



SPECIFICATIONS CALL FOR PROPOSALS Ref. 2023 ECFIN 001/A3

Joint Harmonised European Union Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys: Consumer survey in Romania and Consumer, Construction, Industry, Retail trade and Services surveys in Ireland

1) CONTEXT

The Joint Harmonised European Union Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys (BCS) constitutes an essential tool for the European Commission (Commission) in fulfilling its Treaty-based obligations of surveillance of the EU economies. The BCS programme was set up based on the Commission's institutional prerogatives¹ and constitutes an important source for decision-making of EU economic policy makers. The programme was initiated by a Commission decision in November 1961 and was modified through subsequent Council and Commission decisions. It was last approved through Commission decision C(97)2241 of 15 July 1997 and presented in Commission Communications C(2000)770 of 29 November 2000, C(2006)379 of 12 July 2006, SEC(2012)227 of 4 April 2012 and C(2016)6634 of 20 October 2016.

The Commission is launching a call for proposals for carrying out surveys, as part of the BCS Programme, in Romania and Ireland. This co-operation between the Commission and future partners shall be in the form of a framework partnership agreement (FPA) over a period of maximum two years (May 2023 – April 2025).

Interested entities can apply for one or more surveys in one or both countries.

2) PURPOSE AND SPECIFICATIONS OF THE ACTION

1. Objectives

The programme is designed to gather information on the state of the economies in the EU Member States and Candidate Countries, in order to be able to compare their business cycles for EMU (Economic and Monetary Union) management purposes. It has become an indispensable tool in the EMU economic surveillance process, as well as for general economic policy purposes.

The Commission wishes to establish a long-term co-operation on a joint financing basis with the successful applicants. For this purpose, framework partnership agreements will be concluded for a maximum period of three years. Under this framework partnership agreement, which will specify the common objectives and the nature of the actions to be carried out, two specific annual grant agreements (SGAs) may be concluded between the parties. Each of the actions to be carried out will have a duration of maximum 12 months: from 1 May until 30 April the year after. The action

¹ Art. 54.2 (d) of FR (Financial Regulation)

for the first year will cover the period of 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024 and will be carried out conditional on the approval and availability of the Commission's annual appropriations.

The Commission is looking to conclude agreements with bodies and institutes qualified to carry out actions in one or both countries as specified in Section 1), consisting of the following surveys:

- Industry survey (for Ireland)
- Construction survey (for Ireland)
- Retail trade survey (for Ireland)
- Services survey (for Ireland)
- Consumer survey (for Ireland and Romania)
- *Ad hoc* surveys on topical economic issues. These *ad hoc* surveys are by definition occasional and are carried out, following a specific request from the Commission, in addition to the monthly surveys, using the same established samples as the monthly surveys, to obtain information on specific economic policy issues.

2. Technical specifications

i) Survey timing and reporting of results

The surveys target managers in the manufacturing sector (industry survey), the construction sector, as well as consumers.

The following table gives an overview of the features of the surveys requested under this call for proposals:

Survey name	Number of activities (categories) to be reported	Number of aggregates to be reported	Number of questions to be asked monthly	Number of questions to be asked quarterly	Number of questions to be asked bi-annually
Industry	68	15	8	9	2 (Mar/Apr) 4 (Oct/Nov)
Construction	3	1	6	1	-
Retail trade	5	3	7	-	-
Services	37	1	7	2	2 (Mar/Apr) 4 (Oct/Nov)
Consumer	25 categories	1	15	3	-

- The monthly surveys must be carried out in the first two to three weeks of each month. The results of the business surveys must be e-mailed to the Commission in accordance with the calendar that will be included in the grant agreement; the deadline is generally five working days before the end of the month and the publication of results by the Commission is generally on the second-last working day of the month. In accordance with the calendar that will be included in Annex I of the specific grant agreement, the deadline for the delivery of consumer survey results is generally seven working days before the end of the month, day on which the Commission publishes the Flash Consumer Confidence Indicator for the EU and euro area. The detailed consumer survey results per country are published together with the publication of the business survey results (see above).

- The quarterly questions must be surveyed in the first two to three weeks of the first month of each quarter (January, April, July and October) and the results must be e-mailed to the Commission in January, April, July and October in line with the deadlines for the respective monthly survey results (see above).
- The bi-annual questions must be surveyed in March or April and October or November and the results must be e-mailed to the Commission in April and November in accordance with the calendar, generally at least five working days before the end of the month.
- In the case of *ad hoc* surveys, the partner must undertake to adhere to the specific timetables laid down for them following a specific request from the Commission.

A detailed description of the action, including the harmonised questionnaires to be used for the individual surveys, the required breakdowns of the results in terms of branches (based on NACE Rev. 2 for business surveys)² or socio-economic categories (consumer survey) as well as provisions concerning the transmission and publication of data can be found in the ‘Description of the action’ - Annex 1 of the Model specific grant agreement, available on the following website: [Funding opportunities - economic and financial affairs \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/funding-opportunities-economic-and-financial-affairs-europa.eu).

ii) Methodology

The principle of harmonisation underlying the Commission’s survey programme aims to produce a set of comparable data across countries. Harmonisation is essential to allow the comparison of business cycles in the different countries as well as the calculation of meaningful business cycle indices for the euro area and the EU as a whole. To achieve comparability between countries, the BCS programme is governed by two basic principles:

- use by all national institutes of the same harmonised questionnaires; and
- conduct of the national surveys, and transmission of the results, according to a common timetable.

The national questionnaires may include additional questions, beyond the harmonised ones. However, in designing national questionnaires, priority must be given to ensuring high response rates for the harmonised EU questions. This implies that the harmonised questions shall precede any other questions. Mixing harmonised questions with additional questions on related concepts that might alter respondents' understanding of the harmonised questions shall be avoided. The breakdown of the collected survey results (into sectors, socio-economic categories) may be more detailed than the one set in the programme, as long as the required breakdowns (table in Section 2.2i above) are provided to the Commission.

Non-harmonised parts of the national surveys, in terms of additional questions, breakdowns or higher frequencies, are not part of the action, and do thus not fall under the joint financing.

Partners are free to organise the fieldwork the way that best suits the purpose. The sample design, the sample size, the survey mode, and other methodological considerations should be chosen so as to ensure a high degree of representativeness and a low degree of irregular short-term fluctuations (noise) in the data. A broad and frequently updated sampling frame and a high number of completed questionnaires are considered as key in this respect. The proposed survey methodology will be scrutinised in the evaluation of the received proposals (see Section 9. AWARD

² The NACE classification of economic activities is currently under review to reflect changes in economic structures and organisations as well as technological developments. The new structure is expected to be finalised in 2024 and rolled out in official statistics in 2025-2027. The breakdown of the survey results by activities might need to be adjusted in this process, to ensure comparability with official statistical data. Required steps and methodologies would be discussed with the BCS partners at future annual meetings with the Commission.

CRITERIA). Institutes are encouraged to follow the list of best practices for the conduct of business and consumer surveys developed by the Commission³, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/db_indicators/surveys/documents/bcs_best_practice_en.pdf

In case of changes to the methodological parameters of the survey (as compared to the description in the reply to this Call) during the action period, the partner has to inform the Commission at least 6 months in advance and has to implement appropriate and mutually agreed measures in order to avoid structural breaks in the data. In case of changes to the survey mode, at least 3 months of parallel data collection (based on a sample of at least half the usual size) have to be carried out, as a basis for the backward-correction of past data. Backcast data correcting for any break due to a methodological change have to be sent to the Commission at least 5 working days before the deadline for the data transmission of the month the new methodology is first introduced. Substantial methodological changes are subject to an amendment of the specific grant agreement (see Art. II.13 of the FPA).

3) TIMETABLE

1. Stages as from the date of publication of the call

Stages	Fixed date and time
Deadline for asking questions	21.02.2023
Deadline for submitting applications	28.02.2023 14:00 CET
	Indicative period
Evaluation period	March 2023
Information to applicants	March-April 2023
Signature of the framework partnership agreements	April 2023
Request to confirm budget for the first year	April 2023
Signature of the specific grant agreement 2023-2024 (*)	April 2023
Starting date of the action (first year) (*)	01.05.2023

(*) *Conditional on the approval and availability of the Commission's annual appropriations for the year 2023.*

2. Evaluation of the proposals

The evaluation of the proposals will take place in the following order:

- Step 1** Verification of the admissibility requirements - see Section 5)
- Step 2** Verification of the eligibility criteria - see Section 6)
- Step 3** Verification of the exclusion criteria- see Section 7)
- Step 4** Selection of applicants on the basis of selection criteria- see Section 8)
- Step 5** Evaluation of the proposals on the basis of the award criteria - see Section 9)

Only proposals meeting the requirements of one evaluation step will pass on to the next step.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection and award process according to the estimated calendar indicated in **Section 3. TIMETABLE**.

³ The list builds on the earlier international guidelines on data collection and survey design developed by the Commission and the OECD in cooperation with national survey institutes. These guidelines, together with general methodological considerations, can be found in the European Commission special report No 5/2006 on the Joint Harmonised EU Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/db_indicators/surveys/documents/studies/ee_bcs_2006_05_en.pdf.

4) BUDGET AVAILABLE

1. Sources of Union funding

The action will be financed from the Union budget.

2. Estimated total Union budget for this call

The annual budget available for the specified surveys is in the region of EUR 275 000 (two hundred seventy five thousand euro). The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available. The estimation of the budget is based on the grants awarded to beneficiaries in past grant periods.

3. Annual grant amounts

The annual grant amounts are defined as a co-financing rate of maximum 50% of the eligible costs incurred by the partner. To this end, a precise budget must be supplied by the partner at the beginning of the action, as well as an accurate financial statement at the end of the action.

Applicants wishing to apply for a grant amount should carefully read the financial provisions in Section 11), the guidelines and the models of partnership agreement and annual specific agreement in order to be aware of the cost calculation methodology and the related requirements.

5) ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS OF APPLICATIONS

In order to be admissible, applications must comply with the following requirements:

- Applications shall be sent ***electronically, exclusively*** to the ***functional mailbox*** ECFIN-GRANT-PROPOSALS@ec.europa.eu no later than the ***deadline and time*** for submitting applications referred to in Section 3) TIMETABLE. The evidence of date / time of sending the email will be considered.
- ***Exceptionally in duly justified cases, paper*** applications sent ***by postal mail or courier service can be admissible***. The applicant shall inform the Commission solely via the functional mailbox ECFIN-BCS-2023-CALL-QUESTIONS@ec.europa.eu at the latest 2 calendar days before the deadline for submission. Paper proposals must equally be sent no later than the ***deadline and time*** for submitting applications referred to in Section 3) TIMETABLE. The postmark or date of deposit slip of courier service shall constitute the evidence of timely sending.
- Applications sent by fax will not be accepted.
- Applications shall be submitted ***in writing***, using the ***standard application letter and the other standard forms*** accompanied by (free format) documentation and information as requested in Section 14) PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS. ***For each survey and country***, an individual budget statement and a methodology description shall also be provided.
- Applications containing external web-links requiring the Commission services to download any documents will not be accepted.
- Applications shall be completed in one of the ***official languages*** of the European Union. However, applications in ***English*** are ***encouraged*** as they facilitate the evaluation procedure.

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

6) ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. Eligible applicants

Only applications from **legal entities** established in the following countries are eligible for carrying out actions in EU Member states and candidate countries in the context of the current call for proposals:

- EU Member States
- Candidate Countries [Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey] and
- EFTA and EEA countries [Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland]

Applicants must show that they exist as a legal entity. Examples of eligible applicants are:

- national statistical institutes
- research centres
- companies
- professional organisations/ associations
- non-profit organisations
- public authorities (national, regional, local)
- universities
- educational institutions.

Applicants, co-applicants and affiliated legal entities (see below) must all provide the required documentation by means of the **compulsory standard legal entity form**, accompanied by supporting documents as in the following examples:

- **private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required)
- **public entity:** copy of the resolution or decision establishing the public company, or other official document establishing the public-law entity
- **consortium:** in addition to the supporting documents referring to their legal status, consortium members will submit letters confirming their participation to the action.

Consortium: joint proposal by co-applicants

Legal entities forming a consortium must submit their application as co-applicants (who will be defined as co-beneficiaries in case of award). Their tasks must be clearly identified and a budget statement per co-applicant (containing financial contribution and budgeted costs of each member participating in the proposal) must be submitted, together with a consolidated budget statement.

In case of award of the grant, one of the co-beneficiaries will take the role of co-ordinator and shall:

- assume the overall responsibility for the partnership vis-à-vis the Commission;
- monitor the activities of the other participating member(s);
- ensure the overall coherence and timely submission of survey results;

- centralise the signature of the agreement and deliver the agreement duly signed by all co-applicants to the Commission (mandate is compulsory – see FORM 3);
- collect supporting documents of expenditure incurred by each co-beneficiary as well as external funding and present them in a single submission.
- centralise the Commission's financial contribution and disburse payments to the co-beneficiary(ies);

Proposal by an applicant with affiliated entities with a legal or capital link

Entities that have a link with the applicant, in particular a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, are considered entities affiliated to the applicant. Those entities may take part in the action and may declare eligible costs. The applicant shall therefore identify such affiliated entities in the application form.

If affiliated entities take part in the action, the application form shall:

- contain the written agreement of the affiliated entities (see FORM 4);
- precise their role in the implementation of the action;
- indicate in the budget statement the expected costs to be incurred by the affiliated entities

2. Eligible activities

Activities directly related to providing the required survey data to the Commission are eligible for funding (e.g. administration of questionnaires, collecting, processing and sending of the data, activities linked to monitoring/improving the data quality).

Other activities can be considered eligible to the extent that they are linked to the action.

It is always for the Commission to take the final decision on the eligibility of an activity and the costs related to it, both when analysing proposals with a view to the estimated budget to be annexed to the grant agreement and when examining statements of costs actually incurred for the purpose of determining the final grant.

7) EXCLUSION CRITERIA

1. Exclusion

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

- It is subject to an administrative sanction (i.e. exclusion or financial penalty decision)
- It is in one of the following exclusion situations⁴:
 - bankrupt, being wound up, having the affairs administered by the courts, entered into an arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or subject to any other similar proceedings or procedures
 - in breach of social security or tax obligations
 - guilty of grave professional misconduct⁵

⁴ See Articles 136 and 141 [EU Financial Regulation](#).

⁵ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage.

- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin (including creation of another entity with this purpose).

The applicant shall declare:

- It is not subject to a conflict of interest in connection with this grant and will notify — without delay — any situation which could give rise to a conflict of interests.
- It has not and will not, neither directly nor indirectly, grant, seek, obtain or accept any advantage in connection with this grant that would constitute an illegal practice or involve corruption.
- It has not received any other EU grant for this action and will give notice of any future EU grants related to this action and of any EU operating grant(s)⁶ given to the applicant.
- It is aware that false declarations may lead to rejection, suspension, termination or reduction of the grant and to administrative sanctions (i.e. financial penalties and/or exclusion from all future EU procurement contracts, grants, prizes and expert contracts).

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above (see FORM 5), it must indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the situation of exclusions in current section 7.1, thus demonstrating its reliability.

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

The relevant documentary evidence, which illustrates the remedial measures taken, must be provided in annex to the declaration (FORM 5).

2. Rejection from the call for proposals

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

- (a) is in an exclusion situation established in accordance with section 7.1;
- (b) has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information;
- (c) was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities.

⁶ See Article 180 [EU Financial Regulation](#).

3. Supporting documents⁷ for exclusion criteria

Applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities must all sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations listed under sections 7.1 and 7.2, by filling in the standard declaration on honour (FORM 5).

8) SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain the activity throughout the action period and to participate in its funding.

The applicant's financial capacity will be assessed based on a standard declaration on honour (FORM 5). The declaration on honour is part of the declaration used for the exclusion criteria (see section 7.3). Only one declaration on honour covering both criteria (exclusion and selection) has to be provided.

In addition, only applicants who are private bodies applying for a grant amount exceeding 60.000€, shall also submit FORM 6 in order to provide further details (financial key figures) regarding their financial capacity.

The authorising officer, at any time of the grant procedure, may request further evidence of economic and financial capacity; e.g. by means of certified balance sheets and profit and loss accounts for the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed. For newly created entities, the business plan might replace closed accounts.

In the case of legal entities forming one applicant (the "sole applicant"), as specified in section 6.1, the above requirements apply to each one of those entities.

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

- request further information;
- propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;
- reject the application.

2. Operational capacity

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

The following criteria will be used to assess the applicant's operational capacity:

- at least three years of proven experience in successfully carrying out economic tendency surveys;
- sound operational structures and resources (technical equipment, tools, facilities, personnel, management, etc.), needed to successfully complete the proposed action.

The applicant's operational capacity will be assessed based on a standard declaration on honour (FORM 5, see also section 8.1 above).

In addition, applicants (both public and private bodies) have to submit FORM 7 in order to provide further details regarding their operational capacity, supplemented with the following:

⁷ Article 137 FR

- a description of operational structures and resources;
- the current organisational chart;
- CVs or description of profiles with experience and qualifications of the staff primarily responsible for implementing the action, accompanied where appropriate by a list of relevant publications;
- proof of relevant experience of the subcontractor(s), if relevant.

9) AWARD CRITERIA

Only proposals having passed the selection criteria will be assessed at the level of the following award criteria:

- **Award criterion 1** (maximum 60 points)

The quality of the *proposed survey methodology* with reference to:

- sampling frame (source, survey unit, size, population coverage, updating frequency, cut-offs) (maximum 10 points);
- sampling method (random vs. purposive, use of quota, stratification, panels) (maximum 10 points);
- number of completed interviews (maximum 12 points)
- response rates (maximum 4 points)
- survey mode: face-to-face, CATI, email, postal, internet, etc. (maximum 6 points);
- measures to raise/maintain response rates: advance letters, reminders, follow-up activities, incentives to respond, etc. (maximum 3 points);
- treatment of missing data: unit non-response and item non-response (maximum 3 points);
- weighting scheme: characteristics and updating frequency (maximum 6 points);
- questionnaire design: preferential treatment of harmonised vs. other questions (maximum 3 points)
- data quality control system (maximum 3 points).

- **Award criterion 2** (maximum 10 points)

The *effectiveness of the organisation and workflow of activities* (including, if applicable, co-ordination between co-applicants and with sub-contractors) with a view to delivering results of sufficient quality in time.

- **Award criterion 3** (maximum 10 points)

The degree to which the collected data will be *disseminated at national level and feed into economic analysis and research, to foster critical review by experts*.

- **Award criterion 4** (maximum 20 points)

The *cost effectiveness of the proposed action and the adequacy of the composition of the budget in view of the envisaged survey implementation*.

For the evaluation of the proposals in terms of the award criteria, applicants have to submit a technical proposal containing all of the following elements:

- for each survey and country applicants applies for, an individual detailed description of the survey methodology using the dedicated separate FORM 8a for consumer survey and FORM 8b for sectoral business surveys (excel files);
- an outline of the (envisaged) questionnaire in original language;
- a detailed description of the envisaged implementation of the action (workflow, contingency measures, measures to ensure quality and timely delivery of results, if applicable, co-ordination between co-applicants and with sub-contractors);
- a description of all actions that the applicant will undertake to promote the dissemination and use of the collected data for analysis and research and foster critical review by experts;
- if applicable, a duly filled in standard form regarding subcontractors involved in the action, including a justification and a detailed description of the tasks to be subcontracted (see also point 11.1.e); the form to be used is the worksheet SUBCONTRACTING of FORM 9;
- a financial proposal (estimated budget) for each survey for year 1 of the action (1st May 2023 - 30th April 2024) which must show a balanced budget (revenue/expenditure), using the FORM 9 - Estimated budget (Annex II of SGA) and FORM 10 - declaration on estimated costs.

The evaluation criteria will be applied individually per survey.

The applications will be ranked according to the total award points received per survey. Only applications which have obtained a total of at least 50 out of 100 points will qualify for the award of a framework partnership agreement.

Subject to the award decision by the responsible authorising officer, the best-ranked applicant per survey per country will be awarded a framework partnership agreement.

If for some country(ies) and/or sector(s) no proposal is eligible or qualified for a grant, the Commission reserves the right to not fully allocate the available budget and to organise a new call for proposals focussed on the missing countries/sectors.

10) LEGAL COMMITMENTS⁸

In the event of a partnership/grant awarded by the Commission, a framework partnership agreement will be sent to the partner. Two copies of the original framework partnership agreement must be signed first by the partner and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it as last party and return one original. The agreements are drawn up in English.

The framework partnership agreement defines the general rights and obligations of the parties in implementing their partnership and details the procedure for concluding annual specific grant agreements in order to implement the action.

The awarding of annual grant amounts is subject to the approval and availability of the Commission's annual appropriations. Each year, the Commission will consult its partner on the basis of an invitation to submit a budget proposal in order to award and sign a specific grant agreement.

For the first year the partner will be asked to confirm the budget submitted with its proposal in the context of the current call for proposals for awarding partnership agreements.

In case the total amount of requested grants for the accepted proposals is higher than the annual appropriations available for the EU BCS Programme, the Commission may propose to all partners a lower grant percentage than the one requested in their proposal. This decrease would ensure proportional reduction of funding for each partner.

⁸ Article 180 FR (Financial Regulation)

Where the Commission decides to award a specific grant, it shall propose to the partner to sign a specific annual grant agreement.

Please note that the award of a partnership/grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

11) FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

1. General principles

a) Non-cumulative award⁹

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

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

b) Non-retroactivity¹⁰

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed. A grant may be awarded for an action which has already started but only where the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action may not entirely be provided by the EU grant. Co-financing of the action may take the form of:

- The beneficiary's own resources
- Income generated by the action
- Financial contribution from third parties

d) Balanced budget

The estimated budget (FORM 9) and the declaration on the estimated costs (FORM 10) of the action for year 1 (May 2023- April 2024) has to be submitted as part of the application. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance. The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants with general accounts in a currency other than the euro must convert estimated costs calculated in another currency into euros at the average of the daily exchange rates established by the European Central Bank and published on its website:

<http://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/exchange/eurofxref/html/index.en.html>,

determined over the corresponding reference year.

If no daily euro exchange rate is established by the European Central Bank for the currency in question, conversion must be made at the average of the monthly accounting rates established by the Commission and published on its website:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm,

determined over the corresponding reference year.

⁹ Article 191 FR

¹⁰ Article 193 FR

For the final financial statement and request for payments, the exchange rate to be used to declare eligible costs actually incurred (see point 3.iii) below) is indicated in Article 4.5. of the Model SGA.

Unit costs for staff costs (see point 3.i) below) and flat rate financing for administrative costs, when applicable (see point 3.ii) below), are fixed at budget statement and shall not be revised for the final financial statement. No further conversion is done for the final financial statements.

Applicants carrying out surveys in more than one country must submit a budget per survey area per country.

e) Implementation contracts/ subcontracting¹¹

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of a procurement contract (implementation contracts), the beneficiary may award the contract in accordance with its usual purchasing practices provided that the contract is awarded to the tender offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interest. Moreover, the beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Beneficiaries may subcontract tasks forming part of the action. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the conditions described in Art. II.11 of the FPA are met.

2. Forms of Union contribution and categories of costs covered

Mixed financing grants are calculated on the basis of a detailed budget statement indicating clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding. The grant amount may neither exceed the eligible costs nor the amount requested. The maximum co-funding rate of the eligible costs will be defined by applying a maximum co-financing rate of 50% of the eligible costs declared by the beneficiary (and its affiliated entities), taking into account the available Union budget for the action. Amounts are indicated in euros.

Recipients of Union funds shall declare their eligible costs on the basis of either of the following:

- (a) unit costs (see 3.i) below);
- (b) flat-rate financing (see 3.ii) below);
- (c) costs actually incurred (see 3.iii) below);
- (d) flat rate for indirect costs (see 3.iv) below).

Eligible and ineligible costs are described in Articles I.5, I.6, I.7 and II.19 of the Model FPA.

Please use the standard estimated budget (FORM 9) to estimate the costs necessary to implement the action. The sheet 'Guidance BS' will help applicants to fill in the individual sheets of the excel document.

The estimated budget must be filled in by the applicant (and the co-applicant, if applicable) for each country in which surveys will be carried out. In case of a consortium with a co-applicant, a consolidated estimated budget integrating the individual budgets must also be submitted.

In case of affiliated entities, please clearly differentiate the estimated costs for the affiliated entities in the estimated budget.

¹¹ Article 204&205 FR

3. Method to determine the amount of eligible costs

i) Unit cost for staff

Partners shall declare eligible staff costs on the basis of unit costs. The estimated budget shall set out the estimated number of days and the estimated daily rate for direct staff costs, broken down per pay grade.

The average daily rates shall be calculated using the beneficiary's own data and excluding any costs that are ineligible under the grant agreement or already included in other budget categories. The total annual direct staff costs are divided by the staff employed during the reference year (expressed in full-time equivalents (FTE)) belonging to the respective pay grade and by 215 annual working days.

Average daily rate per pay grade = $\frac{\text{Total annual direct staff costs per pay grade}}{\text{FTE per pay grade during reference period} * 215 \text{ working days}}$

Where information on FTE is not available, the calculation may be based on the (total) number of staff.

Where staff costs are not paid based on time, the beneficiary may also propose a unit cost per deliverable. The deliverables can be questionnaires, conducted interviews or records depending on the survey mode. The unit costs per deliverable may be calculated by reference to existing agreements with the interviewers.

The average cost per (type of) deliverable shall be calculated as a weighted average of the amounts paid per deliverable to individual interviewers, reflecting the distribution of existing individual agreements with the interviewers.

In the Final Financial Statement, the unit costs, accepted during the evaluation of the budget statement, and the actual number of worked days and deliverables shall be declared.

ii) Flat-rate financing of administrative costs

As a rule, and where they do not exceed 50% of the estimated eligible staff costs, beneficiaries shall declare eligible administrative costs (except costs for subcontracting and update of software/process redesign, see point iii below) on the basis of flat rates. The flat rate will be calculated based on the estimated administrative costs of the beneficiary eligible for flat rate financing. The applicant will provide a clear breakdown of all estimated administrative costs.

The flat rate will be calculated as the percentage of the total budgeted eligible administrative costs eligible for flat rate financing, in relation to the total declared eligible staff costs. A clear explanation on how the expenses relate to the action and their calculation methodology shall be provided together with the budget proposal. Beneficiaries with administrative costs eligible for flat rate financing accepted during the evaluation as being lower than or equal to 50% of the total budgeted eligible staff costs, must apply this percentage to their eligible staff costs when calculating the final total amount of eligible costs of the annual action.

iii) Financing of costs actually incurred

Only where the eligible administrative costs (excluding costs for subcontracting and update of software/process redesign) exceed 50% of the estimated eligible staff costs, beneficiaries shall declare them based on real incurred costs. Costs for subcontracting and up-date of software/process redesign must always be declared based on real incurred costs.

iv) Flat rate for indirect costs

The flat rate for the beneficiary's indirect costs is 7% of the total eligible direct costs excluding the costs for subcontracting. The flat rate indicated in the budget statement and accepted during the evaluation, shall be applied in the Final Financial Statement.

4. Payment conditions, checks and audits

The EU contributions will be paid provided the action is implemented properly (i.e. in line with the agreed survey methodology, fully and on time). If the action is not properly implemented the amount of the grant will be reduced proportionately. Please also refer to Art. II.25.4 of the FPA.

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

For this purpose, in case of verifications, checks or audits, the beneficiary will be required to provide:

- for costs declared on the basis of unit costs: the number of units declared
- for costs declared on the basis of a flat rate: the eligible costs to which the flat rate applies.

Where the grant takes the form specified in Sections 11) 3.i), 3.ii) or 3.iv), the beneficiary will not be required to report on the costs actually incurred for the implementation.

The amounts of unit costs or flat rates as specified in Sections 11) 3.i), 3.ii) or 3.iv) will not be challenged by ex-post controls. This does not affect the possibility to reduce the grant as specified above or in the case of irregularity, fraud or a breach of other obligations.

Payment of the grant on the basis of unit costs or flat rates as specified in Sections 11) 3.i), 3.ii) or 3.iv) does not affect the right of access to the statutory records of the partners for the purposes of:

- reviewing them for future grants, or
- protecting the Union's financial interests, e.g. detection of fraud, irregularities or breach of obligations.

5. Calculation of the final grant amount

The final amount of the grant is calculated by the Commission at the time of the payment of the balance as indicated in Art II.25 of the Model FPA.

6. Reporting and payment arrangements

i) Reporting

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the action, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents including relevant supporting documents in accordance with article 4 of the Model SGA:

- (a) a final technical report (see model in Annex IV of the FPA) in English providing details of the implementation and results of the action together with copies of the questionnaires used during the grant period, including any written instructions given to respondents interviewed, and an overview per survey of the effective sample size over the duration of the action;

- (b) a final financial statement per survey (see model in Annex V of the FPA) including a detailed list of costs and clarification on the calculation methodology applied to determine the final costs;
- (c) a declaration on the reported final costs (see model in Annex IX of the FPA).

The request for payment of the balance shall be preceded by the timely submission of the survey data.

ii) Payment arrangements

A pre-financing payment corresponding to 40% of the grant amount will be transferred to the partner within 30 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the grant agreement.

The Commission will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the partner on the basis of the calculation of the final grant. If the total of the pre-financing payment is higher than the final grant amount, the partner will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the Commission through a recovery order¹².

12) PUBLICITY

1. By the beneficiaries

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

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

To do this they must use the text, the logo and the disclaimer available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/resources-partners/european-commission-visual-identity_en

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

2. By the Commission

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

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level¹³ if he/she is domiciled within the EU or equivalent if domiciled outside the EU;
- subject of the grant
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected

¹² Art. 115(2) FR

¹³ Commission Regulation (EC) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), OJ L39, 10.2.2007, p.1.

by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

13) PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, addresses and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the applications in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposals will be processed solely for that purpose by the Head of Unit Finance of Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs; the practical organisation of the data processing being assured by the person signing the agreement.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) /1046. For more information see the Privacy Statement on: https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures_en.

14) PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the formal requirements and by the deadline set out under Section 5. **ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS OF APPLICATIONS.**

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or for the correction of clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process¹⁴.

The application letter, forms and annexes are available on the following website: [Funding opportunities - economic and financial affairs \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-opportunities-economic-financial-affairs_en).

Applications must be submitted in the correct forms (see full details in point 4 below), duly completed, dated and signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation.

1. Electronic Submission (Only electronic application via dedicated Functional Mailbox)

Applications must be submitted by e-mail to **exclusively** to the functional mailbox:

ECFIN-GRANT-PROPOSALS@ec.europa.eu.

Application emails must be structured and sent as follows:

- the subject line of your email shall read: Proposal BCS 2023 ECFIN 001/A3 – <Name applicant - Country>.
- If for technical reasons, applications cannot be sent in one single email, they should be split in different but consecutive emails. Please clearly indicate the number of parts in the subject line of your email as follows: ‘Proposal BCS 2023 ECFIN 001/A3 – <Name applicant - Country> – Part <number> of <number> of Part(s)’.</div><div data-bbox="115 892 295 909" data-label="Footnote">

¹⁴ Art. 151 and 200(3) FR

- form 9 (estimated budget year 1) shall be uploaded to the email both in excel and pdf format (signed and dated).
- all other forms shall be uploaded to the email in either word or pdf format (signed where relevant)

Applications containing external web-links requiring the Commission services to download any documents will not be accepted.

2. Paper submission by postal mail or courier services only in exceptional situations

The Commission ***exceptionally*** accepts paper applications sent by postal mail or courier service ***on the conditions*** stipulated in Section 5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS OF APPLICATIONS. The forms 8a, 8b and 9 must nevertheless also be provided in excel format by enclosing in the envelope a memory stick with the uploaded excel files or by sending the excel documents to the dedicated functional mailbox above (see point 14.1), clearly mentioning in the subject line of your email: Proposal BCS 2023 ECFIN 001/A3 – <Name applicant - Country>.

Means of dispatch	Address for delivery	Comment
By post	CALL Ref. 2023 ECFIN 001/A3 European Commission Directorate-General Economic and Financial Affairs Attn. Koen MEUWIS, Head of Unit ECFIN/R2 Finance Office LOI 102 07/008 B – 1049 Brussels Belgium	
By courier	CALL Ref. 2023 ECFIN 001/A3 European Commission Directorate-General Economic and Financial Affairs Attn. Koen MEUWIS, Head of Unit ECFIN/R2 Finance (Office LOI 102 07/008) Avenue du Bourget 1 B-1140 Brussels (Evere) Belgium	Deliveries by courier can be received from 07.30 to 17.30 Mondays to Fridays. The Commission’s administrative service for receiving courier deliveries is closed on Saturdays, Sundays and official holidays of the Commission.

3. Contacts before the deadline

If you have any question about the call you can send a request for information by e-mail **exclusively** to the following address: ECFIN-BCS-2023-CALL-QUESTIONS@ec.europa.eu. Applications cannot be sent to this functional mailbox.

The deadline for asking questions is set out in Section 3. TIMETABLE.

The most relevant questions and answers will be published on the following website: [Funding opportunities - economic and financial affairs \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities-economic-financial-affairs/).

On its own initiative, the Commission may also inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or any other type of clerical error in the text of the call documents. The website will be updated regularly and it is the interested parties’ responsibility to check for updates and modifications during the submission period.

4. Documents

All standard forms and documents are published on the following website: [Funding opportunities - economic and financial affairs \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/economic-financial-affairs/).

- (a) The specifications of the call for proposals ref. 2023 ECFIN 001/A3
- (b) The Guidelines for the financial management of grant agreements
- (c) Checklist of documents to be provided
- (d) Grant applications shall contain the following compulsory standard forms to be filled out and signed when requested in the form. When specified in the forms, free format documents and information shall be submitted:
 - Form 1 - Application letter
 - Form 2 - Administrative information
 - Form 3 - Mandate for co-ordinating applicant (only for consortium - joint proposal)
 - Form 4 - Affiliated entity's declaration
 - Form 5 - Declaration on honour regarding exclusion and financial and operational capacity
 - Form 6 - Financial capacity – details (financial key figures)
 - Form 7 - Operational capacity – details
 - Form 8a - Description of the survey methodology Consumer survey (excel file)
 - Form 8b - Description of the survey methodology Business surveys (excel file) (per survey)
 - Form 9 - Estimated Budget year 1 (per survey and per country) (excel file)
 - Form 10 - Declaration on estimated costs
 - Form 11 - Technical proposal (free format, max. 10 pages)
- (e) Separate standard legal entity form to be downloaded:
http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm
- (f) Separate standard financial identification form to be downloaded:
http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_en.cfm
- (g) Model framework partnership agreement (FPA) and its annexes:
 - Annex I Action plan
 - Annex II General conditions
 - Annex III Model specific grant agreement (SGA) (see below (h))
 - Annex IV Model technical report
 - Annex V Model financial statement
 - Annex IX Model declaration on reported final costs
- (h) Model specific grant agreement (SGA) and its annexes:
 - Annex I Description of the action
 - Annex II Estimated budget
 - Annex III Model declaration on estimated costs