



Thessaloniki, 10/07/2023

Frequent Questions Asked (FAQ)
in relation to the Call for proposals
GP/DVQ/ReferNet_FPA/001/23

1. What is the purpose/scope if this Call for proposals

With the objective of establishing a European network for VET – ReferNet –, this call aims at selecting one applicant from each eligible country (EU member states, Iceland and Norway) with which Cedefop will conclude a four-year framework partnership agreement (2024-2027) as well as a one-year specific grant agreement for 2024.

Please refer also to point 1.3 as well as section 2 of the Call for proposals document.

2. What are a framework partnership agreement and a specific grant agreement?

An agreement is a legal document signed between Cedefop and the institution beneficiary of the grant. The establishment of this legal link means:

- that the beneficiary is bound by the obligation to implement the action/work programme under certain conditions and
- that Cedefop is bound by the obligation to pay the grant to exactly the same entity/person provided the action/work programme is implemented according to those conditions.

Therefore, the existence of the legal relationship is a primary condition for the entitlement of the beneficiary to receive the grant and the entitlement of Cedefop to demand the implementation of the specific action/work programme under the conditions specified in the grant agreement.

Please refer also to the section “Definitions” of the Call for proposals document under “Beneficiary” and “Partnership”.

3. What is ReferNet?

Refernet is Cedefop's European network of expertise on VET. It was set up in 2002 to meet the growing demand for comparative information about VET systems, developments and policies at the time. The network currently covers EU member states, Iceland and Norway. Each country is represented by a key organisation involved in VET and/or VET-related research and analysis referred to as the national ReferNet partner.

Please refer also to points 1.1 and 1.2 of the Call for proposals document.

**FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT****4. What is an action grant?**

In general terms, a grant is defined as a 'financial contribution' or as 'financial support'; it is a direct payment made by Cedefop to one or more beneficiaries for the purpose of carrying out an action (grant for an action).

Please refer to Annex I of the Call for proposal document "Specifications ReferNet work plan 2024".

5. What are the 6 principles applying to grants?

The purpose of the **transparency principle** is to guarantee the effective use of public funds. On the one hand, it enables the target population of potential beneficiaries to obtain accurate and timely information on actions being undertaken by the Union. On the other hand, it is designed to ensure a sufficient level of participation for funds to be allocated to the operators who are best placed to execute actions consistent with the policy.

The purpose of the **principle of equal treatment** is to guarantee the absence of favouritism in grant award and administration procedures as well as their impartiality. This principle is reflected in the fact that no preferential treatment may be given to any potential beneficiary or beneficiaries; this rule applies not only to the process of identifying and selecting beneficiaries but also during the implementation of the action. Beneficiaries in the same situations or circumstances must be treated in the same way.

The **co-financing principle** implies that part of the action or of the operational expenditure of a body is to be funded by the beneficiary or covered by contributions other than those made from the Union budget. The purpose of the co-financing principle is to make beneficiaries stakeholders in the implementation of the action and in the proper execution of the work programme. This principle is also intended to ensure that beneficiaries maintain a certain degree of financial independence from Union funding while increasing and diversifying the resources from which the action may benefit.

A grant is by nature a direct payment made by the Commission by way of donation; by definition, this implies that the beneficiary must not derive any profit from the activities funded by the grant. The **no-profit principle** means that the purpose or effect of grants cannot be to generate profit from the action or work programme implemented by the beneficiary.

The principle of **non-cumulative award** serves to prevent double funding of an action or work programme. This principle is reflected in the rule that prohibits the award of more than one grant funded from the Union budget to the same beneficiary for the same action,

The principle of non-retroactivity: Union funding may not be used to finance actions which have already been completed and which have therefore proved achievable without financial support from the Union. Union funding, in fact, does not add value unless it serves to implement an action in pursuit of objectives formulated in the call for proposals. Financial support, moreover, may apply only to costs pertaining to the implementation of the action that have arisen after the date of signature of the grant agreement. In certain situations, however, grants for actions that have already begun may be awarded if the applicant can demonstrate the need for starting the action prior to signature of the agreement.

6. How can an applicant institution become a beneficiary of ReferNet Cedefop action grant?

An applicant is an eligible legal entity or grouping of legal entities having submitted a proposal within the framework of this open call for proposals.

Using eligibility, exclusion, selection and award criteria, Cedefop will conclude a four-year framework partnership agreement with one successful applicant from each eligible country (2024-2027).

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Provided the applicant has been successfully selected for the signature of a four-year framework partnership agreement, Cedefop will conclude a one-year specific grant agreement for 2024 with one successful applicant from each eligible country, by using evaluation criteria.

7. What are eligibility, exclusion, selection and award criteria?

Those criteria have been established and shall be assessed by Cedefop in order to verify that the applicant complies with them and can be selected as future beneficiary of Cedefop ReferNet action grants and in view of signing a framework partnership agreement for 2024-2027.

Please refer also to section 3, point 5.7 of the Call for proposals document as well as Annex II – “Official application form and annexes”.

8. What are evaluation criteria?

Those criteria have been established and shall be assessed by Cedefop in order to verify that the applicant having successfully passed the above stated criteria for the conclusion of a framework partnership agreement complies with these evaluation criteria and can be selected as future beneficiary of Cedefop ReferNet 2024 action grant and in view of signing a specific grant agreement for 2024.

Please refer also to section 4 of the Call for proposals document.

9. How much is Cedefop grant contribution?

Cedefop's financial grant is based on the principle of co-financing. It is only an additional financial contribution to the National ReferNet partner's own financial contribution and/or local, regional, national and/or private contributions obtained elsewhere for the project (including sponsoring).

In all cases, Cedefop's total contribution may not exceed 70 % of the eligible costs. Therefore, a minimum of 30 % of the total estimated eligible expenditure of the project must come from sources other than the budget of the European Union.

Please see also points 5.1 and 5.2 of the Call for proposals document.

10. What are eligible costs?

The only costs eligible in the context of this call for proposals are those which are:

- (a) directly linked to the project concerned, i.e. generated directly by the project and indispensable for its implementation. These costs have to be necessary and reasonable for the implementation of the project. The project must comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular in terms of value for money and cost-effectiveness;
- (b) generated during the lifetime of the project as defined in the agreement;
- (c) actually incurred by the partner and co-beneficiaries and recorded in their accounts in conformity with the applicable accounting principles, and which are declared in accordance with the requirements of the applicable tax and social legislation; and

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- (d) identifiable and verifiable with original supporting documents, including pay slips.

Please see also point 5.6 of the Call for proposals document.

11. What is the payment procedure?

The specific grant agreement lays down the payment arrangements as follows:

- (a) A pre-financing payment equivalent to 60 % of the total EU contribution will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days of the signing of the agreement by the last of the two parties;
- (b) Cedefop will determine the level of the final payment to be made to the partner within 60 days of Cedefop approving the final report.

Please see also points 5.3, 5.4 and 5.8 of the Call for proposals document.

12. How can an applicant submit its proposal?

Original proposals must be duly filled in and signed where applicable and submitted by post or courier to Cedefop premises. Signatures can be either by hand or with Qualified Electronic Signature (QES) within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 (eIDAS Regulation).

The deadline to submit an original proposal is **22/09/23**.

Please refer also to section 8 of the Call for proposals document.