

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

Piloting a Skills Guarantee for Workers in Transition

ESF-SI-2025-SKILLS-GUARANTEE-01

Call Conditions



**Funded by
the European Union**

Abstract

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

Open Call title: Piloting a Skills Guarantee for Workers in Transition.

Deadline: 09/02/2026 at 17:00 CET.

Indicative overall grant budget for the Call: **EUR 14 500 000.**

Form of grant: a lump-sum grant.

Expected project duration: 24 months.

Grant amount: The estimated size of a grant is between EUR 2 500 000 and EUR 3 000 000 per project (but this does not preclude the submission/selection of applications requesting other amounts), constituting up to 80% of the total project budget. At least 20% co-funding must therefore 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 online via the electronic portal and data exchange system *eSInnis* (e-Social Innovation Information System, 'the Portal') managed by the Granting Authority. The link to the Portal is specified in the Call announcement.

For support contact: Skills-guarantee@socialinnovationplus.eu

Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract | 2 |
| Glossary | 5 |
| 1. Background | 7 |
| 1.1. Key concepts | 7 |
| 1.2. Legal basis of the Call | 7 |
| 1.3. The policy context | 8 |
| 2. Aim of the Call – Activities – Outcomes | 9 |
| 2.1. Aim of the Call | 9 |
| 2.2. Target group | 10 |
| 2.3. Essential elements of the project | 11 |
| 2.4. Activities | 12 |
| 2.5. Requirements for activities supporting employment of the target group (Section 2.4 of the Call Conditions, activity No. 4) | 13 |
| 2.6. Outcomes | 14 |
| 2.7. Deliverables | 15 |
| 2.8. Social Innovation Match | 15 |
| 2.9. Further guidance | 16 |
| 3. Budget available and co-funding rate – Form of grant – Eligibility of costs – Cost categories – Double funding | 16 |
| 3.1. Budget available and co-funding rate | 16 |
| 3.2. Form of grant | 17 |
| 3.3. Eligibility of costs and cost categories | 17 |
| 3.4. Double funding | 19 |
| 4. Timetable – Deadlines – Project duration | 19 |
| 5. Admissibility and documents | 19 |
| 6. Eligibility – Eligible participants – Consortium composition | 20 |
| 6.1. Eligible participants | 20 |
| 6.2. Consortium composition requirements | 21 |
| 7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion | 22 |
| 7.1. Financial capacity | 22 |
| 7.2. Operational capacity | 23 |
| 7.3. Exclusion criteria | 24 |
| 8. Assessment and award procedure | 25 |
| 8.1. Assessment procedure | 25 |
| 8.2. Award procedure | 26 |
| 8.3. Admissibility and eligibility check | 26 |
| 8.4. Complaints regarding application rejection or other acts or omissions of the Granting Authority | 27 |
| 8.5. Award criteria | 28 |
| 9. Other regulations - Dissemination and visibility - Ownership | 29 |
| 9.1. Data protection | 29 |
| 9.2. Record keeping | 29 |
| 9.3. Horizontal principles (gender equality and non-discrimination) | 29 |
| 9.4. Dissemination and visibility | 30 |
| 9.5. Ownership of results | 30 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 10. Support | 30 |
| 11. Grant Agreement preparation | 31 |
| 12. Project implementation requirements | 31 |
| 12.1. Reporting and payment arrangements | 31 |
| 12.2. Liability regime for recoveries | 31 |
| 12.3. Provisions concerning project implementation | 31 |
| 13. Amendments to the Call Conditions | 32 |
| 14. Annexes | 33 |

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.

Automotive sector and related supply chains – under this Call, this term refers to the broad economic and industrial system encompassing the design, development, manufacturing, sales, maintenance, and component-production of motor vehicles. It also covers upstream suppliers (e.g., for engines, electronics, batteries) and downstream services (e.g., repair, mobility services).¹

Beneficiaries – the signatories of the Grant Agreement (either directly or through an accession form). They must 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).

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

Individual learning account – a delivery mode for individual training entitlements. It is a personal account that allows individuals to accumulate and preserve their entitlements over time, for whichever eligible training, guidance, or validation opportunity they deem most useful and whenever they want to, in line with national rules. It grants the individual full ownership of the entitlements, irrespective of the funding source.

Individual training entitlement – the right to access a personal budget at an individual's disposal to cover the direct costs of labour-market-relevant training, guidance and counselling, and skills assessment or validation that are eligible for funding.

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.

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

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, which may participate separately as training providers or consortium partners.

Public body – any legal entity which is established as a public body by national law.² 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.

¹ Automotive industry: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/automotive-industry_en

² 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.

Restructuring – a term used to describe a wide range of different activities which lead to the reorganisation of an enterprise. Restructuring can have serious consequences for the workforce regarding levels of employment and the terms and conditions of employment offered to workers.³

Skills Guarantee pilot – an initiative by the European Commission to identify a mechanism whereby workers at risk of unemployment in sectors undergoing restructuring are maintained in employment through transitioning in strategic and growing sectors and companies, facilitated by upskilling and reskilling.⁴

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 2.1. (8) of the ESF+ Regulation).

Workers in transition – under this Call, this term refers to individuals undergoing, or at risk of, changes in their employment situation due to structural economic transformations, particularly those driven by the clean and digital transitions in the automotive sector and related supply chains.

³ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/topics/restructuring>

⁴ [Communication from the Commission, The Union of Skills](#)

1. Background

1.1. Key concepts

This is a Call for European Union (EU) grants to pilot a Skills Guarantee through **projects that test innovative approaches for ensuring workers are maintained in employment through mechanisms that enable them to transition from the automotive sector and related supply chains towards strategic and growing sectors where jobs are created, such as defence**⁵. Such mechanisms, which facilitate smooth and effective job transitions, should be supported by incentivising public and private organisations, delivering upskilling and reskilling of workers, and bringing together public authorities, companies, and education and training providers in partnerships.

This Call is organised under the **ESF+ SI+ Initiative**. The ESF+ SI+ Initiative aims to promote transnational cooperation between EU Member States and EaSI⁶-participating countries with a view to facilitating the transfer and scaling up of innovative solutions. By supporting transnational cooperation, the initiative aims to disseminate best practices across Europe in various fields, including employment, education, skills, and social inclusion. What is an established good practice in one country or region can serve as a source of innovation elsewhere.

Under the ESF+, the SI+ Initiative covers innovations⁷ that are social both in terms of their ends and their means. Thus, it is acknowledged that **social innovation**:

- is a collective social process, involving the distinctive participation of civil society actors and building new relationships between public, private, and third sector entities; and
- generates social output and impact in the form of improved services, products, models, social relationships, standards, or policies that create greater social impact than current practice and are therefore more effective in achieving the objectives of the ESF+ and the European Pillar of Social Rights ('the Pillar')⁸.

Innovative activities are linked to the development, testing, validation, implementation, and scaling-up of new (combinations of) products, services, models, or practices that meet social needs and resolve societal challenges. Thereby, social innovations aim to change the social context, empower civil society actors, and boost their capacity to act, as well as develop new policy approaches. The concept of social innovation allows public authorities, private and third sector entities to enter into new relationships and to tailor innovative actions to the specific needs and opportunities, or to experiment in a transnational context at the EU level.

1.2. Legal basis 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 1296/2013 (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021)⁹, and in particular Articles 5(2), 14(6), and 25(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 Union (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024)¹⁰, 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(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. ESF+ supports EU Member

⁵ Strategic sectors are defined in line with the European Competitiveness Fund's four windows: Clean Transition and Industrial Decarbonisation; Health, Biotech, Agriculture and Bioeconomy; Digital Leadership; and Resilience and Security, Defence Industry and Space ([Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the European Competitiveness Fund \('ECF Regulation – COM\(2025\) 555 final'\)](#)).

⁶ Employment and Social Innovation strand (EaSI). [Regulation - 2021/1057 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁷ 'Innovation' is a concept that includes each of the three following features:

- novelty: an element of change from the current situation;
- adoption: a change that is embraced by its potential users; and
- outcome: value, for example increased efficiency of a process or improvement of the wellbeing of users.

An additional aspect of innovation is that unlike an invention, which is usually considered an individual accomplishment, it results from a process involving the cooperation of numerous actors ([European Parliament Briefing 'Understanding Innovations' \(February 2016\)](#))

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

⁹ [Regulation - 2021/1057 - EN - Eur-Lex](#)

¹⁰ [Regulation - EU, Euratom - 2024/2509 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

States 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.

1.3. The policy context

In November 2017, the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission proclaimed the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, setting out 20 principles and rights to support well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems. The ESF+ finances the implementation of these principles through projects in the area of employment, education and skills, and social inclusion.

In March 2025, the European Commission communication on the **Union of Skills**¹¹ outlined a plan to ensure high-quality education, training, and lifelong learning for all and to empower people across the EU to develop the skills they need to succeed in their lives and careers. In particular, one of the strands of the Union of Skills focuses on the upskilling and reskilling of workers, notably those with lower and middle skills, so that they can thrive in a fast-changing labour market.

The current Call will **support the initial implementation of the Skills Guarantee** under different alternative delivery mechanisms for a future larger scale scheme aimed at supporting workers in transition. It is one of the key deliverables under the 'Upskilling and reskilling' strand of the Union of Skills. The Call focuses on **workers in the automotive sector and related supply chains** who, because of restructuring due to clean and digital transformations in those sectors, face unemployment risks. It aims to **enable those workers to remain employed by helping them transition to strategic and growing sectors, such as defence**. Its overall aim is to secure employment for a minimum duration, i.e. six months, by facilitating, accelerating, and smoothing the transition of skilled workers to other sectors. **This should be achieved by putting in place mechanisms that bring together public and private stakeholders — public authorities, companies, and education and training providers — in partnerships, offering incentives to organisations, and delivering upskilling and reskilling of workers.**

The clean and digital transformations bring significant structural changes to labour markets and fundamentally alter the skills requirements of many current and future jobs. Upskilling and reskilling of the workforce in the EU is a key element of its competitiveness response. At a time of a rapidly changing EU labour market due to digitalisation, greening, industrial transformation, as well as geopolitical shifts resulting in increased defence and security needs, lifelong skills development should become the norm for everybody. This is necessary for addressing labour and skills shortages, which put at risk the European economy and the European social model, and for smoothing workers' transitions to shortage occupations, in particular in strategic and growing sectors. The 2030 EU headline target on adult learning signals that more policy action is needed. Participation of adults in learning remains too limited. The 2022 Adult Education Survey found that 39.5% of adults participated in training in the previous 12 months, only two percentage points higher than in 2016, and far from the 2030 target of 60%¹².

Digital skills are essential for the EU labour market given widespread digitalisation and automation and the rapid changes. The majority of jobs today require digital skills, at least at basic level and often more than that, but only 56% of EU adults have at least basic digital skills¹³. More effort is needed to reach the 2030 target of 80% as part of the EU Digital Decade.

The importance of **skills for the clean transformation** is expected to rise. As an example, around 1.5 million employees will need to be reskilled and upskilled in the battery value chain by 2030¹⁴. Similarly, by 2030, the skills needed for the biomethane and heat pumps sectors, as well as the photovoltaic solar energy sector, are estimated at more than one million workers each.¹⁵ At the same time, a considerable number of workers are at risk of losing their jobs in energy-intensive industries and in sectors undergoing transformation, particularly in the automotive industry which employed, directly and indirectly, 13.2 million people in 2022 — 7% of all EU jobs¹⁶. In the passenger car industry alone, it is estimated that 2.4 million automotive workers will need to be retrained or upskilled by 2030¹⁷.

At the same time, Member States are facing significant **labour and skill shortages**¹⁸. According to the 2025 ELA-EURES report, occupations such as welders and flame cutters are among those that face the most acute shortages. Three quarters (78%) of

¹¹ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/union-skills_en

¹² Data from a special extraction compatible with the target, excluding guided-on-the-job-training, available here: <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/d14c857a-601d-438a-b878-4b4cebd0e10f/library/c5a8b987-1e37-44d7-a20e-2c50d6101d27/details>

¹³ Eurostat ([isoc sk dskl i21](#))

¹⁴ <https://www.isi.fraunhofer.de/en/blog/2024/batterieforchung-kuerzung-foerderung-folgen-aufbau-oekosystem-europa-deutschland-fachkraefte-mangel.html#:~:text=Looking%20at%20the%20entire%20value,7%2C8>

¹⁵ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/news/pact-skills-launch-large-scale-renewable-energy-skills-partnership-2023-03-21_en

¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ac_25_297

¹⁷ European Commission (2024) [The Transition Pathway for The EU Mobility Industrial Ecosystem](#)

¹⁸ [Labour shortages and surpluses in Europe 2024 | European Labour Authority](#)

small and medium-sized businesses said in a recent [Eurobarometer survey](#)¹⁹ that they find it difficult to recruit the talent they need. Shortages are likely to increase as AI, robotics, data-driven processes, and the clean transition further transform industries.

Upskilling and reskilling are a shared responsibility. Public authorities at EU, national, regional, and local levels have their role to play, but so do businesses, social partners, education and training providers, civil society organisations, local communities, and individuals. Closer cooperation between those actors can help bridge some of the existing gaps between public authorities and companies, particularly as regards the relevance of skills for the job market, to prevent future skills mismatches and to increase employment opportunities, including by supporting the continuous training of workers. This would enable them to remain in organisations undergoing changes that require different skill sets, or to transition to other organisations experiencing hiring difficulties amid high shortages and skills mismatches.

The initiatives outlined in the Union of Skills are a push towards addressing these challenges. For example, about half of the Member States are working towards schemes for **individual learning accounts** (ILAs)²⁰. ILAs are personal wallets with entitlements that can be used for training or other support. These allow individuals to accumulate and preserve their entitlements over time, to take up training, guidance, or validation of acquired skills whenever they need it, e.g., **during economic downturns or in response to emerging skills needs**. The aim of ILAs is to **give all working-age adults access to training**, contributing to a culture of regular upskilling and reskilling for everyone, thus acting as a preventive and anticipatory measure. They are therefore very close to the spirit of this Skills Guarantee Call, and once ILA schemes are in operation the Skills Guarantee could be used to channel top-ups, i.e. **additional individual training entitlements**, to the accounts of individuals **most in need of upskilling and reskilling**. Member States can thereby decide to whom they wish to grant additional support. In this case, top-ups could be granted to people working in the automotive sector and related supply chains, supporting their employment and transitions to strategic and growing sectors.

2. Aim of the Call – Activities – Outcomes

2.1. Aim of the Call

The aim of the Call is to pilot a Skills Guarantee scheme that enables smoother and more effective transitions of workers into sustainable employment, and to draw on the experience in shaping a future European Skills Guarantee. This should ensure that workers at risk of unemployment or in transition are supported to remain in employment in another organisation and to further develop their skills.

The grants will fund projects that **propose innovative methods/practices to enable workers from the automotive sector and related supply chains who are at risk of unemployment or in professional transition to enter employment in strategic and growing sectors**. This will be achieved by identifying the skills required by organisations in strategic and growing sectors, mapping workers with the potential for retraining, delivering targeted training, and ensuring that participants receive a job offer/placement followed by employment **for a minimum period of six months**. The ultimate goal of the projects is to prevent workers from falling into unemployment.

The grants awarded under this Call shall be for projects that **develop partnerships between various public and private stakeholders**, i.e. public authorities at national or regional level, especially Public Employment Services (PES), social partners, education and training providers and companies to jointly develop effective mechanisms to facilitate the employment of workers in occupations facing labour shortages across organisations operating in strategic and growing sectors, particularly through the development of relevant skills.

To inform and support the design of the future Skills Guarantee scheme, **projects are required to pilot one** of the following three distinct delivery mechanisms for the proposed intervention (see Figure 1):

1. **Social partner-led or private sector-led mechanism**, implemented either through company-to-company cooperation or consortia of companies.
2. **Public Employment Service-led or other public authority-led mechanism**.
3. **Other public-private partnership**.

Each selected mechanism must integrate training opportunities with complementary employment support measures to promote effective job matching and ensure sustainable employment outcomes.

Each project may propose activities **under one delivery mechanism only**. Regardless of the selected mechanism, each

¹⁹ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2961>

²⁰ Cf. the Council Recommendation of June 2022.

project consortium must include at least one national or regional public authority to ensure institutional alignment, policy coherence, and sustainability of results.



Figure 1. Delivery mechanisms

The Call aims to fund at least one project per mechanism, provided they meet the **minimum threshold of 60 points out of 100 under the award criteria assessment**.

Projects should focus on:

- The **effectiveness of matching processes**, the speed of transitions into new employment, and the sustainability of job placements in strategic and growing sectors;
- The **establishment of partnerships among relevant actors** to ensure that the activities address the specific needs/skill requirements of the identified sectors;
- **Incentives provided to organisations to hire and retain employees;**
- The **delivery of training** programmes/skills development where necessary to support employment, ensuring that the training remains relevant in light of sectoral changes, is delivered efficiently, and contributes to effective career development.

The mechanism set and tested under this Call may build on **Individual Learning Account** systems already established or piloted by Member States.

Activities already financed by other funds, such as ESF+, the Just Transition Fund, and/or the EGF, cannot be funded under this Call.

To enable exchanges of knowledge and experience among the beneficiaries of the grants awarded under this Call, the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation, in cooperation with the European Commission, will organise 2-4 mutual learning events during the implementation of this Call. The first mutual learning event will be organised no later than nine months after the start of the projects. It is crucial for mutual learning among beneficiaries and is therefore mandatory. It is planned to organise two on-site mutual learning events during the implementation of the projects (provisionally in Vilnius and Brussels), each lasting two full days, with the remaining events held online. Each project is expected to ensure the participation of two representatives in these mutual learning events.

The European Commission will draw on the results of this Call to identify which of the mechanisms tested enable effective value-chain transitions **in favour of strategic and growing sectors or occupations** such as defence, clean transition and industrial decarbonisation, digital leadership, and resilience and security. These mechanisms should enable workers facing unemployment due to the restructuring caused by the digital and clean economy transition to move into new jobs in other sectors and upskill and reskill, in line with relevant national, regional and/or sectoral transition strategies.

The results of this Call will thus inform the future **larger-scale roll-out of the Skills Guarantee** referred to in the Commission proposal on establishing a European Competitiveness Fund (ECF)²¹ by scaling up the mechanisms identified through this Call.

2.2. Target group

Projects submitted under this Call shall target **workers from the automotive sector and related supply chains who are at**

²¹ COM(2025) 555 final/2, 16.7.2025

risk of unemployment or in transition, with the exception of those who can readily secure new employment within their sector or who intend to start their own business.

For the purpose of determining whether workers can '*readily secure new employment*' and to demonstrate that the project does not cover this category, applicants may rely on evidence such as labour market demand indicators, occupational mobility data, or self-assessment by applicants.

When defining the target group, applicants shall include only those workers who voluntarily wish to be employed in a strategic and growing sector. Workers expressing the intention to start their own business during the outreach phase shall be excluded from the matching and employment components of the project.

Applicants shall provide justification, supported by appropriate evidence, for the selection of specific occupations, subsectors or regions. Suitable forms of evidence may include, for example, EU or national strategic roadmaps, transition strategies, labour market analyses, or skills gap studies demonstrating coherence with the strands of the European Competitiveness Fund and alignment with the aim of this Call.

2.3. Essential elements of the project

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

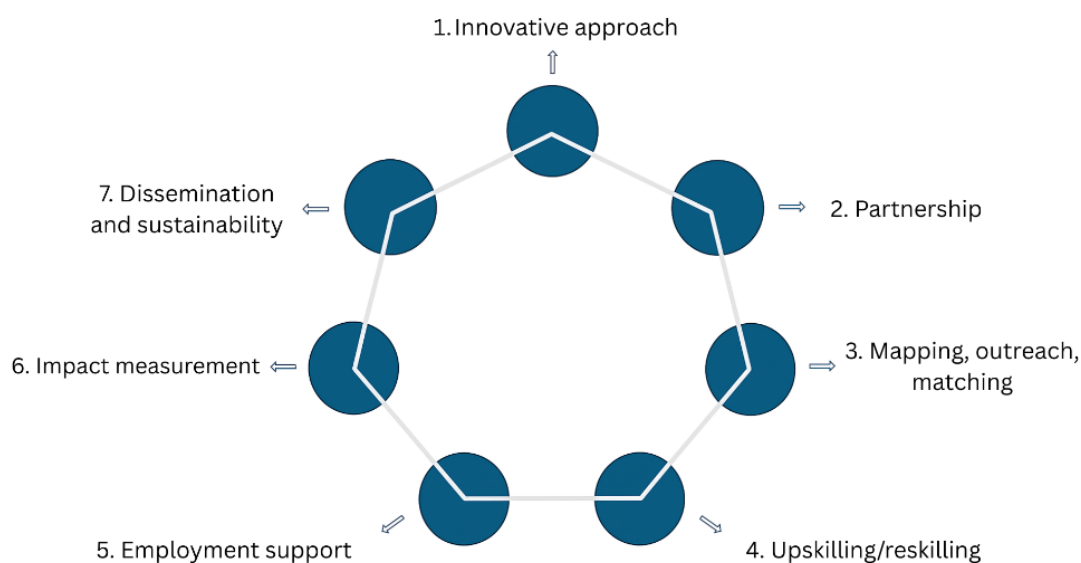


Figure 2. Essential elements of the project

1) Innovative approach

The application must present a clear and coherent framework for the implementation of innovative methods through **one of the delivery mechanisms** outlined in Section 2.1. It should describe the proposed innovative approach and methodology for delivering the selected mechanism, explaining how the proposed interventions address the identified needs of the target group and relevant organisations in strategic and growing sectors, in line with relevant national, regional, and/or local transition strategies.

If the project involves replication or further development of previous experimentation, the applicant must provide evidence of the effectiveness of the methods previously tested in other contexts. The application must include a description of the proposed method, explaining when and where it was applied, what results were achieved, as well as a web link to the previous experimentation, if available.

Importantly, any interventions proposed to support the transition of workers at risk of unemployment must complement, rather than merely redistribute, existing services and offerings. The application should clearly demonstrate the added value, distinct advantages, and synergies of the proposed approach in comparison with existing interventions and support measures. The description of the innovative approach should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

2) Partnership

Consortium composition must comply with the requirements as specified in Section 6.2. The consortium is required to include at least **one national or regional public authority** (e.g., Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Public Employment Services,

etc.). The **established partnership must involve relevant actors** in order to ensure that the activities respond to the specific needs/skill requirements of the identified strategic and growing sectors, that the training remains relevant in light of the changes the sector(s) is undergoing, and that it is delivered efficiently and leads to effective career development. In this regard, it is important to involve in the consortium relevant **stakeholders for the chosen delivery mechanism** (relevant public authorities, PES, education and training providers, social partners, companies, funders, etc.).

The application should provide a clear and comprehensive account of how each consortium member will contribute to fulfilling the overarching aim of the Call. The roles assigned to each consortium member should be in line with their demonstrated experience and expertise. The description of the cooperation between the members of the consortium should be provided in the Application Form: Part B - Section 2.

3) Mapping, outreach, and matching

The applicant must explain how the project will identify, reach out to, and match **workers from the automotive sector and related supply chains who are at risk of unemployment or in professional transition and organisations in strategic and growing sectors**. A description of the mapping, outreach, and matching activities and their rationale should be provided in the Application Form: Part A.

4) Upskilling/reskilling

The application must contain an activity that involves upskilling, reskilling and/or broader skills development leading to new or improved skills that enhance sustainable employability of workers, e.g., training, short-term work experience, etc. The applicant must explain the relevance of the developed skills for the clean and digital transformations and/or for strategic and growing sectors. A description of that phase shall be provided in the Application Form: Part A.

5) Employment support

The application must include concrete activities designed to encourage employers to hire and retain the targeted workers. These activities may combine financial and non-financial incentives to foster sustainable employment. Financial incentives can include wage subsidies and must be linked to employment duration. The support should ensure **employment for at least six months**. Non-financial incentives may involve advisory services, mentoring or coaching, or partnerships to facilitate matching and retention. Applicants are encouraged to propose innovative approaches that effectively motivate employers and contribute to lasting integration into the labour market. A description of the activities supporting the target group's employment shall be provided in the Application Form: Part A.

6) Impact measurement

The applicant 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 outcomes mentioned in Section 2.6. The methods must include provisional output and outcome indicators (including those related to the employment of workers) for monitoring the activities and their impact on the target group and the participating entities, in line with the 'Theory of Change'. The applicant should disclose how the impact measurement would be used by the applicant for the long-term continuity and sustainability of the innovative approach presented in the project. The expected outcomes, the impact of the project and the indicators for their measurement should be detailed in the Application Form: Part B.

7) Dissemination and sustainability

The applicant must explain how the results of the project will be promoted at local, regional, national, and European levels. Moreover, the applicant must explain how the objectives, activities, and efforts to achieve the desired outcomes will continue beyond the grant period, and how the innovative approach could be implemented on a larger scale, considering, among other options, a possible funding either under the shared management strand of the ESF+ or other funding sources. Information on the sustainability of project results should be detailed in the Application Form: Part B.

2.4. Activities

Applicants must describe how the proposed activities contribute to the expected outcomes of the Call. The expected outcomes shall be realistic and defined in measurable terms.

Activities shall be designed with the potentially diverse needs of the target group in mind.

Applicants should ensure that the activities described correlate with the proposed budget. The implementation of activities should be well documented to ensure transferability and/or upscaling if the project approach proves to be effective.

Activities that can be funded may include, but are not limited to²²:

1. Activities related to mapping

²² Additional activities, in line with the goals of the project, may be proposed by the applicant.

- Mapping the target groups, individuals and organisations (from the automotive sector and related supply chains), and the skills needed in other organisations in line with the windows of the European Competitiveness Fund²³ (based on research and up-to-date skills intelligence²⁴).

2. Activities related to outreach and matching

- Reaching out to the target groups, including companies, to raise their awareness of the support available, and motivating and guiding them to take part;
- Providing pre- and post-placement support (i.e. working with employees and employers before and after the intervention);
- Experts' support for organisations in preparing employee development and transition pathways;
- Facilitating matching between the target group, training programmes, and potential employers (e.g., via an online portal).

3. Activities related to upskilling/reskilling

- Delivering training that preferably combines several elements, such as training relevant to the new job, work experience, etc.;
- Integrating work-based learning elements, such as work tasters, traineeships, apprenticeships, etc., with the aim of supporting sustainable employment.

4. Activities supporting employment

- Supporting the employment of the target group, for instance through organisational incentives to hire and retain them in employment (e.g., financial support in the form of wage subsidies, or non-financial support in the form of mentoring, coaching, etc.).

5. Participation in mutual learning events organised by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation

It is crucial for mutual learning among beneficiaries and is therefore mandatory. It is planned to organise two on-site mutual learning events during the implementation of the projects (provisionally in Vilnius and Brussels), each lasting two full days, with up to two additional events held online. Each project is expected to ensure the participation of two representatives in these mutual learning events.

2.5. Requirements for activities supporting employment of the target group (Section 2.4 of the Call Conditions, activity No. 4)

Supporting the employment of the target group (i.e. workers in the automotive sector and related supply chains undergoing restructuring processes) 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.

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 '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.

²³ Clean Transition and Industrial Decarbonisation; Digital Leadership; Health, Biotech, Agriculture and Bioeconomy; Resilience and Security, Defence industry and Space; [EUR-Lex - 52025PC0555 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

²⁴ Skills intelligence is the outcome of an expert-driven process of identifying, analysing, synthesising and presenting quantitative and/or qualitative skills and labour market information. These may be drawn from multiple sources and adjusted to the needs of different users.

To remain relevant, skills intelligence must be kept up-to-date and adjusted when user needs change. This requires the expert-driven process to be continuous and iterative.

- 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 amendment during implementation stage) are foreseen, they should be structured under two distinct Work Packages: '*Employment support*' and '*Employment support (additional employment providers)*'.

2. Eligible employment support measures

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

- Subsidised or supported employment (e.g., wage subsidies of 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, mentoring, employer incentives, etc.) 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 project objectives.

3. Duration and conditions of employment support:

- Each person employed must stay in the employment for at least six (6) 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, 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).

2.6. Outcomes

Applicants should demonstrate in their projects a focus on achieving the expected outcomes for workers from the automotive sector and related supply chains, specifically by addressing the following areas:

- Securing employment for these workers for a minimum period of six months by supporting smoother and more effective job transitions into strategic and growing sectors;
- Ensuring the sustainability of this employment for the target group of workers in strategic and growing sectors by equipping them with the skills required in those sectors, to the extent needed.

Further impact

In addition to the expected outcomes, the transnational projects funded under this Call are expected to generate further impact, such as:

- Improved productivity and adaptability of organisations and/or sectors;
- Enhanced awareness and knowledge among organisations, social partners, public employment services, education and training providers, and other stakeholders at local, regional, national, and European levels regarding innovative approaches to fostering skills development of workers;
- Reduced labour shortages²⁵ and skills mismatches²⁶ resulting from strengthened partnerships between public and private entities.

²⁵ Labour shortages arise when the demand for workers in an occupation exceeds the supply of workers available who possess the required skills and are willing to work at a specific wage rate and in specific working conditions in a particular place and point in time (Eurofound (2024), Company practices to tackle labour shortages, digital story).

²⁶ Skills mismatch is a situation of imbalance between the skills – and qualifications – possessed by the workforce (supply) and those needed by the labour market (demand) (Cedefop glossary).

2.7. Deliverables

All project activities shall be split into **work packages**²⁷. For each work package, the link to specific objectives and deliverables must be clearly described. The applicant must describe **at least one deliverable** covered by each work package, considering the scope and specificity of the project activities.

The beneficiary shall provide the following **mandatory** deliverables:

a) A Report on Mapping, Outreach, and Matching

Following the finalisation of the mapping phase and the development of at least a preliminary plan for the matching and training, upskilling, or reskilling of workers, the beneficiary must submit a report. This report must be submitted **six months after the start of the project** and must include:

- The results of the mapping of the target group(s) of workers;
- The preliminary matching mechanism developed, or at least the proposed approach for its design and implementation;
- A description of the strategy/methodology for reaching out to the identified target group(s);
- The proposed approach for the training, upskilling, or reskilling of workers.

A recommended template/guidelines for the Report on Mapping, Outreach, and Matching is provided in Annex 10 to the Call Conditions.

b) An Interim Report

The Interim Report, which must be delivered **12 months after the start of the project**, must summarise the activities performed, the progress made, and any challenges encountered. It must include:

- A brief outline of the project and its activities;
- Progress made in implementing project activities and a preliminary analysis of the outcomes (i.e. number of workers who, following the matching mechanism, were placed in new employment or participated in upskilling or reskilling programmes under implementation, including their foreseen duration), as well as feedback from the institutions involved and other relevant stakeholders;
- Any challenges encountered and the measures taken or planned to address them;
- Next steps.

A recommended template/guidelines for the Interim Report is provided in Annex 11 to the Call Conditions.

c) A Final Report 'Lessons Learned and Future Plans'

The Final Report must summarise the activities performed and the main takeaways from the project that could be relevant for presenting the project to third parties and implementing similar initiatives in other EU Member States. The report must include:

- An overview of the project;
- An analysis and evaluation of the project implementation, outcomes and impacts, based on data collected during monitoring (e.g., enrolment rates, completion rates, number of workers who avoided unemployment, duration of new employment, length of contract, etc.), as well as feedback from the institutions involved and other relevant stakeholders;
- The lessons learned and recommendations for the future application of the innovative approach;
- The planned follow-up activities and a long-term sustainability strategy for the roll-out of the innovative approach.

To promote the transfer and/or scaling-up of social innovations across Europe, the final reports of the implemented projects **will be made publicly available on the SI+ Initiative website and on the European Commission website**.

A recommended template/guidelines for the Final Report 'Lessons Learned and Future Plans' is 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 of the Grant Agreement.

2.8. Social Innovation Match

Coordinators of projects selected under this Call **are required to upload key information to the Social Innovation Match**²⁸

²⁷ Work package (WP) means a major sub-division of the proposed project, i.e. every project is divided into defined smaller parts. WP represents a specific block of tasks, and each WP must include activities and deliverables – the output of a particular WP. For more information about work packages please see Section 3.2 of the Call Conditions.

²⁸ [Social Innovation Match | European Social Fund Plus \(europa.eu\)](https://socialinnovationmatch.europa.eu/)

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.

2.9. Further guidance

It is recommended to use the following information sources when planning project activities:

- [Scaling-up social innovation: Seven steps for using ESF+](#)
- [Social Innovation: Inspirational practices supporting people throughout their lives](#)
- [Proposed Approaches to Social Impact Measurement](#)
- [ELA-EURES \(2025\) 'Labour shortages and surpluses in Europe 2024'](#)
- [Eurofound \(2024\) 'Creating a new social contract for the just transition: Is partnership working?'](#)
- [Eurofound's database 'European Restructuring Monitor \(ERM\)'](#)
- [Cedefop \(2025\) 'Meeting skill needs for the green transition'](#)
- [Eurofound \(2025\) 'Employment in the EU's automotive sector'](#)
- [Eurofound \(2025 - forthcoming\) 'Company restructuring approaches in the context of the twin transitions'](#)
- [Practical guide for project promoters](#)
- [SIM database](#)

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

3.1. Budget available and co-funding rate

The estimated available budget for this Call is EUR 14 500 000. It is expected to fund projects with grant amounts ranging between EUR 2 500 000 and EUR 3 000 000 each. Projects that pass the individual thresholds per criterion and the overall threshold will be considered for funding within the limits of the available budget.

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-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.

3.2. 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+ Initiative²⁹.

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 3.3 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 as 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:

- a. The number of work packages shall be well justified. Among other work packages, the project should include **at least five mandatory** work packages:
 - Project Coordination/Management,
 - Dissemination and Communication,
 - Mapping, Outreach, and Matching,
 - Upskilling/Reskilling,
 - Employment Support.

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 a work package.

- b. 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 can have multiple activities/deliverables. The deliverables of the project will be managed through the Portal and will be specified in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

3.3. Eligibility of costs and cost categories

a) Eligible cost categories

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

²⁹ <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/app/uploads/2024/06/lump-sum-rules.pdf>

- A. Direct personnel costs:
 - A.1 Employees (or equivalent) person-months
- B. Purchase costs:
 - B.1 Travel and subsistence per travel or day
 - B.2 Other goods and services
- C. Other costs
 - C.1 Subsidised employment
- D. Indirect costs³⁰

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. to achieve 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 fixed in the Grant Agreement (Article 6 and Annex 2).

b) Eligibility periods of costs

In order to ensure the continuity and timely start of implementation, certain preparatory activities and their related costs may be considered eligible if incurred **after the submission of the application** but **before the signature of the Grant Agreement**.

Any activities or related expenditures undertaken in this period are carried out **at the applicant's own risk** and shall become eligible for funding **only if** the Grant Agreement is subsequently signed and the costs incurred are formally recognised as eligible by the Granting Authority.

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

- Costs are incurred after the date of submission of the application (as registered in the Portal);
- 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.

c) Ineligible costs and contributions

The following costs and 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;

³⁰ 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).

7. Excessive or reckless expenditure;
8. Deductible or refundable VAT (including VAT paid by public bodies acting as public authority);
9. Costs incurred or contributions made for the 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, equipment, and vehicles;
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, fixed lump sums to participants;
16. Amortisation and depreciation costs³¹.

3.4. Double funding

There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget. 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.

4. Timetable – Deadlines – Project duration

| Timetable and deadlines (indicative) | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Deadline for submission of applications | 9 February 2026 – 17:00 CET |
| Assessment of applications | February 2026 – April 2026 |
| Information on assessment results | May 2026 |
| Grant Agreement signature | June 2026 |

Starting date and duration of the projects

The indicative duration of a project should be up to 24 months.

The actual starting date of the 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
- Another date agreed by the parties to the Grant Agreement, which cannot be earlier than the signature of the Grant Agreement.

5. 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 Section 4 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.** Applicants must create a user account to use the Portal.
2. **Submission of an application** (the application template is provided as Annex 3 to the Call Conditions).

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

³¹ 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.

in the application columns is limited, so please be concise and specific.

Documents must be uploaded to the Portal under the relevant Call, 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 complies with the conditions for receiving the EU funding (in particular, eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion criteria, etc.). At a later stage, applicants may be asked for additional documents (legal-entity and bank-account validation, financial capacity check, etc.).

It is recommended to complete an application 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 e-mail** (with the date and time of the submission of an application). Not receiving the confirmation e-mail implies that the application was NOT submitted successfully. If the applicant assumes that the failure to apply was caused by the malfunctioning of the Portal, a complaint should be immediately filed via the e-mail address Thelp@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).

6. Eligibility - Eligible participants – Consortium composition

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

6.1. Eligible participants

To be eligible, **the applicant, acting as the coordinator**, must:

- Be a legal entity (public or private body);
- Be established in an EU Member State.

To be eligible, **co-applicants and associated partners** must:

- Be legal entities (public or private bodies);
- Be established in one of the eligible countries, namely:
 - EU Member States;
 - Non-EU countries: European Economic Area (EEA) countries and those associated to the ESF+ (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, and Serbia) as well as countries with which an association agreement is being negotiated (Ukraine and Kosovo³²) provided the agreement enters into force before the signature of the Grant Agreement.³³

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 (consequently, the application) or co-applicant ineligible for funding and lead to rejection.

Applicant, co-applicants, and associated partners can be (non-exhaustive list):

- national, local and regional authorities, including ministries of labour and social affairs;
- public employment services (PES), job centres, and private employment agencies;
- companies;
- social partners, representative bodies linked to the labour market, including chambers of commerce and other trade associations;
- education and training institutions such as schools, universities, and vocational education and training (VET) providers;
- lifelong-learning research centres and entities;
- associations and representatives of those involved in VET;

³² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

³³ See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_esf-socpl_en.pdf

- service providers linked to lifelong learning;
- local community centres, hubs;
- third sector;
- public and private funders.

International organisations³⁴ can participate in a project as associated partners only.

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

If the applicant or co-applicant 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)³⁵ and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), or entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05³⁶. Such entities shall not be eligible to participate in the project in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, associated partners, or subcontractors.

6.2. Consortium composition requirements

Only consortia are eligible. **Each consortium must consist of at least three (3) organisations:** one applicant (coordinator) and at least two (2) co-applicants. Associated partners do not count towards this minimum requirement for the consortium.

a) Transnational requirements

To be considered eligible, a consortium must include **an applicant (coordinator)** that is established in an EU Member State and **at least two co-applicants. At least one of the co-applicants must be established in an eligible country other** than that of the coordinator, i.e. the members of the consortium shall represent at least **two different eligible countries**.

b) National requirements

The consortium must also include **at least one national or regional public authority** as applicant, co-applicant, or associated partner, which should be:

- established in the same country as the applicant (coordinator) or the co-applicant.
- operating in the field of employment, education, or training (e.g., a ministry, ESF+ Managing Authority or Intermediate Body, Public Employment Service, etc.). In **Section 2.3 of Part B of the Application Form**, the applicant must clearly identify the institution that will act as a public authority, detailing its specific role and responsibilities within the project. In **Section 3.3 of Part B of the Application Form**, the applicant must explain the commitment of this institution to ensuring the sustainability and continuation of the project's approach and learnings beyond its completion.

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 can participate in a project but may not declare eligible costs.

Under this Call, **an entity may participate as the coordinator in only one consortium**.

For practical and legal reasons, it is recommended to set up consortium agreements that allow the consortium to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (even though they are not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also may allow for the redistribution of the grant according to the internal principles and criteria of the consortium (for instance, one beneficiary can reallocate its grant to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows its members to customise the use of the grant within the consortium and can also help to protect any member in case of disputes.

To identify potential members of the consortia, applicants are invited to **consult the [Social Innovation Match \(SIM\)](#)** (see Section 2.8 of the Call Conditions, 'Social Innovation Match'). However, it is not mandatory to identify a potential co-applicant from those entities listed in SIM.

Conditions for rejection

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

³⁴ International organisation means an organisation established by a treaty or other instrument governed by international law and possessing its own international legal personality.

³⁵ 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>

³⁶ 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).

A co-applicant regarded as 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 reassessed without the said co-applicant's activities and costs. If the application is accepted for funding, the Granting Authority will ask the applicant to adapt the work plan and budget correspondingly.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

An applicant (coordinator) must 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.

7.1. Financial capacity

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

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

The financial capacity of **the coordinator** will be assessed prior to the signature of the Grant Agreement³⁷, 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 together with the application:

- Signed Legal Entity Identification form (Annex 9 'Public Legal Entity Form': in English), and
- Copy of the act, law, decree, or decision establishing the legal entity as a public body (or, in the case of absence thereof, 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 shall 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 of the project is > EUR 60 000, must submit:
 - 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 of the project is > EUR 750 000, must submit:
 - The information and supporting documents 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 and in coordinating 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) pre-financing guarantees;
- to submit an irrevocable and unconditional joint guarantee from other co-applicants or a third party;
- to split the payment of the pre-financing into several instalments;
- to set a ceiling for the pre-financing in the Grant Agreement at EUR 20 000;
- to establish additional conditions for project monitoring in the Grant Agreement;
- any other measure which, after assessing the specific situation, would ensure that the project will be implemented properly.

If the coordinator is in breach of the obligation to provide the pre-financing guarantee or other corresponding documents, the pre-financing will not be paid.

³⁷ If the application is pre-selected for funding.

Such breaches and 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.

7.2. Operational capacity

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

Public bodies³⁸ are exempted from the operational capacity check. The Granting Authority, if needed, may request additional information to verify the status of the public body.

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

- a) **The coordinator**³⁹ (as a legal entity) has managed at least one consortium⁴⁰ project (funded by the 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 (2021–2025).

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

- b) **The lead project manager**, directly involved in the management of the project submitted under the Call, has managed at least one consortium project (funded by the EU or national public funds) which:
1. was managed by the lead project manager;
 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 (2021–2025).

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

The coordinator's project team and the lead project manager are required to have a very good command of English (C1 level or higher) and professional competencies and appropriate qualifications to carry out the required tasks.

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

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

1. A list of projects managed by the coordinator and/or the lead project manager within the past five years (see **Annex 5** to the Call Conditions for a template **to justify requirements a) or b)**).
2. **Evidence proving that at least one project from those indicated in Annex 5 meets all the five operational capacity criteria.** 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 a 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).

The documentation must clearly demonstrate that the project indicated:

- 2.1. was coordinated/managed by the lead applicant/coordinator or the lead project manager;
- 2.2. involved partners/beneficiaries (a lead applicant/coordinator and co-applicant) from no fewer than two different eligible 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 (2021–2025).

³⁸ As defined in the Glossary of the Call Conditions. Documents proving that the entity is a public body are presented in Section 7.1.

³⁹ As defined in the Glossary of the Call Conditions.

⁴⁰ As defined in the Glossary of the Call Conditions.

3. **A declaration by the coordinator** followed by supporting evidence certifying the professional competencies, 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, evidence, proving that at least one project from those indicated in 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.

7.3. 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 situations⁴¹ described below:

1. Bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities, or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
2. In breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
3. Guilty of grave professional misconduct⁴² (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
4. Guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal entity, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)⁴³;
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 if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
6. Guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant); or
7. They have created an entity under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social, or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

An applicant or any co-applicant shall also be excluded from participating in the Call if it is found that⁴⁴:

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

The applicant and co-applicants shall 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 is detected, the Granting Authority will send a notification and will provide the opportunity for clarification before the final decision of the Project Selection Committee is taken, in compliance with the principle of proportionality.

If 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 damage, or payment of fines, taxes, or social security contributions. The 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

⁴¹ See Article 138 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#)

⁴² See Article 138(1)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#)

⁴³ See Article 138(1)(d) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#)

⁴⁴ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#)

the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

8. Assessment and award procedure

8.1. Assessment procedure

Applications submitted will be subject to an assessment procedure (see Figure 3).

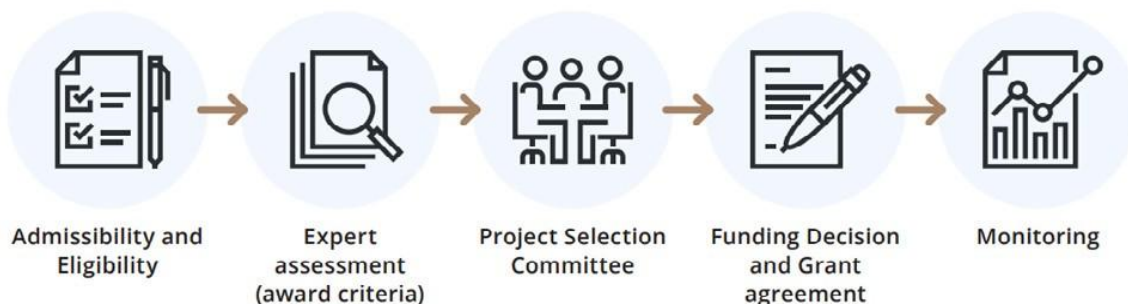


Figure 3. Process of application assessment

Formal requirements

Applications will first be checked for formal requirements (see Section 8.3 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 shall not be accepted (and will not be assessed at the admissibility stage).

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.

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 8.5 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 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 dutifully 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.

8.2. Award procedure

Selection of projects for funding

The selection of projects and the recommendations for funding will be made by a selection panel – the Project Selection Committee (PSC). The results of the applications' assessment will be presented at the PSC meeting. The PSC will rank the applications with the passing scores and will set the order of priority for the 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'.

Projects that pass the individual thresholds per criterion and the overall threshold will be considered for funding within the limits of the available budget.

The Call aims to fund **at least one highest-ranked project under each of the three delivery mechanisms** (see Section 2.1 of the Call Conditions, 'Aim of the Call'), provided that a sufficient number of high-quality applications are received and that at least one eligible application per mechanism achieves 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, under any of the delivery mechanisms. The Granting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between delivery mechanisms, 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 the 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 to the preparation of the Grant Agreement. Each rejected applicant will receive an Assessment Summary Report including reasons for rejection of their application and information on the possibility of submitting a complaint (for more information, please see Section 8.4 of the Call Conditions).

If the application is deemed to have been rejected due to flaws in the selection procedures (rather than the quality of the application), a complaint may be submitted following the deadlines and procedures set out in the Assessment Summary Report.

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.

8.3. Admissibility and eligibility check

Once the submission of applications is closed, the 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, which 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 one 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 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 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, except if the coordinator is a Public Body.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their application in English to facilitate the processing of the applications and to speed up the assessment process. However, applications submitted in any of the official languages of the EU will be accepted.⁴⁵ 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 must:

1. Involve only applicants, co-applicants, and associated partners defined as eligible under the Call Conditions (see Section 6.1 of the Call Conditions);
2. Be submitted by a consortium meeting the requirements set out in the Call Conditions (see Section 6.2 of the Call Conditions);
3. Not involve legal entities subject to EU restrictive measures (see Section 6.1 of the Call Conditions);
4. Not exceed the maximum project duration indicated in the Call Conditions (see Section 4 of the Call Conditions);
5. Be accompanied by a pledge of a contribution to the project from the applicant's own funds or funds from other sources at least at the percentage level of the project costs specified in the Call Conditions (see Section 3.1 of the Call Conditions);
6. Be submitted by the applicant (coordinator) which meets the operational capacity criteria (see Section 7.2 of the Call Conditions);
7. Target workers and organisations as specified in Section 2.2 of the Call Conditions;
8. Not propose a project that has already been funded (in its entirety or any separate part thereof) from the EU budget or will receive such funding in the foreseeable future;
9. 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.

8.4. 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 may 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 application. 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, the existence of a conflict of interest, breach of the limits of discretion, etc.). Disagreements with the result or reasoning of the application's assessment 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. Review requests will not automatically lead to reassessment of an application. Reassessment will 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 reassessment if, even after adding the maximum points under that criterion, the final score would nevertheless remain below the threshold for funding.
4. Reassessment will be carried out on the basis of initially provided information, i.e. no additional information will be

⁴⁵ 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 7).

accepted. Depending on the case, reassessment 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). Reassessment may be assigned to the same assessment panel or a new one, depending on the Granting Authority's internal procedures.

All complaints received will be handled with the 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 receiving the complaint. If a complaint is complex, the time allocated for the Granting Authority's response 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-up or ongoing implementation of other projects proposed for funding/funded under the Call. In case a complaint is confirmed, the application will be referred for review and reassessment.

If the response provided by the Granting Authority is deemed insufficient by the complainant, the dispute 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.

8.5. Award criteria

Applications that are declared eligible and admissible will be subject to an assessment against the award criteria.

The award criteria for this Call are as follows:

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

The extent to which:

- The project contributes effectively to the aim, activities, and expected outcomes of the Call, as described in Section 2 of the Call Conditions, and fosters transnational cooperation;
- The project proposes training activities that are clearly adapted to the specific needs, skills, and competencies of the identified target group, and that are relevant to sectoral changes;
- The project introduces effective and innovative measures that significantly enhance the efficiency and speed of job matching processes and facilitate workforce transitions towards strategic and growing sectors;
- The proposed interventions demonstrate a strong alignment with, and support for, the implementation of relevant national, regional, or local strategies;
- The project identifies and leverages synergies with existing local, regional, or national initiatives and services, ensuring complementarity and avoiding duplication with current support mechanisms for workers in transition.

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

- **Project design and implementation** (max 20 points, threshold 10 points):
 - Clarity and consistency of the project design (includes assessment of whether all essential elements of the project have been incorporated, clearly described, and logically interlinked to ensure a coherent and well-structured project);
 - 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);
 - A balanced distribution of tasks, responsibilities, resources, and management tools within the consortium;
 - A clear and justified rationale for the composition of the consortium.
- **The 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; best value for money).

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 of, and identifying, the expected outcomes⁴⁶;
- The planned intervention guarantees employment of participating workers beyond the project duration;
- The planned intervention responds to labour market trends and the recruitment needs of strategic and growing sectors, while demonstrating a long-term, sustainable vision that supports adaptation, replication, and scaling of innovative practices for worker transition beyond the project's direct target group;
- Dissemination activities are effective in maximising the uptake of project results at local, regional, national, and European levels;
- The project demonstrates a commitment to long-term sustainability by actively involving relevant public authorities (e.g., a ministry, ESF+ Managing Authority or Intermediate Body, Public Employment Service, etc.) in the future implementation and uptake of the project outcomes.

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 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 reasoning for that will be explained in the Assessment Summary Report.

9. Other regulations - Dissemination and visibility - Ownership

9.1. Data protection

The submission of an application under the 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 2016/679⁴⁷. It will be processed exclusively for the purpose of assessing the application, subsequent management of the grant, and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation, and communication.

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

9.2. Record keeping

The beneficiaries must 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, the beneficiaries are not obliged to keep specific records on the actual costs incurred, but must keep adequate records and supporting documents to prove proper implementation of the work.

The beneficiaries must keep the original documents. Digital and digitised documents are considered 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.

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

The projects under this Call must ensure gender equality, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination on the grounds

⁴⁶ See Section 3 of [Social Experimentation – Publications Office of the EU](#)

⁴⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj>

of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation throughout the entire project cycle –preparation, implementation, monitoring, and reporting stages. Appropriate measures to prevent any such discrimination should be taken in accordance with the aim 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. Please also see Article 17 of the Grant Agreement.

9.4. 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 any supplies or major results funded by the grant.
2. **Present the project** (including a project summary, the coordinator's contact details, the list of beneficiaries (if any), the European flag, and the funding statement, project results, etc.) on the beneficiary's **website** or **social media account**.

The emblem and the funding statement are available in the Grant Agreement and on the Europa⁴⁸ website, or can be downloaded from the European Commission's website⁴⁹.

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. Please also see Article 16 of the Grant Agreement. The Granting Authority will evaluate the project results and synthesise the key results by collecting Final Reports 'Lessons Learned and Future Plans' (Annex 7), which will be disseminated by the European Competence Centre of Social Innovation by relevant means (webinars, policy briefs, newsletters, etc.).

9.5. 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 effect 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.

10. 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: SKILLS-GUARANTEE@socialinnovationplus.eu.

Questions related to the submission of an application shall:

- be sent **at the latest seven days before the submission deadline** (see Section 4 of the Call Conditions);
- clearly indicate the reference to the Call and the topic to which the question relates.

Call-specific questions shall be sent **no later than ten days before the submission deadline**.

⁴⁸ https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/european-flag_en

⁴⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/logos_downloadcenter

11. Grant Agreement preparation

If an application is assessed positively, the Grant Agreement preparation procedure will be initiated. During this process, the applicant will be asked to update the submitted application, taking into account the comments provided by the experts (provided in the Summary Assessment Report), which may include budgetary corrections. The applicant will also be asked to 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 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 sets out 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.

12. Project implementation requirements

12.1. Reporting and payment arrangements

Beneficiaries shall 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 (24 months), two pre-financing instalments and the final payment are planned:

- The first (initial) pre-financing payment of 50% of the grant after signature of the Grant Agreement;
- The second pre-financing payment of 30% of the grant after approval of the first periodic report. Where the spending of the previous pre-financing is less than 70%, the amount of the next pre-financing payment will be reduced by the difference between the 70% ceiling 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 pre-financing may be adjusted.

There will be no interim payments. The specific frequency, amount, and requirements of pre-financing 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.

12.2. 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 other 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 termination of the Grant Agreement, 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.

12.3. Provisions concerning project implementation

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

No-profit rule – Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs)⁵⁰ for the beneficiaries.

For more details, see point 4.2 of the Data Sheet and Article 21.3.3 of the Grant Agreement.

13. Amendments to the Call Conditions

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

⁵⁰ See Article 195 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

14. Annexes

1. Annex 1: Detailed Budget Table.
2. Annex 2: Grant Agreement, template.
3. Annex 3: Application Form, template.
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.
8. Annex 8: Declaration of Professional Competencies, template.
9. Annex 9: Public Legal Entity Form.
10. Annex 10: Report on Mapping, Outreach, and Matching, template.
11. Annex 11: Interim Report, template.

