

CEF TELECOM – 2020-2 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

European Digital Media Observatory – 7 October 2020 version

All information in blue has been added or updated since the previous version.

Commonly used abbreviations in this FAQ

EDMO	European Digital Media Observatory
------	------------------------------------

1. What should be the composition of the consortia applying for the establishment of the national/regional hubs?

The consortium requirements are specified in section 6.1 of the call text.

2. Who needs to submit a self-declaration or a letter of support?

As specified in section 6.1 of the call text, research and fact-checking organisations must fill in and submit the relevant self-declarations together with the proposal. The templates of the self-declarations are available on the call page.

In addition, all proposals must submit letters of support from independent expert(s) and/or organisation(s), which could become involved in the activities of the research hubs, thanks to their expertise. The template of the letter of support is available on the call page.

3. Are single entities eligible to apply?

Proposals can be submitted by single entities, provided that they comply with all the necessary eligibility criteria specified in section 6.1 of the call text.

4. What is a national/multinational research hub?

A national/multinational research hub is a network of organisations (e.g. academic organisations, independent fact-checking organisations, media organisations and other relevant organisations), active in one or several Member State(s).

A national/multinational research hub will pull together a national/multinational multidisciplinary community composed of academic researchers, fact-checkers, media practitioners and other relevant stakeholders in order to create a network capable of quickly detecting and analysing disinformation campaigns, as well as producing content to support mainstream and local media and public authorities in exposing harmful disinformation campaigns. Such a community may extend beyond the consortium partners and include experts and organisations providing additional expertise in fields that might be relevant to tackle national/multinational disinformation narratives. These national/multinational hubs will focus activities around emerging digital media vulnerabilities and disinformation campaigns, which are of special relevance within the territory and/or linguistic area in which they will operate. Multinational hubs can cover more than one Member State with similar media ecosystems within an EU region.

5. Which would be main tasks of a national/multinational research hub?

After establishing a national or multinational research hub, the main responsibilities of the created communities will be to detect, analyse and expose disinformation campaigns, while concurrently assessing their societal impact. Moreover, these hubs will promote activities to raise awareness among citizens of the multi-faceted challenges linked to disinformation and enable them to think critically, evaluate and analyse the information they are exposed to. Finally, these hubs, in close cooperation with national authorities, will assist in the monitoring of the digital platform's policies and of the overall digital media ecosystem at national/multinational level. Detailed requirements are specified in section 2.1 of the call text.

6. What will be the nature of the relationship/cooperation between the national/regional research hubs and EDMO?

The main activities of the research hubs will be performed in coordination with EDMO. EDMO and its hubs will identify together those topics that need to be tackled at EU level to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Hence, each hub will set up a website connected to the EDMO public page and commit to actively contribute to EDMO's activities, following the governance rules that EDMO's Governance Body will put in place. Moreover, hubs will contribute to EDMO's repositories of fact-checks, media literacy materials and scientific articles, while concurrently monitoring the evolution of the disinformation phenomenon, by applying a common methodology established in coordination with EDMO.

7. What is the expected CEF contribution of the proposals addressing this call?

The budget of a proposed action, and consequently the CEF funding requested, has to be commensurate with the objectives of the proposal. In order to address the objectives of this call, proposals requesting an amount of the order of EUR 1.5 million of EU contribution are expected. However, this does not preclude the submission of proposals requesting other amounts.

8. The EDMO call invited NGOs to apply either as national observers or in cooperation with other entities. Is the latter option preferred in scoring?

Proposals will be assessed on their technical merits, providing that they meet the eligibility criteria and comply with the call requirements.

9. Is it correct that the EU co-financing rate for this call is limited to 75% and that the consortium needs to provide 25% own resources?

Yes, according to section 11.1.1 of the call text and to the CEF Regulation, a maximum co-financing rate of 75% will be applied to the eligible costs. Applicants must provide 25% of resources for the proposed action. For further details on the eligible costs, please refer to section 11 of the General FAQs.

10. The call specifies that proposals requesting an EU contribution in the order of EUR 1.5 million are expected. How will submissions requesting less be viewed (e.g. in the range EUR 500 000 – EUR 1 million)?

This amount is indicative. The estimated budget of the proposed action should be proportionate to objectives set, and activities and tasks defined. Therefore, proposals requesting smaller amounts (which may be the case for example for the creation of hubs covering a smaller Member State) will be considered.

11. Do all applying entities that are part of a consortium have to be a research organisation/fact-checker (e.g. a non-research NGO)?

No, in section 6.1 of the call text, a set of minimum requirements is defined regarding the composition of the consortium and the expertise of applicants. Hence, additional organisations, such as non-research NGOs, can be part of the proposal as long as their contribution is both relevant to the project, and the proposal itself demonstrates relevance as required by the call.

12. Are the digital hubs expected to use technology developed by the EDMO or not necessarily?

All the hubs - if they comply with the rules set up by the Governance Board of the Observatory - will have access to the technological platform deployed by the EDMO. Nevertheless, hubs could also use different technological tools or resources. They could also consider the possibility to provide these resources to the Observatory as a whole. The integration of these additional services with the Central Platform might require an agreement with the EDMO Core Service Platform, but such a possibility is welcomed.

13. Are researchers expected to conduct independent research (i.e. for peer review) or to coordinate and analyse fact-checks for reports and public communication?

The call requires that the independent research be primarily focused on analysing fact-checks for reports and public communication. Research is only a means to achieve the ultimate goals of the action, in particular a means to ensure that disinformation campaigns can be detected, analysed disclosed and their impact is assessed.

14. Based on section 4 of the call, do you expect to fund 6 projects?

The number of proposals funded will depend not only on the total budget earmarked for the call, but also on the total EU contribution requested of the successful proposals.

15. What do you mean by multinational can be based on similar "media systems"? Is there a basis other than language to combine Member States in the proposal?

It can mean countries with similar media environments or facing similar disinformation "threats".

16. Do we need national ministerial approval to submit a proposal as coordinator to the EDMO call for proposals?

Yes. Please refer to section 6 of the General FAQs for further details.

17. Regarding the technical platform development: is the current EDMO technical provider allowed to work on national hubs developments as well, or would this be considered as conflict of interest?

The call for proposals does not preclude organisations involved in the deployment of the Core Service Platform in being part of consortia applying for the creation of national or multinational hubs.

18. Regarding the technical platform development: if we purchase services of technical development in order to develop the national hub, is it mandatory to have this company appear as a sub-contractor, or are we free to allocate funds to this as we wish?

The call does not prescribe how the technical platform development should be implemented. It is up to the applicants to decide how to develop/implement the services. See also section 11.7 of the General FAQs.

19. You mentioned during the 16 July Info Day that we need to "provide support letters from independent organisations". What do you mean exactly? Could you specify which organisations you are thinking of?

Support letters are only needed from relevant experts and/or organisations with expertise in relevant areas of investigation and research (e.g. health, climate change, immigration, security, economics, European policies, or other relevant areas prone to disinformation), which are not involved in the proposal. All proposals must include at least three letters of support signed by relevant expert(s) and/or by the authorised representative(s) of relevant organisation(s).

20. If we decide to work with several fact-checkers on a case-by-case basis, should they appear as sub-contractors or are we free to allocate funds to this activity as we wish?

An independent fact-checker must be part of the consortium as required by section 6.1 of the call text. If you wish to involve more fact-checkers in the consortium, it is up to you as applicants to decide on their status in the action, be it consortia members, sub-contractors or affiliated entities. Please refer to section 11 of the General FAQs.

21. If we decide to work with several researchers on a case-by-case basis, should they appear as sub-contractors or are we free to allocate funds to this activity as we wish?

The proposal must be submitted by or coordinated by (in the case of a consortium) a public or private research organisation. If you wish to work with several researchers, it is up to you as applicants to decide on their status in the action, be it contracted independent experts or sub-contractors. Please refer to section 11 of the General FAQs.

22. Would an institution such as CLEMI be an eligible partner (for media literacy, communication), as they are publicly funded (see <https://www.cleml.fr/fr/en/about-cleml.html>)?

INEA is not in a position to assess eligibility of applicants before the submission of proposals. It is up to the applicants themselves to make sure they comply with the eligibility criteria defined in the call text.

23. Do you expect several fact-checkers companies to be active on the project?

Provided that the minimum requirements for the consortium composition are met, as per section 6.1 of the call text, it is up to the applicants to decide on the number of fact-checkers to be involved in the action and their status in the action. The participation of additional fact-checkers is welcome as long they comply with the definition from section 6.1 of the call text.

24. Do we need to provide a reference letter from a government body? If yes, at which level and which entity: e.g. education, culture, Prime Minister's office?

Each Member State may have a specific procedure in place for the endorsement of proposals submitted under CEF Telecom. Any potential applicants should contact their Member State contact point for more information.

Please refer to section 6 of the General FAQs and to the list of national contact points published on the call page for further details.

25. Can you explain what you mean by "the project should get the approval of the Member State"?

Please see answer to Q.16 above and section 6 of the call text.

26. Is it acceptable or desirable for a country to cover fact-checks and media literacy from another country with the same language or should there be a representative of both countries in the consortium?

The call for proposals allows for consortia to cover fact-checks and media literacy activities in more than one Member State: "Multinational hubs will cover more than one Member State with similar media ecosystems within an EU region". Nevertheless, such consortia must prove in their application that they have the capacity and ability to cover more than one Member State in compliance with the call requirements. The call does not require that the hub have representatives from all Member States covered by the hub. Furthermore, Member States covered by the hub do not need to share the same language.

27. Are you considering ways for groups/organisations to participate in the research/collaboration work without requesting funding? If so, could you please confirm where does that stand and what would it entail?

Each national/multinational hub will be tasked to support the creation of a multidisciplinary community. This entails the involvement in such community of experts and organisations that are not part of the consortium and therefore are not receiving financial support from the grants awarded by this call for proposals. Please refer to section 6.1 d) of the call text for further details.

28. Is it possible to have a public authority as a partner within the consortium (e.g. an electoral authority or a regional institution)?

Public authorities can be part of a consortium. Cooperation with national/regional authorities for the monitoring of online platforms' policies and digital media ecosystem is one of the key activities of the hubs. However, proposals submitted by consortia including public authorities will have to clearly demonstrate how they intend to preserve the independence of the hubs from the direct and indirect influence of national/regional governments.

29. Would a national collaboration platform for media innovation and social research be eligible as the coordinating entity?

The entity coordinating the consortium must be an independent public or private research organisation, as specified in section 6.1 a) of the call text, therefore a national collaboration platform for media innovation and social research cannot be the coordinator.

30. Regarding the eligibility criteria (section 6.1 of the call text), is the participation in the consortium only open to academic research entities/fact-checkers or also to other types of organisations (private and public)? Can other types of organisations also be part of the consortium?

Section 6.1 of the call text specifies that **in order to be eligible, a proposal must be submitted by one or more entity/ies based in one or more Member States and/or EEA countries participating in the CEF Telecom programme.** The call as such does not preclude the participation of private or public organisations, on condition that the **minimum set of requirements listed under paragraphs a) to d) of section 6.1 are met.** Therefore, organisations (public or private) that are not academic research entities or fact-checkers can participate in the consortium.

31. Could you provide some examples of infrastructure costs that could be eligible under this EDMO call?

Examples of infrastructure costs could include: IT hardware and software, servers, switches, licenses, etc. Such costs must be relevant to the objectives set in the proposed action. Any examples provided here are without prejudice to the evaluation and assessment of the costs when submitted at the end of the action.

32. The call text specifies the following: "Moreover, it will provide relevant and updated material to media literacy practitioners to sharpen their initiatives aimed at enhancing critical thinking of digital media users." Could you clarify if "practitioners" in this case means our activities should reach out to the general audience directly or indirectly, through NGOs and other organisations that offer courses on media literacy?

Hubs are expected to produce content that can be used by organisations which carry out media literacy activities. However, hubs can also organise media literacy activities directly for the general public.

33. Section 2 of the call text specifies that hubs must promptly detect emerging disinformation, analyse relevant actors, vectors, etc. This requires some sort of a technical infrastructure being put in place. Are the hubs expected to develop their own technical infrastructure or can they predominantly only use the Truly Platform developed by EDMO?

Truly Media platform services and tools will be accessible to all EDMO hubs. This does not preclude hubs from setting up their own technical infrastructure, which should be interlinked with EDMO central platform.