

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

# Boosting Fact-checking Activities in Europe

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The European University Institute and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation have established the European Media and Information Fund (hereafter EMIF) with a view to addressing the phenomenon of online disinformation in Europe and promoting a more resilient and fact-based digital information ecosystem.

The present Call for Proposals establishes specific provisions regulating the process of applying for funding of actions in support of fact-checking. It aims at complementing the activities of the European Digital Media Observatory (hereafter EDMO) by providing funding to fact-checking projects that contribute to increase coverage and timeliness of fact-checks, as well as strengthen fact-checking organisations in Europe.

Applications shall be submitted online on [emifund.eu](https://emifund.eu) and shall follow the evaluation and selection procedures detailed on this notice.

EMIF's Management Committee reserves the right to make any modifications and amendments to the terms and conditions set forth in this notice. These shall be publicised on EMIF's website: [emifund.eu](https://emifund.eu) and will not affect grant applications submitted prior to such announcement.

## *1. Objectives*

Independent fact-checking organisations play a key role in limiting the negative effects of disinformation on the public discourse and democratic processes. In addition to raising public awareness about concrete disinformation cases, their work feeds into mainstream news, media literacy practices and research, thereby entailing a strong multiplier effect.

This Call aims at strengthening the European fact-checking ecosystem by focusing on two priority actions:

- a. Urgent actions: projects designed to increase coverage, depth, and speed of fact-checking activities by organisations that commit to producing regular flows of fact-checks:
  - i. in connection to critical events (e.g., elections, public health or public security crises, etc.), which may be likely targets of disinformation campaigns in one or more European countries; and/or
  - ii. aimed at improving the detection and understanding of disinformation narratives in topical areas of public interest (e.g., climate change, economic recovery, immigration, geopolitical issues, EU policies, etc.) within relevant information environments (local/national/European).
- b. Scale-up projects: free-lance collaborations within newsrooms and/or the integration of state-of-the-art technologies for content verification and media and social media monitoring. This Call encourages projects:
  - i. involving structured and time-framed, free-lance collaborations with specialist staff (journalists, but also subject-matter experts or data analysts) to enhance diversity and bring complementary skills and innovative approaches in fact checking organisations, as well as best fact-checking practices in newsrooms, thereby paving the way for more stable job opportunities and expanding journalistic coverage around topics of public interest that may be actual or potential targets of disinformation campaigns; and/or
  - ii. involving the licensing or acquisition of adequate online content verification technologies and network analysis tools, which are instrumental for scaling-up and improving the efficiency of debunking activities, notably in view of the increasingly sophisticated information manipulation tactics and techniques employed in disinformation campaigns.

The projects funded under this Call are expected to:

- raise public awareness and empower diverse readerships in different European countries to critically assess news and information accessed through different media, notably online;
- foster knowledge-sharing between fact-checking organisations, civil society, researchers, media outlets and online platforms;
- facilitate the creation of a European network of independent fact-checking organisations;
- stimulate innovation in fact-checking organisations, newsrooms and improvement of journalistic skills;
- help reduce the impact in Europe of disinformation campaigns, including foreign interference and influence operations carried out outside Europe.

Under both priorities, projects should consider possible ways to enhance cooperation between European fact-checking organisations, as well as between fact-checkers and news media, civil society, and online platforms.

## 2. *Conditions of Admissibility*

### **2.1. Size and Duration of Projects**

	Maximum grant per project	Maximum duration per project (months)
<i>Urgent Actions</i>	€ 55,000.00	6
<i>Scale-up projects</i>	€ 80,000.00	12

Projects applying to this Call should comply with both maximum duration and maximum size according to the respective area.

## 2.2. Eligible Applicants

Applicants shall be legal entities employing fact-checkers and abiding by recognised ethical and professional standards (e.g., Code of Principles of the International Fact-Checking Network, deontological Codes for the Journalistic Profession applicable in their country of establishment, European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity).

Should an applicant not be a signatory to any code, it should explain how it ensures *de facto* adherence to the ethical and professional standards applicable to the type of activities carried out by its organisation.

Proposals from individual entities are eligible if submitted by:

- i. Small-sized independent fact-checking and news media organisations with up to 50 employees, and up to € 10 million turnover or € 10 million total balance sheet;
- ii. Non-governmental Organisations;
- iii. Universities;
- iv. Research centres;
- v. Educational institutions;
- vi. Non-profit organisations.

Proposals from consortia are eligible if submitted by:

- i. any of the entities mentioned above under points (i) to (vi);
- ii. news media organisations, including for-profit entities of any status or size, on condition that the consortium also integrate one or more entities mentioned above under points (i) to (vi).

Only applications from legal entities and consortium members established in the EU, EFTA or UK are eligible.

Specific tasks may be subcontracted out to entities or natural persons irrespective of their place of establishment.

Provisions regarding exclusions:

- Natural persons may be part of a consortium, but a natural person cannot lead the project. Activities and expenses pertaining to natural persons shall be allocated to the Lead Applicant.
- State-controlled organisations – other than universities, research centres, educational institutions, and public media organisations with editorial independence – are not eligible to receive funding and therefore cannot apply individually or lead a consortium, but they may take part in the action at their own costs.
- Consortia cannot be solely composed of entities affiliated with the Lead Applicant.

### **2.3. Eligible Activities**

Activities may be developed at local, regional, national, or international levels across the territory of the EU, EFTA and UK.

Proposals should cover one of the two priorities set out in Section 1 at point a) “Urgent Actions” and point b) “Scale-up Projects”.

The following types of activities are eligible for both priorities a) and b):

- journalistic investigations and fact-checking activities;
- production of original content in the form of articles (fact-checks);

- awareness and dissemination actions, including conferences, seminars, events;
- actions aiming at the creation and improvement of networks, exchanges of good practices, and uptake of innovative methodologies and relevant technologies.

Additionally, for priority b), the following types of activities are also eligible:

- integration of complementary skills via additional human resources in newsrooms;
- usage of innovative tools improving the efficiency of fact-checking (e.g., by facilitating online content verification or network analysis).

Eligible activities shall be those that will be developed in addition to the applicant's current activities and that will enable a prompt detection and exposure of emerging disinformation campaigns with potential negative impact on public opinion in the relevant linguistic area(s).

Proposals should include concrete deliverables and set clear, objectively verifiable and quantifiable performance indicators for the end of the project. The estimated reach should be substantiated by an outreach plan identifying appropriate means of communication and dissemination, including links to EDMO's website.

Activities deriving from cooperation with news media, educational institutions, online platforms, research and/or civil society organisations not directly involved in the projects are viewed positively as they may be effective means to gain relevant insights or to extend the outreach of the funded activities.

Proposals addressing priority b) must describe the terms and conditions for the engagement of free-lance collaborators, and/or identify the type of analytical tools to be acquired or leased, explaining how journalists taking part to the funded project may enhance their ability to detect and debunk disinformation campaigns via such tools.

All actions will respect the editorial independence of the media, emphasise the importance of proper editorial arrangements and allow the beneficiaries to select those interventions they find most appropriate.

## **2.4. Financial Capacity**

Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to maintain their activity throughout the duration of the funded project.

The verification of the financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies such as universities, research centres and educational institutions.

The assessment of the applicant's financial capacity will be based on a declaration on their honour to be submitted with the application.

Additionally, applicants shall submit:

- the profit and loss account for the last two financial years for which the accounts were closed, and
- the balance sheet for the last two financial years for which the accounts were closed.
- For newly created entities, the business plan may replace the above documents.

If the applicant's financial capacity is not sufficiently justified, the EMIF Unit may request further information.

## **2.5. Operational Capacity**

Applicants must have the know-how, qualifications, and resources to successfully implement the proposed action/project. In particular, applicants must demonstrate to

have sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature, or proven knowledge in the field covered by this Call.

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

Each applicants will have to submit an original “blue ink” signed declaration on their honour, and the following supporting documents:

- curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation;
- the applicants’ activity reports if available, or an exhaustive list of previous projects and activities performed and connected to the field of this Call or to the actions to be carried out;
- a description of the technical equipment, tools, or facilities, as well as the human resources at the disposal of the applicant and involved in the project.

## **2.6. Exclusion Criteria**

Applicants which are in one of the following exclusion situations cannot participate:

- bankruptcy, insolvency or winding-up procedures, affairs or assets administered by a court or a liquidator, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures;
- in breach of social security or tax obligations, established by a final judgement or a final administrative decision;
- guilty of grave professional misconduct (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant), established by a final judgement or a final administrative decision;

- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant), established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision;
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a procurement contract, a grant agreement, or a grant decision, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation (EC) No 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making- or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- creation of an entity under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant), established by a final judgement or a final administrative decision;
- resident or ordinarily resident of an EU or US embargoed country;
- as a natural person, an employee of the government or an employee of a government-controlled entity.

Each applicant must provide an original “blue ink” signed declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to above.

EMIF shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- is in one of the exclusion situations mentioned above; or

- has misrepresented information required as a condition for participating to the Call, or has failed to supply that information; or
- was previously involved in the preparation of this Call, thereby causing a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

### *3. Submission of Applications*

Applications shall be submitted using the online application form available on EMIF's website: [emifund.eu](https://emifund.eu).

Applications shall be submitted in English and specify the requested grant amount. Supporting documents shall be submitted in their original language, as well as in an English translation.

Applications submitted on paper are not accepted.

Applicants can present proposals addressing either priority a) or b), at any time, starting from the date of publication of the present Call and until:

- 28 February 2025 for “Scale-up Projects”;
- 30 June 2025 for “Urgent Actions”.

Cut-off dates (“funding rounds”) will occur every 4 months – in February, June, and October each year. The last two funding rounds – in February and June 2025 – will only apply to priority a) Urgent Actions.

At each cut-off date, applications thus far submitted proceed to the admissibility phase.

Applications from consortia shall be submitted by the Lead Applicant entity.

Once a proposal is submitted, the Lead Applicant will receive a confirmation e-mail. Absent this confirmation e-mail, the proposal should be considered as not submitted. If the Lead Applicant concerned believes this is due to a fault in the submission system, EMIF should be alerted within 5 days by email to be sent to [info@emifund.eu](mailto:info@emifund.eu) with a reference to the Call's title: Boosting Fact-Checking Activities in Europe, explaining the circumstances. EMIF's Management Committee will decide on such cases.

Applicants cannot submit proposals:

- simultaneously to priorities a) and b);
- before the end date of an ongoing project funded by EMIF under the “Boosting Fact-checking Activities in Europe” Call for Proposals, where the applicant is involved;
- while the applicant is involved in a project on the reserve list (ref. Section 4.4).

#### *4. Evaluation and Award Procedure*

##### **4.1. Eligibility Checks**

Based on the documentation provided by the applicant, the EMIF Unit at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation will identify all eligible projects that may be funded, by performing the following checks:

- Regularity of the application (including goals, size, amount requested, and duration of project proposal)
- Eligibility of the applicants
- Eligibility of the proposed activities
- Financial capacity
- Operational capacity (preliminary validation)
- Exclusion criteria

- All mandatory annexes/supporting documents in their original language, as well as in an English translation.

The applications that fail to satisfy any of the above eligibility checks will not go through the admissibility phase. Based on these checks, the list of projects admitted to the evaluation phase will be established.

Applicants whose applications are rejected at this stage shall be informed and have 5 working days to appeal, counted from the day after the notification. Appeals may be sent via email to: [info@emifund.eu](mailto:info@emifund.eu). Received appeals shall be analysed by the EMIF Unit and forwarded with an opinion to EMIF's Management Committee, which will make the final decision.

Applicants will be kept informed at each step of the process and a specific timeframe will be communicated to them regarding the selection and decision-making process, upon receipt of their application. All applicants will be informed about the decision by email.

All projects included in the list of admitted projects will move forward to the evaluation phase.

## **4.2. Evaluation Procedure**

All admitted applications are evaluated by independent experts from several countries, appointed by EDMO. This shall guarantee equal opportunities for all potential beneficiaries.

Each application shall be evaluated by two experts. If necessary, a third expert may be called upon to assess the application. These experts will have the sole responsibility for

ensuring the evaluation of the application’s merit by scoring the pre-set selection criteria.

### 4.3. Selection Criteria

The evaluation will be made based on the following selection criteria:

Selection Criterion	Weight
<p>Relevance: to assess the contribution of the project’s expected results to the objectives of the Call listed in Section 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved detection of disinformation in critical situations or around topics of public interest, which may be actual or potential targets of disinformation campaigns;</li> <li>• Adoption of state-of-the-art methodologies for content verification and media and social media monitoring;</li> <li>• Expansion of the applicant’s existing activities or start-up of new fact-checking activities by the applicant;</li> <li>• Transformative potential of the project (considering the applicant’s starting point).</li> </ul>	4
<p>Quality of content and activities: to assess the adequacy of the proposed methodologies to reach the objectives of the Call:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coverage and regularity of fact-check production (for priority (a));</li> <li>• Diversity, complementarity of skills and innovative approaches developed through the project (for priority (b));</li> <li>• Cost-efficiency of the proposed activities in the chosen domain;</li> </ul>	2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanisms to ensure diversity, impartiality and editorial independency, including collaboration with news media, civil society and online platforms.</li> </ul>	
<p>Project management: to assess the feasibility of the proposed project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience and diversity, including gender balance, of the proposed project team, as well as the efficiency of the team composition to reach the objectives of this Call;</li> <li>• Sufficiency and efficiency of the operational resources allocated to the project;</li> <li>• Clarity of the chosen methodology, and clear allocation of responsibilities and corresponding budgets among the partners;</li> <li>• Quality of the proposed coordination mechanisms, quality control systems and arrangements to manage risks.</li> <li>• Guarantees and mechanisms for proper handling and safekeeping of sensitive and/or personal data used in the project.</li> </ul>	2
<p>Dissemination: to assess the expected impact of the proposed project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality and outreach of promotional activities towards users of social media and online platforms' services;</li> <li>• Quality of the strategies to exchange knowledge, ensure transferability of project's outcomes towards news media, civil society and/or online platforms and monitor progress in this regard;</li> </ul>	2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential impact at local, regional, national and/or European levels, beyond those directly involved in the project and beyond the project’s lifetime.</li> <li>• The project’s sustainability, scalability and/or replicability, its potential for longevity beyond the funding periods.</li> </ul>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>

Each criterion shall be scored on a scale between 0 and 10 points and an application must get at least 6 points in each criterion to be supported. The total score, on a scale between 0 and 100, is obtained by multiplying the criteria scores by the weights indicated above.

The overall classification of the application will be the simple average of the two scores assigned by the two independent experts.

#### **4.4. Decision on Grants**

For each one of the two priority actions under Section 2, points (a) and (b) above, a ranked list of selected projects will be established. The proposed ranked lists of selected applications shall be submitted with the respective scores and justifications to EMIF’s Management Committee to be approved. The application approval shall take into consideration an appropriate balance between countries, entities, and research areas.

##### *Reserve list*

All applications that, following the evaluation, have scored above the minimum threshold (60 points) but are not fundable under the relevant Funding Round because they exceed the available allocation, are placed on a reserve list for consideration in the immediately subsequent Funding Round. If again in that Round they are not

supported, they are definitely rejected but thenceforth new applications from the same applicant may be submitted.

All other projects will be rejected.

EMIF's Management Committee may:

- decide to reduce the amount of the grant requested;
- decide to not to give or reduce the pre-financing to the applicant;
- decide to give pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see Section 5.2 below);
- impose unconditionally and irrevocably the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries or decide to reject the participation of the applicant in the proposal and request reallocation of the tasks to another applicant of the consortium or his replacement, without compromising the quality of the proposal.

EMIF reserves the right to refuse funding for any application that contains or relates to offensive, obscene, pornographic, defamatory, or threatening content. This shall not be interpreted, in any way, to limit the applicants' exercise of free speech or scientific freedom.

Applicants will be duly notified by email about the outcome of the evaluation. The awarded projects will be announced on EMIF's website.

The awarded applications will have 3 months to start the project counting from the approval notification date.

#### **4.5. Grant Agreement**

After approval notification by EMIF's Management Committee, applicants who successfully pass the evaluation phase will be invited for grant preparation by the EMIF Unit with a view to entering into a Grant Agreement, detailing the purpose of the grant, the award conditions and level of funding, including deliverables, reporting requirements and payments. Invitation to grant preparation does not constitute a formal commitment to funding.

The grant preparation phase will involve a dialogue to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the expert evaluators or other concerns.

The Grant Agreement shall be signed between the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Applicant. In case of consortium, the Agreement will be signed by the Lead Applicant on behalf of the consortium, and it will be responsible for:

- ensuring that the funding provided is distributed in accordance with the terms of the Grant Agreement; and
- procuring that all partners also comply with the terms of the Grant Agreement.

Other members of the consortium shall mandate the Lead Applicant with the powers to sign the Grant Agreement.

EMIF reserves the right to require any or all members of the consortium to also enter the Grant Agreement directly.

Portuguese law governs all agreements and the place of jurisdiction for any disputes is Lisbon.

#### **4.6. Form of Grant and Funding Rate**

The grant will be defined by applying a funding rate of 100% to the eligible costs actually incurred and declared by the beneficiary, up to the maximum set out on section 2.1 Size and Duration of Projects, above.

In case the proposed project is a part of a larger programme or project of the applying entities, the submitted application should clearly identify the actions designed to achieve the objectives of the present call and detail the outputs, deliverables and related costs pertaining to the budget submitted, as well as the timeframe for the execution of the proposed project. The applicant will have to report on such objectives, outputs, deliverables, through a separate accounting and reporting system, and take all the necessary transparency measures to demonstrate that no action undertaken under the submitted project overlaps with actions undertaken under the larger programme or project.

Applicants are not required to provide matching funds but will have to commit to covering the budgeted costs exceeding the requested grant amount out of their own resources.

The estimated budget of the project must be attached to the Application Form. It must be drawn up in euros.

#### **4.7. Eligible Costs**

Eligible costs shall meet all the following conditions:

- They are incurred by the beneficiary and are necessary for the implementation of the action/project which is the subject of the grant.

- They are incurred during the duration of the action/project. The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the Grant Agreement. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action/project before the agreement is signed, the costs eligibility period may start before that signature. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application.
- They are indicated in the estimated budget of the action/project.
- They are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiaries and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established.
- They comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.
- They are reasonable, justified, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.
- The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Both direct and indirect costs are eligible.

#### *Eligible direct costs*

The eligible direct costs for the action/project are the costs which are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action/project and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as:

- (i) the costs of personnel (including actual salaries, social security contributions and other statutory costs) working under an employment contract with a beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action/project,

provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual policy on remuneration. The costs of natural persons working under a contract with a beneficiary other than an employment contract or who are seconded to a beneficiary by a third party against payment may also be included under such personnel costs, provided that the costs are not significantly different from the costs of staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary and the result of the work belongs to the beneficiary;

- (ii) the costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;
- (iii) the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounting statements, including the costs of renting or leasing equipment or other assets. Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation, rental or lease costs corresponding to the implementation period and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action/project may be taken into account when determining the eligible costs. By way of exception, the full cost of purchase of equipment may be eligible if this is justified by the nature of the action/project and the context of the use of the equipment or assets;
- (iv) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are directly assigned to the action/project;
- (v) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Grant Agreement (e.g., dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action/project, translations, reproduction);
- (vi) costs derived from subcontracts, provided that the subcontracting contract is awarded to the tender offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interest;
- (vii) duties, taxes and charges paid by the beneficiary, notably value added tax (VAT) if not refundable.

*Eligible indirect costs*

The eligible indirect costs (overheads) are costs that are not directly linked to the action/project implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

A flat-rate amount of a maximum of 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action/project, excluding direct costs of subcontracting, is eligible as indirect costs, representing the beneficiaries' general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

The following costs are considered as ineligible:

- (i) return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary,
- (ii) debt and debt service charges,
- (iii) provisions for losses or debts,
- (iv) interest owed,
- (v) doubtful debts,
- (vi) exchange losses,
- (vii) contributions in kind from third parties,
- (viii) excessive or reckless expenditure,
- (ix) deductible VAT,
- (x) expenses that are financed by other funding sources.

The total eligible costs of the action/project are the consolidated total eligible costs accepted by the EMIF Unit and reflected in the Grant Agreement. The total amount paid to the beneficiaries by EMIF may in no circumstances exceed the maximum amount of the grant as indicated in the Grant Agreement.

The revenue generated by the action/project, if any, reported on the date on which the request for payment of the balance is drawn up will be deducted from the actual eligible costs of the action/project.

EMIF's Management Committee may reduce the maximum amount of the grant if the action/project has not been implemented properly (i.e., if it has not been implemented or has been implemented poorly, partially or late), or if another obligation under the Grant Agreement has been breached. The amount of the reduction will be proportionate to the degree to which the action/project has been implemented improperly or to the seriousness of the breach.

## *5. Reporting and Payment Arrangements*

### **5.1. Reporting**

The interim report, pertaining solely to Scale-up projects, shall be submitted 6 months after the project's beginning or when the expenditure attains 40% of total eligible costs, whichever occurs first, and shall contain activity and financial information regarding the development of the project thus far.

A final closure meeting marking the end date of the Project shall be held to which EMIF representatives shall be invited to attend, with a presentation of the main results, outcomes, and lessons learned.

The final report shall be submitted within 2 months after project completion and shall contain activity and financial information regarding the full development of the project.

The EMIF Unit may request clarifications and further documents before making a decision regarding the acceptance of the final report for purposes of payment of the final instalment. Payments will be made within 2 weeks after the final report approval.

The interim and final financial reports shall be presented with the same budget headings as in the approved budget. A list of expenses/invoices/receipts shall accompany this report to justify the spent amounts.

The financial report shall preferably be accompanied by a statement of an external auditor certifying that the expenditure is real and incurred in accordance with the Grant Agreement, such certification plus the list of expenses is accepted as sufficient proof of expenditure to justify the payment. Otherwise, a sample of proof of expenses shall be requested by the EMIF Unit.

Templates for the interim and final reports will be provided to the beneficiaries.

Specific audits may be commissioned, notably in case of suspected fraud or mismanagement of the funds provided by EMIF.

## **5.2. Payment Arrangements**

Payments of grants shall be made in instalments and are conditional on the submission and approval of interim (if applicable) and final reports.

Payments will be put into effect as follows:

For Urgent Actions:

- 50% of the grant amount upon signature of the Grant Agreement; and
- A balance payment of up to 50% of the grant amount, upon receipt and approval of the Project's final technical and financial report.

For Scale-up projects:

- 50% of the grant amount upon signature of the Grant Agreement;

- 30% of the grant amount upon approval of the interim report; and
- A balance payment of up to 20% of the grant amount, upon receipt and approval of the Project's final technical and financial report.

A pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested, in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment. The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the eligible European countries. The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is cleared against the payment of the balance, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement.

As an alternative to requesting a guarantee on pre-financing, the EMIF Unit may decide to split the payment of pre-financing into several instalments which, in total, shall not exceed 50% of the grant amount.

Payments will be made once the EMIF Unit is satisfied with the documentation and financial information provided by the beneficiaries.

## *6. Budget*

The total grant allocation for this permanent call is €4 350 000 until 2026.

The indicative allocation per funding round is €435 000. For the last two funding rounds, the indicative allocation is €217 500.

## *7. Publicity & IPRs*

Applicants retain ownership of their intellectual property rights in the application and any subsequent information or materials provided as part of the application process

(hereafter, “Application Materials”), as well as in the content or other intangible assets resulting from the activities.

By submitting an application, applicants agree that any Application Materials provided to EMIF pursuant to this Call may be used by EMIF:

- i. to assess their application;
- ii. if the application is successful, to provide funding under the Grant Agreement and to assess ongoing compliance with the terms and conditions thereof; and
- iii. in any relevant publicity, including at events, in speeches, in annual reports, through social media and any other medium, online or offline.

Relevant publicity includes the use of aggregated data showing how EMIF’s funding has been awarded (e.g., by project type, industry sector and location), and project-specific information (e.g., the names and location of applicants, the funds awarded and a description of the project and/or project title). Applicants grant EMIF the right to use their trade names, trademarks, logos and other distinctive brand features for these specific purposes.

By signing the Grant Agreement, beneficiaries agree to provide CGF and EUI, EMIF’s promoters, non-exclusive, transferrable and royalty-free license on all copyrighted material produced throughout the project for the purposes of enabling them to populate their websites (and/or affiliated websites) with relevant content as a result of the activities for which the grant is used so to disseminate findings and raise public awareness. The beneficiaries agree to provide the Fund with a summary of the project of 600-words maximum, explaining the added-value, goals, methods, and targets of the project to be posted on the EMIF website in a language targeted towards the general public.

Moreover, beneficiaries are required to acknowledge EMIF's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used, including by giving prominence to EMIF's name and emblem in accordance with the "Logo Application Guidelines" and the "EMIF Visibility Handbook" that are provided after the signing of the Grant Agreement.

Applicants must warrant that they have obtained and will maintain all necessary agreements, releases, licences, and approvals to execute the project and to disclose the Application Materials to EMIF for the purposes set out in this Call, and that the execution of the project and provision of the Application Materials to EMIF will not infringe any third-party rights or entail a breach of any confidentiality obligations.

Applicants agree to indemnify EMIF against any liabilities, costs, claims, losses, damages or expenses (including reasonable legal fees) suffered or incurred in relation to a claim from a third party that the application or the use or reproduction of any Application Materials infringes or misappropriates any third-party rights.

## *8. Processing of Personal Data*

If processing of grant applications under this Call involve the recording and processing of personal data (such as your name, address and CV), such data will be processed only for the purposes of evaluating the submitted proposal and in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC.

## *9. Contacts*

Questions and requests for clarification may be sent to [info@emifund.eu](mailto:info@emifund.eu) with a reference to the Call's title: Boosting Fact-Checking Activities in Europe.