

# Humanitarian Aid (HUMA)

# Call for certifications

EU Humanitarian Partnership 2028-2034

(HUMA-2028-2034-PARTNERSHIP-CERT)

**Version 1.0**
**08 July 2026**

| HISTORY OF CHANGES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Version** | **Publication Date** | **Change** | **Page** |
| 1.0 | 08.07.2026 | ▪ Initial version. | |
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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

# CALL FOR CERTIFICATIONS

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for **certifications** to become an **EU humanitarian partner** for the period 2028-2034 under the **Humanitarian Aid Programme**.

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

- Regulation 2024/2509 (EU Financial Regulation)[1]
- the basic act (Humanitarian Aid Regulation 1257/96).

The call will remain open for the entire MFF programming period 2028-2034 and will be managed by the **European Commission, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO)**.

It covers the following **topics**:

- **HUMA-2028-2034-PARTNERSHIP-CERT-Partners**

We invite you to read the **call documentation** on the Funding & Tenders Portal Topic page carefully, and in particular this Call document, the HUMA Partnership certificate and the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual.

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

- the Call document outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope of the certificate (section 1)
  - timetable (section 2)
  - admissibility conditions and mandatory submission annexes (section 3)
  - eligibility conditions (section 4)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 5)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 6)
  - award criteria (section 7)
  - other conditions (section 8)
  - how to submit an application, get help and important information (sections 9, 10 and 11)
- the Online Manual outlines the procedures to register and submit applications online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal') and specific procedures for certificates.

## 1. Background, objectives and scope

The EU Humanitarian Partnership certificate is an EU quality certificate for humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The certificate aims to promote the concept of a long-lasting quality partnership, (based on professionalism, diversity, capacity to respond to humanitarian needs in

line with humanitarian principles, adherence to agreed rules and standards) and thereby promote the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of aid, to ensure that EU-funded humanitarian aid actions are implemented in the most appropriate, rapid, efficient and effective manner, and achieve the intended results.

The certificate is a prerequisite for NGOs to apply for funding for action grants under the Humanitarian Aid Programme.

The certification procedure consists in validating the status of an NGO as EU humanitarian partner, checking that it is a humanitarian organisation, checking administrative and financial management, operational capacity, financial capacity and certifying compliance with the partnership principles (transparency and accountability, humanitarian principles and ethical standards, compliance and internal control). It will be based on an independent ex ante assessment by an external independent auditor, which is to be provided as part of the application.

The certificates will be valid for HIPs launched until the end of 2034 (and up until the end of projects funded under that period).

Partners will be subject to regular monitoring by DG ECHO. In case of significant changes regarding elements that were part of the assessment (including the relation with implementing partners), the partner must inform DG ECHO.

The certificates may be suspended or withdrawn by DG ECHO, in case a partner no longer complies with the conditions for the certificate or if the partner is suspected to be in material breach of one of the commitments undertaken under the partnership.

## 2. Timetable and deadlines

This call is a continuously open call without cut-off dates, which will normally remain open until 30 June 2033 and cover the entire duration of the 2028-2034 MFF programming period.

The indicative timetable is as follows:

| **Timetable and deadlines:** | |
|---|---|
| Call opening: | 15 October 2026 |
| Submission: | continuously open call |
| Final deadline for submission: | 30 June 2033 |
| Evaluation and information on evaluation results/award: | ca 3-4 months |

Applications can be submitted at any moment in time (until the final deadline).

⚠ You should plan your application well ahead of the first HIP application for funding where you would like to participate. Organisations that would like to participate as of 1 January 2028 should submit their applications before **31 March 2027**. Applications received after this date cannot be guaranteed timely processing.

[1] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024).

⚠ This call is a continuously open call without cut-off dates. Once submitted, your application will immediately be sent to evaluation; resubmission of already submitted applications in the Submission System is therefore NOT possible.

## 3. Admissibility and documents

Applications must be submitted before the **final deadline for submission** *(see timetable section 2)*.

Applications must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the Calls for proposals section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Applications (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).

Applications must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and **all required annexes**:

- Application Form (Part A) — contains administrative information about the organisation *(to be filled in directly online)*
- Application Form (Part B) — contains the technical description *(template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*
- mandatory annexes *(templates to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*:
  - independent assessment report (by an independent qualified external auditor)
  - declaration of honour (DoH).

Your application must be **readable**, **accessible, printable** (please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded).

Applications are limited to **maximum 10 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages. Annexes do not count towards the page limit.

⚠ The information shared as part of your application (including the independent assessment report) will be treated as confidential (like EU internal information). Please be however aware that it will need to be shared with staff and evaluators who participate in the selection procedure (all bound by obligations of confidentiality).

ℹ For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the Online Manual.

## 4. Eligibility

In order to be eligible, the applicants must be:

- independent, non-profit-making, autonomous, non-governmental organisations:
  - with a clear humanitarian purpose, i.e. the humanitarian purpose is spelled out in their statutory documents

- transparent and accountable and
- delivering aid in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, i.e. the principles are clearly reflected in the mission statement or the internal documentation of the organisation (including codes of conduct, etc)

- established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member State (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
  - eligible non-EU countries:
    - Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein

and

- have their main headquarters in an EU Member State or non-EU country receiving EU aid or, exceptionally, a non-EU donor country.

All applicants must register in the Participant Register — before submission.

*Specific cases and definitions*

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible.

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for 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)[2]. Such entities are not eligible to participate in EU projects and can NOT obtain a certificate.

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092[3]. Such entities are not eligible to participate in EU projects and can NOT obtain a certificate.

## 5. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

*Financial capacity*

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement EU humanitarian aid projects. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all projects.

Key elements of the financial status will be assessed as part of the independent assessment report.

Partners that already have a partnership certificate for the previous period 2021-2027 and whose financial capacity assessment (FCA) is still valid at the submission of their certificate application (i.e. a FCA which is not older than 18 months) do NOT need to have their financial status assessed in the independent assessment report (questions 8-11 can stay empty).

For all other partners, the questions will need to be filled in AND a financial capacity assessment by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation) will be triggered after

[2] 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.

[3] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

submission of the application. You will be contacted and requested to upload your financial documents in the Participant Register *(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 *(see Guidance on FCA financial viability ratios)*.

⚠ In addition, the financial capacity will also be checked on a regular basis in the context of applications for funding, in accordance with the standard rules for grants.

ℹ 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 EU humanitarian aid projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

Basic elements regarding operational capacity (project design and project management) will be assessed as part of the independent assessment report.

⚠ In addition, project-specific operational capacity will be checked in the context of applications for funding, in accordance with the standard rules for grants.

*Exclusion*

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding *(bankruptcy, breach of social security or tax obligations, grave professional misconduct, breach of key obligations in an EU contract, etc)* can NOT receive a certificate.[4]

Non-exclusion will be verified as part of the independent assessment report.

⚠ In addition, non-exclusion will also be checked in the context of applications for funding, in accordance with the standard rules for grants.

## 6. Evaluation and award procedure

Applications will be subject to a formal evaluation procedure.

They will be checked for formal requirements (admissibility and eligibility) and then evaluated against the award criteria (section 7).

Both eligibility check and evaluation will be based on the findings in the assessment report submitted as part of the application (and other available information, if any). If needed, DG ECHO may request additional information.

Applications that pass the evaluation will be included in the award list.

All applicants will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful applications will be awarded the certificate; the other ones will be rejected.

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 electronic notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after

[4] See Articles 138 and 143 EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

sending will be 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.

⚠ Successful applications will be included in the public list of EU humanitarian partners. If you would like to request not to be included in this list, please contact ECHO-APPEL@ec.europa.eu.

⚠ Please note that information relating to the list will be shared with the Member States (including the names of organisations which were not included because their application was rejected or which were removed due to suspension or withdrawal).

## 7. Award criteria

The **award criteria** are included in the two blocks of detailed criteria that are part of the independent assessment report:

1. **Block 1: Eligibility, financial capacity, exclusion and minimum requirements**
2. **Block 2: Operational capacity and additional suitability requirements**

| BLOCK 1 – ELIGIBILITY, FINANCIAL CAPACITY, EXCLUSION AND MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS | YES/NO |
|---|---|
| **LEGAL STATUS** | |
| 1 NGO Status | YES/NO |
| 2 Headquarters | YES/NO |
| 3 Autonomy and independence | YES/NO |
| 4 Non-exclusion | YES/NO |
| **HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES** | |
| 5 Humanitarian purpose | YES/NO |
| 6 Humanitarian principles | YES/NO |
| 7 Humanitarian aid experience | YES/NO |
| **FINANCIAL STATUS** | |
| 8 Certified audited financial statements | YES/NO |
| 9 Liquidity (quick ratio) | YES/NO |
| 10 Equity | YES/NO |
| 11 Operating income | YES/NO |
| **SYSTEMS** | |
| 12 Segregation of duties | YES/NO |

| | |
|---|---|
| 13 Accounting system | YES/NO |
| 14 Procurement procedures | YES/NO |
| **RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY** | |
| 15 Compliance with EU values | YES/NO |
| 16 Responsibility for implementation of actions | YES/NO |
| 17 Ensuring quality of proposals | YES/NO |
| 18 Transfer of financial support to third parties | YES/NO |
| 19 Selection of implementing partners | YES/NO/N.A. |
| 20 Monitoring and oversight arrangements | YES/NO |
| 21 Reliability of reporting | YES/NO |
| **OVERALL SCORE BLOCK 1** | **YES/NO** |

| **BLOCK 2 - OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND ADDITIONAL SUITABILITY REQUIREMENTS** | **Score …/10** |
|---|---|
| **PRINCIPLES** | |
| 1 Ethics | ../10 |
| 2 Anti-fraud and anti-corruption | ../10 |
| 3 PSEAH, child protection and protection of environment | ../10 |
| 4 Safety and security of staff | ../10 |
| **OPERATIONAL CAPACITY** | |
| 5 Project design | ../10 |
| 6 Project management | ../10 |
| **COMPLIANCE WITH RULES, REGULATIONS, OBLIGATIONS AND STANDARDS** | |
| 7 Humanitarian | ../10 |
| 8 Operational | ../10 |
| 9 Protection of personal data | ../10 |
| **INTERNAL CONTROL** | |
| 10 Governance, risk management and oversight | ../10 |
| 11 Human resources | ../10 |
| 12 Budgeting, accounting and reporting | ../10 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **13 Audit trail and document management** | **../10** |
| **OVERALL AVERAGE SCORE BLOCK 2** | **.../10** |

The detailed criteria are described in the template for the independent assessment report which must be submitted as part of the application.

In the independent assessment report, the minimum requirements will be scored as fulfilled or not fullfilled; the additional suitability requirements will be scored with points.

| **Minimum pass scores** |
|---|
| Block 1: Score = YES to each question (with Question 19 being the only possible exception allowing for a 'N/A' answer)<br><br>Block 2: Overall average score ≥ 6/10 and individual score for each question ≥ 4/10. |

In the evaluation report, the assessment will be verified and confirmed for all criteria by the Commission evaluators.

Only organisations that reach the minimum pass scores may be certified. Other applications will be rejected.

## 8. Other conditions

*Communication and visibility*

Partners must promote the EU Humanitarian Partnership and the actions financed by DG ECHO, along with their results, while duly respecting and protecting the safety and dignity of the final recipients of the assistance.

*Monitoring, information and coordination*

Partners will be subject to regular monitoring by the Commission on compliance with the conditions for the certificate.

The partners must inform DG ECHO about changes to their legal entity data (in particular, name, address, legal representatives, legal form and organisation type changes) and changes in their legal, financial, technical or organisational situation that may call into question the compliance with conditions for the certificate (or may create conflicts of interests).

The partners must also — without delay — inform DG ECHO about any instances of grave professional misconduct, such as sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (regardless of whether the partner is/was receiving EU humanitarian funding or not during the period concerned).

If requested, they must provide additional or other documentation or information in a timely, comprehensive and transparent manner.

If problems are identified, appropriate remedial measures (notably in the form of an action plan) will be agreed with the partner.

Persistent lack of cooperation or material breach of one of the commitments undertaken under the partnership may lead to the suspension or withdrawal of the

certificate. The same applies to non-compliance with the information and coordination obligations.

Please be aware that information on suspensions and withdrawals may be shared with EU Member States as part of the information on updates of the list of EU Humanitarian Partners.

*Suspension or withdrawal*

DG ECHO may suspend or withdraw the certificate if the partner no longer complies with the conditions for the certificate or if the partner is suspected to be in material breach of one of the commitments undertaken under the partnership.

During suspension, the organisation will not be eligible to apply for funding under the Humanitarian Aid Programme.

Withdrawal of the certificate means that the partner will no longer be eligible to apply for grants under this Programme and that ongoing grant agreements may be terminated if the reasons for the withdrawal affect the partner's ability to properly their implementation.

For more information about monitoring, suspension or withdrawal of certificates, consult the Online Manual.

## 9. How to submit an application

All applications 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 application**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the Calls for proposals section.

Submit your application in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisation. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the application. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (if any; *see section 3*). Upload them as PDF files (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The application must keep the format unchanged and respect the **page limits** *(see section 3)*; excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System, otherwise the application may be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The application must be submitted **before the deadline** (*see section 2*). After this deadline, the system is closed and applications can no longer be submitted.

Once the application is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation email** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation email, it means your application 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 application (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.

## 10. 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
- Topic Q&A 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 Call and Topic pages regularly, since we will use them to publish call and topic updates.

*Contact*

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the IT Helpdesk.

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: ECHO-APPEL@ec.europa.eu.

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

## 11. 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.
- **Consult** the Portal Call and Topic pages regularly. We will use them to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System —** By submitting the application, you **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the Portal Terms & Conditions.
- **Registration —** Before submitting the application, you must be registered in the Participant Register. The participant identification code (PIC) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **No resubmission —** Since this is a continuously open call without cut-off dates, applications that have been submitted in the Submission System can NOT be changed and re-submitted. Once an application is submitted, it will immediately be sent to evaluation.
- **Rejection —** By submitting the application, you accept all the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Applications that do not comply with all the call conditions 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 —**For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for your 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 10*).
- **Confidentiality —** Information that you share (including as part of the proposal) will be subject to the same confidentiality arrangements as those set out for grant agreements and normally protected like EU internal information ('Commission use').
- **Data protection —** The submission of an application under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with Regulation 2018/1725. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your application (and subsequent management of the certificate). Details are explained in the Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement.