



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Directorate E
Unit 3: VET, Apprenticeships and Adult Learning

EaSI – PROGRESS Axis

Support for the deployment of skills assessments in the implementation of “Upskilling Pathways”

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

VP/2018/008

**Any questions should be sent by email to:
empl-vp-2018-008@ec.europa.eu**

To ensure a rapid response to requests for information, applicants are invited to send their queries in English, French or German where possible

**This text is available in English, French and German.
The English version is the original.**

**Applicants are invited to read the present document in conjunction with the Financial Guidelines for Applicants and the model grant agreement(s) published with this call as well as the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and their rules of application:
http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations_en.cfm**

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1. INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND

1.1. Programme/Legal base

This call for proposals is published under REGULATION (EU) No 1296/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on a European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI")¹ and amending Decision No 283/2010/EU establishing a European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion.

The **European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" 2014-2020**² is a European-level financing instrument managed directly by the European Commission to contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, by providing financial support for the Union's objectives in terms of promoting a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions.

The EaSI Programme shall, in all its axes and actions, aim to:

- (a) pay particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as young people;
- (b) promote equality between women and men,
- (c) combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
- (d) promote a high-level of quality and sustainable employment, guarantee adequate and decent social protection, combat long-term unemployment and fight against poverty and social exclusion.

Hence, in designing, implementing and reporting on the activity, beneficiaries/contractors must address the issues noted above and will be required to provide detail, in the final activity report on the steps and achievements made towards addressing those aims.

The EaSI 2018 work programme for grants and procurements, mentioning the present call, was adopted on 13 December 2017³.

1.2. Policy, economic background and main purpose.

The first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights states that *“everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and*

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0238:0252:EN:PDF>

² <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1081>

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?advSearchKey=EaSIannualworkprogramme&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en&policyArea=&type=0>

acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market”⁴.

In December 2017, the European Council called for further steps to be taken for implementing the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, intended for people with the greatest skills needs.

The European Agenda for Adult Learning⁵ underlines the need for adults to regularly enhance their personal and professional skills and competences, in response to multiple social, technological and economic changes and the instability and risks these provoke, not least for low-skilled and the low-qualified people. European labour markets are undergoing important changes that affect employment trends; among which, demographic change and economic migration on the supply side and the growing complexity of jobs on the demand side are becoming increasingly challenging and raise uncertainties about the nature and level of skills that will be required (especially digital skills and transversal skills such as problem-solving). Even jobs which traditionally required low-level qualifications, or no qualifications at all, are becoming more demanding.

In 2016 there were 63 million people, more than a quarter of the Union population aged 25-64, who had left initial education and training with at most a lower secondary education qualification⁶. This “low-skilled challenge” should be urgently addressed. Furthermore, the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (‘PIAAC’) indicates that, in 20 Member States, similar proportions of adults aged 16 to 65 performed at the lowest level of skills proficiency in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments.

These sources also show that low-qualified and/or low-skilled adults are less likely to find a job or to take part in learning, although these are key to their social inclusion and democratic participation, among other benefits. The aggregate net economic benefit (from higher incomes, reduced crime rates, etc.) of reducing the size of the low-skilled adult population in the EU (assuming a further decrease to reach 7.4% of adults being classed as low-skilled by 2025) is estimated at EUR 2 013 billion⁷ for the period 2015-2025.

Therefore, it is crucial for their individual well-being as well as for the good of society that they be provided with adequate upskilling opportunities, especially through tailored outreach measures targeted at those furthest away from the labour market or education and training.

Furthermore, where arrangements exist for enabling adults to raise their skills levels, they are often not tailored to the specific needs of different target groups and do not always properly address the needs of low-skilled adults. Other challenges include the absence of legal frameworks to guarantee and ease access to skills assessments/audits in most countries, low take up by individuals who need it the most or no perception of its benefits.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en#documents

⁵ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C_.2011.372.01.0001.01.ENG

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Labour_market_and_Labour_force_survey_%28LFS%29_statistics

⁷ “[Investing in skills pays off](#)”, CEDEFOP, 2017

1.2.1. Upskilling Pathways

The Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on “Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults”⁸ recommends Member States to “offer adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences, for example those who have left initial education or training without completing upper secondary education or equivalent, and who are not eligible for support under the Youth Guarantee, access to upskilling pathways which provide them with the opportunity, according to their individual needs, to:

- acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence;

and/or

- acquire a wider set of skills, knowledge and competences, relevant for the labour market and active participation in society, building on Recommendation 2006/962/EC on key competences for lifelong learning, by making progress towards a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4 depending on national circumstances”.

Upskilling Pathways should comprise three steps:

- “skills assessment (i.e. skills identification or screening);
- provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer; and
- validation and recognition of skills acquired⁹”.

Member States are to identify priority target groups for the delivery of Upskilling Pathways.

They should outline appropriate measures for the implementation of the Recommendation at the latest by mid-2018 by building on relevant existing national arrangements¹⁰.

One of the crucial goals of the Recommendation is to bring together in a coherent way the many fragmented and partial offers proposed to adults by very disparate providers and in multiple settings. Actions funded under this call should be developed in accordance with key principles outlined in paragraphs 11 to 18 of the Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: coordination and partnership between stakeholders and sectors, outreach, guidance and support measures to learners and proper follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of the Recommendation.

1.2.2. Skills assessments / skills audits

This section is intended to provide details about the content and organisation of skills assessments and guidance to potential applicants as to the scope of the call.

The Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways provides that the target groups should be offered the “opportunity to undergo an assessment, e.g. a skills audit, to identify existing skills and upskilling needs” and that the validation arrangements set up in accordance with

⁸ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:JOC_2016_484_R_0001

⁹ The last step (validation of skills) builds in particular on the [2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). Applicants to this call should consult this text.

¹⁰ The Commission Staff Working Document “[Tackling low skills: The Skills Guarantee](#)” accompanying the Communication “A new skills agenda for Europe” provides useful examples of existing skills assessments implemented in some Member States, which could form parts of future arrangements for Upskilling Pathways.

the 2012 Recommendation “to identify, document, assess and/or certify existing skills” should be applied to these groups, where appropriate.

The Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on “the validation of non-formal and informal learning”¹¹ states that Member States should offer individuals the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned outside formal education and training and to make use of that learning for their careers and further learning, in accordance with the following principle: “individuals who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment have the opportunity, in accordance with national legislation and specificities, to undergo a ‘skills audit’¹², aimed at identifying their knowledge, skills and competences within a reasonable period of time, ideally within six months of an identified need”.

The Recommendation defines an individual skills audit (or skills assessment) as “a process aimed at identifying and analysing the knowledge, skills and competences of an individual, including his or her aptitudes and motivations in order to define a career project and/or plan a professional reorientation or training project; the aim of a skills audit is to help the individual analyse his/her career background, to self-assess his/her position in the labour environment and to plan a career pathway, or in some cases to prepare for the validation of non-formal or informal learning outcomes”.

Building on the 2015 European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning and the 2016 Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, some key features of effective practice in individual skills assessment can be identified (the list below is not exhaustive)¹³:

- **Methods and tools**

- Initial assessment and diagnosis of an individual’s basic and wider skills (and of the individual’s needs related to broader issues of learning) as a first step to identifying needs for further education and training; this may take place, for example, through a combination of dialogue and standardised testing/assessment;
- Support of an advisor/counsellor, adequately trained to deal with skills assessments and low-skilled adults.
- Availability of tools adapted to the needs of low-skilled adults for extracting evidence of skills (e.g. screening tools, online skills assessment, conversational and declarative methods, observations) and presenting evidence of skills (e.g. CVs, third party reports, portfolios).

- **Pre-conditions/enablers: successful approaches**

- are centred upon the individual, his or her desires, needs and decisions;
- empower the learner;
- are built upon a relationship of trust (e.g. respecting data privacy);
- ensure the individual understands the process and its purposes;

¹¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>

¹² The 2012 and 2016 Recommendations use the terms ‘skills audit’ and ‘skills assessment’ interchangeably. In this Call, only the term “skills assessment” is used.

¹³ For a picture of what skills assessments in Europe look like, the applicant is invited to refer to the [2015 European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning](#) (in particular section 4.3 on skills audits) and the [2016 Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#) (in particular the [synthesis report](#), section 5 on skills audits).

- convince both practitioners and managers in organisations dealing with low-skilled adults (adult learning centres, companies, employment/unemployment services...) of the value of the existing tools, and develop trust in them and their outcomes;
 - ensure effective coordination of all parties involved, e.g. via a national strategy
 - deliver skills assessments in the environment most suited to the needs of low-skilled adults.
- **Result: a document/ portfolio that:**
 - states the level of the individual's skills,
 - identifies the next educational and professional development steps required, and
 - sets out a plan to achieve them.

2. OBJECTIVE(S) – PRIORITIES – TYPES OF ACTIONS - EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Objectives - Priorities

The overall objective of this Call is to support Member States (and other EaSI countries¹⁴ if they so wish) in their implementation of the Council Recommendation “Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults” (December 2016).

The specific objective of this call is to support the deployment by national and/or regional authorities, as an integral element in their implementation of the Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, of the provision of individual skills assessments (including literacy, numeracy and digital skills) for low skilled / low qualified adults (and in particular for priority groups identified by countries in the framework of the Recommendation, where relevant).

The ‘skills assessments’ deployed should:

- Identify and document the individual’s existing basic (and if possible wider) skills, to make them visible; and
- Identify and document any specific learning gaps in each individuals’ basic (and if possible wider) skills; and
- Provide the basis for designing a learning offer adapted to the specific needs of each individual.
- Be easily accessible and available to low-skilled adults (and to priority groups identified by the country, where relevant)

The provision of skills assessments should:

- be based on effective and sustainable coordination of relevant public and private actors;
- be complemented by guidance and support the take up of further learning opportunities;

¹⁴ See section 6.1 for the list

- where available, provide individuals with opportunities to validate/certify his or her skills, whether acquired through prior learning or through the proposed learning offer, and whether leading to a qualification or not.

2.2. Description of the activities to be funded / Type of actions

(a) Proposals **must** be centred around one of the two or a combination of the two elements below:

- Tools for assessing the skills (including, literacy and/or numeracy and/or digital skills) of low-skilled / low qualified adults or priority targets groups as defined by the countries, where relevant, and / or
- Arrangements for providing such assessments to low-skilled / low qualified adults or priority targets groups as defined by the countries, where relevant.

(b) Proposals **must** include one or more of the following activities:

- Enlarging the scale or scope of existing assessment tools and arrangements for low-skilled / low-qualified adults that are considered to be effective (e.g. enlarging the scope of an existing assessment arrangement to cover a different target group); or
- Adapting to the needs of low-skilled adults existing assessment tools and arrangements that are considered to be effective (e.g. adapting an assessment so that it assesses basic literacy, numeracy or digital skills); or
- Developing new assessment tools and arrangements for low-skilled adults¹⁵ and/or testing them on a scale that allows conclusions to be drawn about their effectiveness.

(c) In addition, applicants **can**, if they so wish, include in their proposals the following activities:

- supporting relevant organisations dealing with low-skilled adults (e.g. adult education and vocational training providers, guidance services, employers, public employment services) to offer skills assessments and to motivate low-skilled adults to undertake them;
- creating or improving mechanisms for coordination and cooperation among stakeholders (e.g. adult education and training providers, labour market stakeholders and social policy stakeholders, etc.) for the design or provision of skills assessments;
- supporting the use of the results of skills assessments in the design of tailored offers of learning opportunities.

2.3. Expected outputs/results

¹⁵ The Upskilling Pathways Recommendation states that Member States (and for the purpose of this call, other EaSI countries if they so wish) should build on relevant existing national arrangements. Developing a new tool or arrangement should be duly justified by the lack of appropriate existing ones.

It is expected that the projects funded under this Call will support the deployment of skills assessments for low-skilled/low qualified adults in the focus country¹⁶ concerned, thereby contributing to the implementation of the Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways.

This Call complements the support for low-skilled adults that is provided through the European Social Fund and Erasmus+, by assisting each focus participating country to develop coherent strategies for raising the levels of skills and qualifications for adults who lack an upper secondary education or with low proficiency in basic skills.

This Call should also complement related activities (ongoing or future) taking place at national, regional or local levels.

2.4. Monitoring

The Commission, with the support of an external contractor, will monitor regularly the EaSI Programme. Therefore, beneficiaries/contractors will have to transmit qualitative and quantitative monitoring data on the results of the activities. These will include the extent to which the principles of equality between women and men has been applied, as well as how anti-discrimination considerations, including accessibility issues, have been addressed through the activities. Related templates are attached or will be provided.

In setting up the action, beneficiaries must foresee the necessary funding for monitoring and reporting to the Commission.

As the monitoring of the EaSI Programme involves the collection and further processing of personal data, Regulation (EC) 45/2001, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community Institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data, is applicable.¹⁷

3. TIMETABLE

	Stages	Date or period
a)	Publication of the call	05/2018
b)	Deadline for questions and requests for clarifications	06/07/2018
c)	Deadline for submitting proposals	13/07/2018 Swim, Courier and Post : 24:00 Brussels' time (CET) Hand deliveries 16:00 Brussels' time

¹⁶ For the definition of “focus country” please see section 6.1

¹⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32001R0045>

		(CET)
d)	Evaluation period (indicative)	07-09/2018
e)	Information to applicants (indicative)	10/2018 ¹⁸
f)	Signature of the grant agreement (indicative)	11/2018 ¹⁹
g)	Starting date of the action (indicative)	11/2018-01/2019

3.1. Starting date and duration of the projects

The actual starting date of the action will either be the first day following the date when the last of the two parties signs the grant agreement, the first day of the month following the date when the last of the two parties signs or a date agreed upon between the parties.

Applicants should note that if their project is selected, they may receive the grant agreement after the start date of the action that they have indicatively set in the application form. It is therefore advisable to number the months in the work programme instead of indicating the name of the month.

Any expenditure incurred before the signature of the Grant Agreement will be at the applicant's risk. No expenditure can be incurred before the date of submission of the proposal.

An action grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate in the grant application the need to start the action before the grand agreement is signed.

The project's duration should indicatively be between 12 months and 24 months.

4. AVAILABLE BUDGET AND CO-FINANCING RATE

4.1. Available Budget

The total budget earmarked for the EU co-financing of projects under this call is estimated at EUR 1 500 000.

The EU grant requested should indicatively be between EUR 250 000 and EUR 500 000.

The Commission expects to fund between three and six proposals.

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

¹⁸ And in any case no later than 6 months after the submission deadline.

¹⁹ And in any case no later than 3 months after the date of information to applicants.

In order to ensure that limited resources benefit as many countries as possible, only one grant will be awarded per focus country (i.e. country where the core of the activities take place). If more than one eligible proposal for activities in the same focus country pass the quality threshold, only the proposal receiving the highest total score will be recommended for award.

4.2. Co-financing rate

Under this call for proposals, the EU grant may not exceed 80 % of the total eligible costs of the action. The applicants must guarantee their co-financing of the remaining amount covered by the applicants' own resources or from other sources other than the European Union budget²⁰.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applications must be sent no later than the deadline for submission referred to in section 3(c)
- Applications must be submitted using the electronic submission system available at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim>, and by sending a signed, printed version of the application form and its annexes by post or courier service (see section 12)

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

Applicants are encouraged to submit their project proposal in English, French or German in order to facilitate the treatment of the proposals and speed up the evaluation process. It should be noted, however, that proposals in all official languages of the EU will be accepted. In this case, applications should be accompanied by an executive summary in English, French or German (checklist point 3).

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1. Eligibility of the applicants (lead and co-applicants) and affiliated entities²¹

a) Place of establishment

Legal entities properly established and registered in the following countries are eligible as applicant (or as lead applicant and co-applicant in the case of a consortium):

- EU Member States;
- Iceland and Norway in accordance with the EEA Agreement²²;

²⁰ Letters of commitment are required from co-applicants, any affiliated entity and any third party providing financial contributions to the eligible costs of the action (see section 14, checklist point 5).

²¹ See section 2 of the Financial Guidelines for definitions.

²² Switzerland participates at its own cost particularly in certain EURES activities. Swiss organisations cannot submit proposals under the EaSI EURES calls but may participate as associate organisations

- Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey²³

b) Type of entities

To be eligible, the mono-applicant or lead applicant in case of consortium must be a public entity in charge of national or regional policies and actions for upskilling/re-skilling adults.

Any co-applicants must be public or private entities (profit or non-profit making) involved in the organisation and/or financing and/or provision of services to adults such as skills assessment, validation of competences, education and training, orientation and guidance.

c) Consortia²⁴

Actions may involve consortia.

In the case of an action to be implemented by a transnational consortium, the application must make clear which country will be the focus country of the project. A focus country is the country in which each project's activities should be concentrated – and this should be clearly defined in the proposal. (See last bullet point of Section 9)

In the case of a proposal submitted by one applicant, if that applicant is not considered to be eligible, the application will be rejected.

In the case of consortia, if the lead applicant is not considered to be eligible, the application will be rejected. If a co-applicant is considered not to be eligible, this organisation will be removed from the consortium and the proposal evaluated on that basis. In addition, the costs that are allocated to a non-eligible co-applicant will be removed from the budget.

d) Affiliated entities

Legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation and which satisfy the eligibility criteria, may take part in the action as affiliated entities, and may declare eligible costs.

For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the application form.

e) Associated entities

Actions may involve associated entities.

²³ Other candidate and potential candidate countries, would also participate in accordance with the general principles and the general terms and conditions laid down in the framework agreements concluded with them on their participation in Union programmes. However, it is not yet confirmed, therefore applicants and co-applicants from those countries should check with the secretariat of the call (empl-vp-2018-008@ec.europa.eu) their eligibility.

²⁴ Letters of mandate, authorising the lead applicant to submit the proposal and to sign any Grant Agreement on their behalf must be submitted from each co-applicant. Letters of commitment must be submitted from each co-applicant, associate partner and affiliated entity, certifying that they are willing to participate in the project with a brief description of their role and indicating any financial contribution where applicable (see section 14, checklist points 5. Letters of commitment are also required from any associate organisations (participation on a no-cost basis and no financial contribution).

Entities are allowed to participate in the action as associate organisations where this serves the aim of the action, on a no-cost basis. These organisations will not be a party of the grant agreement concluded with the Commission.

6.2. Eligible activities

a) Geographical Location

To be eligible, actions must be fully carried out in eligible participating EaSI countries (see section 6.1) and concentrate on one of these eligible participating EaSI countries (“focus country”).

b) Types of activities

The grant will finance the activities of the kinds indicated in section 2.2.

c) Core activities

Project management and project coordination are considered to be core activities and cannot be subcontracted.

6.3. Ineligible activities

Financial support to third parties as defined in point 3 of the Financial Guidelines is not eligible under this call.

The following types of activities are not eligible for EU funding:

- Lobbying;
- Acquisition of immovable property and/or vehicles
- Building construction

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Applicants (the mono-applicant or lead and co-applicant(s) in the case of a consortium) must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in article 106(1) and 107.1(b) and (c) of the Financial Regulation concerning exclusion and rejection from the procedure respectively, using the relevant form attached to the application form available at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/swim/external/displayWelcome.do>.

The same exclusion criteria apply to any affiliated entities.

7.1. Rejection from the call for proposals

The Commission shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- a. is in an exclusion situation;
- b. has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply this information;

c. was previously involved in the preparation of calls for proposals documents where this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise.

The same exclusion criteria apply to any affiliated entities which must, therefore, be included in the above-mentioned declaration(s).

Administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, who are guilty of misrepresentation.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

The mono-applicant or lead applicant and each co-applicant must have the financial and operational capacity to complete the activity for which funding is requested. Only organisations with the necessary financial and operational capacity may be considered for a grant.

8.1. Financial capacity

The mono-applicant or lead and each co-applicant must have access to solid and adequate funding to maintain their activities for the period of the action and to help finance it as necessary.

The verification of financial capacity will not apply to public bodies.

The mono-applicant's or lead applicant's and each co-applicant's financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents to be submitted with the application:

- Declaration on honour (including financial capacity to carry out the activity) (see section 14, checklist point 4);
- Annual balance sheets and profit and loss accounts for the last financial year available (see section 14, checklist point 16);
Summary balance sheet and profit and loss accounts using the template provided in SWIM (see section 12) and signed by the legal representative (see section 14, checklist point 17).
- For grants of EUR 750 000 or more per beneficiary or affiliated entity, an audit report produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last financial year available (see section 14, checklist point 18).
- information on the financial capacity provided by the applicant and in particular the information provided in section "Financial Resources" of the SWIM application form

The ratio between the total assets in the applicant's (lead and co-applicant(s)) balance sheet and the total budget of the project or the part of the project budget for which that organisation is responsible for, according to the budget in the application form would be considered strong if it is equal or greater than 0.65.

If the mono-applicant or lead applicant is considered not to have a strong financial capacity, the application as a whole will be rejected.

If a co-applicant or several co-applicants are considered not to have a strong financial capacity, the Commission will also take into account any other relevant information on the financial capacity provided by the applicant and in particular the information provided in section "Financial Resources" of the SWIM application form.

After this further analysis, the Commission will take various proportional measures depending on the level of weaknesses identified, which may be to:

1. reject the whole application;
2. remove the co-applicant from the consortium and re-evaluate the proposal without this co-applicant;
3. propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;
4. propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing paid in several instalments;
5. propose a grant agreement with pre-financing payment(s) covered by (a) financial guarantee(s);
6. propose a grant agreement with joint financial liability of 2 or more applicants/co-applicants;
7. propose a grant agreement with a mix of the measures 4, 5 and 6;

8.2. Operational capacity

The applicant (the mono-applicant or lead and co-applicant(s) in the case of a consortium) lead and co-applicants shall possess operational resources (e.g. technical, management) and adequate professional skills and qualifications necessary for the proper implementation of the action. The applicants shall also have a strong experience and competences in the field of the education of adult, in particular those without an upper secondary education.

The operational capacity of the applicant (of the mono-applicant or lead and co-applicant(s) in the case of a consortium) to complete the proposed action must be confirmed by the submission in the proposal of the following:

- A list of the main projects relating to the subject of the call, if any, carried out in the last three years (see section 14, checklist point 15);
- The CVs of the proposed project co-ordinator and of the persons who will perform the main tasks, showing all their relevant professional experience (see section 14, checklist point 14);
- Declaration on honour signed by the legal representative (including operational capacity to carry out the activity) (see section 14, checklist point 4).

If the mono-applicant or lead applicant for consortia is considered not to have the required operational capacity, the application as a whole will be rejected. If a co-applicant is considered not to have the required operational capacity, this co-applicant will be removed from the consortium and the application will be evaluated without this co-applicant²⁵. In addition, the costs that are allocated to the non-selected co-applicant will be removed from

²⁵ This includes a re-evaluation of the eligibility of the modified consortium.

the granted budget. If the application is selected, the work programme may have to be slightly adjusted.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

The proposals that fulfil the eligibility and selection criteria will be assessed according to the following award criteria:

- Relevance of the proposal to the objectives of the call (Max. 35 points)
Particular attention will be paid to
 - The extent to which the proposal responds to the Call's objectives (set out in section 2.1), and builds upon the guidance set out in section 1.2.2
- Quality of the methodology (Max. 20 points)
Particular attention will be paid to:
 - Coherence and appropriateness of the project methodology, including risk assessment
 - Quality assurance plan
- Expected impact and sustainability (Max. 30 points)
Particular attention will be paid to:
 - Planned impact on target group, and sustainability
 - Potential for transferability of activities and outputs
 - Commitment of relevant public authority/ies to exploiting the results of the project in implementing the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation at national level.
- Cost efficiency (Max. 15 points)
Particular attention will be paid to:
 - A reasonable and realistic budget, proportional to the scale and scope of the action

Applications will be ranked according to the total score awarded. Taking into account the available budget, for each focus country (i.e. country where the core of the activities will take place), only the proposal with the highest total score will be recommended for award, **on condition that the total score reaches at least 70% of the maximum possible mark.**

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant being awarded by the Commission, a Grant Agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiary, or to the coordinator in the case of multi-beneficiary grant agreements.

The 2 copies of the original agreement must be signed by the beneficiary, or the coordinator in the case of multi-beneficiary Grant Agreements, and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last.

The Grant Agreement may include corrections and deletion of ineligible costs or activities made by the Commission – therefore the applicant should carefully read the whole

agreement and the budget and work programme sections in particular, before signing and returning the copies to the Commission.

A model Grant Agreement is published on the Europa website under the relevant call: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en>.

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

10.1. Sources of Funding

In addition to the obligations with regard to visibility of Union funding foreseen in the General conditions to the grant agreement, beneficiaries must acknowledge in writing that the project has been supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") 2014-2020. In practice, all products (publications, brochures, press releases, videos, CDs, posters and banners, and especially those associated with conferences, seminars and information campaigns) must state the following:

This (publication, conference, video, xxx) has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

The European emblem must appear on every publication or other material produced. Please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/services/visual_identity/pdf/use-emblem_en.pdf

Every publication must include the following:

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Details on financial provisions are laid out in the Financial Guidelines for Applicants and the model Grant Agreement, both published on the Europa website under the relevant call: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en>.

a) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests.

Specific procurement procedures

Where the value of a foreseen procurement contract for subcontracting external expertise exceeds EUR 60 000, in addition to the rules indicated in the Financial Guidelines for applicants, the following shall apply:

- if selected, beneficiaries must be able to prove, if requested, that they have sought bids from at least three different tenderers, including proof that they have publicised

their intention on their website and provided a detailed description of the selection procedure.

- the applicant must provide with the grant application a copy of the draft tender specifications. To assist applicants, a model for tender specifications is included in Annex to this call. The draft tender specifications should be submitted in English, French or German (see section 14, checklist point 19).

This requirement does not apply to public authorities which are already governed by a system of public procurement rules.

12. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The procedure to submit proposals electronically is explained in point 14 of the "Financial Guidelines for Applicants". Before starting, please read carefully the SWIM user manual:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/calls/pdf/swim_manual_en.pdf

Once the application form is filled in, applicants must submit it both electronically and in hard copy (one original and one copy), before the deadline set in section 3.c above.

The SWIM electronic application form is available until midnight on the day of the submission deadline. Since the applicants must first submit the form electronically, and then print, sign and send it by post service or hand delivery by the submission deadline, it is the **applicant's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate postal or courier services are locally available on the day of the deadline.**

The hard copy of the proposal must be duly signed and sent in two copies (one marked "original" and the other marked "copy"), including all documents listed in section 14, by the deadline (the postmark or the express courier receipt date serving as proof) to the following address:

Address for registered post or express courier service:

<p style="text-align: center;">European Commission <u>(NOT TO BE OPENED BY CENTRAL MAIL SERVICES)</u> Call for proposals VP/2018/08 – DG EMPL CAD J-27 00/120 B-1049 Bruxelles - BELGIUM</p>

Evidence of posting or express courier deposit slip should be kept as it could be requested by the European Commission in cases of doubt regarding the date of submission.

- a) registered post evidence : postmark
- b) express courier service evidence : deposit slip of express courier service

Hand-delivered proposals must be received by the European Commission by 4 p.m. on the date of the deadline for submission as indicated in section 3(c) at the following address:

<p style="text-align: center;">European Commission</p>

Service central de réception du courrier
(NOT TO BE OPENED BY CENTRAL MAIL SERVICES)
Call for proposals VP/2018/008 – DG EMPL.E.3
Avenue du Bourget, 1
B-1140 Evere

At that time the European Commission's Mail Service will provide a signed and dated receipt which should be conserved as evidence of delivery.

If an applicant submits more than one proposal, each proposal must be submitted separately.

Additional documents sent by post, by fax or by electronic mail after the deadlines mentioned above will not be considered for evaluation unless they have been specifically requested by the European Commission (See Section 13).

The applicant's attention is also drawn to the fact that incomplete or unsigned forms, hand-written forms and those sent by fax or e-mail will not be accepted.

13. COMMUNICATION

Contacts between the Commission and potential applicants can only take place in certain circumstances and under the following conditions only:

Before the final date for submission of proposals

Any requests for additional information must be made by e-mail only to the coordinates stated below.

The information contained in the present call document together with the Financial Guidelines for Applicants provides all the information you require to submit an application. Please read it carefully before doing so, paying particular attention to the priorities of the present call.

All enquiries must be made by e-mail only to:

empl-vp-2018-008@ec.europa.eu

For any technical problems please contact: empl-swim-support@ec.europa.eu

The Commission has no obligation to reply to requests for additional information received after the deadline for questions and clarifications set in Section 3(b).

Replies will be given no later than 5 days before the deadline for submission of proposals. To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the Commission will not give a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants, or affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

No individual replies to questions will be sent but all questions together with the answers and other important notices will be published (FAQ in EN) at regular intervals on the Europa website under the relevant call:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en>.

At the request of the applicant, the Commission may provide additional information solely for the purpose of clarifying the nature of the call.

The Commission may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or clerical error in the text of the call for proposals on the mentioned Europa website.

It is therefore advisable to consult the above mentioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published. It is the applicant's responsibility to check for updates and modifications regularly during the submission period.

After the deadline for submission of proposals

No modification to the proposal is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed.

If there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process.

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide a valid e-mail address and contact details and to check this e-mail address regularly. In case of any change of contact details, please send an e-mail with the application VP reference and the new contact details to (**empl-~~vp~~-2018-008@ec.europa.eu**).

In the case of consortia, all communication regarding an application will be done with the lead applicant only, unless there are specific reasons to do otherwise.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed of the reasons for rejection. No information regarding the award procedure will be disclosed until the notification letters have been sent to the beneficiaries.

14. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE APPLICATION AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

14.1. Instructions for the presentation of the application

The application comprises an application form including the budget, a description of the proposed action and work plan plus a series of other required documents (see section 14).

The description of the proposed action and workplan must be written using the template available in SWIM and must be presented in one single document.

The budget must be presented using the application form in SWIM and a separate budget explanation must also be provided in the description of the proposed action (section IV).

In case of subcontracting any tasks comprising part of the action (see the Financial Guidelines), the description of the action must provide details on the tasks to be subcontracted and the reasons for doing so and these tasks must be clearly identified in the budget. Core tasks as defined in section 6.2(c) of the call cannot be subcontracted.

14.2. Required documents

The table in annex includes the documents that must be provided on submission of the proposal. It also indicates where originals are required. We recommend that applicants use the table as a **checklist** in order to verify compliance with all requirements.

While some information must be supplied using the templates available in the SWIM, other documents may need to be completed and/or attached electronically, usually either administrative documents or free format text descriptions. The SWIM application indicates in each section where SWIM templates should be used as well as which and where free format documents can be uploaded electronically.

At the submission of the application, **copies of the signed originals** will be accepted for most of the documents to be submitted by the co-applicants. However, the lead applicant shall keep the original signed versions for its records, because **originals** may have to be submitted for certain documents at a later stage. **If the lead applicant fails to submit these original documents within the deadline given by the Commission, the proposal will be rejected for lack of administrative compliance.**

Regarding the compilation of the application file, it is recommended to:

- 1) follow the order of documents as listed in the checklist (and attach a ticked checklist as below to the proposal);
- 2) print the documents double-sided;
- 3) use 2-hole folders (do not bind or glue; stapling is acceptable).

CHECKLIST for required documents

This table includes the documents that must be provided for the proposal and where originals are required. We strongly recommend using the table as a checklist in order to verify compliance with all requirements. **Notes:** **highlighted documents** do not need to be provided by public entities. Documents marked with * are obligatorily to be attached online in SWIM as well.

No.	Document	Specification and content	The document must be provided by each				Originally signed?	Checkbox
			Lead applicant	Co-applicant	Affiliated entity	Associate organisation/ third party		
1	Official cover letter of the application	This letter must quote the reference of the call for proposals, be originally signed and dated by the authorised representative and include the proposal reference number generated by SWIM (e.g. VP/2018/008/xxxx) – free format	✓	--	--	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Signed SWIM application form submitted online + hard copy	The SWIM application form submitted online must be printed and dated and signed by the authorised legal representative and send by hard copies (one original and one copy) as foreseen in Section 12. <i>Note: the online form must be electronically submitted before printing. After electronic submission, no further changes to the proposal are permitted.</i>	✓	--	--	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Executive summary (if necessary)	Executive summary in EN/FR/DE (maximum 2 pages) – free format	✓	--	--	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Declaration on honour*	The template is available in SWIM and must be written on the official letterhead of the organisation, bearing the original signature of the authorised legal representative. This declaration must also cover any affiliated entity. Where applicable, the relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken for applicants who declared on of the situations of exclusion listed in the declaration.	✓	✓	--	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Letter of commitment*	The template is available in SWIM and must explain the nature of the organisation's involvement and specify the amount of any funding provided. The letter must be written on the official letterhead of the organisation and bear the original signature of the legal representative.	--	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Letter of mandate*	The template is available in SWIM and must be written on the official letterhead of the organisation, dated and signed by the authorised legal representative.	--	✓	--	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Legal/capital link with lead or co-applicant*	Affiliated entities are required to provide proof of the legal and/or capital link with the lead or co-applicant.	--	--	✓	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Legal entity form*	The template is available in SWIM and online (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm) and must be duly signed and dated by the legal representative. Exclusively in the case of social partner organisations without legal personality : a signed letter of the legal representative certifying his/her capacity to undertake legal obligations on behalf of the organisation.	✓	✓	--	--	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Proof of registration	A certificate of official registration or other official document attesting the establishment of the entity (for public bodies: the law, decree, decision etc. establishing the entity).	✓	✓	--	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Statutes	The articles of association/statutes or equivalent proving the eligibility of the organisation (not applicable for public bodies).	--	✓	--	--	--	<input type="checkbox"/>

11	VAT certificate	A document showing the identification number for tax purposes or the VAT number, if applicable.	✓	✓	--	--	--	□
12	Financial identification form*	The template is available in SWIM and online (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_en.cfm) and must be duly signed and dated by the account holder and bearing the bank stamp and signature of the bank representative (or a copy of recent bank statement attached).	✓	--	--	--	✓	□
13	Description of the action and work plan*	The template is available in SWIM which must be duly completed and submitted electronically together with the online submission form and on paper as well. The paper version must be identical to the electronic version of the detailed work programme.	✓	--	--	--	--	□
14	Curricula vitae of key staff	Detailed CVs of the person responsible for managing the action (named in section A.3 of the online application form) and the persons who will perform the main tasks . The CVs should indicate clearly the current employer.	✓	✓	✓	--	--	□
15	List of main projects	A list of the main projects carried out, if any, in the last three years relating to the subject of the call other than those already indicated in the SWIM online application form (section F.3) – free format	✓	✓	✓	--	--	□
16	Balance sheet & profit and loss accounts	The most recent balance sheet and profit & loss accounts, including assets and liabilities, specifying the currency used.	--	✓	✓	--	--	□
17	Summary balance sheet & profit and loss accounts	The template is available in SWIM and must be signed by the authorised legal representative	--	✓	✓	---	✓	□
18	Audit report	For grant requests of EUR 750,000: an external audit report produced by an approved auditor, certifying the accounts for the last financial year available. The threshold applies to each co-applicant in line with their share of the action budget. The report should be submitted in English, French or German.	--	✓	✓	--	--	□
19	Tender specifications for subcontracting external expertise	Where the value of a foreseen procurement contract for subcontracting external expertise exceeds EUR 60 000, in addition to the rules indicated in the Financial Guidelines for applicants, the applicant must provide with the grant application a copy of the draft tender specifications. To assist applicants, a model for tender specifications is included in Annex to this call. The draft tender specifications should be submitted in English, French or German	--	✓	✓	--	--	□

ANNEX I:

FINANCIAL GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Annex I is available on the Europa website under the relevant call:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en>

ANNEX II:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adult learning: a component of the lifelong-learning continuum, covering the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities, general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training (source: [European Agenda for Adult Learning](#)).

Basic skill: a skill considered fundamental to enable a person to function in society (source: [Oxford dictionaries](#)); in the context of Upskilling Pathways, basic skills are: literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Director General for Vocational Training: high-level national decision-maker for VET policy; these gather twice a year with peers from EU and other countries to discuss common EU VET policy.

Informal learning: learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. (source: [CEDEFOP](#)).

Guidance and counselling: range of activities designed to help individuals to take educational, vocational or personal decisions and to carry them out before and after they enter the labour market (source: [CEDEFOP](#)).

Low-qualified adult: in this context, adult who has left initial education or training without completing upper secondary education or equivalent (source: [Upskilling Pathways Recommendation](#)).

Low-skilled adult: in this context, adult who performs at the lowest level of proficiency in literacy and/or numeracy and / or digital competence.

Non-formal learning: learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification (source: [CEDEFOP](#)).

Portfolio: A learning portfolio is a collection of items (such as information, evaluations, sample work, awards, and acknowledgments) that provide proof of a person's knowledge and skills.

Prior learning: the knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired through previously unrecognised training or experience (source: [CEDEFOP](#)).

Priority group: in this context, specific target groups, among the total population of low-skilled adults in a given country, that the Member State has prioritised for the delivery of Upskilling Pathways (source: [Upskilling Pathways Recommendation](#)).

Qualification: 1. an official record (certificate, diploma) of achievement which recognises successful completion of education or training, or satisfactory performance in a test or examination; 2. and / or the requirements for an individual to enter, or progress within an occupation (source: [CEDEFOP](#)).

Skill: ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to compete tasks and solve problems (source: [CEDEFOP](#)).

Skills assessment: in this context: a process that identifies an individual's knowledge, skills and competences, and any skills gaps, in order to identify any further learning required, define a suitable offer of learning, and prepare for the validation of non-formal or informal learning outcomes (source: [2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#))

Skills audit: in this context: the same as skills assessment q.v.

Tailored learning: in this context, a high quality, flexible offer of education and training that meets the specific needs of an individual (identified by a skills assessment), and is delivered in appropriate learning settings in which qualified teachers and trainers apply adult-specific teaching methods and exploit the potential of digital learning. If in line with national systems and circumstances, such a learning offer should be built up of units (modules) of learning, the outcomes of which can be documented, assessed and validated in order to record the progress of learners at different stages (source: [Upskilling Pathways Recommendation](#)).

Upskilling Pathway: 1. opportunity for a low-skilled adult who is not eligible for support under the Youth Guarantee to a) acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence; and/or b) acquire a wider set of skills, knowledge and competences, relevant for the labour market and active participation in society by making progress towards a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4 depending on national circumstances (source: [Upskilling Pathways Recommendation](#)); 2. Coherent system to make available such opportunities to low-skilled or low-qualified adults in a given country.

Validation (of learning outcomes): confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification. OR process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard. Validation consists of four distinct phases: a) identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual; b) documentation to make visible the individual's experiences; c) formal assessment of these experiences; and d) certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification (source: CEDEFOP) (i.e. recognition in the context of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation).

**ANNEX III: MODEL FOR TENDER SPECIFICATIONS FOR SUBCONTRACTING
EXTERNAL EXPERTISE**

Tender Specifications –

1. Background
2. Purpose of the Contract
3. Tasks to be performed by the Contractor
 - 3.1. Description of tasks
 - 3.2. Guidance and indications on tasks execution and methodology
4. Expertise required
5. Time schedule and reporting
6. Payments and standard contract
7. Price
8. Selection criteria related to the financial and technical capacity of the bidders
9. Award criteria related to the quality of the bids received

The contract will be awarded to the tenderer whose offer represents the best value for money - taking into account the following criteria:

.....
.....
.....

It should be noted that the contract will not be awarded to a tenderer who receives less than [70%] on the Award Criteria.

10. Content and presentation of the bids
 - 10.1. Content of the bids
 - 10.2. Presentation of the bids