CALL FOR PROPOSALS – EACEA 33/2019

Erasmus+ Programme
KA3 – Support for Policy Reform
CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Applicants' Guidelines
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The legal framework

This call for proposals is based on the Regulation N° 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing "Erasmus+": The Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport (hereafter "Erasmus+") for the period 2014 to 2020, and in particular the Key Activity 3 - Support for Policy Reform (as referred to in Article 6.1c and further set forth in Article 9.1a)\(^1\).

Under this call for proposals, the European Commission (hereinafter ‘the Commission’) is inviting the submission of proposals for establishing "Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs)". The funding of these proposals is foreseen in the Commission 2020 Annual Work Programme on grants and contracts for the Erasmus+ Programme (C(2019)5823 adopted on 7 August 2019)\(^2\).

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA, hereinafter ‘the Agency’), acting under the powers delegated from the Commission, is responsible for implementing the call.

1.2. The policy context

The combined effects of rapid technological change, digitalization, climate change, circular economy, and new forms of work, call for innovative ideas to ensure that vocational training not only adapts to change, but is also at the forefront of mastering and driving this change. These developments are not only disrupting every aspect of work and life, but also creating opportunities for innovation and employment creation across all sectors. The capacity to innovate is increasingly becoming the key factor driving economic and social development.

VET policy makers are confronted with new challenges in anticipating and responding in due time to the fast changing skill needs of the labour market, and to the expectations of individuals. The "shelf-life" of skills is becoming increasingly short.

To address this challenge, VET institutions must become much more flexible and responsive to the need for renewing their offer, companies have to become an active partner in designing and providing opportunities for work-based learning, and individuals have to embrace lifelong learning to maintain their employability, active citizenship and quality of life.

The way we teach and learn has to be in tune with these new opportunities and challenges.

Developments in the VET system have often been of a gradual and incremental nature, and in many cases driven top-down. Business-as-usual may not be a viable option for the future. The speed and scale of change calls for innovative approaches where VET institutions are empowered to understand, engage and be an active partner in co-creating solutions for local social and economic development.

A bottom-up approach to excellence, where VET institutions are capable of rapidly adapting skills provision to evolving local needs, is essential to raise the attractiveness, relevance and quality in VET.

An initiative to promote vocational excellence has been called for since 2004 when the parties to the Copenhagen process, i.e. the Member States, the social partners, the candidate countries and the EFTA countries and the Commission, set the overall priorities for the EU Vocational Education and training (VET) modernisation agenda in various Communiqués.


The 2010 Bruges Communique\(^3\) calls for action on “…vocational excellence for smart and sustainable growth.”, and “VET providers to collaborate with enterprises, design centres, cultural sector, and higher education forming "knowledge partnerships".

The 2015 Riga Conclusions\(^4\) further reinforces this call through “…increase cooperation to promote innovation and excellence in VET”.

The Council Recommendation of 15 March 2018 on a “European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships”\(^5\) is promoting work-based learning in all its forms.

The Communication from the Commission of 22 May 2018 “Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies”\(^6\) outlines a new initiative establishing Centres of Vocational Excellence. These centres should connect reference VET providers across Member States, foster cooperation, including with stakeholders, and strive to develop high quality curricula and qualifications focused on sectoral skills needs and societal challenges. They should act as drivers of excellence and innovation and promote a proactive role for VET in local and regional economic development, including by seeking synergies with universities and jointly contributing to the provision of the range of skills needed in our modern economies and societies. The Centres will act as entrepreneurial incubators and catalysts for investment. The Communication also proposes that the Centres will build synergies with universities, thus jointly contributing to the provision of the range of skills needed to support innovation and competitiveness.

The tri-partite Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) adopted on 3 December 2018 an Opinion\(^7\) that sets a shared vision of governments, trade unions and employers’ organisations from EU Member States and Partner countries. The Opinion is calling for the set-up of excellent, inclusive and lifelong post-2020 VET systems, fit for addressing the future societal and economic challenges. The Opinion stresses the role of VET in supporting the acquisition of job specific and transversal skills, and calls for a better balancing of investment and funding between initial and continuing VET. The Opinion also calls on the Commission to provide support for the establishment of platforms of Centres of Vocational Excellence.

### 1.3. Defining VET excellence

Excellence in vocational education and training (VET excellence) ensures high quality skills and competences that lead to quality employment and career-long opportunities, which meet the needs of an innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy.

It is characterised by a holistic learner centred approach in which VET:

i. Is an integrative part of skills ecosystems, contributing to regional development\(^8\), innovation\(^9\), and smart specialisation strategies\(^10\).

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\(^7\) [https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1146&newsId=9263&furtherNews=yes](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1146&newsId=9263&furtherNews=yes)

\(^8\) Regional Development Policy - Regional development is a broad term but can be seen as a general effort to reduce regional disparities by supporting (employment and wealth-generating) economic activities in regions. See [http://www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy/regionaldevelopment.htm](http://www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy/regionaldevelopment.htm)

\(^9\) An innovation is the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations. See [https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=6865](https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=6865)

\(^10\) Smart Specialization is a place-based approach characterised by the identification of strategic areas for intervention based both on the analysis of the strengths and potential of the economy and on an Entrepreneurial Discovery Process with wide stakeholder involvement. It is outward-looking and embraces a broad view of innovation including but certainly not limited to technology-driven approaches, supported by effective monitoring mechanisms. See [http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/what-is-smart-specialisation-](http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/what-is-smart-specialisation-).
ii. Is part of **knowledge triangles**, working closely with other education and training sectors, the scientific community, and business.

iii. Enables learners to acquire both **vocational** and **key competences**\(^{11}\) through **high-quality provision** that is underpinned by quality assurance, builds innovative forms of partnerships with the world of work, and is supported by the continuous professional development of teaching and training staff, innovative pedagogies, mobility and internationalisation strategies.

2. **OBJECTIVE AND ACTIVITIES**

2.1. **Objective**

The overall objective of the call is to support the establishment and development of **transnational cooperation platforms** of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) to connect centres operating in a given local context at European level.

It aims to introduce a European dimension to VET excellence at two levels:

1) **National**: in a given local context, embedding CoVEs closely in the local innovation and skills ecosystems, and connecting them at European level; and

2) **Transnational**: through platforms of CoVEs bringing together partners that share a common interest in developing Vocational Excellence approaches, through close cooperation and sustainable partnerships.

The transnational cooperation **platforms** will bring together CoVEs that:

- Share a common interest in **specific sectors or trades** (e.g. aeronautics, e-mobility, healthcare, tourism, etc.), or

- Develop together innovative approaches to tackle **societal, technological and economic challenges** (e.g. climate change, digitalisation, artificial intelligence, sustainable development goals, integration of migrants, supporting learners with disabilities/special needs, upskilling people with low skills and/or low qualification levels, etc.).

The platforms will create world-class reference points for vocational training. They will be inclusive and either bring together existing CoVEs in different countries, or expand the model by linking well-established CoVEs in one country with partners in other countries, that intend to develop CoVEs in their local eco-system, thus contributing to “upward convergence" of VET excellence.

CoVEs are not intended to build new VET institutions and infrastructure from scratch (although this type of investment may also be required, it will not be covered by this call).

Instead they aim to bring together a set of local/regional partners such as initial and continuing VET providers, tertiary education institutions including universities of applied sciences and polytechnics, research institutions, science parks, companies, social enterprises, chambers and their associations, social partners, sectoral skills councils, professional/sector associations, national and regional authorities and development agencies, public employment services, etc.

The CoVEs will adopt a bottom-up approach to excellence where VET institutions are capable of rapidly adapting skills provision to evolving local needs.

\(^{11}\) As defined in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on **key competences** for lifelong learning. See [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&from=EN)
2.2. Activities

Centres of Vocational Excellence are characterised by adopting a **systemic approach** through which VET institutions actively contribute to co-create **skills ecosystems**, together with a wide range of other local/regional partners.

CoVEs are expected to go far beyond the simple provision of a quality vocational qualification.

Features that characterise CoVEs include a set of some of the activities (non-exhaustive), grouped under the three clusters mentioned below.

Projects will reach their objectives by building on a combination of a sub-set of the following activities (can be complemented with other activities agreed by the partners):

**Cluster 1 - Teaching and learning**

i. Providing people with labour market relevant skills, in a **lifelong learning** continuum approach. Combining offers of **initial VET** qualifications, with offers of **continuing training** (for upskilling and reskilling), that are informed by skills anticipation.

ii. Providing **guidance services**, as well as **validation** of prior learning.

iii. Developing **innovative curricula** that focus both on **technical skills** and **key competences**, while making use of European competence frameworks (e.g. DigComp, EntreComp, etc.), and tools (e.g. SELFIE).

iv. Developing **innovative learner-centred teaching and learning methodologies**, including interdisciplinary, project-based, and competence-based learning (among others), while fully exploiting digital technologies (e.g. MOOC's, simulators, virtual reality, etc.).

v. Fostering **learner excellence** through actions that incentive VET learners to explore their individual **innovation and creative potential**, leading to a virtuous cycle of benefits for the learners, the teachers and the VET institution that can integrate best practices into regular programmes.

vi. Developing modular and learner-centred transnational **VET learning provision** (curricula and/or qualifications) thus facilitating the **mobility of learners and staff**, as well as the recognition at regional and/or national levels.

vii. Providing **higher level VET** programmes and developing flexible **pathways** between VET and higher education institutions.

viii. Investing in the **continuing professional development of teachers and trainers**, for both pedagogical as well as technical skills, as well as for the implementation of a quality culture based on defined management systems.

ix. Establishing strong **quality assurance** mechanisms aligned with European tools and instruments, which may also include working towards the certification of education and training providers based on standards developed by relevant national and/or **international standards** organisations - e.g. ISO 21001 or EFQM.

x. Establishing **effective feedback loops** and **graduate tracking systems** that enable the timely adaptation of learning provision to evolving labour market needs.

**Cluster 2 - Cooperation and partnerships**

xi. Contributing to creation and dissemination of **new knowledge** in partnership with other stakeholders, e.g. through joint R&D with universities, R&D units in companies, research bodies, etc.

xii. Establishing **business-education partnerships** for apprenticeships, internships, sharing of equipment, exchanges of staff and teachers between companies and VET centres, etc.

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12 As defined in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on **key competences** for lifelong learning.

13 See example of the Dutch MBO Excellence initiative [www.rocmn.nl](http://www.rocmn.nl)
xiii. Working together with local SME's through innovation hubs, technology diffusion centres, and applied research\textsuperscript{14} projects with the involvement of VET learners and staff.

xiv. Providing SMEs with technical support, needs assessment, tools and methodologies, as well as tailor-made training to support their offers for apprenticeship and up-skilling/re-skilling.

xv. Providing or supporting business incubators for VET learners to develop their entrepreneurship skills and initiatives.

xvi. Developing internationalisation strategies to foster transnational mobility of VET learners, teachers and trainers, as well as leaders. This could also include preparatory work to facilitate mobility such as teaching programmes or courses on EU studies to improve understanding of Europe's integration process and its place in a globalised world (e.g. inspired on the Jean Monnet actions).

xvii. Launching and actively participating in campaigns and activities aimed at raising the attractiveness of VET and awareness to the life and job opportunities provided by VET qualifications. These initiatives could attract more people (including learners in primary and secondary schools) to specific professions, and contribute to the European Vocational Skills Week.

xviii. Participating in national and international skills competitions, aimed at raising the attractiveness and excellence in VET.

xix. Developing "International VET campus/academies" for learners in primary, secondary, and VET schools, teachers and trainers, Leaders in VET institutions, as well as for people considering future vocational study options. These could be focused on specific occupational fields, products or services.

\textbf{Cluster 3 \textendash Governance and funding}

xx. Ensuring effective governance at all levels involving relevant stakeholders, particularly companies, chambers, professional and sector associations, national and regional authorities and social partners.

xxi. Actively engaging in the overall national Skills governance systems and linking with employment and social policies at local, regional, national and European level.

xxii. Integrating into economic and innovation strategies and systems at local, regional, national and European levels to proactively co-shape innovation and growth.

xxiii. Developing sustainable financial models that combine public and private funding, as well as income generating activities.

xxiv. Supporting the attraction of foreign investment projects by ensuring timely provision of skills for companies investing locally.

xxv. Making full use of EU financial instruments and Funds. These can include the support of education and training actions, mobility of learners and staff, applied research activities, infrastructure investments to modernise VET centres with advanced equipment, implementation of management systems to assure excellence and sustainability of VET organisations and the services they provide, etc.

Projects are required to apply EU wide instruments and tools\textsuperscript{15} whenever relevant.

They should also aim to adopt an inclusive dimension, by including actions that help address diversity and promote – in particular through innovative and integrated approaches – ownership of shared values, equality, including gender equality, and non-discrimination and social inclusion, including for people with special needs/fewer opportunities.

\textsuperscript{14} See Canadian Colleges and institutes example that make use of applied research to strengthen their capacity to innovate and leverage their strong industry and community connections \url{https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/policyfocus/applied-research/}

\textsuperscript{15} Such as the EQF, ECVET, EQAVET, Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, Council Recommendation on key competences, etc.
A particular focus will be on digital skills as they are increasingly important on all job profiles across the entire labour market, as well as skills to support the transition to a circular and greener economy to meet emerging professional needs for green skills and sustainable development.

Projects must provide evidence that they aim to:

i. Establish strong and enduring relationships at both local and transnational levels, between the VET community and businesses (can be represented by chambers or associations), in which interactions are reciprocal and mutually beneficial, and

ii. Integrate activities, build reflexive relationships between the various activities and services (as described above), and

iii. Be firmly anchored into wider frameworks of regional development, innovation and/or smart specialisation strategies. Such anchoring allows for the identification of synergies between policies and amongst stakeholders, avoiding ad hoc actions, which, though beneficial in themselves probably do not realise all the potential benefits. These can be either existing strategies (to be clearly identified) or being developed in the context of the project (describing how the project contributes to those strategies).

In case learner and staff mobility activities are proposed, these should contribute directly to the objectives of the project and be strongly embedded in the project logic as a whole.

The proposed activities should bring an added value and will have a direct impact on the achievement of the project results.

Concrete results must be achieved within the project’s duration and evidence that the project deliverables will be pursued after EU funding has ended must be provided.

Applications must include a long-term action plan for the progressive roll-out of project deliverables after the project has finished. This plan shall be based on sustained partnerships between education and training providers and key industry stakeholders at the appropriate level. It should include the identification of appropriate governance structures, as well as plans for scalability and financial sustainability. It should also ensure the appropriate visibility and wide dissemination of the work of the platforms, including at EU and national political level and include details on how the roll-out will be implemented at European, national and/or regional levels with relevant partners.

The action plan shall also indicate how EU funding opportunities (e.g. European Structural Funds, European Fund for Strategic Investment, Erasmus+, COSME, sectoral programmes), and national and regional funding (as well as private funding), can support the roll-out of the project. This should take into account national and regional smart specialisation strategies.

3. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Date and time or indicative period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Publication of the call</td>
<td>October 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Deadline for submitting applications</td>
<td>20/02/2020 - 17:00 (Brussels time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Evaluation period</td>
<td>February - June 2020</td>
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<td>d) Information to applicants</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
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<td>e) Signature of grant agreement</td>
<td>August - September 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Starting date of the action</td>
<td>1/10/2020 or 1/11/2020</td>
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4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at 20 million euros. Financial contribution from the EU cannot exceed 80% of the total eligible costs. The maximum EU grant per project is 4 million euros. The Agency reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applications must comply with the following requirements:

- They must be submitted no later than 20 February 2020, 17:00 (Brussels time);
- They must be submitted online using the correct official application form (eForm);
- They must be submitted in one of the EU official languages;

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

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applications which comply with the following criteria will be subject of an in-depth evaluation.

6.1. Eligible partnerships

The partnership shall include at least eight full partners from a minimum of four Erasmus+ Programme countries (including at least two Member States of the European Union).

Each country must involve:

a) at least one company, industry or sector representatives (e.g. chambers or trade associations), and

b) at least one vocational education and training provider (at secondary and/or tertiary level).

One of the partners above will be the coordinating organisation, applying for the Erasmus+ grant on behalf of the partnership.

Depending on the specific nature of the proposal, the participation of other public/private organisation active in the field of vocational education and training, or in the world of work, can be relevant.

These might usefully include public employment services, regional development authorities/agencies, national/regional qualifications authorities, research institutes, innovation agencies, social enterprises, trade unions, organisations working on social inclusion and reintegration, etc.

Organisations from Erasmus+ Programme and/or Partner countries can be associated partners, to the extent it is demonstrated that their participation brings an added value to the CoVE.

Entities affiliated to the applicants are not eligible to receive funding under this call for proposals. Only organisations legally established are eligible. Natural persons are not eligible.

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16 However, applications cannot include only activities that target exclusively learners at tertiary level; applications that focus on VET at tertiary level (EQF levels 6 to 8) must include at least one other VET qualification level between EQF levels 3 to 5.
**What is the role of the organisations participating in a Centre of Vocational Excellence?**

### Coordinating organisation (Erasmus+ Programme country)
A participating organisation that submits the project proposal on behalf of all the partners. The coordinator has the full responsibility to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with the agreement. Its coordinating responsibilities cover the following duties:
- Coordinate the work of the consortium in line with the work plan;
- Monitor the implementation of the action;
- Be the intermediary for all communications between the beneficiaries and the Agency.

### Full partners (Erasmus+ Programme countries)
Participating organisations which contribute actively to the accomplishment of the project.

### Associated partners (optional) (Erasmus+ Programme and/or Partner countries)
CoVEs can involve associated partners from the public or private sector who contribute to the implementation of specific project tasks/activities or support the dissemination and sustainability of the project. For contractual management issues, associated partners are not considered as part of the project partners, and they do not receive funding. However their involvement and role in the project and different activities have to be clearly described.

The following supporting documents will be requested to the coordinating organisation on behalf of the whole partnership, except associated partners, if the project is proposed for funding (These documents cannot be attached to the eForm and are not requested at application stage. They will be requested to successful applicants at the time of notification of the selection results):
- Private entities: extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- Public entities: copy of the resolution or decision establishing the public company, or other official document establishing the public-law entity;
- Mandate letters: in addition to the supporting documents referring to their legal status, project’s full partners will sign and submit mandate letters by which the signatory agrees that the coordinator takes over the above listed duties on behalf of the partnership during the implementation of the project.

### 6.2. Eligible countries

The Erasmus+ Programme countries are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member States of the European Union (EU)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
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<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Estonia</td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
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**For British applicants:** Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the grant. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the grant period without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British applicants continue to be eligible, you will cease to receive EU funding (while continuing, where possible, to participate) or be required to leave the project on the basis of the Article II.17.3.1(a) of the grant agreement.
Non EU Programme countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
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<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liechtenstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republic of North Macedonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
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</table>

The Erasmus+ Partner countries are the following:

Partner countries neighbouring the EU

Region 1: Western Balkans
Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\(^{18}\), Montenegro

Region 2: Eastern Partnership countries
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Territory of Ukraine as recognised by international law

Region 3: South-Mediterranean countries
Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine\(^{19}\), Syria, Tunisia

Region 4: Russian Federation
Territory of Russia as recognised by international law

Other Partner countries

Region 5: Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, Vatican City State

Region 6: Asia
Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam

Region 7: Central Asia
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

Region 8: Latin America
Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela

Region 9: Iran, Iraq, Yemen

Region 10: South Africa

Region 11: ACP
Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Congo - Democratic Republic of the, Cook Islands, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia-Federated States of, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Saint Kitts And Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent And The Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Tanzania, (Democratic Republic of) Timor Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Region 12: Industrialised Gulf Cooperation countries
Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates

Region 13: Other Industrialised countries
Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Hong Kong, Japan, (Republic of) Korea, Macao, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, United States of America, Uruguay

Region 14: Faroe Islands, Switzerland

Any participation has to be in line with the overall EU values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities as foreseen in Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union\(^{20}\).

\(^{18}\) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

\(^{19}\) This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

\(^{20}\) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu_2012/art_2/oj
6.3. Eligible activities

Please see the activities described in section 2.2. The project must include relevant deliverables linked to:

✓ at least 3 activities listed under *Cluster 1 - Teaching and learning*, and
✓ at least 3 activities listed under *Cluster 2 - Cooperation and partnership*, and
✓ at least 2 activities listed under *Cluster 3 - Governance and funding*.

In addition to the above, the applicant can include activities that are not listed in section 2.2. These must demonstrate that they are particularly appropriate to meet the objectives of the call and identified needs, and must be considered and presented as part of a coherent set of activities.

CoVEs are intended for organisations providing vocational education and training, at any EQF levels from 3 to 8, including the upper-secondary level, the post-secondary non-tertiary level as well as the tertiary level (e.g. Universities of applied sciences, Polytechnic institutes, etc.). However, applications cannot include only activities that target learners at tertiary level; applications that focus on VET at tertiary level (EQF levels 6 to 8) must include at least one other [VET qualification level between EQF levels 3 to 5](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf), as well as a strong work-based learning component.

Activities must start on 1 October 2020 or 1 November 2020.

The duration of the projects is 4 years. Applications for projects scheduled to run for a shorter or longer period than that specified in this call for proposals will not be accepted.

The activities must take place in [Erasmus+ Programme countries](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf) (Member States of the EU and Non EU Programme countries).

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. Exclusion from participation

The authorising officer shall exclude an applicant from participating in call for proposals procedures where:

(a) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;

(b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;

(c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:

   (i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of eligibility or selection criteria or in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision;

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(ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;

(iii) violating intellectual property rights;

(iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Agency during the award procedure;

(v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;

(d) it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following:


(ii) corruption, as defined in Article 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;

(iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;

(iv) money laundering or terrorist financing within the meaning of Article 1(3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;

(v) terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;

(vi) child labour or other offences concerning trafficking in human beings as referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;

(e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;

(f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95.

(g) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
(h) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (g) above, the applicant is subject to:

(i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;

(ii) non-final judgments or non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;

(iii) facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;

(iv) information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;

(v) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of Union competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or

(vi) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

7.2. Remedial measures

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above (see section 7.1), it must indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability.

This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines or of any taxes or social security contributions.

The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (d) of section 7.1.

7.3. Rejection from the call for proposals

The authorising officer shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

(a) is in an exclusion situation established in section 7.1; or

(b) has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information; or

(c) was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

Administrative sanctions (exclusion) may be imposed on applicants if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

7.4. Supporting documents

Applicants must provide a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 FR, by filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying the call for proposals. The coordinator of a consortium signs a declaration on behalf of all applicants.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

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

8.1. Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the duration of the grant, and to participate in its funding.

The applicants’ financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents that will be requested to the selected applicants only:

✓ A declaration on their honour;
✓ The profit and loss account as well as the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts were closed;
✓ For newly created entities: the business plan might replace the above documents;
✓ An audit report produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last financial year available. If the audit report is not available AND a statutory report is not required by law, a self-declaration signed by the applicant’s authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for the last financial year available must be provided.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the Agency considers that the financial capacity is not satisfactory, it may:

✓ Request further information;
✓ Propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;
✓ Propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing paid in instalments;
✓ Propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 11.6.2 below);
✓ Where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries;
✓ Reject the application.

8.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action.

In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour, and, within the detailed description of the project, the following supporting documents:

✓ A description of the relevant skills and experience of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the project, accompanied, where appropriate, by a list of recent publications related to the domain of the project;
✓ An exhaustive list of previous or still running projects and activities performed and connected to the objectives of the call for proposals.
9. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible applications will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Relevance of the project (threshold minimum 18 points)</strong></td>
<td>/35 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Link to policy</strong>: the proposal establishes and develops a transnational cooperation platform of Centres of Vocational Excellence, aiming to foster VET excellence;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Consistency</strong>: the extent to which the proposal is based on an adequate needs analysis; the goals are clearly defined, realistic and address issues relevant to the participating organisations and to the action;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Innovation</strong>: the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to innovative results and solutions for its field in general, or for the geographical context in which the project is implemented (e.g. content; outputs produced, working methods applied, organisations and persons involved or targeted);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Regional dimension</strong>: the proposal demonstrates its integration and its contribution to regional development, innovation and smart specialisation strategies, based on the identification of local/regional needs and challenges;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Cooperation and partnerships</strong>: the extent to which the proposal is suitable of realising a strong and enduring relationship at both local and transnational levels, between the VET community and businesses (can be represented by chambers or associations), in which interactions are reciprocal and mutually beneficial;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>European added value</strong>: the proposal clearly demonstrates the added value at the individual (learner and/or staff), institutional and systemic levels, generated through results that would be difficult to attain by the partners acting without European cooperation;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Internationalisation</strong>: the proposal demonstrates its contribution to the international dimension of VET excellence, including the development of strategies to foster VET transnational mobility and sustainable partnerships;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Digital skills</strong>: the extent to which the proposal foresees activities (e.g. skills anticipation, innovative curricula and teaching methodologies, guidance, etc.) related to the development of digital skills;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Green skills</strong>: the extent to which the proposal foresees activities (e.g. skills anticipation, innovative curricula and teaching methodologies, guidance, etc.) linked to the transition to a circular and greener economy;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ <strong>Social dimension</strong>: the proposal includes a horizontal concern throughout the various actions to address diversity and promote shared values, equality, including gender equality, and non-discrimination and social inclusion, including for people with special needs/fewer opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Quality of the project design and implementation (threshold minimum 13 points)** /25 points

- **Coherence**: the overall project design ensures consistency between project objectives, activities and the budget proposed. The proposal presents a coherent and comprehensive set of appropriate activities and services to meet the identified needs and lead to the expected results;
- **Methodology**: the quality and feasibility of the methodology proposed and its appropriateness for producing the expected results;
- **Structure**: the clarity, completeness and quality of the work programme, including appropriate phases for preparation, implementation, monitoring, exploitation, evaluation and dissemination;
- **Management**: solid management arrangements are foreseen. Timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic. The proposal allocates appropriate resources to each activity;
- **Budget**: the budget provides for appropriate resources necessary for success, it is neither overestimated nor underestimated;
- **Financial and quality control**: control measures (continuous quality evaluation, peer reviews, benchmarking activities, etc.) and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient.

Challenges/risks of the project are clearly identified and mitigating actions properly addressed. Expert review processes are planned as an integral part of the project.

The CoVE work programme includes an independent external quality assessment at mid-term and at the end of the project.

- If the project includes **mobility activities** (for learners and/or staff):
  - The quality of practical arrangements, management and support modalities;
  - The extent to which these activities are appropriate to the project's aims and involve the appropriate number of participants;
  - The quality of arrangements for the recognition and validation of participants' learning outcomes, in line with European transparency and recognition tools and principles.

3. **Quality of the project consortium and cooperation arrangements (threshold minimum 11 points)** /20 points

- **Configuration**: the project involves an appropriate mix of complementary participating organisations with the necessary profile, competences, experience and expertise to successfully deliver all aspects of the project.
- **Upward convergence**: the extent to which the partnership brings together organisations active in the field of vocational education and training, or in the world of work, that are at different stages of development of vocational excellence approaches, and allows for a
smooth and effective exchange of expertise and knowledge among those partners;

- **Geographical dimension**: the extent to which the partnership includes relevant partners from different geographical areas, as well as the extent to which the applicant has motivated the geographical composition of the partnership and demonstrated its relevance to the achievement of the objectives of the CoVEs; as well as the extent to which the partnership includes a wide and appropriate range of relevant actors at local and regional level;

- **Commitment**: the distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear, appropriate, and demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations in relation to their specific expertise and capacity;

- **Tasks**: the coordinator shows high quality management, ability to coordinate transnational networks and leadership in complex environment;
  Individual tasks are allocated on the basis of the specific know-how of each partner;

- **Collaboration**: an effective mechanism is proposed to ensure a good coordination, decision-making and communication between the participating organisations, participants and any other relevant stakeholder.

### 4. Impact and dissemination (threshold minimum 11 points) /20 points

- **Exploitation**: the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the project will be used by the partners and other stakeholders. It provides means to measure exploitation within project lifetime and after;

- **Dissemination**: the proposal provides a clear plan for the dissemination of results, and includes appropriate targets, activities, relevant timing, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to stakeholders, policy makers, guidance professionals, enterprises, young learners, etc. within and after the project’s lifetime; the proposal also indicates which partners will be responsible for dissemination and demonstrates the relevant experience that they have in dissemination activities;

- **Impact**: the proposal demonstrates the potential impact of the project:
  - On participants and participating organisations, during and after the project lifetime;
  - Outside the organisations and individuals directly participating in the project, at local, regional, national and/or European levels.

  The proposal includes measures as well as targets and indicators to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short- and long-term);

- **Sustainability**: the proposal explains how the CoVE will be rolled out and further developed. The proposal includes the design of a long-term action plan for the progressive roll-out of project deliverables after the project has finished. This plan shall be based on sustained partnerships between education and training providers
and key industry stakeholders at the appropriate level. It should include the identification of appropriate governance structures, as well as plans for scalability and financial sustainability, including the identification of financial resources (European, national and private) to ensure that the results and benefits achieved will have a long-term sustainability.

Total …/100 points

To be considered for funding, applications must score at least 70 points (out of 100 points in total), also taking into account the necessary minimum threshold for each of the four award criteria.

Quality assurance is vital to ensure that platforms of Centres of Vocational Excellence successfully deliver the expected results and achieve an impact going far beyond the impact CoVEs could achieve. The partnerships are expected to achieve results which are widely transferable within the economic sector concerned.

Expert review processes should be implemented as an integral part of the project. The work programme should therefore include an independent external quality assessment at mid-term and at the end of the project, to be submitted together with the project progress report and final report respectively. In its progress report, the participating CoVEs will have to demonstrate that the follow-up actions resulting from the recommendations of the mid-term quality assessment were implemented.

As a general rule, and within the limits of existing national and European legal frameworks, results should be made available as open educational resources (OER) as well as on relevant professional, sectorial or competent authorities’ platforms. The proposal will describe how data, materials, documents and audiovisual and social media activity produced will be made freely available and promoted through open licences, and does not contain disproportionate limitations.

Platforms of CoVEs are a recent and ambitious action and are subject to a particular monitoring. An active participation from all participants and stakeholders is expected as well as their participation in meetings and events organised by the Agency and the European Commission. A budget for up to 3 meetings per year has to be planned.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Agency, a grant agreement drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the applicant, as well as the procedure in view to formalise the agreement of the parties.

Two copies of the original agreement must be signed first by the legal representative of the coordinating organisation, on behalf of the consortium, and returned to the Agency immediately.

The Agency will sign them last.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1. Form of the grant

11.1.1 Reimbursement of costs actually incurred

The grant will be defined by applying a maximum co-financing rate of 80 % to the eligible costs actually incurred and declared by the beneficiary.
Supporting documents
The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the action, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents:

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

The beneficiary is required to submit, in support of the final payment, a “Report of Factual Findings on the Final Financial Report - Type II” produced by an approved auditor or, in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer.

The procedure and the format to be followed by an approved auditor or, in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer, are detailed in the following “Guidance Notes”:


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

11.1.2 Reimbursement of eligible costs declared on the basis of flat-rate(s)
A flat rate up to a maximum 7% of the eligible direct costs (‘reimbursement of flat-rate costs’), covering indirect costs, will be paid following acceptance of the costs to which the flat rate is to be applied.

11.1.3 Payment conditions, checks and audits for flat-rate(s)
Contribution based on flat-rate will be paid in full provided the action is implemented properly (with the required quality, fully and on time. If the action is not properly implemented the amount of the grant will be reduced proportionately. See also step 4 of section 11.5.

The fulfilment of the above conditions and/or results triggering the payment of the flat rate as specified in section 11.1.2, including where required the achievement of outputs and/or results will be checked at the latest before the payment of the balance. In addition, the fulfilment of those conditions and/or results may be subject to ex post controls.

For this purpose, in case of verifications, checks and audits, the beneficiary will be required to provide the requested contribution to which the flat rate applies.

The amount of flat rates as specified in section 11.1.2 will not be challenged by ex-post controls. This does not affect the possibility to reduce the grant as specified above or in the case of irregularity, fraud or a breach of other obligations.

Payment of the grant on the basis of flat-rates as specified in section 11.1.2 does not affect the right of access to the statutory records of the beneficiaries for the purpose of:

- Reviewing them for future grants, or
- Protecting the Union financial interests, e.g. detection of fraud, irregularities or breach of obligations.

11.2. Eligible costs
Eligible costs shall meet all the following criteria:

- They are incurred by the beneficiary.
- They are incurred during the duration of the action, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates.
The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement.

If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, the costs eligibility period may start before that signature. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application.

- They are indicated in the estimated budget of the action.
- They are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant.
- They are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary.
- They comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.
- They are reasonable, justified, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

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

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

### 11.2.1 Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the action are those costs which, with due regard to the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as:

(a) The costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary’s usual policy on remuneration.

Those costs include actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration. They may also comprise additional remunerations, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of the nature of those contracts, provided that they are paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required, independently from the source of funding used.

The costs of natural persons working under a contract with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or who are seconded to the beneficiary by a third party against payment may also be included under such personnel costs, provided that the following conditions are fulfilled:

(i) The person works under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed);

(ii) The result of the work belongs to the beneficiary (unless exceptionally agreed otherwise); and

(iii) The costs are not significantly different from the costs of staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

(b) Costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary’s usual practices on travel.
(c) The depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in
the beneficiary’s accounting statements, provided that the asset:

(i) Is written off in accordance with the international accounting standards
and the beneficiary’s usual accounting practices; and

(ii) Has been purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation
contracts laid down in the grant agreement, if the purchase occurred within
the implementation period.

The costs of renting or leasing equipment or other assets are also eligible, provided that
these costs do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment or assets and are
exclusive of any finance fee.

Only the portion of the equipment’s depreciation, rental or lease costs corresponding to
the implementation period and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may
be taken into account when determining the eligible costs.

(d) Costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they:

(i) Are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts
laid down in the grant agreement; and

(ii) Are directly assigned to the action.

(e) Costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the agreement (dissemination of
information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction),
including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding
services are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid
down in the grant agreement.

(f) Costs derived from subcontracts, provided that specific conditions on subcontracting as
laid down in the grant agreement are met.

(g) Costs of financial support to third parties, provided that the conditions laid down in the
grant agreement are met.

(h) Duties, taxes and charges paid by the beneficiary, notably value added tax (VAT),
provided that they are included in eligible direct costs, and unless specified otherwise in
the grant agreement.

11.2.2 Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

Indirect costs are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore
cannot be attributed directly to it.

A flat-rate amount of maximum 7 % of the total eligible direct costs of the action is eligible as
indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be
regarded as chargeable to the action. Indirect costs may not include costs entered under
another budget heading.

Applicants’ attention is drawn to the fact that if they are receiving an operating grant financed
by the EU or Euratom budget, they may not declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by
the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any
costs of the action.

In order to demonstrate this, in principle, the beneficiary should:

(a) Use analytical cost accounting that allows separating all costs (including overheads)
attributable to the operating grant and the action grant. For that purpose the
beneficiary should use reliable accounting codes and allocation keys ensuring that the
allocation of the costs is done in a fair, objective and realistic way.
(b) Record separately:

(i) all costs incurred for the operating grants (i.e. personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the part of its usual annual activities), and

(ii) all costs incurred for the action grants (including the actual indirect costs linked to the action).

If the operating grant covers the entire usual annual activity and budget of the beneficiary, the latter is not entitled to receive any indirect costs under the action grant.

Examples of indirect costs are:

 ✓ All costs for equipment related to the administration of the project (PCs, portables, etc.);
 ✓ Communication costs (postage, fax, telephone, internet access, mailing, etc.);
 ✓ Infrastructure costs (rent, electricity, etc.) of the premises where the project is being carried out;
 ✓ Office supplies;
 ✓ Photocopies.

11.3. Ineligible costs

The following items are not considered as eligible costs:

(a) Return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary.

(b) Debt and debt service charges.

(c) Provisions for losses or debts.

(d) Interest owed.

(e) Doubtful debts.

(f) Exchange losses.

(g) Costs of transfers from the Agency charged by the bank of a beneficiary.

(h) Costs declared by the beneficiary under another action receiving a grant financed from the Union budget. Such grants include grants awarded by a Member State and financed from the Union budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Agency for the purpose of implementing the Union budget. In particular, beneficiaries receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget cannot declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.

(i) Contributions in kind from third parties.

(j) Excessive or reckless expenditure.

(k) Deductible VAT.

For more information regarding costs linked to bank transfers, please see Article II.24.11 of the grant agreement.

Costs which could be considered as eligible according to the criteria detailed under section 11.2 become ineligible if they are not supported by adequate supporting accounting documents. In addition, internal documents will not be accepted as valid supporting documents.
11.4. **Balanced budget**

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

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants for whom costs will not be incurred in euros should use the exchange rate published on the Infor-euro website available at:


The applicant must ensure that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action not entirely provided by the EU grant.

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

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

11.5. **Calculation of the final grant amount**

The final amount of the grant is calculated by the Agency at the time of the payment of the balance. The calculation involves the following steps:

**Step 1 - Application of the reimbursement rate to the eligible costs and addition of flat-rate contributions**

The amount under step 1 is obtained by applying the reimbursement rate specified in section 11.1.1 to the eligible costs actually incurred and accepted by the Agency, including costs declared in the form of flat rate contributions to which the co-financing rate applies in accordance with section 11.1.2.

**Step 2 - Limit to the maximum amount of the grant**

The total amount paid to the beneficiaries by the Agency may in no circumstances exceed the maximum amount of the grant as indicated in the grant agreement.

If the amount obtained following Step 1 is higher than this maximum amount, the final amount of the grant is limited to the latter.

If volunteers' work is declared as part of direct eligible costs, the final amount of the grant is limited to the amount of total eligible costs approved by the Agency minus the amount of volunteers' work approved by the Agency.

**Step 3 - Reduction due to the no-profit rule**

‘Profit’ means the surplus of receipts over the total eligible costs of the action, where receipts are the amount obtained following Steps 1 and 2 plus the revenue generated by the action for beneficiaries other than non-profit organisations.

In-kind and financial contributions by third parties are not considered receipts.

The total eligible costs of the action are the consolidated total eligible costs approved by the Agency.

The revenue generated by the action is the consolidated revenue established, generated or confirmed for beneficiaries other than non-profit organisations on the date on which the request for payment of the balance is drawn up.

If there is a profit, it will be deducted in proportion to the final rate of reimbursement of the actual eligible costs of the action approved by the Agency.
Step 4 - Reduction due to improper implementation or breach of other obligations

The Agency may reduce the maximum amount of the grant if the action has not been implemented properly (i.e. if it has not been implemented or has been implemented poorly, partially or late), or if another obligation under the agreement has been breached.

The amount of the reduction will be proportionate to the degree to which the action has been implemented improperly or to the seriousness of the breach.

11.6. Reporting and payment arrangements

11.6.1 Payment arrangements

The beneficiary may request the following payments provided that the conditions of the grant agreement are fulfilled (e.g. payment deadlines, ceilings, etc.). The payment requests shall be accompanied by the documents provided below and detailed in the grant agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment request</th>
<th>Accompanying documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A pre-financing payment corresponding to 40% of the maximum grant amount.</td>
<td>(a) If applicable (weak financial capacity) financial guarantee (see section 11.6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A second pre-financing payment corresponding to 40% of the maximum grant amount.</td>
<td>(a) Progress report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Statement on the use of the previous pre-financing instalment</td>
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<td>(c) If applicable (weak financial capacity) financial guarantee (see section 11.6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment of the balance</td>
<td>(a) Final technical report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Final financial statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) A certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In case of a weak financial capacity, section 8.1 above applies.

11.6.2 Pre-financing guarantee

A pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the EU Member States. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the Agency may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if it considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by:

- A joint and several guarantee by a third party or,
- A joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement.

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or the payment of the balance, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.
11.7. Other financial conditions

a) Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget. Under no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate in the grant application the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed. A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate in the grant application the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed or the decision is notified.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application respectively date of designation of the coordinating body, whichever is the earliest.

c) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary may award the contract in accordance with its usual purchasing practices provided that the contract is awarded to the tender offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interest.

The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation in the event of an audit.

Entities acting in their capacity as contracting authorities within the meaning of Directive 2014/24/EU or contracting entities within the meaning of Directive 2014/25/EU must comply with the applicable national public procurement rules.

Beneficiaries may subcontract tasks forming part of the action. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with:

a) Subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;

b) Recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;

c) The estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;

d) Any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the Agency. The Agency may grant approval:

(i) Before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment;

(ii) After recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:

✓ Is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report, and
Does not entail changes to the grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;

e) The beneficiaries ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.

d) **Financial support to third parties**

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

12. **PUBLICITY**

12.1. **By the beneficiaries**

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

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

To do this they must use the text, the emblem and the disclaimer available at [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/visual-identity_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/visual-identity_en), which will be provided by the Agency.

If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary’s grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

12.2. **By the Agency and/or the Commission**

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on the Internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Agency and/or the Commission will publish the following information:

- The name of the beneficiary;
- The address of the beneficiary;
- The subject of the grant;
- The amount awarded.

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

13. **PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA**

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name and address).

Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC.
Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the call for proposals will be processed solely for that purpose by the department or Unit responsible for the Union grant Programme concerned (entity acting as data controller).

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046. For more information see the Privacy Statement on: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/privacy_statement-eacea_grants.pdf.

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

14.1. Publication

The call for proposals is being published in the Official Journal of the European Union and on the Internet site of the EACEA at the following address: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/ka3-centers-of-vocational-excellence_en.

14.2. Registration in the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal

Before submitting an electronic application, applicants and full partners will have to register their organisation in the Participant register hosted in the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal and receive a Participant Identification Code (PIC9-digit number), serving as the unique identifier of their organisation in the Participant Register. The PIC will be requested in the application form.

The Participant Register hosted in the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal is the tool through which all legal and financial information related to organisations will be managed.

Information on how to register can be found in the portal under the following address: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register.

The tool also allows applicants to upload different documents related to their organisation.

These documents have to be uploaded once and will not be requested again for subsequent applications by the same organisation.

Details on the supporting documents that need to be uploaded in the portal can be found at the following address: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/ka3-centers-of-vocational-excellence_en.

14.3. Submission of the grant application

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the admissibility requirements set out under section 5.

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

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process

➢ Electronic submission

Applicants are requested to log in at https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/ka3-centers-of-vocational-excellence_en and follow the procedure for submitting an application.

The detailed description of the project, the declaration of honour and the balanced estimated budget of the action, presented on the official forms, must be annexed to the eForm.
14.4. Notification and publication of the evaluation results

Applicants shall be notified individually of the outcome of the evaluation procedure by a letter signed by the Agency sent as a registered document to the legal representative of the applicant organisation through the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal at the latest six months after the application deadline. During these six months, assessment and selection of applications take place, followed by the adoption of the award decision.

Only when these procedures are completed, the lists of selected projects will be published on the Agency website: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/selection-results_en.

The legal representative of the applicant organisation will receive an email explaining when the notification letter is available in the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal.

It is responsibility of the applicant to submit in the application the correct email address of the legal representative.

If the formal notification in the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal isn't opened for a period of more than 10 days, the Agency will consider the formal notification acknowledged.

14.5. Rules applicable


14.6. Contacts

In case of questions, please contact the Vocational, Education and Training (VET) sector of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency:

EACEA-EPLUS-VET@ec.europa.eu

Annexes:

- To be attached to the eForm
  - Detailed description of the project
  - Declaration of honour
  - Estimated budget of the action

- Other annexes
  - General instructions
  - Grant agreement model
  - eForm user guide