing rate – Form of grant – Eligibility of costs – Cost categories – Double funding

4.2.1. Budget available and co-financing rate

The indicative Call budget available is EUR **17 000 000, of which:**

- EUR 12 000 000 for Strand I;
- EUR 5 000 000 for Strand II.

The Granting Authority reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available under this Call or to increase the budget of the Call (if relevant, by reallocating funding from other calls under the ESF+ SI+ Initiative). The final decision will be made considering the number of applications received and the results of their assessment.

If an insufficient number of eligible and fundable applications are received under a particular Strand, the funds allocated to that Strand may be reallocated to the other Strand, provided that eligible and fundable applications have been received under that Strand.

The indicative expected size of the grant is between EUR 800 000 and EUR 2 000 000 per project (but this does not preclude the submission/selection of applications requesting other amounts). The grant awarded may be less than the amount requested.

Under this Call, the EU grant may not exceed 80% of the total eligible costs of the project. A co-funding of at least 20% must thus come from sources other than the EU budget. Funds from other EU programmes cannot be used as a source of national co-funding.

Furthermore, the 20% co-funding shall be ensured. It is not mandatory that the whole amount of the co-

³³ [Social Innovation Match | European Social Fund Plus \(europa.eu\)](#)

funding is provided by a single entity (applicant, co-applicant). If two or more entities commit to provide the co-funding, the share provided by each entity shall be indicated in the application.

4.2.2. Form of grant

Grants under this Call shall take the form of lump sums. The amount of the lump sum will be established for **the whole project (overall lump sum)**, per **work package**, and per **beneficiary**, separately, in accordance with the Rules of the Use of Lump Sum Contributions under the ESF+ SI+ Initiative (for the Rules see supporting documents to the Call Conditions).

4.2.2.1. Management of lump sum funding (structure of the application and establishment of lump sums)

Lump sums will be established on the basis of the Detailed Budget Table (see Annex 1 to the Call Conditions for a template) submitted by the applicant, the Granting Authority's assessment of the validity of the amounts requested, and a funding rate of 80%.

All project activities shall be split into work packages. The applicant shall specify the link between the necessary resources and the work packages:

- The applicant shall submit a Detailed Budget Table (Annex 1 to the Call Conditions) providing cost estimations for each cost category per work package and, within a work package, per beneficiary.
- The Detailed Budget Table shall only contain costs that would be eligible as actual costs and shall exclude costs that are ineligible under this Call. The requirements for the eligibility of costs under this Call are presented in Section 4.2.3 of the Call Conditions.
- Cost estimations shall approximate to actual costs. They should be:
 - in line with normal practices,
 - reasonable and not excessive,
 - in line with, and necessary for, the activities proposed.

The payment of a lump sum is linked to the completion of the corresponding work package. A work package can only be declared completed and the corresponding lump sum paid when all the work has been carried out / all deliverables have been reached in accordance with the Description of the Project in the Grant Agreement (see Annex 2 to the Call Conditions for the Grant Agreement template).

The overall project description shall be organised in coherent work packages:

- The number of work packages shall be well justified. Among other work packages, the project should include at least three **mandatory work packages**: the **Project Coordination/Management** Work Package, the **Dissemination and Communication** Work Package, and a Work Package **focusing on activities under Strand I or Strand II**.
- A work package must include a description of all activities and deliverables covered by it, broken down by beneficiaries and associated partners who contribute to the work package.
- The objectives, activities, and verifiable deliverables of each work package should be presented in line with the overall project objectives.

Work packages with a long duration (e.g., for coordination/management and dissemination) may be split into several work packages of shorter duration over the reporting periods (the first reporting period is 12 months after the start of the project).

To facilitate eligibility for the second pre-financing payment, applicants should structure the project proposal so that the work packages completed amount to at least 70% of the first pre-financing payment by the end of the first reporting period. Since lump sum payments are conditional upon the completion of work packages, this approach will help ensure that the second pre-financing payment can be made in full.

Each work package may have multiple activities/deliverables.

Among other deliverables, the coordinator shall have to provide the following **mandatory deliverables**:

a) a Report on Mapping, Outreach, and Matching of the target group(s) (applicable only **for projects**

under Strand II).

This report must be submitted **within eight months of the start of the project** and must include:

- the types of matching and support activities provided in view of employment or self-employment;
- a description of the strategy/methodology for reaching out to the identified target group(s);
- the types of jobs in which the matching will be done, or in which self-employment support is provided;
- the type of training or upskilling that will be provided.

A recommended template/guidelines for this report are provided in Annex 10 to the Call Conditions.

b) a Final Report 'Lessons Learned and Future Plans' (applicable for projects under both Strands).

The Final Report shall include the following elements:

- An outline of the project.
- Analysis and assessment of the project outcomes and impact, including (but not limited to):
 - for Strand I – a description of the innovative approach implemented.
 - for Strand I (where projects include a testing component (see Section 2.4 of the Call Conditions) and Strand II:
 - a description of the tested intervention and its underlying logic, including evidence on the effectiveness of that intervention;
 - a presentation of the evaluation or impact measurement framework, including methodology, indicators, data sources, baseline where relevant, and limitations.
- Structured feedback from the involved institutions and relevant stakeholders.
- Lessons learned and recommendations for the future application of the innovative approach.
- Follow-up activities and a long-term sustainability strategy for the roll-out of the innovative approach.

In order to promote social experimentation or the transfer and/or scaling-up of social innovations across Europe through expanding the best practices, the final reports of the implemented projects will be made public on a website dedicated to the ESF+ SI+ Initiative. A recommended template/guidelines for the Final Report 'Lessons Learned and Future Plans' are provided in Annex 7 to the Call Conditions.

The deliverables of the project will be managed through the Portal and will be specified in Annex 1 to the Grant Agreement.

4.2.3. Eligibility of costs and cost categories

a) Eligible cost categories

The following categories of eligible costs can be covered by the lump sum contributions:

- A. Direct personnel costs:
 - A.1. Employees (or equivalent) person months
- B. Purchase costs:
 - B.1. Travel and subsistence per travel or per day
 - B.2. Other goods and services
- C. Other costs categories
 - C.1 Subsidised employment (**applicable only for projects under Strand II**)

D. Indirect costs³⁴

To be eligible, costs must:

1. Be attributed to the beneficiary.
2. Be related to the duration of the implementation period of the project (except for costs related to the submission of the Final Report of the project).
3. Be estimated in eligible cost categories.
4. Be linked to, and necessary for, the implementation of the project, i.e. achieving the objectives of the project.
5. Be established in accordance with the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary.
6. Be identifiable and verifiable.
7. Comply with the applicable national and EU legislation, including accounting and public procurement rules.
8. Be reasonable and justified and comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular in terms of economy and efficiency.

Indirect costs shall be defined for each application as a flat rate of 7% of the total eligible direct costs (i.e., the sum of all amounts listed in A, B and C categories).

The cost-eligibility rules are set out in the Grant Agreement (Article 6 and Annex 2).

Under this Call, the eligible cost period shall meet the following conditions:

- Costs are incurred after the date of entry into force of the Grant Agreement; and
- Costs are incurred up to the project end date indicated in the Grant Agreement.

Costs incurred before the submission of the application are not eligible under any circumstances.

b) Ineligible costs and contributions

The following costs or contributions are ineligible under this Call:

1. Costs related to return on capital and dividends paid by the beneficiary.
2. Debt and debt service charges.
3. Provisions for future losses or debts.
4. Interest payable.
5. Currency exchange losses.
6. Bank charges levied by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from the Granting Authority.
7. Excessive or reckless expenditure.
8. Deductible or refundable VAT (including VAT paid by public bodies acting as public authorities).
9. Costs incurred or contributions made for activities implemented during a suspension of the Grant Agreement.
10. In-kind contributions by third parties.
11. Costs or contributions for personnel of a national (or regional/local) administration for activities that are part of the administration's normal activities (i.e. not undertaken only because of the grant).
12. Costs related to the purchase of land and real estate as well as infrastructure.
13. Costs related to the purchase of furniture, vehicles and equipment (except for development of IT tools or IT solutions (e.g. software solutions, software applications (apps)) necessary for implementation of project tasks).

³⁴ Indirect costs are costs that cannot be identified as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the project. Indirect costs are general administrative costs – overhead costs incurred in connection with the eligible direct costs for the project. They can include corporate management costs and other costs linked to the normal functioning of the entity, such as horizontal and support staff, office and equipment costs (for instance, maintenance, stationery, photocopying, postage, telephone and fax costs, heating, electricity or other forms of energy, water, office furniture, insurance).

14. Costs related to repair, refurbishment, reconstruction, or any construction works.
15. Regranting. This includes any financial support or distribution of funds to third parties such as bursaries, vouchers (e.g. supermarket or transport vouchers), stipends, sub-grants, or fixed lump sums to participants.
16. Amortization and depreciation costs³⁵.

4.2.4. Double funding

Double funding from the EU budget is strictly prohibited. Any project may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget, and under no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget.

5. Timetable – Deadlines – Project duration

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Deadline for submission of applications	
Strand I	15 October 2026, 17:00 CEST
Strand II	30 September 2026, 17:00 CEST
Assessment of applications	October 2026 – January 2027
Information on assessment results	January 2027
Grant Agreement signature	April 2027

Starting date and duration of the projects

The indicative duration of a project should be 18-24 months.

The actual starting date of a project could be:

- the first day following the date on which the last of the two parties signs the Grant Agreement; *or*
- the first day of the month following the date on which the last of the two parties signs the Grant Agreement; *or*
- the date agreed by the parties to the Grant Agreement, which cannot be earlier than the date of signature of the Grant Agreement.

6. Admissibility and documents

An application shall be filled in online and submitted, together with other supporting documents, electronically via the Portal, by the deadline specified in Chapter 5 of the Call Conditions. An application submitted outside the Portal or after the deadline will not be accepted.

The Portal can be accessed via the Call page. Submission of an application is a **two-step process**:

1. **Creation of a user account.** To use the Portal, an applicant has to create a user account.
2. **Submission of an application** (the application template is provided as Annex 3 to the Call Conditions).

³⁵ While depreciation costs are excluded, the rental of equipment may be eligible if justified as cost-effective and necessary for project implementation. Examples may include short-term rental of training or event equipment, IT tools, or workspace—provided these are proportionate and documented according to the project's needs.

An application, including the Annexes to the Call Conditions and supporting documents, **shall be submitted by filling in the provided forms**, unless specified otherwise. The application **must be complete** and contain all the requested information, including the Annexes to the Call Conditions and supporting documents. The list of the required documents is provided in Annex 4 to the Call Conditions.

The application must be **readable and accessible**. Please note that the number of characters in the application columns is limited, so please be concise and specific.

Documents must be uploaded to the Portal under the relevant Call/Strand; otherwise, the application will be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

When applying, the applicant will have to confirm that they have a mandate to act on behalf of all co-applicants. Moreover, the applicant will have to certify that the information provided in the application is correct and complete and that it complies with the conditions for receiving EU funding (in particular, eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion criteria, etc.).

At a later stage, applicants may be asked to provide additional documents (legal entity and bank account validation, financial capacity check, etc.).

It is recommended that applications be completed and submitted well before the deadline to avoid any last-minute technical problems. Problems due to last-minute submissions, such as network congestion, will be entirely at the applicant's own risk, and they cannot be used as a basis for a request for an extension of the Call deadline.

Once an application is submitted, the applicant will receive a **confirmation email** (with the date and time of the submission). Not receiving the confirmation email implies that the application was NOT submitted successfully. If the applicant believes that the failure to apply was caused by a malfunctioning of the Portal, a complaint should be filed immediately via the email address ITheelp@socialinnovationplus.eu explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of an application (and, if possible, screenshots to prove the malfunction of the Portal or the applicant's attempts to submit the application).

7. General eligibility requirements – Eligible participants

Please note that compliance with the eligibility criteria is mandatory for the entire duration of the project.

Only consortia are eligible.

An entity which applies as a coordinator of a consortium under Strand I 'Strengthening the European Child Guarantee national governance systems' may be part of a consortium under Strand II 'Supporting access to the labour market for Roma NEETs' of this Call and vice versa.

For practical and legal reasons, consortia are encouraged to conclude consortium agreements that enable them to address exceptional or unforeseen circumstances, although this is not mandatory under the Grant Agreement. A consortium agreement also gives the possibility to redistribute the grant according to the internal principles and criteria of the consortium (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows its members to customise the grant to the needs within the consortium and can also help to protect any member in case of disputes.

To be eligible, the applicant acting as the coordinator, co-applicants, and associated partners must:

- Be legal entities (public or private bodies);
- Be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States.
 - Non-EU countries: listed³⁶ European Economic Area (EEA) countries and countries associated with

³⁶ [List of Participating Countries in ESF+ \(3rd Country Participation_Esf\).pdf](#)

the ESF+ or countries with which an association agreement is being negotiated, provided that the agreement enters into force before the signature of the Grant Agreement.

The association agreement must enter into force within one month from either (i) the date on which the final draft of the Grant Agreement is agreed between the Granting Authority and the applicant (coordinator), or (ii) the date on which the Granting Authority, at its discretion, declares the draft final in cases where harmonisation is excessively prolonged. Failure to conclude the association agreement within this one-month period will render the applicant (and, consequently, the application) or co applicant ineligible for funding and lead to rejection.

International organisations³⁷ can participate in a project as associated partners only.

Natural persons cannot be applicants, co-applicants, or associated partners.

If the applicant's or co-applicants' entity has already been validated by the Central Validation Service ('validated' status) and has a Participant Identification Code (PIC) included in the register containing all participants in EU programmes, the entity's registration certificate may not be submitted. **If an entity has not yet been validated by the Central Validation Service, documents certifying the entity's legal status and origin shall be submitted as an annex to the application.**

EU [restrictive measures](#): Special rules apply to entities from certain countries (e.g., entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU)³⁸ and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), or entities covered by the Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05³⁹. Such entities shall not be able to participate in the project in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, associated partners, or subcontractors (if any).

Associated partners, as defined in Article 7 of the Grant Agreement (see the Grant Agreement template in Annex 2 to the Call Conditions), are eligible to participate in a project, **but will not be counted among the required minimum number of consortium members**. An associated partner may participate in a project but may not declare eligible costs.

Conditions for rejection

If an applicant is considered ineligible, the application will be rejected.

A co-applicant deemed ineligible will be removed from the consortium. The related activities and projected costs of the removed co-applicant will be excluded. The eligibility and award criteria of the modified consortium will then be re-assessed without the said co-applicant's activities and costs. If the application is accepted for funding, the Granting Authority will ask the applicant to adjust the work plan and budget accordingly.

8. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

An applicant (coordinator) shall have the financial and operational capacity to complete the activities for which funding is requested. Only legal entities with the necessary financial and operational capacity may be considered as potential grant recipients.

8.1. Financial capacity

³⁷ International organisation means an organisation established by a treaty or other instrument governed by international law and possessing its own international legal personality.

³⁸ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list, and in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map <https://www.sanctionsmap.eu>

³⁹ Commission guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

Under this Call, only the financial capacity of the coordinator will be assessed.

The coordinator shall have stable, sufficient, and sound financial resources (a strong financial capacity) to maintain the project activities and contribute to their funding, as required.

The financial capacity of **the coordinator** will be assessed prior to the signature of the Grant Agreement⁴⁰, unless otherwise required during the assessment of applications.

The verification of financial capacity **shall NOT apply to public bodies**. They will be required to submit the following evidence to the Granting Authority at the time of preparation of the Grant Agreement:

- A signed Legal Entity Identification Form (Annex 9 'Public Legal Entity Form', in English), and;
- A copy of the act, law, decree, or decision establishing the legal entity as a public body (or, if none exists, any other official legal document that proves this).

Assessment of the financial capacity shall be carried out on the basis of the following supporting documents, which will have to be submitted upon request of the Granting Authority prior to the signature of the Grant Agreement or during the assessment of the application:

- a) The coordinator, which is not a public body and where the grant for the project is > EUR 60 000, must submit:
 - A declaration on honour, including a declaration on the financial capacity to carry out the project;
 - Official annual balance sheets and profit and loss accounts for the last two closed financial years;
 - Explanatory notes and/or annexes forming part of the above financial statements (if available);
 - For newly established legal entities: a business plan or any other equivalent document which includes financial projections on total assets and annual total revenue. No statutory audit/self-declaration is needed in such cases.
- b) The coordinator, which is not a public body and where the grant for the project is > EUR 750 000, must submit:
 - The information and supporting documents referred to in point a) above;
 - An audit report issued by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last two closed financial years, where such an audit report is available, or where a statutory audit report is required by the Union or national law, or a self-declaration signed by the legal representative of the entity certifying the validity of the accounts.

The assessment of financial capacity is based on financial indicators (assets, liabilities, and revenue), but other aspects, such as the composition of the project costs, the coordinator's previous experience in EU funding, coordination of transnational consortia, etc. will also be considered in order to verify the credibility of the coordinator.

If the financial capacity of the coordinator is subject to doubt, the Granting Authority may additionally require:

- to submit (one or more) prefinancing guarantees;
- to submit an irrevocable and unconditional joint guarantee from other co-applicants or a third party;
- to split the payment of the prefinancing into several instalments;
- to set a ceiling for the prefinancing in the Grant Agreement at EUR 20 000;
- to establish additional conditions for project monitoring in the Grant Agreement;
- any other measure which, after assessment of the specific situation, would ensure that the project will be implemented properly.

If the coordinator is in breach of the obligation to provide the prefinancing guarantee or other

⁴⁰ If the application is pre-selected for funding.

corresponding documents, the prefinancing will not be paid.

Such breaches and a significant lack of financial capacity may also lead to other measures: rejection of the application, termination of the participation in the project (where possible), or termination of the Grant Agreement.

8.2. Operational capacity

Under this Call, only the operational capacity of the applicant, which acts as the coordinator, will be assessed.

Public bodies⁴¹ are exempted from the operational capacity check. The Granting Authority, if needed, may request additional information.

The coordinator must have sufficient experience in project management/coordination. It is compulsory to meet the criteria specified below. In concrete terms, this means the following:

The coordinator⁴² (as a legal entity) has managed at least one consortium⁴³ project (funded by EU or national public funds) which:

1. was managed by the coordinator;
2. involved beneficiaries (an applicant/coordinator and co-applicant) from no fewer than two different countries;
3. lasted at least 12 months;
4. had a total budget of more than EUR 200 000;
5. was implemented and finished within the last five years (30 September 2021 – 29 September 2026⁴⁴).

Only projects meeting all five requirements above will be taken into consideration for the assessment of the operational capacity of the coordinator.

Please note that project coordination/management activities are core activities and cannot be subcontracted.

The operational capacity of the coordinator to manage the project shall be **confirmed by the submission of the following supporting documents:**

1. A list of projects managed by **the coordinator** within the last five years (see **Annex 5** of the Call Conditions for a template **to document compliance with the requirements**).
2. Evidence proving that at least one project from those listed in Annex 5 meets all five operational capacity criteria⁴⁵. The documentation must clearly demonstrate that the project indicated:
 - 2.1. was coordinated/managed by the lead applicant/coordinator;
 - 2.2. involved beneficiaries (an applicant/coordinator and co-applicant) from no fewer than two different countries;
 - 2.3. lasted at least 12 months;
 - 2.4. had a total budget of more than EUR 200 000;
 - 2.5. was implemented and finished within the last five years (30 September 2021 - 29 September

⁴¹ Definition of a public body can be found in the Glossary. Documents proving that the entity is a public body are presented in Section 8.1.

⁴² As defined in the Glossary of the Call Conditions

⁴³ As defined in the Glossary of the Call Conditions

⁴⁴ The project must be completed before the submission of an application under this Call.

⁴⁵ Evidence could include funding decisions, grant agreements, and other documents containing all the required information. To facilitate assessment, if needed, the documents should be provided with the translation into English. If a link to a website is provided, it should be an official website of the funding instrument/programme, containing all the required information (all the five operational capacity criteria of an eligible project).

2026⁴⁶).

3. A declaration by the coordinator certifying the professional competences, appropriate qualifications, and a very good command of English (C1 level or higher) of the coordinator's project team to carry out the required tasks (Annex 8).

If the coordinator is a public body, Annex 9 (Public Legal Entity Form) should be submitted instead of Annex 5 (List of Previous Projects) and Annex 8 (Declaration of Professional Competencies).

If it is considered that the coordinator, which is not a public body, does not have the required operational capacity (including cases where Annex 5 or evidence, proving that at least one project from those indicated in the Annex 5 meets all five operational capacity criteria are not submitted with the application or evidence submitted does not substantiate at least one of the five operational capacity criteria), the entire application will be rejected.

8.3. Exclusion criteria

An applicant and any co-applicant shall be excluded from participating in the Call if any of them is found to be in any of the exclusion situations⁴⁷ described below:

1. Bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities, or other similar procedures (including procedures involving persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
2. In breach of social security or tax obligations (including those of persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
3. Guilty of grave professional misconduct⁴⁸ (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners, or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
4. Guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal entity, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including the financing of terrorism), child labour, or human trafficking (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners, or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)⁴⁹;
5. Having a history of significant deficiencies in complying with their main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners, or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
6. Guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95 (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners, or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant); or
7. They have created an entity in another jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin, or have created another entity with this purpose (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners, or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

An applicant or any co-applicant will also be excluded from participation in the Call if it is found that⁵⁰:

⁴⁶ The project must be completed before the submission of an application under this Call.

⁴⁷ See Article 136 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#)

⁴⁸ See Article 136 (1) (c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#)

⁴⁹ See Article 136 (1) (d) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#)

⁵⁰ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#)

1. During the award procedure, they misrepresented or failed to supply information required as a condition for participating.
2. They have previously been involved in the preparation of the Call, and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

The applicant and co-applicants will have to submit a declaration confirming that they do not fall under any of the above exclusion criteria. The declaration shall be duly signed by their respective legal representatives.

If any questionable data are detected, the Granting Authority will send a notification and provide the opportunity for clarification before the final decision of the Project Selection Committee is taken, in compliance with the principle of proportionality.

Where an applicant or co-applicants declare one of the above situations of exclusion, they shall indicate the measures they have taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating their reliability. These may include technical, organisational, and staff-related measures intended to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damages, or payment of fines, taxes, or social security contributions. Relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in an annex to the declaration. This does not apply to situations referred to in point 4 of the exclusion criteria.

Administrative measures may be imposed on an applicant or co-applicants who are guilty of misrepresentation if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participation in this procedure prove to be false.

9. Assessment and award procedures

9.1. Assessment procedure

Formal requirements

Applications will first be checked for formal requirements (see Section 9.3 of the Call Conditions, 'Admissibility and eligibility check'). Applications that do not meet these admissibility and eligibility conditions **will be rejected**. The final decision on the rejection of applications will be taken by the Project Assessment Committee.

Applications submitted by means other than through the Portal, or after the deadline, are not accepted (they are not assessed at the admissibility stage, etc.).

Applications that are deemed admissible and eligible will be assessed against the award criteria. In parallel, legal checks (legal entity validation, operational capacity, and exclusion criteria) will be carried out.

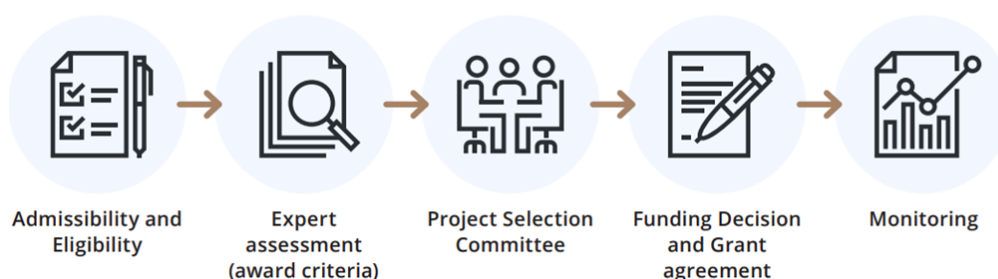


Figure 3. Process of application assessment

Appointment of experts and their tasks

Applications will be qualitatively assessed against the award criteria by at least two experts, at least one of whom will be an independent external expert (see Section 9.5 of the Call Conditions for more information on the award criteria, maximum, and threshold points).

The experts may make suggestions for reducing the budget. The experts shall not have any oral or written communication with the applicants.

Guiding principles of assessment

The guiding principles of assessment are the following:

- Transparency: Funding decisions are based on clearly described rules and procedures. Applicants receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the assessment of their applications.
- Fairness and impartiality: All applications are treated equally. They are assessed impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin, the identity of the submitting entity, the applicant, co-applicant(s), or any team member.
- Confidentiality: All applications, associated annexes and related data, knowledge, and documents submitted to the Granting Authority are treated with the strictest confidentiality.
- Efficiency and speed: The assessment process, preparation, and award of grants are dealt with as a matter of priority.

The Granting Authority will liaise closely with the experts during the assessment process to ensure that rules and procedures are properly understood and duly followed. Prior to the assessment of an application, experts will be requested to determine whether there are any grounds for a conflict of interest. Should any possible risk be observed, the application will be reassigned to a different expert.

Calculation of the final score

The final score for an application will be calculated as the average of the points awarded by two experts who have assessed the application independently. If the difference between their final scores does not exceed 20 points, one of the experts will prepare a consolidated assessment report.

If the difference between the two final scores for the same application exceeds 20 points, a third expert will be appointed. The final score will then be determined as the average of the two assessments with the lowest difference between their overall scores. A third expert shall not be appointed in cases where the final score (the average of two experts) is below the acceptance threshold.

9.2. Award procedure

Selection of projects for funding

The selection of projects will be made separately for Strand I and Strand II, and the recommendations for funding will be taken by the selection panels – the Project Selection Committees (PSC). The results of the applications' assessment will be presented at the PSCs meetings. The PSCs will rank the applications with the passing scores and will set the order of priority for applications with equal scores. In cases where applications receive the same scores, their order of priority shall be determined by the scores for the following award criteria, in descending order of importance: 'Relevance', 'Quality', and 'Impact'.

Applications that pass the individual thresholds per criterion and the overall threshold will be considered for funding within the limits of the available budget. Other applications may be put on the reserve list or will not be funded.

Under Strand I, the Call aims to fund at least six highest-ranked projects, provided that a sufficient number of high-quality applications are received and that at least six eligible applications achieve a minimum score of 60 out of 100. Any remaining unallocated funds may be used to support additional highest-scoring projects, within the limits of the available budget. The Granting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between two Strands, depending on the applications received

and the results of the assessment.

Under Strand II, the Call aims to fund at least two highest-ranked projects, provided that a sufficient number of high-quality applications are received and that at least two eligible applications achieve a minimum score of 60 out of 100. Any remaining unallocated funds may be used to support additional highest-scoring projects, within the limits of the available budget. The Granting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the two Strands, depending on the applications received and the results of the assessment.

The final decision on the funding of projects, as well as on the final grant amount, is taken by order of the Director of the Granting Authority.

Communication of the selection results

Each applicant will be informed about the assessment results. All applicants whose applications have been selected for funding will be invited for the preparation of the Grant Agreement. Each rejected applicant will receive an Assessment Summary Report including reasons for the rejection of their application and information on the possibility of submitting a complaint (for more information, please see Section 9.4 of the Call Conditions).

Grant Agreement

The preparation of the Grant Agreement will involve a dialogue to fine-tune the technical and financial aspects of the project and may require additional information from the applicant. It may also include adjustments to the application to address recommendations of the experts and the PSC, as well as any other concerns. Compliance with the requested amendments will be a precondition for signing the Grant Agreement.

9.3. Admissibility and eligibility check

Once submission of applications is closed, an admissibility and eligibility check of applications will be carried out by the Granting Authority. The admissibility and eligibility check will ensure that only high-quality applications that are in line with the requirements set out in the Call Conditions, are further assessed (award criteria assessment) and qualify for funding. At this stage, compliance with the admissibility conditions and eligibility criteria is checked. Failure to comply with any of the admissibility and eligibility requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

To be considered admissible, an application must be:

- Readable and accessible;
- Complete and must contain all the information, annexes, and supporting documents requested.

Only the information requested in the application and the documents specified in Annex 4 to the Call Conditions will be taken into consideration during the assessment.

The application will be considered inadmissible and will be rejected if the following annexes are not submitted with the application at the time of its submission:

- Annex 1: Detailed Budget Table.
- Annex 5: List of the Previous Projects or Annex 9: Public Legal Entity Form (whichever is required depending on the legal status of the coordinator).
- Annex 8: Declaration of Professional Competencies, unless the coordinator is a public body.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their application in English to facilitate the processing of applications and speed up the assessment process. However, applications submitted in any of the official languages of

the EU will be accepted.⁵¹ In this case, an application should be accompanied by an executive summary in English. It should be noted that the assessment of applications will be carried out on the basis of the English version of the application. The quality of the translation will not be guaranteed, and the translation of the application may not fully reflect the content of the text in the original language and is therefore at the applicant's own risk. Moreover, the Grant Agreement, as well as the project management, formal reporting, key deliverables, and all communication with the Granting Authority, shall be in English.

If any of the admissibility requirements is not met, the application **will be deemed inadmissible**, no eligibility check will be commenced, and the application will be rejected.

To be considered eligible, an application shall:

1. Involve only applicants, co-applicants, and associated partners defined as eligible under the Call Conditions (see Sections 2.7 and 3.8, and Chapter 7 of the Call Conditions);
2. Be submitted by a consortium that meets the requirements set out in the Call Conditions (see Sections 2.7 and 3.8, and Chapter 7 of the Call Conditions);
3. Not involve legal entities subject to EU restrictive measures (see Chapter 7 of the Call Conditions);
4. Not exceed the maximum project duration indicated in the Call Conditions (see Chapter 5 of the Call Conditions);
5. Include the beneficiaries' pledge to contribute to the project from their own funds or funds from other sources at least to the percentage level of the project costs specified in the Call Conditions (see Section 4.2 of the Call Conditions);
6. Be submitted by the applicant (coordinator), who meets the operational capacity criteria (see Section 8.2 of the Call Conditions);
7. Not propose a project that has already been funded (in its entirety or any separate part thereof) from the EU budget or that will receive such funding in the foreseeable future;
8. Meet the other requirements set out in the Call Conditions.

If any of the eligibility requirements is not met, the application will be deemed ineligible, no further assessment will be undertaken, and the application will be rejected.

The results of the admissibility and eligibility assessment will be documented, and, in case of a negative assessment, the applicant will receive an explanation for the rejection.

9.4. Complaints regarding application rejection or other acts or omissions of the Granting Authority

If the application is deemed to have been rejected or dealt with otherwise due to flaws in the selection procedures (rather than the quality of the application), a complaint may be submitted. Only the coordinator of the consortium can submit a complaint.

Complaints will be subject to the following conditions:

1. Complaints must be limited to procedural aspects and must not focus on the merits of the corresponding applications. A complaint must relate to the assessment procedure, admissibility, or eligibility checks and must demonstrate a procedural irregularity, factual error, manifest error of assessment, or abuse of powers (e.g., lack of coherence between the scores and comments, lack of conclusions, existence of a conflict of interest, breach of the limits of discretion, etc.). Disagreements with the result or reasoning of the assessment of the application will not be considered.
2. Only one request for review of the procedural aspects per application will be considered. The request cannot refer to the assessment of applications submitted by other applicants.
3. Requests for review will not automatically lead to re-assessment of an application. A re-assessment will

⁵¹ If you need the Call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after Call publication (for the contact information, see Section 'Abstract' and Chapter 11)

only be carried out if the complaint demonstrates that the procedural irregularity, factual error, manifest error of assessment, or abuse of powers has affected the decision regarding the funding of the application. For example, a complaint relating to one of the assessment criteria will not lead to a re-assessment if, even after adding the maximum points under that criterion, the final score would nevertheless remain below the threshold for funding.

4. Re-assessment will be carried out on the basis of information initially provided, i.e., no additional information will be accepted. Depending on the case, re-assessment may be partial (limited to the criterion affected by the error) or full (where the entire assessment of the application has been recognised as flawed). Re-assessment may be assigned to the same assessment panel or a new one, depending on the internal procedures of the Granting Authority.

All complaints received will be handled with due observance of the requirements of confidentiality.

All complaints shall be submitted to the Granting Authority in English by e-mail to the following address: complaints@socialinnovationplus.eu.

An applicant is required to provide as much relevant detail in the complaint as possible, including any supporting documents and/or correspondence, if applicable.

Having received a complaint, the Granting Authority will examine it and provide a response.

Complaints must be filed within 20 days of the receipt of the decision from the Granting Authority. Complaints received after the deadline will not be taken into consideration. The Granting Authority will respond no later than 30 days after receipt of the complaint. If a complaint is complex, the time allocated for the Granting Authority to respond may be extended. If this is the case, the complainant will be informed about the progress of the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and a new deadline.

The complaints procedure presented herein, and its timeframes must not hinder the start or ongoing implementation of other projects proposed for funding/funded under the Call. If a complaint is upheld, the application will be referred for review and reassessment.

If the response provided by the Granting Authority is deemed insufficient by the complainant, disputes concerning the complaint shall be settled in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Lithuania and may be brought before the courts of Vilnius, Lithuania, depending on the nature of the claims.

9.5. Award criteria

Applications that are declared eligible and admissible will be subject to an assessment against the award criteria. Applications submitted under each Strand will be assessed according to the criteria specific to that Strand. The award criteria for each Strand of this Call are as follows:

9.5.1. Strand I. Award criteria

Award criteria for Strand I are as follows:

1. **Relevance** (max 40 points, threshold 25 points):

- The extent to which the project contributes to the objective and activities of Strand I of this Call (as they are described in Section 2.3 and Section 2.4 of the Call Conditions), addressing child poverty and exclusion, including the policy objectives of the ECG.
- The extent to which the reasoning for the selected social innovation to be scaled up is well-founded, taking into account its transfer feasibility, and adaptation strategy across participating countries.
- The extent to which the selected social innovation significantly enhances the cooperation between the authorities involved in the ECG implementation processes and facilitates digital exchanges of information. Where projects include a testing component, the extent to which the reasoning for introducing new or improved measures to be tested demonstrates relevance and is well-founded, including the identification of the problem, target group, the added value compared to existing

practices, and the potential of the proposed approach to generate robust evidence on its effectiveness for policy-making.

- The extent to which the project demonstrates a strong alignment with, and support for, the implementation of relevant national, regional, or local strategies.

2. Quality – project design, implementation, and team (max 40 points, threshold 20 points):

Project design and implementation (max 20 points, threshold 10 points):

- Clarity and consistency of the project. The extent to which the specific activities envisaged as part of the project are concrete and have a practical dimension, and how thorough, precise and easy to understand they are.
- The extent to which the consistency of the overall design of the project and of the intervention logic is demonstrated. It also measures the extent to which the action is feasible and consistent in relation to the objectives and the expected outcomes.
- Logical links between identified problems, needs, and proposed solutions.
- Methodology for implementing the project (organisation of work, monitoring, timetable, communication and dissemination, involvement of relevant stakeholders and active involvement of public authorities, risks and risk management, etc.).
- The clarity, coherence, and balance of the allocation of tasks, responsibilities, and resources across the consortium, including the appropriateness of managerial responsibilities.
- A clear and justified rationale for the composition of the consortium.
- The level of children in need targeted; the level of involvement of other national authorities and the level of involvement of the regional/local authorities; the level of involvement of civil society and of children. Where projects include a testing component, the proportionality of the evaluation methodology (including indicators, data sources, and methods to assess the effectiveness of the tested interventions and, where relevant, their cost-effectiveness), and the involvement of relevant public authorities.
- The extent of the transnational element, *i.e.* the knowledge-sharing activities with other participants established in the listed²¹ third country resulting in a wide geographical coverage.

Cost-effectiveness of the project (max 20 points, threshold 10 points):

- Feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame and budget.
- Cost-effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation, ensuring that the budget allocated for implementation aligns with the prevailing market rates and the expected outcomes; best value for money. Personnel costs must be reasonable, justified and not excessive. They must reflect the beneficiary's usual remuneration practices and be in line with the prevailing market rates).
- The adequacy of the human and financial resources allocated to the planned activities.

3. Impact (max 20 points, threshold 10 points):

- The extent to which the application includes a sound and detailed impact evaluation methodology that is appropriate for its purpose and capable of providing evidence and identifying the expected outcomes.
- The extent to which the project demonstrates potential for scaling and sustainability of the proposed actions, including their capacity to be integrated into policies, governance frameworks, or service delivery systems beyond the project duration, while actively involving relevant public authorities and policy makers at local, regional, and national levels during implementation. Where projects include a testing component, extent to which the activity demonstrates a credible pathway for sustainability and, where supported by the evidence generated, potential for scaling up including its potential integration into policies, governance frameworks, or service delivery systems beyond the project duration, while actively involving relevant public authorities and policy makers at local, regional, and national levels during implementation.
- The extent to which the planned intervention with its tools and approaches demonstrates a long-term

vision, i.e., it is sustainable beyond the project and enables the adaptation, replication, and sustainable scaling of the innovative practices.

- The effectiveness of dissemination to maximise the uptake of the project results at local/regional/national/European levels.

Scale for assessing the award criteria of the application:

Max. number of points for a criterion	Range of scores			
	Very good	Good	Fair	Weak
40	34-40	28-33	20-27	0-19
20	17-20	14-16	10-13	0-9

Maximum of total award criteria points: 100 points. Overall threshold: 60 points.

Please note that an application will be rejected if it scores below the overall minimum threshold (60 points) or if it does not pass the minimum score threshold set for each award criterion or sub criterion. The reasons for this will be explained in the Assessment Summary Report.

9.5.2. Strand II. Award criteria

Award criteria for Strand II are as follows:

1. Relevance (max 40 points, threshold 25 points):

- The extent to which the project contributes to the objective and activities of Strand II of this Call (as they are described in Section 3.3 and Section 3.4 of the Call Conditions), addressing access to employment for Roma NEETs.
- The extent to which the reasoning for introducing new or improved measures to be tested demonstrates relevance and is well-founded, including the identification of the problem, the target group, the added value compared to existing practices, and the potential of the proposed approach to generate robust evidence on its effectiveness for policymaking.
- The extent to which the proposed innovative measures are suitable for social experimentation, including testing through a robust and proportionate evaluation before any possible scale-up.
- The extent to which the project significantly enhances employment opportunities for the Roma NEETs and the sustainability of employment.
- The extent to which the project demonstrates a strong alignment with, and support for, the implementation of relevant national, regional, or local strategies, and its potential to generate evidence relevant for policymaking.

2. Quality – project design, implementation, and team (max 40 points, threshold 20 points):

Project design and implementation (max 20 points, threshold 10 points):

- Clarity and consistency of the project. The extent to which the specific activities envisaged as part of the project are concrete and have a practical dimension, and how thorough, precise and easy to understand they are.
- The extent to which the consistency of the overall design of the project and of the intervention logic is demonstrated. It also measures the extent to which the project is feasible and consistent in relation to the objectives and the expected outcomes.
- Logical links between identified problems, needs, and proposed solutions.
- Methodology for implementing the project (organisation of work, monitoring, timetable, communication and dissemination, involvement of relevant stakeholders and active involvement of public authorities, risks and risk management, etc.).

- The robustness and proportionality of the evaluation methodology (including indicators, data sources, and methods to assess the effectiveness of the tested interventions and, where relevant, their cost-effectiveness), and the involvement of relevant public authorities.
- The clarity, coherence, and balance of the allocation of tasks, responsibilities, and resources across the consortium, including the appropriateness of managerial responsibilities.
- A clear and justified rationale for the composition of the consortium.
- The scale of the project: the level of involvement of Roma NEETs, the number of targeted persons for matching and employment activities, etc.
- The extent of the transnational element, i.e. the knowledge-sharing activities with other participants established in the listed²¹ third country resulting in a wide geographical coverage.

Cost-effectiveness of the project (max 20 points, threshold 10 points):

- Feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame and budget.
- Cost-effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation, ensuring that the budget allocated for implementation aligns with the prevailing market rates and the expected outcomes; best value for money. Personnel costs must be reasonable, justified and not excessive. They must reflect the beneficiary's usual remuneration practices and be in line with the prevailing market rates).
- The adequacy of the human and financial resources allocated to the planned activities.

3. Impact (max 20 points, threshold 10 points):

- The extent to which the application includes a sound and detailed impact evaluation methodology that is appropriate for its purpose and capable of providing evidence and identifying the expected outcomes.
- The extent to which the project demonstrates a credible pathway for sustainability and, where supported by the evidence generated, potential for scaling up the tested interventions, including its potential integration into policies, governance frameworks, or service delivery systems beyond the project duration, while actively involving relevant public authorities and policy makers at local, regional, and national levels during implementation.
- The extent to which the planned intervention with its tools and approaches demonstrates a long-term vision, i.e., that it is sustainable beyond the project and enables the adaptation, replication, and sustainable scaling-up of the innovative practices.
- The effectiveness of dissemination to maximise the uptake of the project results at local/regional/national/European levels.

Scale for assessing the award criteria of the application:

Max. number of points for a criterion	Range of scores			
	Very good	Good	Fair	Weak
40	34-40	28-33	20-27	0-19
20	17-20	14-16	10-13	0-9

Maximum of total award criteria points: 100 points. Overall threshold: 60 points.

Please note that an application will be rejected if it scores below the overall minimum threshold (60 points) or if it does not pass the minimum score threshold set for each award criterion or sub-criterion. The reasons for this will be explained in the Assessment Summary Report.

10. Other regulations – Dissemination and visibility – Ownership

10.1. Data protection

The submission of an application under this Call involves the collection, use, and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable laws on data protection, including Regulation 2016/679.⁵² It will be processed exclusively for the purposes of the assessment of the application, the subsequent management of the grant, and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation, and communication.

For more details, see Article 14 of the Grant Agreement.

10.2. Record-keeping

The beneficiaries shall keep records and store other supporting documents to prove the proper implementation of the project in line with the accepted standards in the respective field (if any). For lump sum contributions, beneficiaries are not required to keep specific records of actual costs incurred but must keep adequate records and supporting documents to prove proper implementation of the work.

The beneficiaries shall keep the original documents. Digital and digitised documents are considered as originals if they are permitted by the applicable national law. The Granting Authority may accept non-original documents if they provide a comparable level of assurance.

For more details, see Article 19 of the Grant Agreement.

10.3. Horizontal principles (gender equality and non-discrimination)

Projects under this Call shall ensure gender equality, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination on the grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation throughout the entire project cycle, i.e., preparation, implementation, monitoring, and reporting stages.

Projects shall take appropriate measures to prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation, in line with the aims, objectives, and priorities of the Call. Accessibility for people with disabilities should also be duly reflected.

These principles aim to ensure that the project's target group, irrespective of their gender, limited abilities, or any other characteristics, is equally engaged in project activities. See also Article 17 of the Grant Agreement.

10.4. Dissemination and visibility

The beneficiaries must:

- 1. Display the EU flag (emblem) and the funding statement** 'Co-funded by the European Union' in all communication and dissemination activities related to the project and on any supplies or major results funded by the grant.
- 2. Present the project** (including a project summary, the contact details of the coordinator, the list of beneficiaries (if any), the European flag and the funding statement, project results, etc.) on the beneficiaries' **website** or **social media account**.

The emblem and the funding statement are available in the Grant Agreement and on the Europa⁵³ website

⁵² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj>

⁵³ https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/european-flag_en

or can be downloaded from the European Commission's website.⁵⁴

Information about this Call and the grants awarded will be published on the European Commission's and the Granting Authority's websites.

Please note that the Granting Authority and the European Commission reserve the right to make the project results public. See also Article 16 of the Grant Agreement.

10.5. Ownership of results

The results of the project belong to the beneficiaries who generated them. The Granting Authority does not obtain ownership of the results produced during the implementation of the project.

'Results' shall be understood as any tangible or intangible output of a project, such as data, know-how, or information in any form or nature, whether or not they can be protected, as well as any rights attached to them, including intellectual property rights.

The Granting Authority and the European Commission may use (free of charge) any non-sensitive information related to the project activities, as well as materials and documents received from the beneficiaries, for policy, information, communication, dissemination, evaluation, and publicity purposes – during or after the implementation of the project.

For more details, see Article 15 of the Grant Agreement. The rules governing intellectual property rights are also described in the same Article.

11. Support

Many answers can be found in the Call Conditions and other related documentation mentioned above.

Please also visit the Granting Authority's (<https://www.socialinnovationplus.eu/>) and the European Commission's (<https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/esf-social-innovation>) websites regularly, as the Granting Authority will use them to publish Frequently Asked Questions and Call updates, if necessary.

For submission support:

For individual questions concerning the Portal, please contact the IT Helpdesk:

IThelp@socialinnovationplus.eu

Non-IT-related questions should be sent to the following e-mail address according to the Strand:

- ECG@socialinnovationplus.eu
- ROMANEETS@socialinnovationplus.eu

Questions related to the process of submitting an application shall:

- be sent at the latest seven days before the submission deadline (see Chapter 5 of the Call Conditions);
- clearly indicate the reference to the Call/Strand and the topic to which the question relates.

Call-specific questions (other than those related to the submission process as specified above) shall be sent **no later than 10 days before the submission deadline**.

⁵⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/logo-download-center_en

12. Grant Agreement preparation

If the assessment of an application is positive, the Grant Agreement preparation procedure will be initiated, during which the applicant will be asked to update the submitted application considering experts' comments (provided in the Summary Assessment Report), which may include budgetary corrections, and submit the requested documents to the Granting Authority for financial capacity assessment.

The Grant Agreement preparation, application update, and the Grant Agreement signing procedure shall not last longer than two months. If the applicant fails to make the necessary corrections or provide the requested documentation within one month of being informed of them, the Granting Authority will make decisions based on the latest available information and documentation; the application will no longer be corrected; and the deadline for submitting documents will not be extended.

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

The Grant Agreement template may be found as Annex 2 to the Call Conditions.

13. Project implementation requirements

13.1. Reporting and payment arrangements

Beneficiaries will have to report regularly to the Granting Authority on the progress of the project (e.g., deliverables, critical risks etc.) by using the Portal Reporting Tool and in accordance with the timing and conditions stated in the Grant Agreement. For payment requests, the coordinator shall submit a periodic report (prepared using the template available in the Portal Reporting Tool). Specific reporting periods will be defined in the Data Sheet of the Grant Agreement (point 4.2).

Payments will be made in euros to the bank account indicated by the coordinator in the Data Sheet of the Grant Agreement (point 4.2).

According to the maximum possible duration of the project (18-24 months), two prefinancing instalments and the final payment are planned:

- The first (initial) prefinancing payment of 50% of the grant after signature of the Grant Agreement;
- The second prefinancing payment of 30% of the grant after approval of the first periodic report. Where the spending of the previous prefinancing is less than 70%, the amount of the next prefinancing payment will be reduced by the difference between the 70% threshold and the amount used;
- The final payment (payment of the balance).

Please note that a financial risk assessment will be carried out during the financial capacity assessment. In the case of acceptable risks, the frequency and the amounts of the foreseen prefinancing may be adjusted.

There will be no interim payments. The specific frequency, amount, and requirements of prefinancing will be defined in the Grant Agreement. For more details, see point 4 of the Data Sheet and Articles 21 and 22 of the Grant Agreement.

13.2. Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (point 4.3 of the Data Sheet and Article 22 of the Grant Agreement). For beneficiaries, there is limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings – for each beneficiary – that cannot exceed their maximum share of the grant.

Beneficiaries shall be liable to the Granting Authority for the total value of the grant paid out, including the amounts transferred by the coordinator to the beneficiaries. In the event of a recovery order for full or

partial reimbursement of the grant to the Granting Authority, the coordinator shall be responsible for the reimbursement of the grant.

Recoveries will be made if – during the Grant Agreement termination, the final payment, or afterwards – it becomes apparent that the Granting Authority has overpaid and needs to recover the amounts unduly paid.

For more details, see Chapter 4, Section 1 and Chapter 4: Section 3 - Article 22 of the Grant Agreement.

13.3. Provisions concerning project implementation

In certain cases, for objective reasons which could not be foreseen by the beneficiary at the time of the submission and assessment of the application, the deadline for the implementation of the project activities may be extended, by a maximum of six months, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 36 of the Grant Agreement.

For details of the amendment provisions, see Articles 5 and 36 of the Grant Agreement.

If the beneficiaries are in breach of any of the obligations under the Grant Agreement, the Granting Authority will take the measures provided in Chapter 5 of the Grant Agreement.

For more details on the consequences of non-compliance, see Chapter 5 of the Grant Agreement.

No-profit rule

Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs)⁵⁵ for the beneficiaries. For more details, see point 4.2 of the Data Sheet and Article 21.3.3 of the Grant Agreement.

14. Amendments to the Call Conditions

Any amendment to the Call Conditions, including their annexes, will be set out in writing and will be published in the same place as the Call Conditions.

15. Annexes

1. Annex 1: Detailed Budget Table.
2. Annex 2: Grant Agreement, template.
3. Annex 3: Application Form, template:
 - Annex 3a - Strand I.
 - Annex 3b - Strand II.
4. Annex 4: List of Required Documents.
5. Annex 5: List of Previous Projects, template.
6. Annex 6: Declaration of Honour for Beneficiaries, template.
7. Annex 7: Final Report 'Lessons Learned and Future Plans', template:
 - Annex 7a - Strand I.
 - Annex 7b: - Strand II.
8. Annex 8: Declaration of Professional Competences, template.

⁵⁵ See Article 192 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046

- 9.** Annex 9: Public Legal Entity Form.
- 10.** Annex 10: Report on Mapping, Outreach, and Matching, template (Strand II only).

