Forward-looking Projects

Purpose of the action

Following the recent pandemic, **the need for innovation in our education and training systems, as well as youth, has never been so great.** Innovation in teaching and learning is crucial, at individual level as well as at institutional level. These innovative approaches should not only provide today's and tomorrow's workers with the appropriate skills for rapidly-changing labour markets, but should also arm today's and tomorrow's workforce with creativity and skills to confront the growing complexity of societal challenges that we all face such as climate change, the protection of bio-diversity, clean energy, public health, digitalization and automation, artificial intelligence, robotics and data analysis.

This action will aim to foster **innovation, creativity and participation**, as well as social entrepreneurship in different fields of education and training, within sectors or across sectors and disciplines.

**Forward-Looking Projects** are large-scale projects that aim to **identify, develop, test and/or assess innovative (policy) approaches** that have the potential of becoming mainstreamed, thus improving education and training systems. They will support forward-looking ideas responding to **key European priorities** and that have the potential of becoming mainstreamed and giving input for improving education, training and youth systems, as well as to bring a substantial innovative effect in terms of methods and practices to all types of learning and active participation settings for Europe's social cohesion.

The goal is to support transnational cooperation projects implementing a coherent and comprehensive set of **sectoral or cross-sectoral activities** that either:

- **foster innovation** in terms of scope, ground-breaking methods and practices, and/or
- **ensure a transfer of innovation** (across countries, policy sectors or target groups), thus ensuring at European level a sustainable exploitation of innovative project results and/or transferability into different contexts and audiences.

The partnerships should be composed of a mix of public and private organisations combining researchers, practitioners and partners with the capacity to reach policy-makers.

Forward-Looking Projects should therefore be implemented by a mixed partnership of organisations:

- based on excellence and state of the art knowledge,
- having the capacity to innovate,
- able to generate systemic impact through their activities and the potential to drive the policy agenda in the fields of education and training.

Supported projects will aim at achieving systemic impact at European level by having the capacity to deploy their innovative outcomes on a European scale and/or by being able to transfer them into different thematic or geographical contexts.
Lot 1: Digital education (cross-sectoral)

Projects under Lot 1 can address different educational sectors or bridge educational sectors, and must support high quality and inclusive digital education, in line with the Digital Education Action Plan.

Proposals under this Lot should address one of the following three priorities:

- Priority 1: Education technology (edTech): scaling up of EU-based solutions through cooperation and quality assurance;
- Priority 2: Effective pedagogical approaches on informatics for primary and secondary level of education;
- Priority 3: Teacher training and curriculum development in tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy.

These priorities are detailed further under the ‘Setting up a project’ section below.

Lot 2: Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Projects under Lot 2 address the VET sector.

These projects support the implementation of the principles and objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the European Skills Agenda, the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience and the Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies.

Proposals submitted under Lot 2 must address one of the two following priorities that are detailed under ‘Setting up a project’:

- Priority 4: Micro-credentials for employability;
- Priority 5: Improving the attractiveness of Vocational Education and Training (VET) through partnerships and networks of VET providers.

Lot 3: Adult learning

Projects under Lot 3 address the adult learning policy area. These projects support the implementation of the principles and objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the European Skills Agenda, and the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults.

Proposals submitted under Lot 3 must address one of the two following priorities that are detailed under ‘Setting up a project’:

- Priority 6: Development of national registries of quality-assured and labour market relevant training opportunities;
- Priority 7: Supporting the Pact for Skills

Objectives of the Action

The general objectives are as follows:
• Innovative initiatives with a strong impact on education and training reforms in specific strategic policy areas;
• Contributing to the strengthening of Europe's innovation capacity by promoting innovation in education and training;
• Creating systemic change through fostering innovation at both practice and policy-level;
• Support forward-looking ideas focusing on key topics and priorities at EU level, with a clear potential to be mainstreamed in one or more sectors;
• As fully innovative, ground-breaking educational methods and practices and/or transfer of innovation: ensuring at EU level a sustainable exploitation of innovative project results and/or transferability into different contexts and audiences.

The specific objectives include:

• Identifying, developing, testing and/or assessing innovative approaches that have the potential to be mainstreamed in order to improve education and training systems and improve the effectiveness of policies and practices in the field of education and training;
• Launching pilot actions to test solutions to present and future challenges with a view to kick-starting sustainable and systemic impact;
• Supporting transnational cooperation and mutual learning on forward-looking issues amongst key stakeholders and empowering them to develop innovative solutions and promote the transfer of those solutions in new settings, including capacity-building of relevant stakeholders.

Activities under Forward-Looking Projects should contribute to the following:

• Improve quality, efficiency, attractiveness, and equity of education and training systems;
• Improve effectiveness of policies in the field of education and training;
• Support the implementation of EU Frameworks and legal initiatives as well as country-specific recommendations from the European Semester;
• Improved evidence and understanding on target group(s), learning and teaching situations and effective methodologies and tools that can inspire and stimulate innovation at system level;
• Develop knowledge to support evidence-based policy;
• Trigger behavioural shifts at EU level.

Main activities under these Priorities could involve (non-exhaustive list):

• Action research, mapping work, producing large-scale sectoral or cross-sectoral outputs;
• Transnational capacity-building activities such as training, the analysis of policy contexts, policy-research, institutional adjustments;
• Pilot activities to test innovative solutions;
• Large-scale transnational events or networking activities, either sectoral or cross-sectoral;
• Exploitation activities to spread results to the educational community or sector;
• Think-tank activities, researching and experimenting with innovative ideas.

Forward-Looking Projects are required to apply EU wide instruments and tools whenever relevant.

Forward-Looking Projects should include the design of a long-term action plan (beyond the duration of the Erasmus+ funded project) for the progressive take-up and mainstreaming of the innovations developed to be able to impact on education and training systems, in collaboration with the relevant authorities and institutions. They should also ensure the appropriate visibility and wide dissemination of the work, including at EU and national political level.
Forward-Looking Projects could also indicate how other EU funding opportunities (e.g. European Structural Funds, European Fund for Strategic Investment, Recover and Resilience Facility, Just Transition Fund), national and regional funding as well as private funding, can support the implementation of the project. They could take into account national and regional smart specialisation strategies and developments in the European Industrial Ecosystems.

**Criteria to be met to apply for Forward-Looking Projects**

**Eligibility criteria**

In order to be eligible for an Erasmus+ grant, project proposals for Forward-looking Projects must comply with the following criteria:

**Who can apply?**

The applicants (coordinator and full partners) must be:

- public or private organisations/entities that are active in the fields of education and training or in the world of work;
- established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme (Countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature are eligible).

Exception: For Lot 3, Priority 7 Support to the Pact for Skills only the coordinating organisations of Pact for Skills partnerships can be coordinator, and only organisations involved in existing Pact for Skills partnerships at the submission deadline can be full partners.

Higher education institutions established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE).

Organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme can be involved as associated partners (not as coordinator or full partners).

**Consortium composition**

**For Lot 1:**

The consortium must include at least 3 applicants (coordinator and full partners) from a minimum of 3 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme.

Affiliated entities do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for the consortium composition.

The consortium must include at least one public authority at national or regional level (e.g. Ministries of Innovation, Education, Labour or Economy, qualification or quality assurance authorities etc), from an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme, as applicant (coordinator or full partner).

Under Priority 1 (EdTech), the consortium must include at least one EdTech company from an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme, as applicant (coordinator or full partner).

**For Lot 2:**
The consortium must include at least 6 applicants (coordinator and full partners) from a minimum of 3 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme.

Affiliated entities do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for the consortium composition.

For at least 3 eligible countries, the consortium must include, per country:

1. at least 1 enterprise, industry or sector representative organisation, and
2. at least 1 vocational education and training provider, or representative organisation (at secondary and/or tertiary level).

**For Lot 3:**

Under **Priority 6**, the consortium must include at least 3 applicants (coordinator and full partners) from a minimum of 3 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme.

Affiliated entities do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for the consortium composition.

It must also include public or private entities in charge of, or having a high degree of responsibility for (or influence over), the organisation and/or financing and/or provision of educational services to adults (e.g. skills assessment, validation of competences, education and training, orientation and guidance), as applicants or associated partners.

Under **Priority 7**, the consortium must include only partners of existing Pact for Skills partnerships as applicants (coordinator and full partners) from a minimum of 3 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme. Affiliated entities do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for the consortium composition.

**Venue of the activities**

The activities must take place in EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme.

**Duration of the project**

For **Lot 1** projects should normally last between 24 and 48 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

For **Lot 2** projects should normally last 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

For **Lot 3** projects should normally last 24 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

The duration has to be chosen at application stage, based on the objective of the project, on the type of activities planned over time, the budget and the ambitions set for the project.

**Where to apply?**

To the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Call ID Lot 1: ERASMUS-EDU-2023-PI-FORWARD-LOT1
When to apply?

Applicants have to submit their grant application by **15 March at 17:00 (Brussels time)**

Applicant organisations will be assessed against the relevant exclusion and selection criteria. For more information please consult [Part C of this Guide](#).

### Setting up a project

Forward-Looking Projects should always have in mind the following cross-cutting policy contexts:

2. The European Commission’s Green Deal, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals;
3. The European Skills Agenda;
4. The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience;
5. The Council Recommendation on micro-credentials;
6. The Council Recommendation on individual learning account;
7. The Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021- 2030;
8. The Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults;

### Lot 1: Digital education (Cross-sectoral)

Proposals submitted under Lot 1 must support high quality and inclusive digital education, in line with the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027.

Education and training systems are currently undergoing a deep digital transformation, which is being driven by advances in connectivity; the widespread use of devices and digital applications; the need for individual flexibility, the wider availability of and need for high-quality digital education content and the ever-increasing demand for digital skills. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has heavily impacted education and training, has accelerated the change and provided multiple new learning experiences and perspectives.

The Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 sets the EU policy for the digital transformation in education and training over the next programming period. It is a call to action for stronger cooperation at European level to learn from the COVID-19 crisis and to make education and training systems fit for the digital age. The Action Plan foresees 14 actions under two strategic priorities, namely:

- Supporting the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem (1)
- Addressing the need to enhance digital competences for the digital transformation (2)

Adopted by the Commission as a key enabler of the European Education Area, the Action Plan started its implementation in January 2021. In the past months, taking up the European level to learn from the COVID-19 crisis and to make education and training systems fit for the digital age. The Action Plan foresees 14 actions under two strategic priorities, namely:

- Supporting the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem (1)
- Addressing the need to enhance digital competences for the digital transformation (2)
Dialogue aims to support Member States in the digital transformation of their education and training systems in an integrated, coherent and more ambitious approach, bringing together different sectors of government, as well as the private sector (e.g. EdTech companies), social partners and civil society. Through the Structured Dialogue, the Commission and the Member States will put forward a shared diagnosis on the situation and perspectives at national level; identify lessons learned and the necessary next steps for further action on digital education. The Dialogue will reach its completion at the end of 2022 and will feed future actions at EU level on digital education and skills, including two proposals for a Council Recommendation on enabling factors for digital education and on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training.

In this context, it is necessary to ensure that the adequate methodologies and teacher training opportunities are in place as to assure the effective development of digital skills and competences through education and training. Those can include the provision of informatics as a vehicle to promote the active use of technologies at young age and the development of skills and competences to address pressing societal issues, such as tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy.

In addition to the outlined above, the Digital Education Action Plan sets out to support more effective cooperation on digital education and training at EU level through the set-up of a European Digital Education Hub. The Hub will promote cross-sectoral collaboration, identify and share good practices and support Member States and the education and training sector with tools, frameworks, guidance, technical expertise and research in the domain of digital education. The Hub should link national and regional digital education initiatives and actors and support new models for exchange of digital education content, addressing issues such as common standards, interoperability, accessibility and quality-assurance. In alignment with the objectives of the Hub, it is also important to support all actors in the digital education ecosystem to cooperate with each other effectively and in particular to facilitate the collaboration between public authorities/education and training institutions and rapidly developing sectors, such as the European Education Technology (EdTech).

Forward-Looking Projects will address one of the three following priorities:

**Priority 1: Education technology (EdTech): scaling up of EU-based solutions through cooperation and quality assurance**

The European education technology (EdTech) sector is a key source of innovation in digital education and it is growing fast. However, it remains highly fragmented, often lacking the experience and capacity to effectively cooperate with education and training institutions and public authorities in a sustainable manner.

Forward-looking projects in this priority area would involve EU-based EdTech organisations by fostering cooperation between the industry and public authorities, contributing to the development of a high-performing European digital education ecosystem.

Projects under this priority should address both:

- development of an evidence-based quality assurance framework for education technology, in cooperation with Ministries of Education, with reference to the learning outcomes achieved through the integration of education technology solutions in teaching, learning and assessment.
- promoting cross-sectorial cooperation between education technology providers, education and training institutions, and public authorities in addressing efficient and equitable access to high-quality digital education content.
Priority 2: Effective pedagogical approaches on informatics for primary and secondary level of education

Informatics is still a relatively new discipline in school education. While some European countries have a long-standing tradition of teaching it, others, have only recently introduced this subject, especially in primary and lower secondary education. Recent reform processes led to changes in school curricula and to a general trend to enhance informatics at school in the EU. Yet existing evidence shows that while there is experience in teaching informatics in tertiary education and, to a certain extent, in upper secondary, the amount of knowledge and research developed in teaching at lower secondary and primary is much more limited.

Supporting the development of effective pedagogical approaches on informatics and related assessment can help in better preparing teachers to build and share expertise on how to best integrate the subject across the different levels of school education - thus better promoting young people active and safe use of digital technology.

Projects under this priority should address both:

- development and testing effective and innovative pedagogical approaches that are appropriate and with a clear progression between the different levels of education and in particular with a focus on primary and secondary level.
- teacher-training initiatives aimed at increasing the availability of (generalist and specialised) teachers with adequate preparation and qualification to teach the discipline.

Priority 3: Teacher training and curriculum development in tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy

As part of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, the European Commission has launched common guidelines for teachers and educators to promote digital literacy and tackling disinformation through education and training. Yet, more efforts at systemic level are needed to ensure that education and training systems provide effectively young people with the skills and competences to address these pressing issues and that teachers and educators are supported in their training and continuous professional development in the field.

To this end, forward looking projects on teacher training and curriculum development in promoting digital literacy and tackling disinformation would contribute to supporting education and training systems and in particular learners and teachers and educators to address new and emerging challenges in the classroom closely linked to the dynamic online environment in an effective and structured manner.

- Projects under this priority should address both: Initial teacher training and continuous professional development, in the field of digital literacy and tackling disinformation both in terms of content and methodology, but also in terms of systemic uptake;
- Research and exchange of effective and scalable approaches in curriculum development in the field of digital literacy and tackling disinformation.

Lot 2: Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Proposals submitted under Lot 2 must address one of the following 2 priorities:

Priority 4: Micro-credentials for employability

Micro-credentials are the record (e.g. an award or certificate) of the learning outcomes that a
learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. There has been exponential growth and uptake of micro-credentials as workers and job-seekers seek to upskill and reskill in line with the fast changing demands of the labour market, the impact of the digital and green transition and recovery from COVID-19. There is huge potential in micro-credentials to support lifelong learning and more inclusive forms of learning through more flexible learning and relevant learning opportunities. The Commission took steps through its proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability to establish a definition, standard format for describing micro-credentials and principles for designing and issuing micro-credentials.

These elements are essential to ensure the quality, trust and uptake of micro-credentials and enable their full potential as a currency for learning.

To further develop the potential of micro-credentials, the projects should address 1 or a combination of the following areas:

- **Micro-credentials for a more inclusive labour market**: how can micro-credentials be used within skills ecosystems, active labour market policies (i.e. employment services, training support and employment incentives) to support employability and inclusion for disadvantaged groups including such as young people, minimum income recipients, the long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities and the low-qualified in EU labour markets.
- **Micro-credentials for the green transition**: how can micro-credentials be designed, delivered and updated to equip people with the necessary skills for the green transition based on use of labour market skills intelligence and input from employers, industry and social partners.
- **Portability of micro-credentials**: how can we make best use of digitalisation, open standards and authentication services, including European Digital Credentials for Learning (part of Europass), to enable the portability of micro-credentials between countries, employers, education and training and employment systems.

**Priority 5: Improving attractiveness of Vocational Education and Training (VET) through partnerships and networks of VET providers**

Across the EU, recent graduates of VET programmes (at upper secondary level and post-secondary level) tend to be significantly more employable than recent graduates of general education. In addition, VET plays a prominent role in the European upper secondary education landscape as approximately half (48.4 %) of all learners enrolled in upper secondary education are enrolled in VET programmes.

Nevertheless, VET in some countries is still facing many prejudices and suffers from a negative image; and therefore change of mind-set among young people, parents, companies and adult learners, is needed at the grass root level - where VET takes place, in close cooperation with networks of VET providers.

Also increasing awareness about the importance of continuing VET would benefit competitiveness of companies and workers.

Considering VET as an attractive choice is part of the vision of the Council Recommendation on VET: â€œIn light of the green and digital transitions and demographic challenges, there is a need to significantly expand and improve the offer for vocational education and training both for young people and adults, while also increasing the attractiveness and quality of vocational education and training.â€
These challenges require action, for instance by increasing capacity at the grass root level to strengthen attractiveness and excellence of VET and bring European VET policy, initiatives, programmes closer to practice.

The projects must at least implement the set of activities mentioned below (additional activities may be added):

- **Create new and/or enhance existing networks and partnerships of VET providers** at sectoral, regional, national or European level, in particular for countries that have limited representation arrangements among VET providers, to ensure an effective outreach to the VET community for the purpose of strengthening VET attractiveness and excellence in innovative ways; this could include the possibility of contributing and/or creating Communities of Practices (including virtual) to support the attractiveness and excellence in VET.

- **Organise national and/or transnational communication campaigns** to showcase the benefits and career opportunities offered by VET initial qualifications for young people as well as upskilling and reskilling for adults;

- **Organise events and/or networking initiatives** at local, regional, national or European levels to ensure a broad outreach to different target groups, using a mix of innovative online and traditional communication methods; these will feature a strong degree of innovation.

- **Strengthen cooperation with economic and social actors**, including public authorities, social partners, and employers to mobilise for actions to raise the attractiveness and excellence of VET also with the aim to foster learning conducive working environments. Projects will strive to include national or regional public authorities in the project to the extent possible;

- **Select testimonials, nominate ambassadors, and/or set-up awards for excellence** in various fields (for VET learners, teachers, trainers, innovative VET providers, companies, apprenticeships etc.) to serve as inspiring and mobilising examples to raise the attractiveness and excellence in VET. Awards and other initiatives could be national or transnational and build on what already exist in some countries and be scaled up and made sustainable in different countries.

Projects under Priority 5 are encouraged to cooperate with the other projects selected under the same priority and create synergies among their activities (including through the organisation of joint events).

**Lot 3: Adult Learning**

Proposals submitted under Lot 3 must address the following priority:

Priority 6: Development of national registries of quality-assured and labour market relevant training opportunities

Among the reasons that limit participation in adult learning, potential learners report uncertain information about opportunities. The diverse landscape of adult training opportunities is difficult to navigate in many Member States, and it is often uncertain for observers whether a specific opportunity is of good quality and will subsequently be of value on the labour market. For adults, this reduces the incentives to search for and take up such opportunities. For potential funding bodies, either public authorities or employers, it reduces the willingness to increase their investment in skills development. National registries of quality-assured and labour market relevant training opportunities have been used as an innovative tool to tackle these challenges in several Member States, often linked to financial support for individuals to take up the opportunities in these registries, sometimes also including information on guidance and validation opportunities. Quality
information on the provision of guidance and validation opportunities would also help their potential beneficiaries to engage in their use and make the best choice. Projects will identify methods and mechanisms to help ensure that such registries, once operational, reach a significant number of users because they:

- Improve the communication between the “world of education and training” and the “world of work” (e.g. involving skills intelligence, social partners, education and training providers and other relevant stakeholders in their governance);
- Strike a good balance between ensuring quality and providing a diverse offer of opportunities that is responsive to labour market needs;
- Combine simplicity from the user perspective with appropriate flexibility at the “back end” concerning the included opportunities (e.g. possibility of multiple routes into the registry, regional differentiation of the included opportunities etc.); and
- Catalyse additional investments for training (e.g. by becoming a trusted reference for public schemes providing financial support for training, or collective or company-level bargaining about training entitlements).
- Are interoperable with other national registries and the Europass Platform thanks to their use of the standards of the European Learning Model (data scheme).

**Priority 7: Supporting the Pact for Skills**

The Pact for Skills is the first flagship action of the 2020 European Skills Agenda. The Pact is firmly anchored in the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and supports the goals of the Green Deal and the digital transformation, as set out in the Commission communication “A strong Social Europe for Just Transitions”. It also contributes to reaching the EU target of 60% of adults participating in training every year by 2030, as set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

**Expected impact**

Forward-Looking Projects intend to provide innovative solutions that can be mainstreamed at regional, national and European level and ideally with the potential to be developed further either by EU funding or else through national and regional support.

The bottom-up practices should correctly address the fixed priorities set to strengthen Europe’s innovation capacity, make a strong impact on education and training reforms and initiate systemic change.

Through the wide dissemination of project outcomes at transnational, national and/or regional levels, also taking national, European Industrial Ecosystems and regional smart specialisation strategies into account, Forward-Looking Projects are expected to make cathartic impact at system level to help education and training systems better meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

**Award criteria**

**Relevance of the project - (maximum 30 points)**

- **Link to EU policy and initiatives**: the proposal establishes and develops a project that supports a forward-looking idea at EU level, taking into account and fostering existing EU tools and initiatives (if relevant). The proposal also supports the implementation of EU policies (e.g. European Skills Agenda), EU Frameworks and EU initiatives such as country specific
recommendations from the European Semester;

- **Purpose**: the proposal is relevant to the objective of the Action, as well as the general and specific objectives of the Action (see section ‘Objectives of the action’ above);

  - **Lot 1: Digital education (cross-sectoral)** - Supporting high quality and inclusive digital education: the extent to which the proposal consistently plans and integrates activities, research and events that contribute clearly to the objectives of the Lot, in particular under the specific objectives of the priorities each proposal focuses on.

  - **Priority 4 - Micro-credentials for employability**: the extent to which the proposal ensures that micro-credentials make use of - or explore adaptation of - existing national systems and EU tools and services for: (1) skills and qualifications (national qualifications frameworks, credit systems, Europass including European Digital credentials for Learning, quality assurance tools etc) and (2) employability (training systems, individual learning accounts, Public Employment Services, engagement with Social Partners, etc);

  - **Priority 5 - VET attractiveness**: the extent to which the proposal sets-up or strengthens networks and associations of VET providers, to contribute in innovative and concrete ways to increasing attractiveness and excellence in VET, and to reach out to VET providers in countries that have limited representation arrangements among VET providers.

  - **Priority 6 - National registries of training opportunities**: the extent to which the proposal envisages cooperation and exchange on how to set up or enhance effective registries of quality assured and labour market relevant training opportunities that can function as a trusted reference for public or private schemes providing financial support for training and the extent to which they comply with the European Learning Model data scheme;

  - **Priority 7 - Supporting the Pact for Skills**: the extent to which the proposal envisages actions that will reinforce cooperation among partners resulting in better skills intelligence and effective upskilling and reskilling of workers.

- **Innovation**: the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to innovative results and solutions that can be mainstreamed into one or more economic or educational sectors;

- **Consistency**: the objectives are based on a sound needs analysis; they are clearly defined, realistic and address issues relevant to the participating organisations and to the Action;

- **European added value**: the proposal demonstrates clearly the added value at systemic EU level, generated through its trans-nationality and potential transferability;

- **Post-pandemic setting**: the extent to which the proposal integrates measures fostering new policies and practices at systemic level in order to face new challenges posed by the recent pandemic.

**Quality of the project design and implementation - (maximum 30 points)**

- **Coherence**: the overall project design ensures consistency between project objectives, methodology, activities, duration and the budget proposed. The proposal presents a coherent
and comprehensive set of appropriate activities to meet the identified needs and lead to the expected results;

- **Structure**: the work programme is clear and complete (covering appropriate project phases: preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, dissemination and exploitation). It comprises an *ex ante* and *ex post* (both within the project duration) analysis of the introduced innovation in education;

- **Methodology**: the quality and feasibility of the methodology proposed and its appropriateness for producing the expected results, using EU instruments whenever relevant to the project;

- **Management**: solid management arrangements are foreseen. Timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic. The proposal allocates appropriate resources to each activity;

- **Improving quality and effectiveness**: the proposal clearly embeds its innovation into activities and results which improve the quality, efficiency and equity of education and training systems;

- **Budget**: the budget provides for appropriate resources necessary for success, it is neither overestimated nor underestimated;

- **Financial and quality control**: control measures (continuous quality evaluation and training, peer reviews, benchmarking activities, etc.) and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient. Challenges/risks of the project are clearly identified and mitigating actions properly addressed. Expert review processes are planned as an integral part of the project. The work programme includes an independent external quality assessment at mid-term and a few months before the project end in order to enable potential project adjustments.

**Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements - (maximum 20 points)**

- **Configuration**: the composition of the partnership is in line with the action and project objectives. It brings together an appropriate mix of relevant organisations with the necessary profiles, skills, experience, expertise and management support required for the successful delivery of the whole project. The proposal includes partners that adequately represent the sector or cross-sectoral approach concerned. Configuration depending on the addressed lot/priority:
  - **Priority 4 - Micro-credentials for employability**: The extent to which the partnership includes organisations that are actively engaged in policy or practice in the areas of lifelong learning (including all levels and types of learning, education and training) and employment systems, including active labour market policies (i.e. employment services, training support and employment incentives).
  - **Priority 5 - VET attractiveness**: The extent to which the partnership:
    - includes European, national, regional or sectoral associations or networks of VET providers;
    - includes public authorities in order to ensure impact of the activities;
    - ensures a good geographical coverage, in particular for countries that have limited representation arrangements among VET providers.

- **Commitment**: the contributions from partners are significant, pertinent and complementary. The distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear, appropriate, and demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations in relation to their specific expertise and capacity;

- **Tasks**: the coordinator shows high quality management and coordination of transnational networks and leadership in complex environment. Individual tasks are allocated on the basis of the specific know-how of each partner;

- **Collaboration/Team spirit**: an effective mechanism is proposed to ensure an efficient
coordination, decision-making, communication and conflict resolution between the participating organisations, participants and any other relevant stakeholder;

- **Geographical dimension and involvement of third countries not associated to the Programme (if applicable):** the partnership includes relevant partners from different geographical areas and this geographical composition is motivated. If applicable, the involvement of participating organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme brings an essential added value to the achievement of the objectives of the Forward-Looking Project.

### Impact, dissemination and sustainability - (maximum 20 points)

- **Exploitation:** the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the project will be mainstreamed at system level in one or more sectors. It provides means to measure exploitation within the project lifetime and after;

- **Dissemination:** the proposal provides a clear plan for the dissemination of results, and includes appropriate identified quantitative targets, activities, relevant timing, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to the right stakeholders, policy makers and drivers of innovation within and after the project’s lifetime. The proposal also indicates which partners will be responsible for dissemination and demonstrates the relevant experience that they have in dissemination activities. Dissemination also takes into account national and regional smart-specialisation strategies to impact to the maximum at these levels;

- **Open access:** as a general rule, and within the limits of existing national and European legal frameworks, results should be made available as open educational resources (OER) as well as on relevant professional, sectorial or competent authorities’ platforms. The proposal will describe how data, materials, documents and audio-visual and social media activity produced will be made freely available and promoted through open licences, and does not contain disproportionate limitations;

- **Impact:** the proposal demonstrates the potential impact of the project:
  - On the targeted groups and sector(s);
  - On policy-makers at system level;
  - Outside of the policy-makers and authorities directly targeted in the project, on private or public innovation-drivers at local, regional, national and/or European levels. The proposal demonstrates the potential to be implemented by other key stakeholders in the sector or beyond.

The proposal includes measures as well as identified quantitative targets and indicators to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short- and long-term);

- **Sustainability:** the proposal explains how the Forward-Looking Project will be rolled out and further developed at different levels (local, regional, national). The proposal includes the design of a long-term action plan for the progressive roll-out of project deliverables after the project has finished and their incorporation into the mainstream. This plan shall be based on sustained partnerships between policy-makers, education and training providers and key industry stakeholders at the appropriate level. It should include the identification of appropriate governance structures, as well as plans for scalability and financial sustainability, including the potential identification of financial resources (European, national and private) to ensure that the results and benefits achieved will have a long-term sustainability.

To be considered for funding, applications must score at least **70 points** (out of 100 points in total), taking into account the necessary minimum threshold for each of the four award criteria: minimum 15 points for the relevance of the project category; 15 points for quality of the project
design and implementationåŒ”, 10 points for â‘quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangementsåŒ” and 10 points for â“impactåŒ”.

The ex aequo proposals under the same priority will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion â‘RelevanceåŒ” and then â“ImpactåŒ”.

The Evaluation Committee will, if possible, aim at ensuring a balanced coverage of priorities.

**What are the funding rules?**

This action follows a lump sum funding model. The amount of the single lump sum contribution will be determined for each grant based on the estimated budget of the action proposed by the applicant. The granting authority will fix the lump sum of each grant based on the proposal, evaluation result, funding rates and the maximum grant amount set in the call.

The maximum EU grant per project is as follows:

- For **Lot 1** - Digital Education (Cross-sectoral): EUR 1,500,000
- For **Lot 2** - Vocational Education and Training (VET): EUR 900,000
- For **Lot 3** - Adult education (AE): EUR 1,000,000

The maximum number of projects to be funded is:

For all Lots: there is no maximum number of projects set except the budgetary constraints.

For **Lot 1**: there is an indicative target of 3 projects per priority.

**How is the project lump sum determined?**

Applicants must fill in a detailed budget table according to the application form, taking into account the following points:

1. The budget should be detailed as necessary by beneficiary/-ies and organized in coherent work packages (for example divided into â‘project managementåŒ”, â‘analysisåŒ”, â‘trainingåŒ”, â‘organization of eventsåŒ”, â‘model implementationåŒ”, â‘long-term action planåŒ”, â‘communication and disseminationåŒ”, â‘quality assuranceåŒ”, etc.);
2. The proposal must describe the activities covered by each work package;
3. Applicants must provide in their proposal a breakdown of the estimated costs showing the share per work package (and, within each work package, the share assigned to each beneficiary and affiliated entity);
4. Costs described can cover staff costs, travel and subsistence costs, equipment costs and subcontracting as well as other costs (such as dissemination of information, publishing or translation).

Proposals will be evaluated according to the standard evaluation procedures with the help of internal and/or external experts. The experts will assess the quality of the proposals against the requirements defined in the call and the expected impact, quality and efficiency of the action. The lump sum value will be limited to a maximum of 80% of the estimated budget determined after evaluation.

Following the proposal evaluation, the authorising officer will establish the amount of the lump sum, taking into account the findings of the assessment carried out.
The grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc.) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement.

Financial support to third parties is not allowed. Volunteer and SME costs are allowed. Please refer to Part C of this Programme Guide, section ‘Eligible direct costs’.

Under **Lot 2, priority 5**, the proposal should include costs for indicatively one joint event yearly allowing for the exchange of good practices and cooperation with other projects selected under the priority (up to two persons per application/joint event).

The project achievements will be evaluated on the outcomes completed. The funding scheme would allow putting focus on the outputs rather than the inputs, thereby placing emphasis on the quality and level of achievement of measurable objectives.

More details are described in the model Grant Agreement available in the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP).