

European Social Fund Plus Social Innovation Plus Initiative

Innovative Approaches Tackling Long-Term Unemployment

ESF-SI-2024-LTU-01

Call Conditions



ABSTRACT

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

Open Call title: Innovative Approaches Tackling Long-Term Unemployment.

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

Deadline: 30/09/2024 at 5:00 PM CEST time zone.

Indicative overall grant budget for the Call: EUR 23 000 000.

The form of grant: a lump sum grant.

Expected duration of a project: 36 months.

The size of grant: The estimated size of a grant is between EUR 1 000 000 and EUR 3 000 000 per project (but this does not preclude the submission/selection of applications requesting other amounts), constituting no more than 80% of the total project budget. A co-financing of at least 20% must thus come from other sources than the EU budget.

Official Call website: <https://www.esf.lt/lt>; <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/esf-social-innovation>

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

For support: LTU@esf.lt

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GLOSSARY

APPLICANT – a legal entity (organisation) which submits an application. The applicant assumes the role of **the Coordinator**.

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

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

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

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

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

EMPLOYMENT PROVIDER – under this Call, a legal entity (applicant or co-applicant) that will provide job placements for long-term unemployed persons and will remunerate them from the grant in accordance with the conditions of this Call (see Section 2.4).

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

LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED PERSON – an individual of working age who has been without employment for at least 12 months, irrespective of whether he/she is officially registered with the national public employment services (**the target group of this Call**).

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

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

PUBLIC BODY – any legal entity which is established as a public body by national law.¹ The criteria listed below shall NOT constitute sufficient evidence for an entity to be recognised as a public body:

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

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

REMUNERATION – for the purpose of this Call, the term 'remuneration' includes the total compensation payable by an employment provider to long-term unemployed persons arising from their employment (including any applicable wage taxes under national law). It shall not cover other forms of in-kind compensation.

SOCIAL INNOVATION – 'an activity, that is social both as to its ends and its means and in particular an activity which relates to the development and implementation of new ideas concerning products, services, practices and models, that simultaneously meets social needs and creates new social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society, or private organisations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act' (Article 2.1. (8) of the ESF+ Regulation).

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

1. Background

1.1. Policy context

The European Parliament, the European Council, and the European Commission in November 2017 proclaimed the **European Pillar of Social Rights (the Pillar)**, which sets out 20 principles and rights to support well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems. The ESF+ finances the implementation of these principles through projects in the area of employment, education and skills, and social inclusion. The Pillar states that ‘everyone has the right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects’ and that “the long-term unemployed have the right to an in-depth individual assessment at the latest at 18 months of unemployment.”²

Following the announcement by President Ursula von der Leyen in her 2022 State of the Union address, the Commission has adopted its proposal to make 2023 the European Year of Skills. This strategic initiative, running until May 2024, provides a new momentum to the delivery of the principles of the Pillar promoting a mindset of reskilling and upskilling and thereby boosting the competitiveness of European companies, fostering skills policies and investment to ensure that no one is left behind. The European Year of Skills is intended to support sustainable growth of the Union’s social market economy, with the aim of increasing its competitiveness and contributing to the creation of quality jobs. It proposes strengthening collaboration between employers, workers, representatives of employers and workers, social partners, chambers of commerce and other stakeholders to become part of the solution to encouraging skill development, reskilling and creating employment opportunities. Usually, the emphasis is placed on the importance of developing such collaborations on a regional and local scale. However, reskilling and upskilling of the labour force is much more challenging in disadvantaged and remote areas, where access to the labour market is limited.³

Moreover, within the framework of the transition to a contemporary, resource-efficient, and competitive economy, there will be a demand for skills pertinent to the green transition, along with the necessity for upskilling and reskilling of the workforce. These objectives are outlined in the European Green Deal⁴, which sets out the path towards EU climate neutrality by 2050. A workforce with the right skills is a precondition for the green transition, forecasted to generate 2.5 million additional jobs in the EU by 2030.⁵ Furthermore, the European Green Deal introduced the Just Transition Fund, which aids industries and areas impacted by the transition to achieve net-zero emissions. Alongside NextGenerationEU and the ‘Fit for 55’ packages, it includes various mechanisms aimed at addressing employment matters and transforming their economic foundations.

The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021-2030) proposed, as one of its flagship initiatives, a Disability Employment Package to improve labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities.⁶ The Package consists of a set of guidance and good practices for employers, employment and career guidance services, and public authorities. It explains legal obligations, current policy frameworks, and provides concrete guidance and examples.

Furthermore, the Council Recommendation on developing framework conditions⁷ for the social economy calls on Member States to ensure that public authorities provide adequate support to social economy entities with a view to better integrating women as well as disadvantaged and other underrepresented groups, such as the long-term unemployed, into the labour market.

In 2022, Europe reached its lowest unemployment rate since 2009, at 6.2%. However, despite this overall decrease, the proportion of individuals who had been unemployed for more than 12 months remained high and accounted for 2.4% of the total number of unemployed people. This number varied across the EU from 0.6% in Denmark to 7.7% in Greece.⁸ The unemployment rates in 2022 are presented in the chart below (Figure 1).

2 [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles \(europa.eu\)](#)

3 Decision (EU) 2023/936 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 on a European Year of Skills, Available at: [Decision - 2023/936 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

4 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - The European Green Deal (COM/2019/640 final). Available at: [EUR-Lex - 52019DC0640 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

5 Cedefop, The green employment and skills transformation, 22. Available at: [The green employment and skills transformation | CEDEFOP \(europa.eu\)](#)

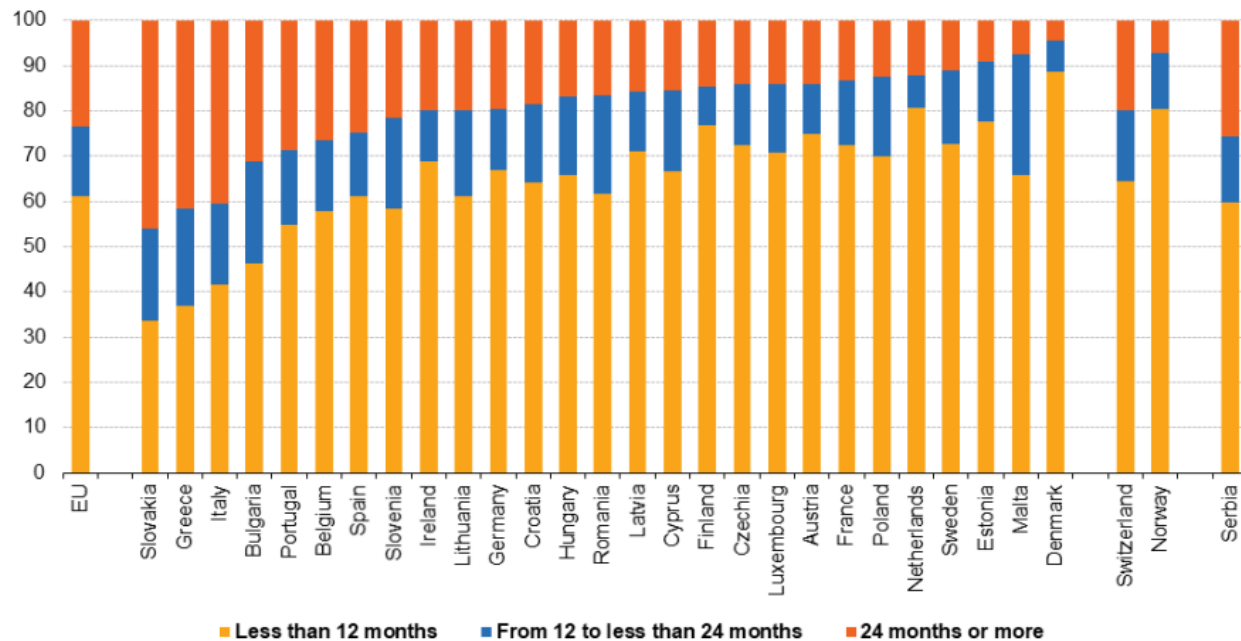
6 [Disability Employment Package to improve labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

7 Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023 on developing social economy framework conditions, (C/2023/1344). Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202301344

8 [Unemployment statistics and beyond - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#)

Figure 1 Unemployment by duration, 2022 (age groups 15-74, unemployment rate as a percentage).

Source: Eurostat. [Unemployment statistics and beyond - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)



Malta and Norway: category '24 months or more' with low data reliability.
Iceland: data not available.

A high long-term unemployment rate indicates that the labour market is not functioning properly. This leads to a reduction in the human resources and skills of the unemployed, a loss of social security contributions, and a decline in economic activity. The negative social impact of long-term unemployment makes it harder for individuals to reintegrate into the labour market the longer they are unemployed.

Long-term unemployed persons are individuals who have been unemployed for 12 months or more. The majority of the long-term unemployed persons are older or low-skilled workers, as well as persons with disabilities, who are almost twice as numerous as those without disabilities.⁹ However, this is not a rule and in 2021 around 2.5 million young people (out of 6 million in total) in Europe were impacted by being unemployed for more than 12 months.¹⁰ The longer a person remains unemployed, the more difficult it becomes to find employment: the probability of finding a job is 0.3 in the first week after unemployment, 0.08 after eight weeks and only 0.02 in the year after unemployment.¹¹ Being unemployed for more than a year has a significant impact on the individuals concerned, EU economies, and social services. It can lead to social exclusion, poverty, and inequality, as well as increased costs to public finances. Additionally, it can result in a loss of income, erosion of skills, and higher incidence of health problems for those affected. Individuals with low skills or qualifications, third-country nationals, persons with disabilities, and disadvantaged minorities, such as the Roma, are among those most vulnerable to long-term unemployment. A person's previous occupation also plays a significant role. In some countries, sectoral and cyclical aspects are crucial in explaining the persistence of long-term unemployment.

Improving the performance, inclusiveness and relevance of educational systems is key to reducing the number of newly unemployed individuals, which, consequently, would prevent them from becoming long-term unemployed.¹²

The European Council Recommendations of February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market state that 'Individualised approaches to support the long-term unemployed should address the barriers

9 European Comparative Data on Persons with Disabilities, EDE. Available at: [Reports - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

10 Markowitsch J., Scharle Á. (2024). Towards zero long-term unemployment in the EU: Job guarantees and other innovative approaches, 6, 8. Available at: [study-on-job-guarantees-initiatives-in-europe-2024-03-06.pdf \(esf.lt\)](https://study-on-job-guarantees-initiatives-in-europe-2024-03-06.pdf)

11 Point (20) of the A/HRC/53/33: The employment guarantee as a tool in the fight against poverty - Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78175-report-special-rapporteur-extreme-poverty-and-human-rights>

12 Markowitsch J., Scharle Á. (2024), 6.

leading to persistent unemployment, updating, and complementing the initial assessment made upon registration. This will guide long-term unemployed persons towards support services sufficiently tailored to individual needs, such as debt-counselling, rehabilitation, social support services, care services, migrant integration, housing and transport support, aimed at addressing barriers to work and empowering those persons to reach clear goals leading to employment.¹³

The European Committee of the Regions, in its Opinion of July 2023 on zero long-term unemployment, stresses the need 'to put forward an employment solution for everyone, including long-term unemployed people.' It also 'notes that employment deprivation costs more than creating additional jobs.'¹⁴

At its 155th plenary session in May 2023, the European Committee of the Regions expressed the need for initiatives combatting long-term unemployment at European level. The Committee also called on local and regional authorities to put in place schemes based on the fundamental principles of local employment initiatives, such as the 'zero long-term unemployment' and 'job guarantee', by redirecting the costs of unemployment towards the creation of decent jobs and called on the European Commission to map these initiatives.¹⁵

Even with these advancements, the challenges of long-term unemployment invite for a further search for innovation and essential solutions.

1.2. The potential of social innovation

This is a call for European Union (EU) grants related to the transfer or scaling up of social innovations in the field of long-term unemployment under ESF+ SI+ Initiative. The ESF+ SI+ Initiative aims at promoting transnational cooperation between EU Member States and EaSI participating countries to facilitate the transfer and scaling up of innovative solutions. By supporting transnational cooperation, the initiative aims to disseminate best practices across Europe in various fields, including employment, education, skills, and social inclusion.

Under the ESF+, the SI+ Initiative covers innovations¹⁶ that are social in terms of both their ends and their means. Thus, it acknowledges that social innovation:

- is a collective social process, involving a distinctive participation of civil society actors and building new relationships between public, private, and third sector entities and
- generates social output and impact in the form of improved services, products, models, social relationships, standards, or policies that create greater social impact than current practice and are therefore more effective in achieving the objectives of the ESF+ and the European Pillar of Social Rights.¹⁷

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

In line with the above definition, social innovation is marked by the following characteristics:

- **It is built upon a bottom-up/tailored approach.**

Social innovation is triggered by context-specific needs. Rather than relying on standardised models, social innovation encourages the development of solutions that are finely adjusted to the specific needs and resources of a given context. This approach recognises that the complexity of social issues demands a customised response that harnesses the potential of local stakeholders and fosters a sense of ownership over the solutions.

13 Point (18) of the Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (OJC 67, 20.2.2016), Available at: [EUR-Lex - 32016H0220\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

14 Points 14-15 of the Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions on zero long-term unemployment: the local and regional perspective. (OJ C 257 21.7.2023). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022IR5490>

15 155th plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions. Available at: [155th CoR Plenary Session \(europa.eu\)](#)

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

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

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

17 [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles \(europa.eu\)](#)

- It requires active involvement of civil society.

Studies on innovation in general often underline the importance of cooperation between public authorities, the private sector, and academia. Social innovation adds civil society as a fourth essential group of stakeholders. As social innovation is people-centred, the involvement of civil society is essential to inform the design and delivery of successful solutions and related policies. In this context, social economy entities play a key role: they have strong local roots and primarily aim to service the community, thus being well-placed to provide need-driven innovative solutions.¹⁸

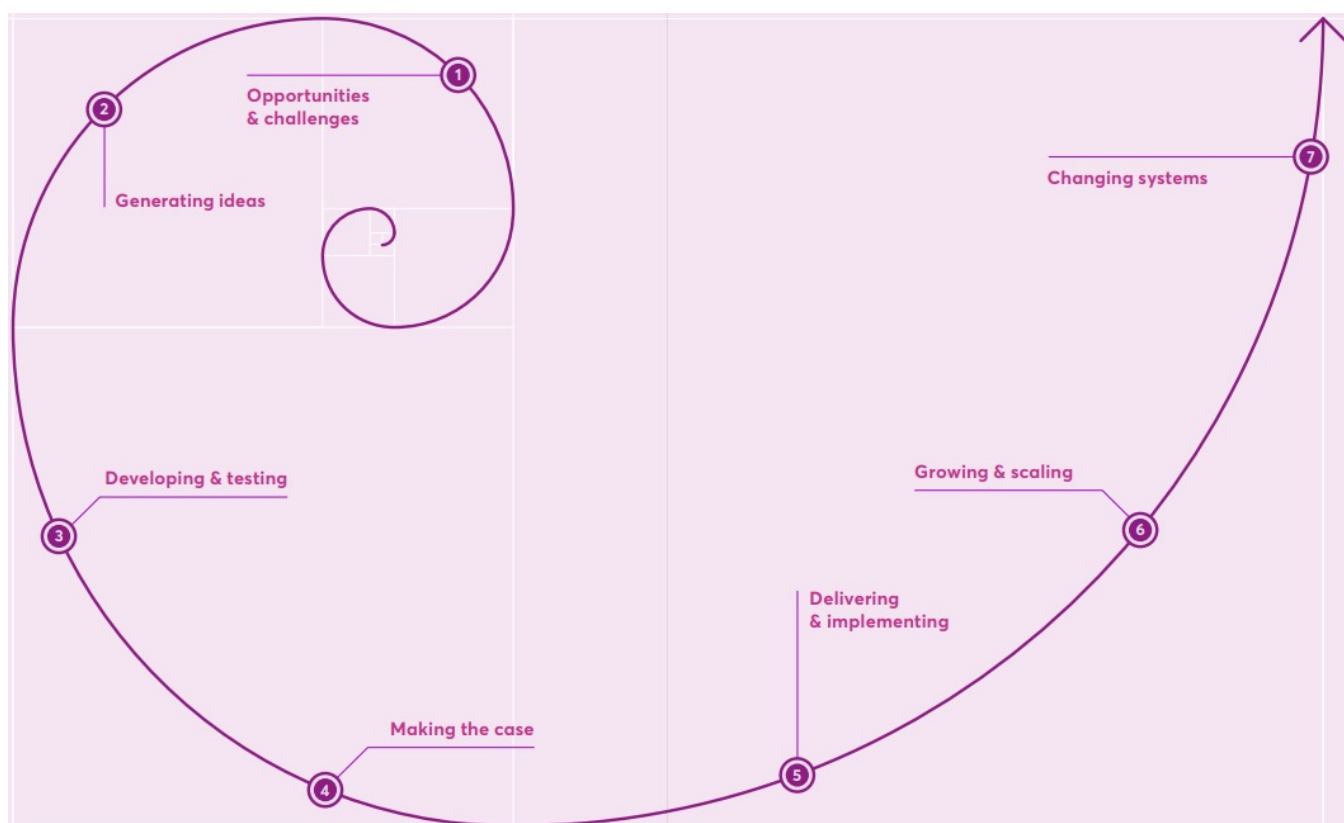
- It is often based on tested small-scale solutions with potential for upscaling.

If tested successfully at the small scale, innovative solutions can be scaled up and eventually mainstreamed into public policies or systems. Transferring an innovative solution, even partially, requires extensive adaptation of the model, approach, service, or product to its new context. It is an iterative process, consisting of continuous trials and adjustments with regard to specific local situations, assessment of the long- and short-term impact on the target population.¹⁹

All in all, social innovation is often referred to as a cyclical process, from early prompts to possible changes in mainstream system policies. Throughout the process, there is continuous learning, assessment of the further development, and adaptation. This can be illustrated by a multi-step curve, as illustrated in the figure below (Figure 2).

Figure 2 The Innovation Spiral

Source: [NESTA \(2019\). A Compendium of Innovation Methods.](#)



18 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy: eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0778

19 European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2022). Ledan, A. Social experimentation – A practical guide for project promoters. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: [Social experimentation - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://social-experimentation-publications-office-of-the-eu.europa.eu)

1.3. Legal base of the Call

This Call is published under:

- Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013²⁰, and in particular Articles 5(2), 14(6) and 25 (i) thereof;
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy²¹;
- Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union²², and in particular Articles 181, 182 and 183 thereof.

This Call is financed by the ESF+ under the SI+ Initiative, launched by the European Commission with a budget of EUR 23 million for the 2021-2027 programming period. The SI+ initiative is implemented under the EaSI strand of the ESF+, under indirect management (Article 25 (i) of the ESF+ Regulation) by ESFA.

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

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

1.4. Benefiting from previously tested local employment initiatives

In accordance with the current Call Conditions, applicants must transfer or scale up²³ previously implemented social innovations in the field of long-term unemployment. This section provides an overview of selected initiatives being implemented in the EU that may serve as a source of inspiration for applicants. However, these are not the only local employment initiatives that can be transferred or upscaled in the territorial contexts of applicants. Other sources of inspiration are provided by the Social Innovation Match database, presented in Section 2.6 of the Call Conditions. Also, applicants may refer to other available models or approaches that can be further transferred or scaled up.

In recent years, several local employment initiatives have been launched in the EU. A set of such inspirational initiatives have been documented and published by ESFA in the Report 'Towards Zero Long-term Unemployment in the EU: Job Guarantees and Other Innovative Approaches'.²⁴ A common feature of the mapped initiatives is that they redirect the costs of long-term unemployment towards the creation of decent jobs that are useful to the areas and communities in which they are developed. There may be a shortage of decent jobs offered by the labour market, but there is no shortage of work. Thus, these initiatives consider that everyone is employable and that even people who have been out of work for a long time have work-related know-how and skills.

The initiatives mapped in the Report demonstrate success in creating tailored jobs by involving local stakeholders, and in having positive impact on the economic and social well-being of communities. Long-term unemployed persons generally do achieve financial independence, experience professional development, and report increased self-confidence. High overall levels of satisfaction and low drop-out rates attest to the potential of these initiatives to successfully combat long-term unemployment.

Zero long-term unemployment initiatives, that have been carried out in France since 2016, in Belgium since 2022, and

²⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1057>

²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1060>

²² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046>

²³ As defined in 'Social experimentation – A practical guide for project promoters' (2022), 'transfer' refers to the implementation of social experimentation in other contexts (either territorial or to a different sector); 'upscaling' refers to the implementation on a larger scale, i.e. expanding the scope of small-scale new solutions to an upper level (from local to regional, national, and/or European levels) to reach a higher number of beneficiaries, 40.

²⁴ Markowitsch J., Scharle Á. (2024).

under the name of 'job guarantee' in Gramatneusiedl in Austria and 'Basisbaan' in Groningen in the Netherlands since 2020, are largely based on common principles:

- No one is unemployable when jobs are tailored to people's abilities and skills, and there are both jobs that are not provided by the labour market and activities or services that are not provided by either the private or the public sector;
- Long-term unemployed people are involved on a voluntary basis, which, unlike forced labour or conditional support, enables them to take real ownership, and the schemes are extended to people who are no longer registered with public employment services;
- High-quality jobs are created on the basis of jobseekers' skills and individual situations, in particular their health and family circumstances;
- Long-term unemployed persons are paid at least the minimum wage and have customised working hours;
- The provided services are benefit the whole area without creating competition with the existing businesses;
- A participatory and inclusive approach is taken, initiated at the local level with the public and all relevant stakeholders.²⁵

The largest initiative mapped in the Report²⁶ is **France's Territoires zero chômeur de longue durée (TZCLD)**, which employed 3,602 individuals. The measure was implemented in 2016 and is planned to continue until 2026. The essential elements of the initiative are a territorial approach and a consensus between all relevant local employment actors to create supplementary jobs for people deprived from employment in newly established non-profit social economy organisations, with the aim of providing new or improving existing services that meet the needs of residents. Belgium is currently adapting the French model on a smaller scale. The initiative is based on a paradigm shift towards collective rather than individual responsibility. A fundamental element of the project is the bottom-up dynamic, which strengthens social cohesion and citizen participation in the area by mobilising local actors with strong links to the territory.

Berlin's Solidary Basic Income (SBI) has been supporting 1,057 individuals to date (2023). The programme started in 2019 and will run until 2025. It aims to tackle early to mid-stage long-term unemployment by offering job opportunities to individuals unemployed in the State of Berlin for up to five years. The initiative is geared towards individuals who have difficulty integrating into the job market but are not completely distant from it: eligible individuals are employment-seeking adults who have been unemployed for over 12 months and up to a maximum of 3 years, residing in the municipality of Berlin. This threshold was deliberately chosen to concentrate on the early stages of long-term unemployment. SBI focuses on offering meaningful work, participation, and avenues for professional growth to long-term unemployed persons. A key conceptual requirement is that the SBI jobs provided must be additional to existing offers and services. To this end, the employers either expanded their range of tasks or restricted the job profile for the SBI positions in such a way so that overlapping with the task portfolio of regular employees were avoided.

The Dutch Basisbaan initiative, launched in 2020 with 50 long-term unemployed persons. It aims to reduce reliance on welfare benefits while fostering a sense of purpose and contribution to the community. A secondary aim is to improve the quality (or availability) of community services. Basisbaan includes a job carving component, personalised placement, and post-placement support for long-term for recipients of unemployment benefits. The target group is social assistance recipients aged over 27 who are able and willing to work (with working capability of 24 to 36 hours/week) but have not been able to find or keep a job in the open labour market. long-term unemployed persons are employed by Groningen municipality and paid the minimum wage.

Austria's Marienthal Job Guarantee Pilot (MAGMA) engages 112 long-term unemployed persons. It differs from existing labour market policy instruments addressing the long-term unemployed in that it involves all long-term unemployed living in the region of Gramatneusiedl, uses a broad mix of support services, and creates additional jobs in the private sector. The MAGMA project is unique in offering a universal and unconditional guarantee of a fair-paid job, through alternative forms of employment to all people unemployed for longer than twelve months. The programme also offers long-term unemployed persons a wide range of support services that are aimed at preparing them for the job market, including one-on-one training, counselling, and support from social workers, doctors, and psychologists. Long-term unemployed persons are supported in their search for work and are either guaranteed paid employment in the private or public sector or supported to create a new job for themselves based on their existing

25 Points 17-18 of OJ C 257 21.7.2023.

26 Markowitsch J., Scharle Á. (2024).

knowledge and skills. Long-term unemployed persons earn at least the minimum wage, bringing their income above their previous social benefits.

It is worth mentioning that the recommendations of the Report identified four elements of an effective policy to reduce long-term unemployment: increasing outreach; providing individualised support; strengthening cooperation between service providers and with employers.²⁷

2. Aim of the Call, Activities, and Outcomes

2.1. Aim of the Call

The aim of this Call is to encourage applicants to transfer or scale up proven and promising social innovations aimed at facilitating the integration or reintegration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market and/or fostering their social inclusion.

Projects are expected to reflect all three key areas:

- (1) cooperation with local employment stakeholders and partnerships between local employers and communities,
- (2) improving the mobilisation (mapping and outreach) of long-term unemployed persons (including those facing the most barriers, such as persons with disabilities), and
- (3) providing an individualised, accessible, and inclusive approach for long-term unemployed persons.

2.2. Activities

Applicants must propose activities that effectively address the aim of the Call, ensuring that they adequately cover the six predefined and mandatory categories of activities (shown in bold below from 1 to 6) and should demonstrate how the chosen activities will contribute to achieving the expected outcomes outlined in the Section 2.3. As a result of the activities implemented in the projects awarded under this Call, each consortium is expected to have further developed an already proven or promising innovative approach(es) that addresses the aim of this Call.

Previous initiatives (as exemplified in the Section 1.4) have demonstrated a range of activities that have proven beneficial in addressing the challenges of long-term unemployment. By drawing upon the lessons learned, applicants can plan their project activities.

Applicants must propose projects that include at least the following six predefined mandatory categories of activities. Each category is outlined with exemplary activities, however, applicants can propose new activities or additional categories of activities that complement these examples, provided that they are in line with the aim of the Call.

1. Strengthening of collaboration and capacity building, for instance:

- Building of the capacity of key stakeholders to implement an innovative approach/model for the benefit of long-term unemployed persons. Encouraging these stakeholders to go beyond traditional outreach and motivation methods in order to provide tailored support in addressing the specific challenges faced by the long-term unemployed who may have given up their job search efforts.
- Facilitating collaboration among various employment actors (for example through the setting up of a local employment committee, other network structures or formal/informal arrangements at local/regional/national level).

2. Fostering partnerships with local communities and local employers, for instance:

- Fostering community-driven job creation initiatives that add value to the community while addressing the challenges of long-term unemployment. This can be achieved by offering tailored job opportunities that are aligned with the abilities of long-term unemployed persons (such as the creation of community gardens, resale shops, recycling initiatives, bicycle repair services, deliveries, mobile and/or social grocery shops, sewing clubs and other initiatives).

²⁷ Markowitsch J., Scharle Á. (2024), 11.

- Collaborating with local employers to identify job opportunities suitable for long-term unemployed persons, fostering inclusive and accessible hiring practices, and providing support for skill development and on-job training.
- Developing training programmes that integrate elements of social entrepreneurship or community service, where long-term unemployed can apply their skills to address local needs or contribute to social causes.
- Partnering with local businesses and entities to create innovative job-sharing or flexible work arrangements that prioritise inclusiveness, work-life balance, and community involvement.
- Establishing mentorship programmes that pair long-term unemployed persons with experienced professionals or community leaders who can provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities.

3. Mapping and reaching out to the target group, for instance:

- Research activities helping to target long-term unemployed persons, including those facing the most barriers to employment, such as persons with disabilities (market research, accompanying research, and evaluation; research about the target group needs, appropriate methodologies; etc)
- Mapping of target groups, their needs, barriers to employment they face, support needed, and already available support with the aim to implement complementary solutions.
- Reaching out to the long term unemployed, including those facing barriers to accessibility and inclusion in typical outreach measures, motivating them, and providing them with guidance.

4. Empowering the long term unemployed and enhancing employability and social inclusion through tailored support and guidance, for instance:

- Offering tailored support to address the specific challenges faced by long-term unemployed persons, focusing on motivation, individual guidance, on-job training, accessibility and other important aspects. Ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to, participate or advance in employment (so-called 'reasonable accommodation' in employment).²⁸
- Incorporating a strong emphasis on the development of general and transferable skills to enhance long-term unemployed persons' adaptability and competitiveness in the labour market.
- Implementing measures to actively involve the unemployed through the creation of personalised service provision. Personalised services include accessible and inclusive case management, mutual support groups, accompanying assistance, etc.
- Developing coaching services, which play a central role in supporting both employees and employers and contribute to seamless integration, reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, effective conflict resolution, and skills development. In addition, high-quality long-term coaching promotes the continuous development of employees, encourages participation in training programmes and ultimately serves as a means of reducing layoffs.
- Providing ongoing mentorship and guidance to assist them in navigating workplace challenges, career advancement opportunities, and maintaining job stability.
- Offering continued support services aimed at addressing any emerging needs or barriers that may arise during the employment phase.
- Collaborating with employers to create supportive and inclusive work environments.
- Providing ongoing individualised support to enhance long-term unemployed person's confidence and capabilities, increasing their employability within the regular labour market.

5. Offering various working options and opportunities for long-term unemployed persons, for instance:

- Establishing or developing social enterprises (only remuneration costs) employing long-term unemployed persons to pursue activities that generate income to (partially) fund their social causes.

²⁸ Article 5 of the Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32000L0078>

- Adopting subsidised employment for long-term unemployed persons. Subsidised employment is an engine for economic opportunity and a stronger labour market. It can mitigate structural barriers to work, such as discrimination in the labour market, and can be adapted and scaled to meet the specific needs of workers, employers, and communities.
- Offering job creation and/or job carving²⁹ options. Creating, modifying, or adapting a job so that it can be performed by a person with or without a disability, while meeting the needs of the employer.

6. Participating in mutual learning events

Participation in mutual learning events organised by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation (established under the ESF+ SI+ Initiative) is **mandatory**. It is planned to organise 5-6 mutual learning events during the implementation of the projects (a maximum of 3 events will take place on site (provisionally in Vilnius, Paris, and Brussels), the others online.

2.3 Outcomes

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

- 1. The capacities of participating entities built to provide sustainable solutions to reducing long-term unemployment, for instance:**
 - Increased collaboration and capacity building among employment actors at various levels, fostering effective partnerships and resource sharing.
 - Enhanced capacities of stakeholders to implement innovative inclusive approaches tailored to address the specific challenges of long-term unemployment.
- 2. Enhanced stakeholder diversity and collaboration in addressing long-term unemployment, for instance:**
 - Facilitation of collaboration among wider networks (e.g., networks not necessarily directly involved in project implementation), including local communities and government organisations, to collectively address the challenges of long-term unemployment.
 - Increased awareness and knowledge among society and stakeholders at local/regional/national level of innovative approaches to foster skills development and tackle long-term unemployment.
 - Strengthening of the community by empowering long-term unemployed persons as active citizens with new skills and opportunities.
- 3. Reduced long-term unemployment in the area targeted by the project, for instance:**
 - The number of long-term unemployed persons who participated in the project and were subsequently reintegrated into the labour market increased.
- 4. Strengthened forms of personalised coaching service provision for long-term unemployed persons, for instance:**
 - Development of tailored, accessible, and inclusive coaching services that provide individual guidance and support to long-term unemployed persons, addressing their specific needs and challenges.
 - Implementation of innovative approaches in personalised coaching to enhance motivation, skills development, and job search strategies for long-term unemployed persons.
 - Improved the employability and competitiveness of long-term unemployed persons by equipping them with the right set of skills.

²⁹ Job carving refers to the practice of rearranging work tasks within a company to create tailor-made employment opportunities for all people, but especially for people with reduced work capacities or for people who for other reasons are constrained in the tasks they carry out ([Job Carving & Job Crafting \(europa.eu\)](#))

2.4. Requirements for employment providers (offering various working options (Section 2.2 of the Call Conditions activity No. 5))

An important role in the project is fulfilled by the employment providers who will offer job places to long-term unemployed persons during the project. These employment providers can be identified in the application, but can also be added at a later stage (project implementation) stage, if necessary:

1. Already identified employment providers should be **included in a project consortium as beneficiaries**.

Remuneration costs of the long-term unemployed persons of all beneficiaries should be planned in a separate Work Package³⁰ 'Employment of long-term unemployed persons' and indicated in the Detailed Budget Table under the subcategory 'Subsidised employment' of the category C 'Other cost categories'.

2. New employment providers who have not been included in the project at the application stage, but who will offer job places and would like to recruit long-term unemployed persons using the grant, may be included in a project as beneficiaries **through an amendment to the Grant Agreement**.

The inclusion of new employment providers and the corresponding grant amount during the implementation of the project should be planned in advance and foreseen in the application. Remuneration costs of the long-term unemployed persons of these new employment providers should be planned in a separate Work Package 'Employment of long-term unemployed persons (other employment providers)' and indicated under subcategory 'Subsidised employment' of the category C 'Other cost categories' in the Detailed Budget Table and attributed to the coordinator at the application stage. These costs will be transferred from the coordinator to the new employment providers through an amendment to the Grant Agreement at the project implementation stage; the new employment provider(s) will thus become additional beneficiaries of the project. These costs cannot be used by the coordinator for any purpose other than those indicated above.

If both options above are planned to be included in a project, they must be separated into two work packages.

Other requirements for subsidised employment:

The length and arrangements of subsidised employment. Each employment position is eligible for remuneration for a maximum of 24 months within the timeframe of the project. Long-term unemployed persons may be employed on a part-time basis, tailored to their capabilities, with flexible working options available to accommodate their diverse needs and circumstances. Applicants should plan the employment positions in terms of monthly units. At the project implementation stage, employment providers will be required to provide documentation verifying the duration of long-term unemployed person employment under the project and their working hours in full-time equivalents (person months).

Adhering to minimum wage laws. Remuneration costs must be calculated in line with the minimum wage laws of the specific country or the collective bargaining minimum wage of the specific employment provider where the long-term unemployed persons are to be employed. Only the minimum wage (including any applicable wage taxes under national law) is eligible and must be included in the project budget. This does not exclude employment providers from offering a higher remuneration for long-term unemployed persons from their own funds.

Secondment opportunities. The option of secondment of long-term unemployed persons by employment providers may also be considered, according to applicable national law. Secondment typically refers to the temporary transfer of an employee from their current original employer to work in another department, company, or location. The purpose of secondment is often to provide employees with new experiences, skills, and perspectives. It can be a low-risk opportunity that allows long-term unemployed persons to explore new positions and see which one is appropriate in a particular case. In this Call, secondments can only occur in national setups. This is different to temporary work, where an employee is temporarily leased to another company, which is not eligible under this Call. In the case of choosing to apply secondment opportunities in the project, the remuneration costs of the long-term unemployed persons should be planned in the Detailed Budget Table in the same way as described above.

³⁰ Work package (WP) means a major sub-division of the proposed project, i.e., every project is divided into smaller pieces of work. WP represents a specific block of work, each WP consists of activities and deliverables – outputs of a particular WP- which show progress of the project.

2.5. Essential elements of the application

The following elements form the core of a project, i.e., each application shall cover **all the elements**. However, applicants are free to choose how to integrate or combine all these elements in the project framework (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Essential elements of the application



1) Conceptual framework

The application should articulate a clear conceptual framework that outlines the cyclical nature of social innovation and details the steps necessary to scale up the proposed innovative model. This includes drawing on existing proven experiences, specifying planned activities, and projecting anticipated long-term impact. Importantly, it should be underscored that any opportunities created for long-term unemployed persons **must supplement existing offerings** and services rather than simply redistribute them. The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

2) Relevance of social innovation

In the table 'Theory of change' (Section 5, Part A of the Application Form), the applicant has to explain why it is reasonable to further develop (transfer and/or scale up) the chosen innovative approach. The applicant must also specify what positive impact the suggested innovative approach will generate on the target group, the participating entities, and employment system. The application should explain the potential impact of the chosen intervention model on addressing the prevalent issue of long-term unemployment within the designated transfer/scaling up context. It should demonstrate a clear need for inclusive social innovation and explain how the innovation in question will help to tackle the identified problem(s). The application should clarify how the proposed model will help to fill existing gaps and/or **complement available solutions**, where appropriate. The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

3) Transnational partnership

A consortium shall consist of at least two eligible entities representing at least two eligible countries (as detailed in the Section 6.1 of the Call Conditions). The application should provide a clear and comprehensive account of how each consortium member will contribute to fulfilling the overarching aim of the Call (please see Section 2.1.), while at the same time promoting mutual learning, fostering collaborative efforts, and ensuring the successful execution of the project. The roles assigned to each consortium member should be in line with their demonstrated experience and expertise. The description of the partnership should be provided in the Application Form: Part B - Section 2.

4) Diversity of stakeholders

A project is encouraged to apply the Quadruple Helix Model³¹ of innovation, which recognises the importance of four major actors in the innovation process: public, private, academic sectors, and civil society. The application should include measures to identify the relevant stakeholders and explain how their effective collaboration and active engagement will be organised. The application should elaborate on how the project will benefit from the expertise, networks, and resources of the actors whose participation is envisaged. This description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

31 Schütz, F., Heidingsfelder, M. L., & Schraudner, M. (2019). Co-shaping the Future in Quadruple Helix Innovation Systems: Uncovering Public Preferences toward Participatory Research and Innovation. *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 5(2), 128–146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2019.04.002>

5) User-centred approach

The project design should prioritise the needs and interests of long-term unemployed persons, who are the primary target group of this Call. Building on this foundation, it is essential that **only voluntary participation of the long-term unemployed persons is encouraged**, ensuring that individuals are engaged in a manner that respects their choice. The project must detail how it intends to involve representatives of the target group(s) in the design and development of the intended solution, with a strong focus on creating solutions that are tailor-made to meet their specific needs and circumstances. Additionally, it should delineate how the planned intervention model will support their involvement in the scaling-up process. The description should be provided in the Application Form: Part B.

6) Impact measurement and management

An application should demonstrate that the solution proposed in the project is viable in terms of impact (i.e., it works better than other existing solutions). The methodology for collecting, evaluating and presenting evidence of the effectiveness of the proposed innovative approach shall be presented in the application. The methods must include provisional outcome indicators for monitoring the activities and their impact on the target group and on the participating entities; they must be in line with the 'Theory of change'. The expected impact of the project and the indicators for measuring it shall be provided in the Application Form: Part B - Section 3. Impact evaluation should be proportionate to the scope and size of the project.

7) Dissemination and communication

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

2.6. Social Innovation Match

Coordinators of projects selected under this Call **are required to upload key information about their projects, a short description of ongoing and planned activities, and their contact details to the Social Innovation Match³² database (SIM)**. This information will be validated for quality and appropriateness by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation before publication.

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

SIM provides the following opportunities:

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

SIM provides a new opportunity for social innovation project promoters to **gain visibility and recognition for their entities across the European Union**.

For more information on SIM, please visit the [SIM user guides](#) page.

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

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

3.1. Budget available and co-financing rate

The indicative Call budget available is EUR 23 000 000. The Granting Authority reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available under this Call or to increase the budget of the Call (if relevant, by reallocating funding from other calls under the ESF+ SI+ Initiative). The final decision will be made considering the number of applications received and the results of their assessment.

The indicative expected size of the grant is between EUR 1 000 000 and EUR 3 000 000 per project (but this does not preclude the submission/selection of applications requesting other amounts). The grant awarded may be less than the amount requested.

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

3.2. Form of grant

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

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

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

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

- The applicant shall submit a Detailed Budget Table (Annex 1 to the Call Conditions) providing cost estimations for each cost category per work package and, within a work package, per beneficiary.
- The Detailed Budget Table shall only contain costs that would be eligible as actual costs and shall exclude costs that are ineligible under this Call. The requirements for the eligibility of costs under this Call are presented in Section 3.3 of the Call Conditions.
- Cost estimations shall approximate to actual costs. They should be:
 - in line with normal practices,
 - reasonable and not excessive,
 - in line with and necessary for the activities proposed.

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

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

- The number of work packages shall be well justified (among other work packages, the project should include at least three **mandatory work packages: Project coordination /management work package, Dissemination and communication work package, and Employment of long-term unemployed persons work package** (as detailed in Section 2.4)).
- A work package must include a description of all activities and deliverables covered by it, broken down by beneficiaries and associated partners who contribute to a work package.
- The objectives, activities, and verifiable deliverables of each work package should be presented in line with the overall project objectives.

- Work packages with a long duration (e.g., for coordination/management, dissemination, or employment of long-term unemployed persons) may be split into several work packages of shorter duration over the reporting periods.
- Each work package may have multiple activities/deliverables. Among other deliverables, the coordinator will have to provide a **mandatory deliverable** - the Final Report 'Lessons learned and future plans', including:
 - Outline of the project;
 - Analysis and assessment of the project outcomes and impact;
 - Structured feedback from the involved institutions and relevant stakeholders;
 - Lessons learned and recommendations for future application of the innovative approach;
 - Follow-up activities and a long-term sustainability strategy for rolling-out of the innovative approach.

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

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

3.3. Eligibility of costs and cost categories

a) Eligible cost categories

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

- A. Direct personnel costs:
 - A.1 Employees (or equivalent) person months
- B. Purchase costs:
 - B.1 Travel and subsistence per travel or per day
 - B.2 Other goods, works, and services
- C. Other costs
 - C.1 Subsidised employment
- D. Indirect costs³³

To be eligible, costs must:

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

Indirect costs will be defined in the application as a flat rate of 7% of the total eligible direct costs (i.e., total amount of A+B+C categories).

³³ Indirect costs are costs that cannot be identified as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the project. Indirect costs are general administrative costs – overhead costs incurred in connection with the eligible direct costs for the project. They can include maintenance, stationery, photocopying, postage, telephone and fax costs, heating, electricity or other forms of energy, water, office furniture, insurance, and any other expenditure necessary for the successful completion of the project.

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (Article 6 and Annex 2).

b) Ineligible costs and contributions

The following costs or contributions are ineligible under this Call:

1. Costs related to return on capital and dividends paid by the beneficiary;
2. Debt and debt service charges;
3. Provisions for future losses or debts;
4. Interest payable;
5. Currency exchange losses;
6. Bank charges levied by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from the Granting Authority;
7. Excessive or reckless expenditure;
8. Deductible or refundable VAT (including VAT paid by public bodies acting as public authorities);
9. Costs incurred or contributions made for activities implemented during a suspension of the Grant Agreement;
10. In-kind contributions by third parties;
11. Costs or contributions for personnel of a national (or regional/local) administration for activities that are part of the administration's normal activities (i.e., not undertaken only because of the grant).

3.4. Double funding

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

4. Timetable - Deadlines - Project duration

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Deadline for submission of applications	30 September 2024, 5:00 PM CEST time zone
Assessment of applications	October 2024-January 2025
Information on Assessment results	February 2025
Grant Agreement signature	April 2025

Starting date and duration of the projects

The indicative duration of the project should be 36 months.

The actual starting date of the project could be:

- the first day following the date on which the last of the two parties signs the Grant Agreement; *or*
- the first day of the month following the date on which the last of the two parties signs the Grant Agreement; *or*
- the date agreed by the parties to the Grant Agreement.

5. Admissibility and documents

The application shall be filled in online and submitted together with other supporting documents, electronically via the Portal by the deadline specified in Section 4 of the Call Conditions. An application submitted outside the Portal or after the deadline will not be accepted.

The Portal can be accessed via the Call page.

Submission of an application is a **2-step process**:

- 1. Creation of a user account.** To use the Portal, an applicant has to create a user account.

2. Submission of an application *(the application template is provided as Annex 3 to the Call Conditions)*

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

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

Documents must be uploaded to the Portal under the relevant Call, otherwise the application might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

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

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

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

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

6. Eligibility - Eligible participants - Consortium composition

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

6.1. Eligible participants

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

- Be legal entities (public or private bodies);
- Be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States;
 - Non-EU countries: listed European Economic Area (EEA) countries and countries associated to the ESF+ (Iceland, Montenegro, Norway and Serbia) or countries with which an association agreement is being negotiated and for which the agreement enters into force by the deadline of this Call (Moldova).³⁴

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

- Public employment services (PES), employment agencies, job centres,
- Local and regional authorities, municipalities,
- Local community centres, hubs,
- Non-governmental and non-for-profit entities (e.g., civil society organisations, associations, foundations, social enterprises, etc.),
- Companies, representative bodies linked to the labour market, including chambers of commerce and other trade associations,

³⁴ List of participating countries in ESF+: [list-3rd-country-participation_esf-socpl_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

- Education and research entities,
- Guidance, consultancy service providers linked to employment, social inclusion,
- Public and private funders, etc.

International organisations can participate in a project as associated partners.

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

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

EU [restrictive measures](#): Special rules apply to entities from certain countries (e. g., entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU)³⁵ and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), or entities covered by the Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05³⁶. Such entities shall not be able to participate in the project in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, associated partners, or subcontractors (if any).

6.2 Consortium composition requirements

a) Applicants, co-applicants (transnationality and experience requirements)

Only consortia consisting of at least two legal eligible entities (representing two different eligible countries (see Section 6.1 of the Call Conditions) are eligible.

Among these entities at least one legal entity (or experts engaged in the project) must demonstrate a proven track record of at least one year experience in the field of long- term unemployment (Annex 8 'Declaration of Professional Competences').

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

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

b) Associated partners

Associated partners, as defined in Article 7 of the Grant Agreement, are eligible to participate in a project, but will not be counted towards the required minimum number of consortium members. An associated partner may participate in a project but may not declare eligible costs.

c) Affiliated entities

Affiliated entities are not eligible.

Conditions for rejection

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

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

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

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

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

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

7.1. Financial capacity

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

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

The financial capacity of **the coordinator** will be assessed prior to the signature of the Grant Agreement³⁷ unless otherwise decided during the assessment of applications.

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

- Signed Legal Entity Identification form (Public Legal Entity form: in English);
- Copy of the act, law, decree, or decision establishing the legal entity as a public body (or, in case of absence thereof, any other official legal document that proves this).

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

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

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

If the financial capacity of the coordinator is considered to be weak, the Granting Authority may additionally require:

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

³⁷ If the application is pre-selected for funding.

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

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

7.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have the know-how, qualifications, and resources to implement the projects successfully and to contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature). This capacity will be assessed, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical, and other) or, in exceptional cases, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

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

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

- a) **The coordinator**³⁸ (as a legal entity) has managed (as a coordinator) at least one consortium³⁹ project (funded by EU or national funds):
- with a value of at least EUR 200 000;
 - with at least 2 other beneficiaries⁴⁰ (coordinator and 2 beneficiaries);
 - which was implemented and finished within the last 5 years (2020-2024).

OR

- b) **The lead project manager**, directly involved in the implementation of the project submitted under the Call, has managed at least one consortium project (funded by EU or national funds):
- with a value of at least EUR 200 000;
 - with at least 2 other beneficiaries (coordinator and 2 beneficiaries);
 - which was implemented and finished within the last 5 years (2020–2024).

Additionally, the lead project manager is expected to have a very good command of English (C1 level or higher).

The lead project manager can be:

- i) currently employed, or
 - ii) planned to be employed by the coordinator (no later than the date of signature of the Grant Agreement).
- c) Proven track record in working with long-term unemployment initiatives for at least 1 year. If the coordinator does not have the required experience, this experience may be provided by one or more co-applicants, or by one or more experts engaged in the project.

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

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

1. A list of projects managed by **the coordinator or the lead project manager** within the last five years (please see **Annex 5** of the Call Conditions for a template **to justify requirements a) and b)**). The information provided should include the subject matter of these projects, their main activities, description of the beneficiaries, duration and budget of a project and the role of the coordinator.
2. A Declaration of the Professional Competences, appropriate qualifications, proven experience working with a long-term unemployment initiatives for at least 1 year and a very good command of English (C1 level or higher) (please

³⁸ As defined in the Glossary of the Call Conditions

³⁹ As defined in the Glossary of the Call Conditions

⁴⁰ As defined in the Glossary of the Call Conditions

see **Annex 8** of the Call Conditions for a template **to justify requirement c)**). The coordinator must certify that the required expertise in working with a long-term unemployment initiatives will be provided either by the coordinator or by one or several co-applicants or experts.

If it is considered that the coordinator does not have the required operational capacity, the whole application will be rejected.

7.3. Exclusion criteria

An applicant and any co-applicant shall be excluded from participating in the Call if any of them is found to be in any of the exclusion situations⁴¹ described below:

1. Bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities, or other similar procedures (including procedures involving persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
2. In breach of social security or tax obligations (including those of persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
3. Guilty of grave professional misconduct⁴² (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
4. Guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal entity, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including the financing of terrorism), child labour or human trafficking (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)⁴³;
5. Having a history of significant deficiencies in complying with their main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
6. Guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant); or
7. They have created an entity in another jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin, or have created another entity with this purpose (including where committed by persons with power of representation and decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

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

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

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

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

Where an applicant or co-applicants declare one of the above situations of exclusion, they shall indicate the measures they have taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating their reliability. These may include technical,

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

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

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

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

organisational, and staff-related measures intended to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damages, or payment of fines, taxes, or social security contributions. Relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in an annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred to in point 4 of the exclusion criteria.

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

8. Assessment and award procedures

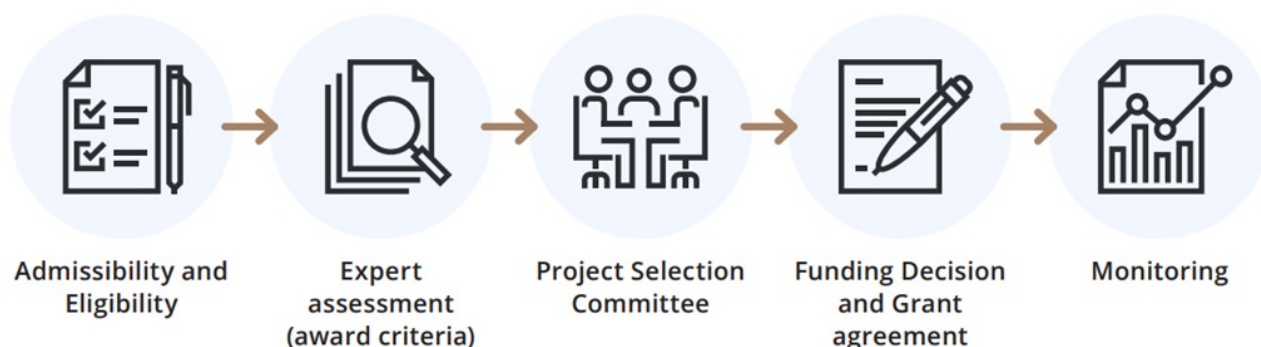
8.1. Assessment procedure

Formal requirements

Applications will first be checked for formal requirements (see Section 8.3 of the Call Conditions, 'Admissibility and eligibility check'). Applications that do not meet these admissibility and eligibility conditions **will be rejected**. The final decision on the rejection of applications will be taken by the Project Assessment Committee.

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

Figure 4 Process of application assessment



Appointment of experts and their tasks

Applications will be qualitatively assessed against the award criteria by at least two experts, at least one of whom will be an independent external expert (see Section 8.5 of the Call Conditions for more information on the award criteria, maximum and threshold points). The Granting Authority has established its own database of external experts. The experts available via the European Commission's Funding and Tenders Portal may also be engaged.

The experts can make suggestions for reducing the budget. The experts shall have no oral or written communication with the applicants.

Guiding principles of assessment

The guiding principles of assessment are the following:

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

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

Calculation of the final score

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

If the difference between the two overall scores for the same application exceeds 20 points, a third expert will be appointed. The final score will then be determined as the average of the two assessments with the lowest difference between their overall scores. This requirement shall not apply to cases where both experts have scored an application below the acceptance threshold.

8.2. Award procedure

Selection of projects for funding

The selection of projects will be made and the recommendations for funding will be taken by a selection panel - the Project Selection Committee (PSC). The results of the applications' assessment will be presented at the PSC meeting. PSC will rank the applications with the passing scores and will set the order of priority for applications with equal scores. In cases where applications received the same scores, their order of priority shall be determined by the scores for the following award criteria, in descending order of importance: 'Relevance', 'Quality', and 'Impact'.

Applications that pass the individual thresholds per criterion and the overall threshold will be considered for funding within the limits of the available budget. Other applications may be put on the reserve list or will not be funded. The final decision on the funding of projects and the final amount of the grant is taken by order of the Director of Granting Authority.

Communication of the selection results

Each applicant will be informed about the assessment results. All applicants whose applications have been selected for funding will be invited for the preparation of the Grant Agreement. Each rejected applicant will receive an Assessment Summary Report including reasons for the rejection of their application and information on the possibility of submitting a complaint (For more information, please see Section 8.4 of the Call Conditions).

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

Grant Agreement

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

8.3. Admissibility and eligibility check

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

To be considered admissible, an application shall be:

- Submitted by the Call deadline;
- Submitted electronically via the Portal. Paper submissions are NOT accepted;

- Readable and accessible;
- Complete and must contain all the information, annexes, and supporting documents requested. Only the information requested in the application and the documents specified in Annex 4 to the Call Conditions will be taken into consideration during the assessment.

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

- Annex 1 Detailed Budget Table.
- Annex 5 List of the Previous Projects.
- Annex 8 Declaration of the Professional Competencies.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their application in English to facilitate the processing of applications and speed up the assessment process. However, applications submitted in any of the official languages of the EU will be accepted.⁴⁵ In this case, an application should be accompanied by an executive summary in English. It should be noted that the assessment of applications will be carried out on the basis of the English version of the application. The quality of the translation will not be guaranteed and the translation of the application may not fully reflect the content of the text in the original language and is therefore at the applicant's own risk. Moreover, the Grant Agreement, as well as the project management, formal reporting, key deliverables, and all communication with the Granting Authority shall be in English. If any of the admissibility requirements is not met, the application **will be deemed inadmissible**, no eligibility check will be commenced, and the application will be rejected.

To be considered eligible an application shall:

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

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

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

8.4. Complaints regarding application rejection

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

Complaints will be subject to the following conditions:

1. Complaints must be limited to procedural aspects and must not focus on the merits of the corresponding applications. A complaint must relate to the assessment procedure, admissibility, or eligibility checks and must demonstrate a

⁴⁵ If you need the Call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after Call publication (for the contact information, see Section 7).

procedural irregularity, factual error, manifest error of assessment, or abuse of powers (e.g., lack of coherence between the scores and comments, lack of conclusions, existence of a conflict of interest, breach of the limits of discretion, etc.). Disagreements with the result or reasoning of the assessment of the application will not be considered.

2. Only one request for review of the procedural aspects per application will be considered. The request cannot refer to the assessment of applications submitted by other applicants.
3. Requests for review will not automatically lead to re-assessment of an application. A re-assessment will only be carried out if the complaint demonstrates that the procedural irregularity, factual error, manifest error of assessment, or abuse of powers has affected the decision regarding the funding of the application. For example, a complaint relating to one of the assessment criteria will not lead to a re-assessment if, even after adding the maximum points under that criterion, the final score will nevertheless remain below the threshold for funding.
4. Re-assessment will be carried out on the basis of information initially provided, i.e., no additional information will be accepted. Depending on the case, re-assessment may be partial (limited to the criterion affected by the error) or full (where the entire assessment of the application has been recognised as flawed). Re-assessment may be assigned to the same assessment panel or a new one, depending on the internal procedures of the Granting Authority.

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

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

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

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

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

The complaints procedure presented herein, and its timeframes must not hinder the start up or ongoing implementation of other projects proposed for financing/financed under the Call. In case a complaint is confirmed, the application will be referred for review and reassessment.

If the response provided by the Granting Authority is deemed insufficient by the complainant, disputes concerning the complaint will be settled in accordance with the procedure established by the laws of the Republic of Lithuania in the Vilnius City District Court or the Vilnius Regional Court, depending on the nature of the claims.

8.5. Award criteria

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

The award criteria for this Call are as follows:

1. **Relevance** (Max 40 points, threshold 25 points):
 - The extent to which the project contributes to the aim and activities of the Call (as they are described in Chapter 2 of the Call Conditions), and fosters transnational cooperation aimed at transfer and upscaling of social innovation;
 - The extent to which the project is relevant to the needs and constraints of the target group;
 - The extent to which the project describes synergies with other existing local/regional/national offerings and services, avoiding duplication with existing support for long-term unemployed persons.
2. **Quality - project design, implementation, and team** (max 40 points, threshold 20 points):
 - **Project design and implementation** (max 20, threshold 10 points):
 - Clarity and consistency of the project;
 - Logical links between identified problems, needs, and proposed solutions;
 - Methodology for implementing the project (organisation of work, monitoring, timetable, risks and risk management);

- A balanced distribution of tasks, responsibilities, resources, and management tools of the consortium;
- A clear and justified rationale for the composition of the consortium.
- **The cost-effectiveness of the project** (max 20, threshold 10 points):
 - Feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame and budget;
 - Cost-effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money).

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

- The extent to which the application includes a sound and detailed impact evaluation methodology that is appropriate for its purpose and capable of providing evidence and identifying the expected outcomes;
- The extent to which the planned intervention demonstrates a long-term vision, i.e. it is sustainable beyond the project and aims to generate a lasting impact on the target group(s);
- Sustainability of results after EU funding ends;
- The effectiveness of dissemination to maximise the uptake of the project results at local/regional/national/European levels.

Scale for assessing the award criteria of the application:

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

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

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

9. Other regulations, Dissemination and visibility, Ownership

9.1 Data protection

The submission of an application under this Call involves the collection, use, and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable laws on data protection, including Regulation 2016/679.⁴⁶ It will be processed exclusively for the purposes of the assessment of the application, the subsequent management of the grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation, and communication.

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

9.2 Record keeping

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

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

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

⁴⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj>

9.3 Horizontal principles (gender equality and non-discrimination)

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

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

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

9.4. Dissemination and visibility

The beneficiaries must:

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

The emblem and the funding statement are available in the Grant Agreement and on the Europa⁴⁷ website or can be downloaded from the European Commission's website.⁴⁸

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

9.5. Ownership of results

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

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

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

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

10. Support

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

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

For submission support:

For individual questions concerning the Portal, please contact the IT Helpdesk: IThelp@esf.it.

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: LTU@esf.it

⁴⁷ https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/european-flag_en

⁴⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/logos_downloadcenter

Questions related to submission of an application shall:

- be sent **at the latest 7 days by the submission deadline** (see Section 4 of the Call Conditions);
- clearly indicate the reference to the Call and the topic to which the question relates.

Call-specific questions shall be sent **no later than 10 days before the submission deadline**.

11. Grant Agreement preparation

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

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

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

12. Project implementation requirements

12.1. Reporting and payment arrangements

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

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

According to the maximum possible duration of the project (36 months), two prefinancing instalments and the final payment are planned:

- The first (initial) prefinancing payment of 60% of the grant,
- The second prefinancing payment of 25% of the grant. Where the spending of the previous prefinancing is less than 70%, the amount of the next prefinancing payment will be reduced by the difference between the 70% ceiling and the amount used;
- The final payment (payment of the balance).

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

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

12.2. Liability regime for recoveries

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

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

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

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

12.3. Provisions concerning project implementation

In certain cases, for objective reasons which could not be foreseen by the beneficiary at the time of the submission and assessment of the application, the deadline for the implementation of the project activities may be extended, by a maximum of 6 months in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 36 of the Grant Agreement.

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

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

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

No-profit rule

No-profit rule — Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs)⁴⁹ for the beneficiaries. For more details, see Point 4.2 of the Data Sheet and Article 21.3.3 of the Grant Agreement.

13. Amendments of the Call

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

14. Annexes

1. Annex 1 Detailed Budget Table;
2. Annex 2 Grant Agreement, template;
3. Annex 3 Application Form, template;
4. Annex 4 List of Required Documents;
5. Annex 5 List of the Previous Projects, template.
6. Annex 6 Declaration of Honour for Beneficiaries, template.
7. Annex 7 Lessons learned and future plans, template.
8. Annex 8 Declaration of the Professional Competences, template.

49 See Article 192 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046

