



EuroHPC JOINT UNDERTAKING
DECISION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE EuroHPC JOINT
UNDERTAKING
No 12/2024

approving the launch of a call on National Competence Centres for High
Performance Computing (DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01)

THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE EUROHPC JOINT UNDERTAKING,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EU) 2021/1173 of 13 July 2021 on establishing the European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking and repealing Regulation (EU) 2018/1488¹, (hereinafter, "the JU Regulation"),

Having regard to the Statutes of the European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking annexed to the JU Regulation (thereinafter "JU Statutes") and in particular to Article 7(5)(c) thereof,

Having regard to the Governing Board Decision no 11/2024, amending the Joint Undertaking's Work Programme and Budget for the year 2024 (Amendment no. 1)

WHEREAS

- (1) The amended Work Programme and Budget for the year 2024 was approved by virtue of the Governing Board Decision No 11/2024 of 21 March 2024.
- (2) The Governing Board should approve the launch of Calls for Proposals, in accordance with the annual work plan.
- (3) The Executive Director of the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking should manage the calls for proposals as provided for in the annual work plan and administer the grant agreements and decision;
- (4) During the 37th Governing Board meeting, the Governing Board discussed the scope of the call and the Governing Board

¹ OJ L 256, 19.7.2021, p. 3.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The Governing Board hereby approves the launch of a call on National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing (DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01), in accordance with the amended Work Programme and Budget for the year 2024 (Amendment no. 1)

Article 2

The Executive Director of the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking is hereby instructed to launch a call on National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing (DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01), further to the adoption of and in accordance with the amended Work Programme and Budget for the year 2024 (Amendment no. 1).

The call for proposals on National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing shall be published at least:

- on the website of the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking;
- on the single portal for participants (Funding and Tenders Opportunity Portal).

Article 3

This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

Done at Luxembourg, on 2 April 2024.

For the Governing Board

Rafal Duczmal

The Chair

Annex I: Call on National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing (DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01)

Annex II: Call Document on National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing (DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01)

Annex I

Call - National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing

DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02

Overview of this call²

Proposals are invited against the following Destinations and topic(s):

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
Opening: 20 Mar 2024 Deadline(s): 23 Apr 2024				
DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01: National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing	DIGITAL-JU-SIMPLE	Up to 10,000,000	Up to 5,000,000	1
Overall indicative budget		Up to 10,000,000		

General conditions relating to this call

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01: National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing

Specific conditions	
<i>Type of Action</i>	DIGITAL JU Simple Grants

²

<i>Expected EuroHPC JU contribution per project</i>	The EuroHPC JU estimates that an EU contribution of up to EUR 5 million matched by a PS contribution of up to EUR 5 million (50% EU funding rate) would to allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. The expected duration of this action is up to 21 months with an EU contribution of up to EUR 600,000 per National Competence Centre.
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Expected Outcome: This action will extend the existing network of National Competence Centres for HPC (NCCs) currently funded by the EuroHPC JU in the EuroCC 2 project by additional National Competence Centres in EuroHPC Participating States that currently do not receive financial support for a NCC. The NCCs will be fully aligned with and integrated into the EUROCC 2 network, its management structure, reporting lines and the CASTIEL 2 Coordination and Support Action. By the end of the action, an effective support network in the field of HPC will have been established providing services to local communities from the public and private sector with a specific focus on SMEs. Through cooperation with other European initiatives the network will provide a knowledge hub for HPC offering a comprehensive support infrastructure from basic training and initial uptake of HPC to specialist knowledge covering the entire HPC value chain including related topics such as intellectual property.

In the course of the action, the NCCs will have demonstrated their significant impact on the innovation capacity of the European HPC ecosystem supported by quantitative key performance indicators measuring the specific impact of individual NCCs with respect to the baseline established on the basis of common criteria for all NCCs.

A detailed competence map of the European HPC ecosystem will be available to identify expertise, monitor and assess the evolution HPC competences in the constituencies of the individual NCCs and in a European context.

The NCCs will address the following areas:

- Contribution to the realisation of the EuroHPC overall and specific objectives
- Promoting the use of HPC at national level by identifying relevant users and matching their needs with the available expertise in the HPC Competence Centres
- Effective establishment of a wide range of HPC services (as referred in the scope of the call)
- Support the development of leading-edge, innovative solutions by targeted regional/national stakeholders in the private and public sector
- Provision of support to interested end users that are/will use HPC and HPDA in their daily business.
- Contribute in ensuring European technological autonomy in this field

Objective: The aim is to support existing or the creation of up to one new NCC in EuroHPC JU Participating States that are currently not funded by the EuroHPC JU. The NCCs funded by the this call should extend the current network of NCCs of the EuroCC 2 initiative to additional countries. The NCCs will provide HPC services to industry (in particular to SMEs), academia and public administrations, delivering tailored/modular solutions for a wide variety of users, with an aim to ease and foster the transition towards wider uptake of HPC in Europe. NCCs will be a focal point of HPC in the respective country, liaising with national initiatives in the area of HPC, facilitating access of national stakeholders to European HPC competences and opportunities in different industrial sectors and domains. SMEs will be central to the NCC's activities. Academic institutions and stakeholders may be addressed only to a limited extent and most of the resources of an NCC will be dedicated to support local SMEs, industry and public services with the uptake of HPC

Scope: Set-up and/or operate NCC in a EuroHPC JU Participating States that do currently not have a NCC funded by the EuroHPC JU. The NCC will represent the focal point of national competences in HPC and provide leading-edge knowledge to enable the development of innovative solutions in their constituency, taking into account national HPC needs and requirements emanating from different user communities (industry, academia, public administrations) and application domains. The NCC will establish and maintain a network of national HPC users, promote HPC use in the private and public sector, reach out to potential new users and develop the necessary expertise for HPC applications close to the relevant national and, in collaboration with other NCCs, European communities. Each NCC will act as an access point to the European network of NCCs and other European HPC initiatives such as the Centres of Excellence for HPC applications to ensure that local stakeholders have access to the best available support in Europe if the required expertise can not be provided by the NCC or is out of scope of the NCC's activities. In return, NCCs will support stakeholders from other regions and countries that need their expertise coordinated through the NCC network and the complementary Coordination and Support Action CASTIEL 2. NCCs will implement a flexible and modular approach in the services to be provided, taking into account the degree of maturity of the national HPC ecosystem and in close coordination and collaboration with the other NCCs to achieve the highest possible impact and the widest possible spread of knowledge, ensure the most efficient use of NCC resources and to avoid duplication of effort among the NCCs and with other initiatives. Proposals should demonstrate the implementation of effective measures to close the gap between advanced and less developed NCCs.

HPC Competence Centres will, for example, engage in the following activities:

- Facilitate access to the HPC ecosystem including testbeds, hands-on sessions on HPC, HPC application optimising and scaling by connecting national communities with other initiatives such as the European Centres of Excellence for HPC applications.

- Facilitate uptake of HPC applications by different users, including SMEs (e.g. promoting locally relevant success stories), academia and public administrations.
- Provide scientific/technical expertise/consulting through application-oriented HPC knowledge/focus (e.g. HPC and High Performance Data Analytics (HPDA)), as well as access to advanced simulation and modelling algorithms, software codes and tools.
- Contribute with the expertise to the development activities (TRL 4-6) of SMEs and the public services to enable their efficient use of HPC resources (e.g., software porting and customization, deployment of advanced simulation and modelling algorithms, methods, and tools etc.).
- Provide on-site evaluations of new technologies, experimenting, proofs of concept as well as enable validation and demonstration of HPC technologies, software codes, tools, and algorithms in relevant environments.
- Facilitate access to supercomputing and data management for exploring innovation solutions of interest to end users, including SME user industries.
- Local and national training and skills development in the area of HPC and related subjects (e.g. HPDA, parallel programming, etc.), through face-to-face as well as online training (e.g. MOOC platforms).
- Awareness raising and outreach on the benefits of HPC to potential user industries, including SMEs.
- Raise awareness and support national and local communities in identifying and protecting intellectual property in an HPC context and provide advice on licensing policies in collaboration with the pan-European network of NCCs.
- Implement technology transfer activities at local/national level and the Digital Single Market.

It is required that the NCC – hosted by either one or several national organisations - is formally designated and mandated by the national authorities of the EU Member State or the EuroHPC JU Participating State. The NCC must be established as an organisation with appropriate visibility to the national communities and an independent organisational structure. The NCC must ensure that the NCC's activities are clearly identifiable and distinct from activities of the institution(s) hosting the NCC. In general, NCCs should employ HPC specialists, primarily full time, with expertise in areas most relevant for the national communities and NCC staff should not work under external supervision. The designated NCC leader should be directly involved in the management of the NCCs operations and is expected to report directly to the coordinator and the funding authority on all aspects of the centre's activities. Applicants are encouraged to implement a pan-European collaboration scheme together with EuroCC 2 for talent management including the identification

and recruitment of HPC experts by the NCCs. Moreover, proposals should clearly set out an effective governance structure and decision making process within the consortium and the complementary Coordination and Support Action CASTIEL 2.

Individual NCCs will focus on activities where local support is most effective such as communication, consultation services, support specific to the relevant national and local communities and necessary co-development to fulfill the mission of NCC. Co-development activities with SMEs should be limited to SMEs and a maximum of 5% of the personnel resources of an NCC may be used for all direct development activities by the NCC. Moreover, development work of NCC staff must not overlap with activities pursued by other NCCs or initiatives and must be duly justified and formally endorsed by the coordinator of the NCC network and/or linked Coordination and Support Action. Actions of potentially broader scope will be coordinated with or transferred to the pan-European network of NCCs and complementary initiatives such as the European Centres of Excellence for HPC. Research activities as well as operation, administration or procurement of HPC systems are not within the scope the NCCs, but NCCs are expected to advise on such activities and support knowledge transfer e. g. from relevant European R&D initiatives to the local HPC ecosystem.

Proposals should clearly describe the mechanisms for exchange of information on the NCCs activities with the coordinator of the EUROCC 2 network and the CASTIEL 2 Coordination and Support Action to ensure the identification of synergies, take into account lessons learned in preceding similar activities, prevent redundant work and strengthen collaboration and cohesion. The NCCs will further support the coordinator of the pan-European NCC network and the relevant Coordination and Support Action in the development, implementation and reporting of common standards such as assessment criteria for NCCs, competence mapping, key performance indicators, measures on the impact of the NCCs on the European HPC ecosystem and a strategic roadmap for the further development of the NCC network.

The JU considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the JU of up to EUR 600,000 per national HPC Competence Centres¹ matched by the Participating States with a similar amount, and a duration of up to 21 months would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals with another duration or requesting other amounts. In line with the NCCs of the EUROCC 2 network, each NCC may include up to five partners with estimated personnel resources of up to 10 full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the duration of the grant. The resource distribution in the proposed work plan should reflect the main focus of the NCC network, i. e. local support services for SMEs and industry, and be generally aligned with the common work package and organisational structure of the NCCs in the EUROCC 2 network. Applicants are expected to conclude a collaboration agreement, preferably before submission of the proposal, with the EUROCC 2 and CASTIEL 2 consortia which will allow participation under the same terms and conditions as NCCs of the EUROCC 2 consortium.

Annex II



Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)

Call for proposals

National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing (DIGITAL-
EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02)

Version 1.2
15 March 2022



EuroHPC
Joint Undertaking

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of **National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing** under the **Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (Digital Europe Regulation [2021/694](#)³).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2023/2024 Work Programme⁴ of the Digital Europe Programme and the amended Work Programme of the EuroHPC JU (Decision No 11/2024) and will be managed by the **European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC JU)**

It is an EU Synergy call. Grants can be linked with another grant funded from any other EU funding programme. The grants under both calls will be managed as linked actions.

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01: National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing**

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic, must submit a separate proposal under each topic.

The call is linked with the topic DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2022-NCC-01-01 and the topic DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2022-NCC-01-02. The grants under both calls will be managed as linked actions. The participants of both actions must conclude a collaboration agreement.

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, outcomes and deliverables, KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables, targeted stakeholders, type of action and funding rate and specific topic conditions (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme (OJ L 166, 11.5.2021, p. 1).

⁴ Annex to the Commission Implementing Decision amending the Commission Implementing decision C(2023)1862 final on financing of the Digital Europe Programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2023 - 2024.

- evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
- award criteria (section 9)
- legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
- how to submit an application (section 11)
- the Online Manual outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
 - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

1. Background

The uptake of HPC services by SMEs, industry, academia and the public sector is a critical element for the development of a sustainable High Performance Computing (HPC) ecosystem in Europe. Pooling resources in a pan-European network of National Competence Centres (NCCs) for HPC fostering coordination, cooperation and collaboration represents a fundamental challenge to unlock the full potential of HPC in Europe and to achieve a more balanced development of the HPC ecosystem among the EuroHPC JU Participating States.

The further development of existing and the creation of new NCCs for HPC will support the widening of HPC skills, the adoption of HPC and attract new HPC users in the private and public sector. The NCCs will specifically address SMEs which need better access to HPC resources to increase their innovation capability such as tools, services and training programmes tailored for their specific requirements. The NCCs will inter alia engage in training and outreach activities for academic, industrial and public sector users, facilitate access of national stakeholders to European HPC competences and resources addressing different scientific and industrial domains, and liaise with other initiatives including the European Digital Innovation Hubs and Centres of Excellence in HPC.

2. Objectives — Scope — Outcomes and deliverables — KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables — Targeted stakeholders — Type of action and funding rate — specific topic conditions

DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01 - National Competence Centres for High Performance Computing

Objectives

The aim is to support existing or the creation of up to one new NCC in EuroHPC JU Participating States that are currently not funded by the EuroHPC JU. The NCCs funded by the this call should extend the current network of NCCs of the EuroCC 2 initiative to additional countries. The NCCs will provide HPC services to industry (in particular to SMEs), academia and public administrations, delivering tailored/modular solutions for a wide variety of users, with an aim to ease and foster the transition towards wider uptake of HPC in Europe. NCCs will be a focal

point of HPC in the respective country, liaising with national initiatives in the area of HPC, facilitating access of national stakeholders to European HPC competences and opportunities in different industrial sectors and domains. SMEs will be central to the NCC's activities. Academic institutions and stakeholders may be addressed only to a limited extent and most of the resources of an NCC will be dedicated to support local SMEs, industry and public services with the uptake of HPC.

Scope

Set-up and/or operate NCC in a EuroHPC JU Participating States that do currently not have a NCC funded by the EuroHPC JU. The NCC will represent the focal point of national competences in HPC and provide leading-edge knowledge to enable the development of innovative solutions in their constituency, taking into account national HPC needs and requirements emanating from different user communities (industry, academia, public administrations) and application domains. The NCC will establish and maintain a network of national HPC users, promote HPC use in the private and public sector, reach out to potential new users and develop the necessary expertise for HPC applications close to the relevant national and, in collaboration with other NCCs, European communities. Each NCC will act as an access point to the European network of NCCs and other European HPC initiatives such as the Centres of Excellence for HPC applications to ensure that local stakeholders have access to the best available support in Europe if the required expertise can not be provided by the NCC or is out of scope of the NCC's activities. In return, NCCs will support stakeholders from other regions and countries that need their expertise coordinated through the NCC network and the complementary Coordination and Support Action CASTIEL 2. NCCs will implement a flexible and modular approach in the services to be provided, taking into account the degree of maturity of the national HPC ecosystem and in close coordination and collaboration with the other NCCs to achieve the highest possible impact and the widest possible spread of knowledge, ensure the most efficient use of NCC resources and to avoid duplication of effort among the NCCs and with other initiatives. Proposals should demonstrate the implementation of effective measures to close the gap between advanced and less developed NCCs.

HPC Competence Centres will, for example, engage in the following activities:

- Facilitate access to the HPC ecosystem including testbeds, hands-on sessions on HPC, HPC application optimising and scaling by connecting national communities with other initiatives such as the European Centres of Excellence for HPC applications.
- Facilitate uptake of HPC applications by different users, including SMEs (e.g. promoting locally relevant success stories), academia and public administrations.
- Provide scientific/technical expertise/consulting through application-oriented HPC knowledge/focus (e.g. HPC and High Performance Data Analytics (HPDA)), as well as access to advanced simulation and modelling algorithms, software codes and tools.
- Contribute with the expertise to the development activities (TRL 4-6) of SMEs and the public services to enable their efficient use of HPC resources (e.g., software porting and customization, deployment of advanced simulation and modelling algorithms, methods, and tools etc.).
- Provide on-site evaluations of new technologies, experimenting, proofs of concept as well as enable validation and demonstration of HPC technologies, software codes, tools, and algorithms in relevant environments.

- Facilitate access to supercomputing and data management for exploring innovation solutions of interest to end users, including SME user industries.
- Local and national training and skills development in the area of HPC and related subjects (e.g. HPDA, parallel programming, etc.), through face-to-face as well as online training (e.g. MOOC platforms).
- Awareness raising and outreach on the benefits of HPC to potential user industries, including SMEs.
- Raise awareness and support national and local communities in identifying and protecting intellectual property in an HPC context and provide advice on licensing policies in collaboration with the pan-European network of NCCs.
- Implement technology transfer activities at local/national level and the Digital Single Market.

It is required that the NCC – hosted by either one or several national organisations - is formally designated and mandated by the national authorities of the EU Member State or the EuroHPC JU Participating State. The NCC must be established as an organisation with appropriate visibility to the national communities and an independent organisational structure. The NCC must ensure that the NCC's activities are clearly identifiable and distinct from activities of the institution(s) hosting the NCC. In general, NCCs should employ HPC specialists, primarily full time, with expertise in areas most relevant for the national communities and NCC staff should not work under external supervision. The designated NCC leader should be directly involved in the management of the NCCs operations and is expected to report directly to the coordinator and the funding authority on all aspects of the centre's activities. Applicants are encouraged to implement a pan-European collaboration scheme together with EuroCC 2 for talent management including the identification and recruitment of HPC experts by the NCCs. Moreover, proposals should clearly set out an effective governance structure and decision making process within the consortium and the complementary Coordination and Support Action CASTIEL 2.

Individual NCCs will focus on activities where local support is most effective such as communication, consultation services, support specific to the relevant national and local communities and necessary co-development to fulfill the mission of NCC. Co-development activities with SMEs should be limited to SMEs and a maximum of 5% of the personnel resources of an NCC may be used for all direct development activities by the NCC. Moreover, development work of NCC staff must not overlap with activities pursued by other NCCs or initiatives and must be duly justified and formally endorsed by the coordinator of the NCC network and/or linked Coordination and Support Action. Actions of potentially broader scope will be coordinated with or transferred to the pan-European network of NCCs and complementary initiatives such as the European Centres of Excellence for HPC. Research activities as well as operation, administration or procurement of HPC systems are not within the scope the NCCs, but NCCs are expected to advise on such activities and support knowledge transfer e. g. from relevant European R&D initiatives to the local HPC ecosystem.

Proposals should clearly describe the mechanisms for exchange of information on the NCCs activities with the coordinator of the EUROCC 2 network and the CASTIEL 2 Coordination and Support Action to ensure the identification of synergies, take into account lessons learned in preceding similar activities, prevent redundant work and strengthen collaboration and cohesion. The NCCs will further support the coordinator of the pan-European NCC network and the relevant Coordination and Support Action in the development, implementation and

reporting of common standards such as assessment criteria for NCCs, competence mapping, key performance indicators, measures on the impact of the NCCs on the European HPC ecosystem and a strategic roadmap for the further development of the NCC network.

The JU considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the JU of up to EUR 600,000 per national HPC Competence Centre matched by the Participating States with a similar amount, and a duration of up to 21 months would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals with another duration or requesting other amounts. In line with the NCCs of the EUROCC 2 network, each NCC may include up to five partners with estimated personnel resources of up to 10 full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the duration of the grant. The resource distribution in the proposed work plan should reflect the main focus of the NCC network, i. e. local support services for SMEs and industry, and be generally aligned with the common work package and organisational structure of the NCCs in the EUROCC 2 network. Applicants are expected to conclude a collaboration agreement, preferably before submission of the proposal, with the EUROCC 2 and CASTIEL 2 consortia which will allow participation under the same terms and conditions as NCCs of the EUROCC 2 consortium.

Outcomes and deliverables

This action will extend the existing network of National Competence Centres for HPC (NCCs) currently funded by the EuroHPC JU in the EuroCC 2 project by additional National Competence Centres in EuroHPC Participating States that currently do not receive financial support for a NCC. The NCCs will be fully aligned with and integrated into the EUROCC 2 network, its management structure, reporting lines and the CASTIEL 2 Coordination and Support Action. By the end of the action, an effective support network in the field of HPC will have been established providing services to local communities from the public and private sector with a specific focus on SMEs. Through cooperation with other European initiatives the network will provide a knowledge hub for HPC offering a comprehensive support infrastructure from basic training and initial uptake of HPC to specialist knowledge covering the entire HPC value chain including related topics such as intellectual property.

In the course of the action, the NCCs will have demonstrated their significant impact on the innovation capacity of the European HPC ecosystem supported by quantitative key performance indicators measuring the specific impact of individual NCCs with respect to the baseline established on the basis of common criteria for all NCCs.

A detailed competence map of the European HPC ecosystem will be available to identify expertise, monitor and assess the evolution HPC competences in the constituencies of the individual NCCs and in a European context.

The NCCs will address the following areas:

- Contribution to the realisation of the EuroHPC overall and specific objectives
- Promoting the use of HPC at national level by identifying relevant users and matching their needs with the available expertise in the HPC Competence Centres
- Effective establishment of a wide range of HPC services (as referred in the scope of the call)
- Support the development of leading-edge, innovative solutions by targeted regional/national stakeholders in the private and public sector

- Provision of support to interested end users that are/will use HPC and HPDA in their daily business.
- Contribute in ensuring European technological autonomy in this field

–

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

KPI on the following information should be collected centrally in a structured format to measure the progress of the NCCs:

- activities on establishing contact to SMEs, industry in general and academia
- support activities for the former such as applying for funding instruments
- inter-NCC exchange activities such as the twinning and mentoring instruments
- maturity stage of the NCCs at the beginning of the action, e.g. in foundation, in preparation of legal status, well established and productive, and the NCCs development
- maturity stage of the NCCs in terms of being recognized as a/as the national HPC authority

Targeted stakeholders

Public and private organisations established in the eligible countries and mandated by the competent national authorities to host a National Competence Centre for HPC. Beneficiaries established in the same country are expected to apply as 'sole beneficiary'⁵.

Type of action and funding rate

DIGITAL JU Simple Grants — 50% funding rate

 For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (*see section 6*)
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation only (*see section 10*)

⁵ For the definition, see Article 187(2) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046: “Where several entities satisfy the criteria for being awarded a grant and together form one entity, that entity may be treated as the sole beneficiary, including where it is specifically established for the purpose of implementing the action financed by the grant.”

- For this topic, access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations apply (see section 10)
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
 - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*
 - extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects*

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 5 000 000**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below.

Topic	Topic budget
DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01	EUR 5 000 000

We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	21 March 2022
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>23 April 2024 – 17:00:00 CET</u> <u>(Luxembourg)</u>
Evaluation:	May 2024
Information on evaluation results:	June 2024
GA signature:	August 2024

5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see timetable section 4).

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page – they are only for information).

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A – contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B – contains the technical description of the project (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*to be uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table/calculator: not applicable
 - CVs of core project team: not applicable
 - activity reports of last year: not applicable
 - **list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (template available in Part B) : applicable**
 - ethics issues table: not applicable
 - security issues table: not applicable
 - ownership control declaration: not applicable

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **100 pages** (Part B) for topic DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01. Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

- ❗ For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Digital Europe Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries^{\[OBJ\]}](#))

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc (*see section 13*).

Specific cases

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

International organisations — International organisations are not eligible, unless they are International organisations of European Interest within the meaning of Article 2 of the Digital Europe Regulation (i.e. international organisations the majority of whose members are Member States or whose headquarters are in a Member State).

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons⁶.

EU bodies — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'⁷. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (*see above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the

⁶ See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁷ For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*⁸ and *entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)*⁹). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

⁸ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

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

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by:

for topics DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01:

- a consortium of **a minimum of 3 independent entities** (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 3 different eligible countries

Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Projects should take into account the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc*).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Security

Projects involving EU classified information must undergo security scrutiny to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules (detailed in a security aspects letter (SAL) which is annexed to the Grant Agreement).

These rules (governed by Decision [2015/444](#)¹⁰ and its implementing rules and/or national rules) provide for instance that:

- projects involving information classified TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET (or equivalent) can NOT be funded
- classified information must be marked in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the SAL
- information with classification levels CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/ EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may be:
 - created or accessed only on premises with facility security clearing (FSC) from the competent national security authority (NSA), in accordance with the national rules
 - handled only in a secured area accredited by the competent NSA
 - accessed and handled only by persons with valid personnel security clearance (PSC) and a need-to-know
- at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continue to be protected in accordance with the applicable rules
- action tasks involving EU classified information (EUCI) may be subcontracted only with

¹⁰ See Commission Decision 2015/544/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

prior written approval from the granting authority and only to entities established in an EU Member State or in a non-EU country with a security of information agreement with the EU (or an administrative arrangement with the Commission)

- disclosure of EUCI to third parties is subject to prior written approval from the granting authority.

Please note that, depending on the type of activity, facility security clearing may have to be provided before grant signature. The granting authority will assess the need for clearing in each case and will establish their delivery date during grant preparation. Please note that in no circumstances can we sign any grant agreement until at least one of the beneficiaries in a consortium has facility security clearing.

Further security recommendations may be added to the Grant Agreement in the form of security deliverables (*e.g. create security advisory group, limit level of detail, use fake scenario, exclude use of classified information, etc*).

Beneficiaries must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third-country security requirements that could affect implementation or put into question the award of the grant (*e.g. technology restrictions, national security classification, etc*). The granting authority must be notified immediately of any potential security issues.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
- prefinancing paid in instalments
- (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)

or

- propose no prefinancing
- request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Implementation' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following information:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate¹¹:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct¹² (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

¹¹ See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

¹² 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 advantage.

- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that¹³:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

8. Evaluation and award procedure

The proposals will have to follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An **evaluation committee** (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated against the operational capacity and award criteria (*see sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their scores.

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:

Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:


- 1) Proposals focusing on a theme that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked proposals will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) The *ex aequo* proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are

¹³ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Implementation'.

- 3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall proposal portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between proposals, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

 No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.*

Grant preparation will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (*see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)*). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

- **Relevance**
 - Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in section 2
 - Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level
 - Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the EU*
 - Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*
- **Implementation**
 - Maturity of the project

- Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources
- Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work
- **Impact**
 - Extent to which the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements
 - Extent to which the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society
 - Extent to which the project addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects *

**May not be applicable to all topics (see specific topic conditions in section 2).*

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	3	5
Implementation	3	5
Impact	3	5
Overall (pass) scores	10	15

Maximum points: 15 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 3/5, 3/5 and 3/5 points.

Overall threshold: 10 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding – within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

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

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date. **As the project is linked to the grants awarded under call DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2022-NCC-01, a project awarded under this call will end at the same date as the CASTIEL 2/EUROCC 2 projects (currently 31/12/2025).**

Project duration:

- Up to 21 months for topic DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01 depending on the start date agreed in the Grant Agreement

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

- additional deliverable on dissemination and exploitation, to be submitted in the first six months of the project

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (*maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc*) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5*).

Project budget (maximum grant amount):

- EUR 5 000 000 per project for topic DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2024-NCC-02-01

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement . This rate depends on the type of action which applies to the topic (*see section 2*). Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc*).

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 6*).

Budget categories for this call:

- A. Personnel costs
 - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
 - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
 - C.1 Travel and subsistence
 - C.2 Equipment
 - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
 - D.2 Internally invoiced goods and services
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - average personnel costs (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost¹⁴: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit costs¹⁵: Yes
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
 - internally invoiced goods and services (costs unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:

¹⁴ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

¹⁵ Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

- in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
- kick off meeting: costs for kickoff meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
- project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible

Reporting and payment arrangements


The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22*).

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **50%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required)— whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more **interim payments** (with cost reporting through the use of resources report).

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (*see art 22*).

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4*). The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount (*by one or several*

beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc). It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement.

Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24*).

Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet point 4.4 and art 22*).

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
 - unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
- or
- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts.*

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

Provisions concerning the project implementation

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5):*

- background and list of background: Yes
- protection of results: Yes
- exploitation of results: Yes
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access to results for policy purposes: Yes
- access to results in case of a public emergency: Yes

- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: Yes

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5):*

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- dissemination of results: Yes
- additional dissemination obligations: No
- additional communication activities: Yes
- special logo: No

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5):*

- specific rules for PAC Grants for Procurement: No
- specific rules for Grants for Financial Support: No
- specific rules for blending operations: No

Other specificities

n/a

Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

 For more information, see [AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

11. How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EU Login account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) submit the proposal

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

As far as possible, ***please try to find the answers you need yourself***, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- FAQs on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to: info@eurohpc-ju.europa.eu

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (*see cover page*).

13. Important

IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies actions). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared to two different EU actions.
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (*see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)*).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

Organisations may participate in several proposals.

BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).

- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*).

Digital Europe types of action

The Digital Europe Programme uses the following actions to implement grants:

Simple Grants

Description: Simple Grants (SIMPLE) are a flexible type of action used by a large variety of topics and can cover most activities. The consortium will mostly use personnel costs to implement action tasks, activities with third parties (subcontracting, financial support, purchase) are possible but should be limited.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: pre-financing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

SME Support Actions

Description: SME Support Actions (SME) are a type of action primarily consisting of activities directly aiming to support SMEs involved in building up and the deployment of the digital capacities. This type of action can also be used if SMEs need to be in the consortium and make investments to access the digital capacities.

Funding rate: 50% except for SMEs where a rate of 75% applies

Payment model: pre-financing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)

Description: Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs) are a small type of action (a typical amount of 1-2 Mio) with the primary goal to support EU policies. Activities can include coordination between different actors for accompanying measures such as standardisation, dissemination, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning exercises and studies, including design studies for new infrastructure and may also include complementary activities of strategic planning, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries.

Funding rate: 100%

Payment model: pre-financing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

Grants for Procurement

Description: Grants for Procurement (GP) are a special type of action where the main goal of the action (and thus the majority of the costs) consist of buying goods or services and/or subcontracting tasks. Contrary to the PAC Grants for Procurement (*see below*) there are no specific procurement rules (i.e. usual rules for purchase apply), nor is there a limit to 'contracting authorities/entities'. Personnel costs should be limited in this type of action; they are in general used to manage the grant, coordination between the beneficiaries, preparation of the procurements.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: pre-financing - second pre-financing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

PAC Grants for Procurement

Description: PAC Grants for Procurement (PACGP) are a specific type of action for procurement in grant agreements by 'contracting authorities/entities' as defined in the EU Public Procurement Directives (Directives 2014/24/EU , 2014/25/EU and 2009/81/EC) aiming at innovative digital goods and services (i.e. novel technologies on the way to commercialisation but not yet broadly available).

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: pre-financing - second pre-financing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

Grants for Financial Support

Description: Grants for Financial Support (GfS) have a particular focus on cascading grants. The majority of the grant will be distributed via financial support to third parties with special provisions in the grant agreement, maximum amounts to third parties, multiple pre-financing and reporting obligations.

Annex 5 of the model grant agreements foresees specific rules for this type of action regarding conflict of interest, the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management as well as the selection procedure and criteria.

In order to assure the co-financing obligation in the programme, the support to third parties should only cover 50% of third party costs.

Funding rate: 100% for the consortium, co-financing of 50% by the supported third party

Payment model: pre-financing - second pre-financing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance sub-grants) – payment of the balance

Lump Sum Grants

Description: Lump Sum Grants (LS) reimburse a general lump sum for the entire project and the consortium as a whole. The lump sum is fixed ex-ante (at the latest at grant signature). on the basis of a methodology defined by the granting authority (either on the basis of a detailed project budget or other pre-defined parameters). The lump sum will cover all the beneficiaries' direct and indirect costs for the project. The beneficiaries do not need to report actual costs, they just need to claim the lump sum once the work is done. If the action is not properly implemented only part of the lump sum will be paid.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: pre-financing – second (third) pre-financing (as there is no cost reporting) – final payment

Framework Partnerships (FPAs) and Specific Grants (SGAs)

FPAs

Description: FPAs establish a long-term cooperation mechanism between the granting authority and the beneficiaries of grants. The FPA specifies the common objectives (action plan) and the procedure for awarding specific grants. The specific grants are awarded via identified beneficiary actions (with or without competition).

Funding rate: no funding for FPA

SGAs

Description: The SGAs are linked to an FPA and implement the action plan (or part of it). They are awarded via an invitation to submit a proposal (identified beneficiary action). The consortium composition should in principle match (meaning that only entities that are part of the FPA can participate in an SGA), but otherwise the implementation is rather flexible. FPAs and SGAs can have different coordinators ; other partners of the FPA are free to participate in an SGA or not. There is no limit to the amount of SGAs signed under one FPA.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: pre-financing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

Eligibility restrictions under Articles 12(5) and (6) and 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation

Security restrictions Article 12(5) and (6)

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, and if justified for security reasons, topics can exclude the participation of legal entities *established* in a third country or DEP associated country, or established in the EU territory but *controlled* by a third country or third country legal entities (including DEP associated countries)¹⁶.

This restriction is applicable for SO1 (High Performance Computing), SO2 (Artificial Intelligence) and SO3 (Cybersecurity), but at different levels.

- In the case of SO3, the provision is implemented in the strictest way. When activated, only entities established in the EU and controlled from EU MS or EU legal entities will be able to participate — with no exceptions.
- In SO1 and SO2, entities controlled by third countries or third country legal entities may be able to participate if they comply with certain conditions set up in the Work Programme. To that end, additional rules will be imposed on those legal entities, which need to be followed if they want to participate.

The activation of this article will be make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

Strategic autonomy restrictions Article 18(4)

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, calls can limit the participation to entities *established* in the EU, and/or entities established in third countries associated to the programme for EU strategic autonomy reasons¹⁷.

The application of this article will make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

 For more information, see [Guidance on participation in DEP, HE, EDF and CEF-DIG restricted calls](#).

¹⁶ See Article 12(5) and (6) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694

¹⁷ See Article 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694.

