

Directorate-General for Communication

CALL FOR PROPOSALS COMM/SUBV/2020/M

FOR THE CO-FINANCING OF MEDIA ACTIONS UNDER THE MULTI-ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR GRANTS IN THE AREA OF COMMUNICATION 2020-2021

Application deadline: 31 July 2020

<u>Disclaimer:</u> The provisional timetable and budget estimates in sections 4 and 5 may be reviewed as required under the prevailing circumstances linked to the COVID-19 outbreak.

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1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

1.1 Background

This call for proposals is based on the European Parliament (EP)'s <u>multiannual work</u> <u>programme for grants in the area of communication (2020-2021)</u> published on the EP website.

1.2 Purpose of this call for proposals

The purpose of this call for proposals is to select action proposals for the award of grants for media actions (television, radio, online and/or written press).

This call for proposals is open to all organisations complying with the criteria described in the following sections.

Grant agreements will be signed with those organisations who have submitted an action proposal and have been selected for co-financing based on the criteria laid down in this call for proposals. The grant agreements will define the precise subject of the agreement, the conditions for implementation of the action covered, and the maximum amount to be co-financed.

2 OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The EP is launching a call for proposals to select actions, which will contribute to fulfil the objectives of the <u>multi-annual work programme for grants</u>.

The principal objective of this call for proposals is to contribute to raise citizens' awareness of the role and democratic values of the European Union by promoting strategic engagement with media. The key performance indicator to measure the achievement of the principal objective of the call for proposals is the number of communication actions co-financed and the hours of attention (estimated exposure) generated by the co-financed actions. Applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that each action proposal must set out its own individual performance indicators in accordance with Article 3.2 of this call for proposals.

The expected results of the actions are to provide regular supply of reliable and pluralistic information on the European Union, raising awareness of the European Parliament's key role as the voice of the European citizens and decision maker, to ensure wide dissemination and geographical balance and promoting a wide public debate on the EU.

Such actions should primarily target EU citizens who have turned more demanding towards the European Union, specifically since the outbreak of the Covid19-pandemic, as well as citizens who show some interest in EU affairs.

Insights and analysis, which help to identify those segments of the population are available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20200527RES79925/20200527RES79925/20200527RES79925.pdf

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/eurobarometer?year=eng.aac.eurobarometer.filters.allYears&type=eng.aac.eurobarometer.filters.type.specificSurveys;

3 FORMULATION AND DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION ACTIONS

3.1 Communication actions sought by the EP

The EP is looking to co-finance multimedia actions in the fields of television, radio, online and/or written press aimed at providing citizens with non-partisan and factual information, showing the impact and relevance of the EP and EU action on people's daily life. Selected beneficiaries should produce and broadcast or publish reliable and pluralistic journalistic content (news, debates, interviews, polls, etc.) in at least one of the official EU languages, focusing on the EP's legislative and political priorities (inter alia: EU contribution to fight against COVID-19 and its economic and social consequences, Conference on the future of Europe, European Green Deal, European Digital Economy) adapted to the post COVID-19 communication environment.

Proposals by pan-European associations or networks of media should provide a clear commitment from each of the members participating in the action to publish or broadcast at least the media content produced by them.

Complete editorial freedom will be given to the grant beneficiaries, who must, in turn, guarantee impartial, balanced, reliable and pluralistic information, contributing to promote a wide public debate on the EU.

The potential reach, audience and impact of the action are key criteria for awarding the grants. The actions should be multi-platforms, outlining in the proposal a strategy for online distribution, including on social media and/or provision of interactive services to encourage and facilitate engagement and to facilitate consistency with EP communication campaigns. In addition, strategies to maximise the impact, such as broadcasting at peak viewing times or integration of slots into existing programs with established viewing figures will be favorably considered. It should be noted that the applicants must prove the current levels of audience in their proposals. Audience outside the 27 EU Member States will not be considered an asset. Action proposals solely based on an event or mere social media campaigns will be disregarded.

Supported activities may include but are not limited to:

- TV shows or parts of them, including integration of slots in shows with established viewing figures or in peak times; audience outside the EU27 is not considered an asset.
- Radio programmes, including integration of slots in programmes with established airing figures or in peak times; audience outside EU27 is not considered an asset.
- Multimedia actions with high views and engagement rates, including strong distribution via social media, and possibly participation/interaction with public.
- Actions with a trans-European dimension (cooperation of different media across Europe).
- Actions that contribute to fact-checking and to counter disinformation, providing a high level of audience.

In assessing the reach, audience and impact, the following elements will be looked at:

- new or fitting into an existing format
- number of programmes (for TV and radio, articles for online)

- length of programmes / articles
- length of segment devoted to EP / EU
- airing days and times / publication days and section
- available on line
- reach via social media, inter alia on Facebook, Twitter, Youtube Instagram and podcasts.
- estimated number of MEPs involved in each programme/article
- involvement of opinion leaders / influencers (media has to specify in the description)

Proposals must be clearly and well-defined, researched and fully developed having taken all time-schedule and budget considerations into account. They shall consist of an action or a series of actions to be implemented over a period of 20 months maximum, starting at the earliest on 1 October 2020 and ending at the latest on 30 June 2022. Any request to have a later end date should be duly justified. Actions must be ready to start as of the award of the grant.

3.2 Performance indicators for the action

The proposals must set up quantified targets using the following performance indicators in Annex 1.II (mandatory). Grant beneficiaries will be requested to report on the actual achievements of the action against the predefined targets. The proposal should also indicate methodology for collecting this data/source of information and to evaluate the results of the action.

Applicants should select the performance indicators corresponding to the field(s) of activity of their action proposal based on the most recent data available.

1. Television, Radio

- 1.1 Expected audience at the specific slots and platforms chosen for distribution of the action
- 1.2 Expected market share at the specific slots and platforms chosen for distribution of the action [%]
- 1.3 Expected audience of the action compared to existing, relevant and best performing programmes of the channel [%]
- 1.4 Expected audience of slot/s chosen for rerun
- 1.5 Expected market share of slot/s chosen for rerun
- 1.6 Expected number of views via VOD
- 1.7 Expected number of daily unique visitors to VOD / audio-on-demand webpage
- 1.8 Planned number of runs (total of all programmes)

2. Written press

- 2.1 Circulation (i.e. number of copies circulated to the public (sales, subscription, etc.))
- 2.2 Readership (i.e. number of readers of the publication or of a specific product of the publication)

2.3 Number of articles to be published

3. Online media:

- 3.1 Expected number of views/impressions of the specific pages / sections / social media posts
- 3.2 Expected engagement rate on the specific pages / sections / social media posts
- 3.3 Expected number of daily unique visitors of the specific pages or sections
- 3.4 Number of specific pages / sections / social media posts to be published

4 EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

The EP reserves the right to contact applicants during the evaluation procedure in order to obtain additional information, documentation or clarifications on the content of the proposal. However, this does not include any kind of negotiation. Any requests or replies do not constitute any ground to claim any expectation concerning the selection of the proposal.

4.1 Admissibility criteria

Failure to comply with at least one of the following admissibility criteria will lead to a rejection of the application.

- applications must be sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to below;
- applications must be submitted following the electronic submission procedure described below. No other method of submission will be accepted.

4.2 Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for a grant, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they are:

- A legal person constituted and registered as a legal entity for at least two years at the time of application;
- Based in one of the Member States of the European Union, the United Kingdom or Switzerland.

Exclusion of multi-beneficiary schemes

Several applicants cannot submit one common action proposal. In addition, grant agreements may only be signed with a single beneficiary.

However, cooperation schemes may be implemented as follows:

- Applicants may submit a proposal coordinated with another proposal by one or more other grant applicant(s). In such case, the coordination modalities should be reflected in the description of the action. This coordination scheme could lead to the signature of two or more grant agreements.

- Applicants may delegate the implementation of part of the action to other entities (implementing partners). They may define the modalities of their cooperation scheme in the description of the action. In case the proposal would be selected, only the beneficiary of the grant would sign a grant agreement and carry the legal and financial responsibility for the implementation of the action.

The affiliated entities of the applicant may implement the action in full or in part without being considered as subcontractors. Affiliated entities are legal entities having a link with the applicant, notably a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation on the condition that they satisfy the eligibility and non-exclusion criteria of an applicant. In this case, the existence of such link must be demonstrated by the applicant.

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, at least one of the following supporting documents is requested:

- Extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of association register or any other relevant supporting document. For the purpose of easing the evaluation, a curtesy translation of the document(s) provided is also requested;
- Where relevant, any document proving the existence of the structural link between the applicant and its affiliated entities.

4.3 Exclusion criteria¹

a) Exclusion from participation

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the exclusion situations:

- (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;

¹ Articles 136, Article 137 and Article 142 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.

- (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:
 - (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council² and Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - (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/JHA³, 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/JHA⁴;
 - (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 Council⁵;
 - (v) terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA⁶, 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 Council⁷;
- (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 proposal 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;

² OJ L 198, 28.7.2017, p. 29.

³ OJ L 192, 31.7.2003, p. 54.

⁴ OJ L 300, 11.11.2008, p. 42.

⁵ OJ L 141, 5.6.2015, p. 73.

⁶ OJ L 164, 22.6.2002, p. 3.

⁷ OJ L 101, 15.4.2011, p. 1.

- (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 2988/95⁸;
- (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 proposal in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
- (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);
- (i) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) 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 proposal 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.

b) Rejection from award

In accordance with Article 141 (1) of the Financial rules, applicants will be rejected from an award procedure if, they:

- a. are in an exclusion situation established in accordance with Article 136 of the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union;
- b. have misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information;

⁸ OJ L 312, 23.12.1995, p. 1.

c. were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, which cannot be remedied otherwise.

c) Supporting documents

Applicants must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Article 136 (1) and 141 (1) of the Financial rules filling in the relevant form attached to the application form (Annex 1.IV). Omitting to sign and/or date this form will result in the exclusion of the proposal.

4.4 Selection criteria

a) Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding. In particular, they should have

 An average turnover/income in the two last financial years of at least twice the total amount of the contribution requested to the EP.

The applicant's financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents:

- A declaration of their honour annexed to the application form duly filled in and signed (Annex 1.IV -see exclusion criteria),
- A financial statement (including the balance sheet, the profit and loss accounts and the annexes) for the last two financial years for which accounts have been closed.
- Financial data provided in the grant application form,
- The Restructured Simplified Accounting Balance Sheets and Profit and Loss Accounts dully filled in (Annex 1.III).

b) Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action. The applicants must have in particular:

- 1) at least 2 years' proven communication experience as a media outlet falling in at least one of the following categories:
 - television broadcasting companies or networks broadcasting at pan-European, national or regional level in one or more Member States,
 - radio broadcasting companies or networks broadcasting at pan-European, national or regional level in one or more Member States, online news / information portals
 - newspapers (print, online or both),
 - · news agencies,
 - sectoral associations, networks or companies producing content to be broadcasted or published by third party media (provided that the media being it a member of the

association or of the network or a third party provides a commitment to broadcast or publish the media content).

2) human resources whose competencies and qualifications include experience in journalism, action management and sound knowledge of European affairs.

In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour (Annex 1.IV - see exclusion criteria), and the following supporting documents:

- curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation;
- the organisations' activity report for the last two years;
- an exhaustive list of previous actions and activities performed and connected to the actions to be carried out.

Proposals that fail to meet the financial or operational criteria will not be examined further.

4.5 Award criteria

All proposals passing the eligibility, selection and reach criteria will be assessed in accordance with the award criteria listed below and ranked in order of merit according to the points received. Following the evaluation, all eligible proposals are ranked according to the total number of points awarded. Financial contributions shall be awarded to the highest scoring proposals up to the available budget.

In order to ensure the best possible geographical spread and attract the widest audience, action proposals from the same country will be ranked against each other and only the best scored ones may be shortlisted.

Proposals must propose an efficient management structure and provide a clear and precise description of the strategy and of the expected results.

The content of each proposal will be assessed according to the following criteria and sub-criteria. The sub-criteria shall be taken into account in the assessment of each of the main award criteria

	Criteria	Maximum weighting (points)
1	Relevance of the action proposal	30
	a) Relevance of the action with regard to the national context (political, economic and societal)	
	b) Relevance of the action with regards to the objectives of the call, including how it relates to EP agenda and priorities	

TIMETABLE

Publication of the call for proposals:	Beginning of June 2020
Application deadline:	31 July 2020

Evaluation period:	July- September 2020
Information to applicants	September 2020
Signature of grant agreements:	September-October 2020

6 FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

The Financial Regulation defines the applicable rules for the implementation of the actions.

6.1 Budget available

An indicative amount of € 5.15 million will be available for grants under this call for proposals. The EP reserves the right not to distribute the entirety of the available budge

6.2 Co-financing

Co-financing shall take the form of reimbursement of a specified proportion of eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary and its affiliated entities⁹.

The grant is limited to a **maximum co-funding rate of 80 % of the action's eligible costs**. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimative budget must be financed from sources other than the grant (co-financing principle).

For more information on the categories of costs eligible and on how to estimate the budget of your action, please refer to the guidelines for applicants in Annex 3.

7 USE OF ACTIONS' RESULTS AND PUBLICITY

7.1 Use of actions' results

Without prejudice to the fact that ownership of the results of the action, including industrial and intellectual property rights, and of the reports and other documents relating to it, shall be vested in the beneficiary, the beneficiary grants the Union the right to use the results of the action for the purposes specified in the signed grant agreement.

7.2 Publicity by the beneficiaries

In accordance with the grant agreement, grants beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used. Beneficiaries should ensure the visibility of the EU funding in a proactive manner, displaying at least the European Union emblem in association with the EP logo.

Any communication or publication related to the action, made by the beneficiary shall indicate that the action has received funding from the Union and shall display the European Union emblem.

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⁹ As defined in Article 187 of the Financial Regulation

The obligation to display the European Union emblem and the EP logo does not confer to the beneficiary a right of exclusive use. The beneficiary shall not appropriate the European Union emblem, EP logo or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means.

For the purposes of the second, third and fourth subparagraphs and under the conditions specified therein, the beneficiary is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the Parliament to use the European Union emblem and the EP logo.

Guidelines on the use of the EU emblem are available at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/services/visual_identity/pdf/use-emblem_en.pdf

More information on the visual identity of the EP, notably the EP logo guidelines (graphic charter) and the terms of use of the EP logo by third parties, may be found on the website of the EP at the following address: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/downloadcentre/en/visual-identity.

Where possible, a disclaimer should be used in conjunction with the EP logo (Cf. guidelines for applicants).

7.3 Publicity by the EP

All information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on the EP website no later than 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The EP will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary,
- address of the beneficiary,
- subject of the grant, and
- amount awarded.

8 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

8.1 Application form

Applications must be submitted electronically using the grant application form annexed to this call for proposals.

8.2 Supporting documents

The supporting documents may be submitted in any official languages. Applicants are not required to provide translated documents, except for supporting documents aimed at demonstrating the eligibility and the operational capacity of the applicant, which must be submitted together with a summary in English.

Supporting documents must be clearly entitled and numbered as per the checklist for applicants.

The EP may ask applicants to complete any application, which is incomplete or illegible or which is not formatted as requested

8.3 Ways of submission and deadline

Applications for grants must be submitted electronically by 31 July 2020 at midnight CET.

The date and time of submission will be the date and time of sent applications, as registered by the EP's server.

In order to register a grant application, the applicant must download the application form available on the European Parliament's website at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00beb2559e/Grants.html following the guidelines and instructions provided in the form. The form must be saved on a local drive (computer) before being completed.

The form may be filled offline, edited and saved several times (if necessary). Please do not rename the form and the annexes thereof.

In order to be registered, the application form must be submitted by email:

- either by pressing on "Submit by Email" at the bottom of the form: by clicking on "Submit by email", the form will be automatically attached to an email addressed to the EP, or
- by attaching the application form to an email addressed to dgcomm-egrants@ep.europa.eu.

Requested supporting documentation (see admissibility requirements) must be manually attached to the same email before sending it to the EP. The e-mail body may be filled in with comments relevant to the application if necessary. Please send your application and annexes in one single email, avoiding transfer via web-based applications. The size limit of incoming emails is 50 MB.

Paper applications or electronic applications on data carriers (CD Rom, USB Stick) will not be accepted. Applicants should note however that an original application in paper may be requested by the EP in the course of the evaluation and the award process.

It is highly recommended to submit your application before the above mentioned deadline in order to avoid potential delays which might be caused by a large number of simultaneous applications.

8.4 Information during the procedure and notification of results

The EP will notify receipt of applications and results, <u>by e-mail only</u>, to the <u>contact person</u> named in the grant application form. It is the applicant responsibility to provide a valid e-mail address for its contact person for the whole duration of the procedure and to check this e-mail address regularly.

Upon submission of their application, applicants will receive information on the evaluation and award process in 3 steps:

1- Acknowledgement of receipt stating the date and time of application. In case the applicant would not receive an acknowledgement of receipt within 15 calendar days following the submission of the application, he/she should contact the EP at dgcomm-subvention@ep.europa.eu within 15 calendar days after the deadline for application in order to confirm receipt of the application. The EP shall not be held liable in case of any technical issue preventing the registration of an application. If the applicant cannot provide a proof of submission, the application will not be considered by the EP.

- 2- Email confirming the status of the application:
 - Confirmation that the application is under assessment (applications complying with the admissibility criteria) and communication of the grant ID (to be reminded in all correspondence with the EP), or
 - Rejection because inadmissible application (see admissibility criteria above).
- 3- Notification of the results of the evaluation (selected or rejected grant proposals). Successful applicants will be required to confirm their application following the notification of results. Failure to do so may lead the EP to withdraw its offer.

9 CONTACT AND REQUEST FOR COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Questions of clarification may be sent by e-mail to: dgcomm-subvention@ep.europa.eu five days before the deadline for submission.

Questions drafted in English or French will receive a reply within five working days. It should be noted that this time-limit could be extended in case a translation from any EU official language to English or French would be required. Replies will be provided in English or in French.

10 DATA PROTECTION

Please see the privacy statement of the EP communication grants programme

11 LIST OF ANNEXES

Annex 1: Grant application form (to fill in) and its annexes:

- Annex 1.I: Description of the action (to fill in and return with the application form)
- Annex 1.II: Performance indicators for the action (to fill in and return with the application form)
- Annex 1.III: Restructured Simplified Accounting Balance Sheets and Profit and Loss Accounts (to fill in and return with the application form)
- Annex 1.IV: Declaration on honour (to fill in and return with the application form)
- Annex 1.V: Financial Identification Form (to fill in and return with the application form)
- Annex 2: Model Grant Agreement (for information only)
- Annex 3: Guidelines for applicants (for information only)
- Annex 4: Checklist for applicants (for information only)