

**Contracting authority**:

Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS)

NALAS Branch in Albania

EU for Municipalities Project

EU for Municipalities

Open Call for proposals

Guidelines
for grant applicants

Reference: EU4M-CfP2

Deadline for submission of full application:

10 June 2022, at 17:00 (CET)

NOTICE

Notice

This is an open call for proposals, where all documents are submitted together (concept note and full application). In the first instance, only the concept notes will be evaluated. Thereafter, for the lead applicants who have been pre-selected, the full applications will be evaluated. After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed ‘declaration by the lead applicant’ sent together with the full application.

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1. EU for Municipalities GRANT SCHEME
	1. Background

The EuropeAid project 166359/DD/ACT/AL “EU for Municipalities” (EU4M) project in Albania, was launched on 1 June 2021 and has a duration of 30 months, until November 2023.

The overarching objective of EU4M is to support the development potential of municipalities and improve environmental and socio-economic conditions in the local communities in Albania. The priority of the EU4M will be to support municipalities via grants in the fields of sustainable local economic development, local public infrastructure and services, innovation, job creation, youth empowerment, environmental protection, city greening as well as improving access to and quality of education, social care, public health, sports, culture and other basic local government services.

EU4M will provide significant financial support (EUR 1,75 million) for interventions in local communities. As per the Annual Action Programme for Albania for Year 2020 and the Financing Agreement for 2020 between the Republic of Albania and the European Union, the Government of Albania shall provide a co-financing of at least 10% of the amount of each sub grant included in the EU grant scheme for municipalities (at the time of the grants’ signatures). This co-financing contribution amounts at least to EUR 194.444, which shall be added to the EU4M grants.

The EU4M grants will have a strong investment component, ranging from 50-70% of the grant to be dedicated to investments and purchase of supplies to improve the quality of local public infrastructure and services for the benefit of the local communities. The project will also work on strengthening local government capacities in EU funds management, through a targeted technical assistance component that will be coordinated with Municipalities for Europe 2.0.

The EU4M Grant Scheme will include two Call for Proposals (CfP). The second CfP will provide sub-grants to municipalities in the amounts from 20.000 to 50.000 EUR and will make it possible to support small infrastructure interventions that are of benefit to the local communities. The CfPs will be open to all 61 municipalities in Albania that comply with the eligibility criteria, for the direct benefit of the local communities.

EU4M will include a technical assistance component tailored to the needs of the municipalities during the application and implementation phase for those municipalities that will be awarded sub-grants under the two CfPs. Technical assistance shall include one-to-one and hands-on training to municipal staff through coaching clinics, peer-to-peer exchanges and regional trainings. Local government training needs in the project application and proposal development phase will be harmonized and coordinated with the Municipalities for Europe (MfE) project.

* 1. Objectives of the programme and priority issues

The **overall objective** of this call for proposals is: to support the development potential of municipalities and improve environmental and socio-economic conditions in the local communities in Albania.

The **specific objectives** of this call for proposals are to support municipalities improve local public infrastructure and enhance quality of and access to services, including environmental protection, city greening, city resilience, resource-efficiency, youth and community empowerment, education, sports and culture.

The **priorities** of this call for proposals are structured into three main thematic areas:

* Small scale interventions to improve local government public infrastructure and services
* Promote environmental protection, greening of cities, city resilience, and resource-efficiency at local level
* Promote youth and community empowerment and development of education, social services, culture and sports at local level

The proposed action should address at least one of the above-mentioned priorities.

The proposed action can also address more priorities.

* 1. Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 630,000**. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

**Size of grants**

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

* minimum amount: EUR 20,000
* maximum amount: EUR 50,000

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum percentages of total eligible costs of the action:

* Minimum percentage: 70 % of the total eligible costs of the action.
* Maximum percentage: 90 % of the total eligible costs of the action[[1]](#footnote-2) (see also Section 2.1.5)

Any action supported under this call for proposals must have a **capital investment component** (work and supplies to be procured) which must fall between the following minimum and maximum percentages:

* minimum percentage: 50% of the total eligible costs of the action
* maximum percentage: 70% of the total eligible costs of the action

At least 2% of the grants will be allocated for communication and visibility activities.

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union.

The total eligible costs of the action consist of:

* Any grant requested under this call for proposals **and**
* Co-financing by the Albanian Government (according to Financing Agreement for 2020 between the Republic of Albania and the European Union) **or**
* Co-financing by the Beneficiaries **or**
* Co-financing from sources, other than the general budget of the Union
1. Rules FOR thIS call for proposalS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?locale=en>).

* 1. Eligibility criteria

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

1. the actors:
* The ‘**lead applicant’**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form (2.1.1),
* if any, its **co-applicant(s)** (**where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as ‘applicant(s)’**) (2.1.1),
* and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s). (2.1.2);
1. the actions:

Actions for which a grant may be awarded (2.1.4);

1. the costs:
* types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (2.1.5).
	+ 1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))

**Lead applicant**

(1) In order to be eligible for a grant, the lead applicant **must**:

* Be one of the Municipalities of the Republic of Albania as defined by the Law No. 115/2014, dated 31.07.2014, “On the territorial and administrative division of local government units in the Republic of Albania”, **and**
* be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary**, and**
* have spent 70% or more of their capital investment of the previous year's budget (2021), demonstrating it has sufficient capacity to absorb and manage additional funding.

Lead applicants must sign Declaration on Capital Investment Spending (Annex F), declaring its compliance with the requirement to have spent 70% or more of their capital investment of the previous year's budget (2021).

**Lead applicants may not be awarded more than one contract as lead applicants within the two call for proposals of the EU for Municipalities Grant Schemes.**

Lead applicants that have been awarded a contract under the EU for Municipalities Grant Scheme First Call for Proposals (EU4M – CfP1) may apply as co-applicants under the second call for proposals (EU4M – CfP2).

(2) Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide;

Lead applicants, co-applicants and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant and the co-applicants are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion according to Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract. In this respect, provisionally selected lead applicants and co-applicants are obliged to declare that they are not in one of the exclusion situations through a signed declaration on honour (PRAG Annex A14). For grants of EUR 60 000 or less, no declaration on honour is required. See section 2.4.

In Annex A, Part B Section 8 of the grant application form (‘declaration(s) by the lead applicant’), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself and the co-applicant(s) are not in any of these situations.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The lead applicant may act individually or with 1 (one) co-applicant for the implementation of the action.

If awarded the grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in Annex G (special conditions). The coordinator is the main interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

**Co-applicant(s)**

**Lead applicants are not obliged to have co-applicants.** If they decide to have co-applicants, the latter participate in designing and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant.

Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself i.e. be one of the Albanian municipalities in the Republic of Albania.

In addition to the categories referred to in Section 2.1.1, the following are however also eligible as co-applicants:

* **non-profit making organisation** or any other civil society entities as defined under the Law No. 8788, dated 07.05.2001, and its amendments, art. 2 "Definitions", and/or the Law No 119/2015, art. 2 "Definitions", officially registered in the Republic of Albania, **at least 3 years before the launch of this call for proposals** and its status, experience and expertise is related to the action.

The lead applicant and the co-applicant(s) must sign a partnership agreement (Annex E) and which shall be submitted together with the application.

Co-applicant(s) must sign the mandate for co-applicant(s) in Annex A, Part B Section 4 of the grant application form.

If awarded the grant contract, the co-applicant(s) (if any) will become beneficiary(ies) in the action (together with the coordinator).

(3) Applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG) at the
 moment of the award decision cannot be awarded the contract[[2]](#footnote-3).

* + 1. Affiliated entities

Not Applicable

* + 1. Associates and contractors

The following entities are not applicants nor affiliated entities and do not have to sign the ‘mandate for co-applicant(s)’ or ‘affiliated entities' statement’:

* Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Part B Section 6 — ‘Associates participating in the action’ — of the grant application form.

* Contractors

The beneficiaries are permitted to award contracts. Associates or affiliated entity(ies) cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

* + 1. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of an action may not be shorter than 6 months nor exceed 9 months.

Priorities:

* **Priority 1: Local public sector infrastructure and local public services**
* **Priority 2: Environmental protection, greening of cities, city resilience, and resource-efficiency at local level**
* **Priority 3: Youth and community empowerment and development of education, social services, culture and sports at local level**

Location

Actions must take place in Albania.

Types of action

* (small scale) interventions to develop, modernize and rehabilitate local public sector infrastructure and improve access to and quality of local public services for Albanian citizens;
* (small scale) interventions that promote environmental protection, sustainable, resilient and green cities and resource efficiency at the local level;
* (small scale) interventions that promote youth and community empowerment and the development of education, social services, culture and sports at the local level
* interventions that apply innovative, integrated and smart approaches and technologies, including digitalization that contribute to improve quality of and access to local services and sustainability of local communities;
* actions that ensure synergy and complementarity with interventions outlined in the Local Strategic Development Plans and Objectives;
* interventions that apply coordinated approaches to territorial development and foster intermunicipal cooperation.

The following types of action are ineligible:

* actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses; studies or training courses not related to the proposal;
* actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
* actions for the exclusive benefit of individuals or restricted groups of individuals;
* actions supporting political parties or candidates in elections;
* retroactive financing for projects already in implementation or completed;
* actions including commercial and profit-making activities[[3]](#footnote-4);
* actions related to any business-related infrastructure that brings benefits to a single user and/or single large enterprise(s);
* actions which includes (re)construction of any public infrastructure/assets that require resolution of property issues, e.g., property rights are not clear, or there are ongoing disputes;
* actions which include development of technical documentation, including feasibility studies, technical implementation projects, etc.;
* actions covered and financed by other EU funded programmes.

Types of activity

The following **indicative activities** may be financed under this Call for Proposals:

* Interventions that improve access to and quality of local services in the areas of municipal public squares, recreational areas and urban refurbishing, parks and green areas, children’s playgrounds, roads, pedestrian zones, bicycle and walking paths, signages, public lighting, public transport and mobility;
* rehabilitation, reconstruction, modernisation and development of social sector infrastructure, to improve access to and quality of services in particular in the areas of education (schools, labs, preschools, kindergartens, nurseries), public health (primary healthcare facilities), social care services (social care and service centres), sports (sport fields, sport halls and playgrounds, etc.), youth and cultural centres, and access facilities for vulnerable groups etc.;
* activities addressing key challenges in the area of environmental protection, including also waste management (separation, collection, disposal and treatment of solid and household waste, recycling practices, landfills restoration) and water and sewage systems at municipal level;
* activities improving the municipal environmental monitoring capacities and infrastructure to control and mitigate the impact of the polluting industries in the municipality territory;
* activities improving sustainability of the urban and rural areas through developing energy and resource efficiency practices, promoting biodiversity and good agriculture and rural development practices;
* activities that help to mitigate climate change/crisis, promote resiliency, prevent and manage natural disasters, improve infrastructure and services for civil emergencies and reduce environmental risks (floods, fire, earthquakes) at the local level.
* activities that promote the preservation of cultural heritage and improve cultural infrastructure at the local level (such as museums, libraries and cultural activities etc.);
* activities of socio-economic nature which promote youth empowerment and advancement, including the professional qualification and that facilitate labour market participation;
* activities bringing innovative and creative solutions and smart technologies improving access to and quality of local public services, including digitalisation;

**The above-mentioned list of types of activities is not exhaustive, they are only indicative. Other appropriate or innovative activities that are not mentioned above may also be considered for financing when they clearly contribute to the achievement of the Call’s objectives.**

Financial support to third parties[[4]](#footnote-5)

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. As far as possible, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must incorporate information and communication activities designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

Applicants must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing (see the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU external actions specified and published by the European Commission at <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/communication-and-visibility-manual-eu-external-actions_en>).

**At least 2% of the sub-grants will be allocated for communication and visibility activities.**

Number of applications and grants per applicants

The lead applicant may not submit more than 1 (one) application under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may not be awarded more than 1 (one) grant under this call for proposals as lead applicant.

The lead applicant may be a co-applicant in only 1 (one) application at the same time.

A co-applicant may not be the co-applicant in more than 2 (two) applications under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant may not be awarded more than 2 (two) grant(s) under this call for proposals.

**Please note that in case of failure to fulfil these requirements, the applications of all concerned entities will be rejected.**

* + 1. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for ‘eligible costs’.

The reimbursement of eligible costs may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:

* financing not linked to costs of the relevant operations based on:

 (i) either the fulfilment of conditions set out in sector specific legislation or Commission Decisions; or

(ii) the achievement of results measured by reference to the previously set milestones or through performance indicators;

* actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);

It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines).

The following costs are eligible:

* the cost of staff assigned to the action, corresponding to actual gross salaries including social security charges and other remuneration-related costs (excluding bonuses); salaries and costs shall not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies), unless it is justified by showing that it is essential to carry out the action;
* works on (re) construction costs / rehabilitation / extension of physical public infrastructure owned by municipalities, directly related to local public services;
* purchase costs for equipment and supplies specifically dedicated to the purposes of the action, directly related to improving access to and quality of local public services provided by municipalities, provided that ownership is transferred at the end of the action when required in Article 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;
* purchase of technical equipment and information and communication technology (ICT) and infrastructure (hardware and software) directly related to improving access to and quality local public services;
* costs of consumables specifically dedicated to the action;
* supplies and services for activities supporting the implementation of the action;
* costs for communication and visibility of the action.
* supervision services for works costs funded by the action;
* expenditure verification report for the costs funded by the action;
* bank account maintenance (not bank fees).
* **Salary costs of the personnel of local governments** may be eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the action or operation were not undertaken.
* **These personnel shall not receive for the engagement in the project activities any other remuneration than their standard, regular salaries in their respective institutions.**
* The salaries of the civil servants or other public employees of the local governments may be presented as co-financing contribution of the applicants if their action is strictly related to the project's activities, and shall not exceed 10% of the total eligible costs of the action.
* Prior to the signature of a grant contract, the contracting authority may require from the relevant beneficiaries the appointment of these staffers by their authorised representative in writing (indicating their names, project function and gross salaries).
* Please note that this does not apply to professional staff recruited by the local governments for the sole purpose of managing this project resulting from the grant award.

Contingency reserve

The budget **may** include a contingency reserve not exceeding 5 % of the estimated direct eligible costs. It can only be used with the **prior written** **authorisation** of the contracting authority.

Eligible indirect costs

 Not applicable.

Contributions in kind

Not applicable

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

The following costs are not eligible:

* debts and debt service charges (interest);
* provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
* costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant;
* purchases or rent of land or buildings;
* currency exchange losses;
* taxes, including Value Added Tax
* in kind contributions (except for the volunteers’ work)
* customs and import duties or any other charges
* fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation
* regular operational costs of public services, unrelated to the implementation of the action;
* consultancy costs for the preparation of the action;
* costs incurred before the start of implementation of the action; Retroactive payments are not allowed.
* credit to third parties;
* bank charges, costs of guaranties and similar charges
* bonuses included in costs of staff

**Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct**

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

**Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment**

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The European Commission reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, ‘corrupt practices’ are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

d) Unusual commercial expenses

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

e) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

* 1. How to apply and the procedures to follow
		1. Application forms

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions on the concept note and the full applications in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A).

Applicants must apply in English.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the instructions on the concept note or any major inconsistency in the application e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that only the grant application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

**The following are the documents which MUST be submitted as an application for a grant:**

* Annex A: Grant Application Form (Word format)
* Annex B: Budget (Excel format)
* Annex C: Logical Framework (Excel format)
* Annex D: Legal Entity Sheet (PDF format)
* Annex E: Partnership Agreement
* Annex F: Declaration on Capital Investment Spending
* Annex H: Declaration on Honour

**Technical Supporting Documents: For all the applicants whose application involves the execution of works and/or purchase of equipment, the following technical supporting documents WILL BE REQUIRED in addition to the aforementioned ones:**

1. Technical Project for Implementation: works design/technical project, main or detailed works design in accordance with the type of works for which the Grant is being requested;
2. Indicative priced bill of quantities – calculated in ALL or EUR.
3. Technical specifications, in the case of equipment etc.
4. If applicable, Proof of ownership of the land/assets to be renovated
5. If applicable, feasibility study (with cost-benefit analyses which includes economic and financial analysis),;

**All technical documentation for execution of works must be in compliance with requirements of the national legislation.**

**Administrative Supporting Documents to be provided together with the full application:**

Copy of the organisational structure (list of position and number of staff allocated to each department/unit) of the municipality, as approved by the mayor;

Brief report with the list of performed activities related to EU integration, with respective links where possible) demonstrating municipal performance on EU related issues and reporting, during the past year, until the date of submission of the full proposal;

Supporting documents showing that the proposed actions are part of the municipal strategy for community development, medium term budgets, territorial development plan, or other sectorial plans, to ensure achievement of development objectives and policies.

Supporting documents (agenda, presence list, report/minutes of meetings, pictures, weblinks etc.) showing that the proposed actions are the results of proper consultations with the local community.

**Financial Supporting Documents to be provided by the Lead Applicants to confirm compliance with the eligibility criteria on Capital Investment Spending.**

1. Copy of the initial Annual Budget for 2021, as approved by the municipal council, confirming the planned investments by the municipality;
2. Copy of the 2021 Annual Budget Execution Monitoring Report (with Annexes), as submitted to the Municipal Council and the Ministry of Finance and Economy, confirming the actually spent investments by the municipality for 2021;
3. Copy of the Expenditure Reconciliation Act (s) with the Treasury Office for year 2021, confirming the actually spent investments, together with a table summarizing the consolidated capital expenditures for the Municipality and its subordinated spending units, as per the reconciliation acts;

The lead applicant must specify/highlight the exact paragraphs/pages within the above-mentioned documents, showing the declared amounts of planned and spent capital investments in 2021.

The contracting authority may require the lead applicants to provide additional official documents or information, validating the compliance of the lead applicant with the requirement to have spent 70% or more of their capital investment in budget year 2021.

The application form and the entire Application package are available:

* On the website: [www.eu4municipalities.al](http://www.eu4municipalities.al) (<https://eu4municipalities.al/thirrja-e-dyte/>)

**Lead applicants must verify that their application is complete using the checklist for application** (Annex A, Part B, Section 7 of the grant application form and that the signatures, where required, are well visible and recognizable on both the original and the copies. Incomplete applications may be rejected.

When applicants have co-applicants, they must sign the Partnership Agreement see Annex E – Partnership Agreement).

Please make sure that the Declaration by the Applicant and the Partnership Agreement are signed by the legally authorized representative of the relevant institution or organization.

**No additional annexes should be sent.**

* + 1. Where and how to send applications

Applications must be submitted in one original and 3 copies in A4 size, each bound. The complete application form (Part A: concept note and Part B: full application form), budget and logical framework must also be supplied in electronic format (CD-ROM or USB) in a separate and single file (i.e. the application must not be split into several different files). The electronic file must contain **exactly the same** application as the paper version enclosed.

The checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form) and the declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 of Part B of the grant application form) must be stapled separately and enclosed in the envelope.

The outer envelope must bear the **reference number and the title of the call for proposals**, together with the full name and address of the lead applicant, and the words ‘Not to be opened before the opening session’ and ‘Të mos hapet para sesionit të hapjes së aplikimeve*’*.

Applications must be submitted in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) at the address below:

Postal address:

NALAS Branch Albania

EU for Municipalities Project

Rruga ‘Donika Kastrioti’ (Seksioni Ukraina e Lirë), Pallati Tekno-Projekt, H.1, Kati 4rt, Ap. 3/1, Tiranë

Address for hand delivery:

NALAS Branch Albania

EU for Municipalities Project

Rruga ‘Donika Kastrioti’ (Seksioni Ukraina e Lirë), Pallati Tekno-Projekt, H.1, Kati 4rt, Ap. 3/1, Tiranë

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

**Lead applicants must verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form). Incomplete applications may be rejected.**

* + 1. Deadline for submission of applications

The applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that there are two different systems for sending applications/full proposals: one is by post or private courier service, the other is by hand delivery.

In the first case, the application/full proposal must be sent before the date for submission, as evidenced by the postmark or deposit slip, but in the second case it is the acknowledgment of receipt given at the time of the delivery of the application/full proposal which will serve as proof.

**The deadline for the submission of full applications is 10 June 2022 at 17:00** (Tirana time).

The contracting authority may, for reasons of administrative efficiency, reject any application submitted on time to the postal service but received, for any reason beyond the contracting authority's control, after the effective date of approval of the first evaluation step (i.e. concept note), if accepting applications that were submitted on time but arrived late would considerably delay the award procedure or jeopardise decisions already taken and notified. (see indicative calendar under Section 2.5.2).

* + 1. Further information about applications

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of applications to the below address(es), indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: grants@eu4municipalities.al

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the submission of applications.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

No individual replies will be given to questions. Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published on the website [www.eu4municipalities.al](http://www.eu4municipalities.al) (<https://eu4municipalities.al/thirrja-e-dyte/>), as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

Please note that the contracting authority may decide to cancel the call for proposals procedure at any stage according to the conditions set out in Section 6.5.9 of the PRAG.

* 1. Evaluation and selection of applications

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

1. **STEP 1: OPENING & ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION**

During the opening and administrative check the following will be assessed:

* + - If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
* If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The concept notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note, which can be found in Part A of the grant application form.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Scores\*** |
| **1. Relevance of the action** | Sub-score | **20** |
| 1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)? | 5 |  |
| 1.2 How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target local community(ies), municipality(ies), or region(s) if applicable, and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)? | 5 |  |
| 1.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? | 5 |  |
| 1.4 Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. Innovative approaches, innovation, best practices, regional focus, cross-municipal partnerships, partnerships with local stakeholders, co-financing and complementarity or scaling up with other initiatives supported by the EU or other donors, gender equality, environmental/climate change issues, sustainable local economic development, youth empowerment, social inclusion? | 5 |  |
| **2. Design of the action** | Sub-score | **30** |
| 2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention approach follow the rationale to achieve the expected results? Does the proposal demonstrates sufficient maturity to allow swift implementation? | 5x2\*\* |  |
| 2.2 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? Does the problem analysis ensure the perspectives and contributions of stakeholders and/or endorsement of the local communities/target beneficiaries? | 5 |
| 2.3 Does the design take into account external factors and other stakeholders (risks and assumptions, mitigation measures)? | 5 |  |
| 2.4 Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are the results (outputs, outcomes and impact) realistic?  | 5 |  |
| 2.5 Does the action strengthen the municipal efforts, capacities, and performance and reporting regarding the EU integration-related processes? | 5 |  |
| **TOTAL SCORE** | **50** |

\*\*this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

Once all concept notes have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

Firstly, only the concept notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the number of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to at least 200% of the available budget for this call for proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot, where relevant.

After the evaluation of concept notes, the contracting authority will send letters to all lead applicants, indicating whether their application was submitted by the deadline, informing them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether the concept note was evaluated and the results of that evaluation The evaluation committee will then proceed with the lead applicants whose proposals have been pre-selected.

1. **STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION**

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

* If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form). This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The full applications that pass this check will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

**The selection criteria** help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s operational capacity and the lead applicant's financial capacity and are used to verify that they:

* have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding (this only applies to lead applicants);
* have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This applies to applicants and any affiliated entity(ies).

**The award criteria** help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

*Scoring:*

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

**Evaluation grid**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Maximum Score** |
| **1. Financial and operational capacity** | **10** |
| 1.1 Do the applicants have sufficient in-house experience of project management and content related technical expertise? (Including knowledge on the issues to be addressed, staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)? Does the Municipality have a functioning EU Unit with sufficient capacity to ensure proper coordination and management of EU integration-related issues? | 5 |
| 1.2 Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?  | 5 |
| **2. Relevance** | **20** |
| *Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation* |  |
| **3. Design of the action** | **15** |
| 3.1 How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)? | 5 |
| 3.2 Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification? If not, is a baseline study foreseen (and is the study budgeted appropriately in the proposal)? | 5 |
| 3.3 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? | 5 |
| **4. Implementation approach** | **30** |
| 4.1 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic?  | 5 |
| 4.2 Does the investment component and the technical proposal of the action demonstrate sufficient maturity and feasibility to allow swift implementation within the indicative budget and available timeline?\*\* | 5\*2 |
| 4.3 Does the proposal include an effective and efficient internal monitoring system?  | 5 |
| 4.4 Is the co-applicant(s)' level of involvement and participation in the action justified and satisfactory? | 5 |
| 4.5 Does the proposal include activities to improve understanding and awareness of the EU values and standards, and Albania’s EU integration process? Does the action proposes an innovative, smart and/or green approach, including digitalization of services?  | 5 |
| **5. Sustainability of the action**  | **15** |
| 5.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups? | 5 |
| 5.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing? | 5 |
| 5.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable?:- Financially *(e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs)*- Institutionally *(will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local ‘ownership’ of the results of the action?)*- At policy level (where applicable) *(what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods)*- Environmentally (if applicable) *(will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?)* | 5 |
| **6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action** | **15** |
| 6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? | / 5 |
| 6.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory? | / 10 |
| **Maximum total score** | **100** |

\*\*this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance.

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than 6 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the lead applicant applies without co-applicants or affiliated entities the score for point 4.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of co-applicants or affiliated entities is mandatory according to these guidelines for applicants.

*Provisional selection*

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached.

In case of applications with the same score, priority in the list will be given to applications having scored higher under section 4 of the Evaluation Grid as per above, and in case of equal score in section 4, having scored higher in section 5 of the Evaluation Grid as per above; in case of equal scores in sections 4 and 5, priority will be given to the score assigned in section 3, then 6, then 1.

In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

1. **STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS AND AFFILIATED ENTITY(IES)**

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.4). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

* The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 of Part B of the grant application form) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
* The eligibility of applicants and the affiliated entity(ies) will be verified according to the criteria set out in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals.

* 1. Submission of supporting documents for provisionally selected applications

A lead applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents in order to allow the contracting authority to verify the eligibility of the lead applicant, (if any) of the co-applicant(s) and (if any) of their affiliated entity(ies):

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, and (if any) of each co-applicant.
2. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants above EUR 100 000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available. In all other cases, the applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available. This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by a beneficiary to an authorising officer responsible in any one financial year.
3. A copy of the lead applicant’s latest accounts (profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed). A copy of the latest account is not required from (if any) the co-applicant(s).
4. The decision of the municipal council of the lead applicant, for which the grant is awarded, with the mandate to the Mayor to sign the grant contract.
5. The decision of the municipal council showing the commitment of local financial resources to cover the eventual co-financing from municipalities, the VAT related costs and maintenance plan and costs for the proposed action, included in the annual/medium term budget.
6. If applicable, all necessary legal authorisations: e.g. location and construction permits/proof that the applicant applied for necessary permits;
7. If applicable, positive Decision on Social and Environmental Impact Assessment or a statement from the relevant public authority that the latter is not needed for the specific activities,.
8. The Financial Identification Form (FIF) of the lead applicant, shall be provided after the contract signature and after the authorisation and opening of the bank account in a second-level bank.
9. Legal entity sheet (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and (if any) by each co-applicant), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there.
10. The lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in and sign the declaration on honour (Annex H) certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.6.10.1 of the PRAG).

Documents must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union orin the language of the country where the action is implemented, a translation into English of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, must be attached for the purpose of analysing the application.

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided before the deadline indicated in the request for supporting documents sent to the lead applicant by the contracting authority, the application may be rejected.

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

NB : In the eventuality that the contracting authority is not satisfied with the strength, solidity, and guarantee offered by the structural link between one of the applicants and its affiliated entity, it can require the submission of the missing documents allowing for its conversion into co-applicant. If all the missing documents for co-applicants are submitted, and provided all necessary eligibility criteria are fulfilled, the above mentioned entity becomes a co-applicant for all purposes. The lead applicant has to submit the application form revised accordingly.

* 1. Notification of the Contracting Authority’s decision
		1. Content of the decision

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the contracting authority’s decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See further Section 2.4.15 of the practical guide.

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm>

* + 1. Indicative timetable

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **DATE** | **TIME** |
| **Launching of the EU4M 2nd Call for Proposals (EU4M-CfP2)** | 13/04/2022 | 10:00 |
| **1. Information meeting (if any)** | TBD |  |
| **2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority** | 20/05/2022 | 17:00 |
| **3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority** | 30/05/2022 | 17:00 |
| **4. Deadline for submission of applications**  | **10/06/2022** | **17:00** |
| **5. Information to lead applicants on opening, administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)** | July 2022 | TBC |
| **6. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)** | July-August 2022 | TBC |
| **7. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)** | July-August 2022 | TBC |
| **8. Contract signature** | 30/09/2022 | TBC |

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site of the EU for Municipalities project: [www.eu4municipalities.al](http://www.eu4municipalities.al)

* 1. Conditions for implementation after the contracting authority’s decision to award a grant

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract. Where the coordinator is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed, it will sign a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. In this case references to provisions of the standard grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the grant contract shall be understood as references to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement.

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the beneficiary(ies) and its affiliated entity(ies) (if any) to award procurement contracts, those contracts must be awarded in accordance with Annex IV to the standard grant contract, and in respect of the Albanian national public procurement rules and procedures.

In this context, a distinction should be made between awarding implementation contracts and subcontracting parts of the action described in the proposal, i.e. the description of the action annexed to the grant contract, such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

Awarding implementation contracts: implementation contracts relate to the acquisition by beneficiaries of routine services and/or necessary goods and equipment as part of their project management; they do not cover any outsourcing of tasks forming part of the action that are described in the proposal, i.e. in the description of the action annexed to the grant contract.

Subcontracting: Subcontracting is the implementation, by a third party with which one or more beneficiaries have concluded a procurement contract, of specific tasks forming part of the action as described in annex to the grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

1. LIST OF annexes

**Documents to be completed**

Annex A: Grant application form (Word format)

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical framework (Word format)

Annex D: Legal entity sheet

Annex E: Partnership agreement

Annex F: Declaration on Capital Investment Spending

Annex H: Declaration of Honour

**DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION[[5]](#footnote-6)**

Annex G: Standard grant contract

Annex G: Standard grant contract

- Annex II: General conditions

- Annex IV: Contract Award Rules

- Annex V: Standard Request for Payment

- Annex VI: Model Narrative and Financial Report

- Annex VII: Model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action

- Annex IX: Standard Template for Transfer of Ownership of Assets

Annex H: Declaration on Honour

Annex I: Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-procurement-contracts/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag/diems_en>

Annex J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.

**Useful links:**

**Project Cycle Management Guidelines**

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-guidelines-vol-1\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-guidelines-vol-1_en)

**The implementation of grant contracts**

**A Users' Guide**

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/companion/document.do?nodeNumber=19&locale=en>

**Financial Toolkit**

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/procedures-beneficiary-countries-and-partners/financial-management-toolkit_en>

Please note: The toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

\* \* \*

1. **Suspensive Clause:** As per the Annual Action Programme for Albania for Year 2020, the Government of Albania shall provide a co-financing of at least 10% of the amount of each subgrant included in the EU grant scheme for municipalities (at the time of the grants’ signatures). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. In case the action generates revenue, it shall be used to finance the operation, together with the other sources of funding. Revenue of an operation means cash in-flows directly paid by users for the goods and services provided by the operation, such as charges borne directly by users for the use of infrastructure, sale or rent of land or buildings, or payment for services incurred during the period of implementation of the operation. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. In case the action generates revenue, it shall be used to finance the operation, together with the other sources of funding. Revenue of an operation means cash in-flows directly paid by users for the goods and services provided by the operation, such as charges borne directly by users for the use of infrastructure, sale or rent of land or buildings, or payment for services incurred during the period of implementation of the operation. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. These documents should also be published by the contracting authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)