Capacity building in Higher Education

The Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action supports international cooperation projects based on multilateral partnerships between organisations active in the field of higher education. The activities and outcomes of CBHE projects must be geared to benefit the eligible third countries not associated to the Programme, their higher education institutions and systems. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, this action supports the relevance, quality, modernisation and responsiveness of higher education in third countries not associated to the Programme in addressing socio-economic recovery, growth and prosperity and reacting to recent trends, in particular economic globalisation but also the recent decline in human development, fragility, and rising social, economic and environmental inequalities.

Objectives of the Action

In third countries not associated to the Programme the action will specifically:

Specifically, the action will:

- Improve the quality HE and enhance its relevance for the labour market and society;
- Improve the level of competences, skills and employability potential of students in HEIs by developing new and innovative education programmes;
- Promote inclusive education, equality, equity, non-discrimination and the promotion of civic-competences in higher education in the third countries not associated to the Programme in HE;
- Enhance the teaching, assessment mechanisms for HEI staff and students, quality assurance, management, governance, inclusion, innovation, knowledge base, digital and entrepreneurial capacities, as well as the internationalisation of HEIs;
- Increase the capacities of HEIs, bodies in charge of HE authorities to modernise their higher education systems, particularly in terms of governance and financing, by supporting the definition, implementation and monitoring of reform processes;
- Improve the training of teachers and continuous professional development in order to impact the longer term quality of the education system;
- Stimulate cooperation of institutions, capacity building and exchange of good practice;
- Foster cooperation across different regions of the world through joint initiatives.

Expected impact

- Modernised HEIs which will not only transfer knowledge but also will create economic and social value through the transfer of their teaching and research results to the community/country;
- Improved access to and quality of higher education, in particular for people with fewer opportunities and in the poorest countries in the different regions;
- Increased participation of HEIs located in remote areas;
- Governance for efficient and effective policymaking and policy implementation in the field of higher education;
- Regional integration and establishment of comparable recognition, quality assurance tools to
support academic cooperation, mobility for students, staff and researchers;
• A stronger link and cooperation with the private sector, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship;
• Alignment of the academic world with labour market enhancing employability of students;
• Increased students’ sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
• Increased level of digital competence for students and staff;
• Institutional ownership of the CBHE results thus ensuring sustainability;
• National ownership by experimenting and mainstreaming positive and best practices in HE;
• Increased capacity and professionalism to work at international level: improved management competences and internationalisation strategies.

Priorities of the Action

The action is expected to contribute to the following priorities:

Green Deal

Higher Education systems are crucial for supporting the Green Deal, through developing knowledge, competences, skills and values, and potentially enabling a profound change in people’s behaviour. In this context, priority will be given to projects that aim to:

• support the modernisation of economies, making them more competitive and innovative, while ensuring a just green transition, stimulating green jobs and paving the way to a climate neutral society; with a gender-transformative approach, not exclusively focusing on male-dominated fields;
• provide applicable answers to environmental challenges, including urban and rural development, green and efficient energy, health, water and waste management, sustainable transport, desertification, biodiversity loss and sustainable use of natural resources, strengthening agri-food value chains at national and regional level;
• increase climate awareness, sustainability and resilience, in all sectors of society and economy;
• accelerate the transition towards a just green and circular economy and tackle regional and trans-regional environmental challenges, in particular by strengthening links with the private sector and by enhancing the knowledge and green skills needed for a modern workforce;
• develop competences in various sustainability-relevant sectors, green sectorial skills strategies and methodologies, as well as future-oriented curricula that better meet the needs of individuals.

Digital transformation

Raising the quality and inclusiveness of education through digital technologies, whilst also enabling learners to acquire essential digital competences and sector-specific digital skills is of strategic importance for the EU and many countries of the world. The higher education system is increasingly impacted by the digital transformation, but also has an essential role to harness its benefits and opportunities and tackle digital divides. In this context, priority will be given to projects that aim to:

• support the development and uptake of digital skills to make the digital transformation as comprehensive and inclusive as possible;
• help to bridge the digital divide by promoting digital literacy, digital entrepreneurship, gender-sensitive programmes and strategies, specifically in remote and rural areas and vulnerable communities;
• develop connectivity solutions empowering citizens through distance learning and teaching innovations;
• support the digital economy and reinforce scientific, technical and innovation capacities by fostering links between education, research and business in the area of digitalisation, including through projects related to data infrastructure, data management and SME/business digitalisation;
• improving digital education eco-systems, by reinforcing digital skills and competences of teachers and academic staff.

**Integration of migrants**

Education and training systems play a key role in addressing the challenges of migration as well as unlocking migration’s benefits. They help newcomers acquire necessary labour market skills, understand the cultures of the host country and help the native population with being open to diversity and change. In this context, priority will be given to projects that aim to:

• support recognition of degrees and credentials and contribute to a regional credit transfer system to build regional higher education areas and intra-regional connectivity;
• granting access to education to migrants and displaced persons in receiving countries, including language education and scholarships;
• develop holistic models that address the unique needs of refugee students and ensure access to education with a strong support for academic, social, physical and psychological development.

**Governance, peace, security and human development**

Commitment to the rule of law, human and fundamental rights, equality, democracy and good governance are the bedrock of stable, fair and prosperous societies. This action can help lay the foundations for strengthening active citizenship and building specific expertise in these areas. CBHE projects can help identify long-term solutions to problems of weak governance in higher education. In this context, priority will be given to projects that aim to supporting academic cooperation and initiatives in the following areas:

• governance, rule of law, democracy, fundamental values, protection of human rights, and the fight against corruption;
• fight against discrimination, promote media literacy and the role of an independent media and civil society;
• peace and security, human development, intercultural dialogue, respect for diversity, tolerance, gender equality, women and youth empowerment;
• social, economic and cultural rights, health and well being.

**Sustainable growth and jobs**

Higher education is needed to build skills for life and work. Higher education also supports employability and is a precondition for sustainable growth. A key objective is to tackle the existing mismatch between education outcomes and labour market demands, including through the development of work-based learning. In this context, priority will be given to projects that aim to:

• foster the offer and uptake of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) skills - and related gender inclusiveness - with linkages with the just green transition towards climate neutrality;
• promote youth and women entrepreneurship, develop innovation hubs and start-ups to help
generate local employment opportunities and prevent brain drain;
- strengthen links between the academic sector, research and business to address current and future skills needs, primarily entrepreneurship, and skills needed for value chains development on national, regional level;
- support the upskilling of the young population;
- strengthen links with the labour market to promote jobs creation, job opportunities and private sector involvement in skills-development;
- develop primary and secondary teacher education and in-service trainings to address structural causes of school dropouts and counter persisting economic and gender inequalities.

For Strands 1 and 2, the above priorities apply as follows in each regional context:

- **Western Balkans**: Green Deal; Digital transformation; Integration of migrants; Governance, peace, security and human development; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **Neighbourhood East**: Green Deal; Digital transformation; Integration of migrants; Governance, peace, security and human development; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **South Mediterranean**: Green Deal; Digital transformation; Integration of migrants; Governance, peace, security and human development; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **Asia**: Green Deal; Digital transformation; Governance, peace, security and human development; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **Central Asia**: Green Deal; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **Middle East**: Green Deal; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **Pacific**: Green Deal; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **Sub-Saharan Africa**: Green Deal; Digital transformation; Integration of migrants; Governance, peace, security and human development; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **Latin America**: Green Deal; Digital transformation; Governance, peace, security and human development; Sustainable growth and jobs
- **Caribbean**: Green Deal; Governance, peace, security and human development; Sustainable growth and jobs

**Geographical targets**

CBHE projects can be implemented as:

- National projects, i.e. projects involving institutions from only one eligible third country not associated to the Programme;
- Multi-country (Regional) projects within one single eligible Region;
- Multi-country projects involving more than one eligible Region (Cross-regional). Cross-regional projects must address priority areas relevant for all Regions involved, demonstrate their relevance for each Region and justify this by a detailed analysis of common needs and objectives.

The budget of the CBHE action will be used to support projects as follows:

- National and Regional projects: Indicatively 90% of the budget of the action
- Cross-regional projects: Indicatively 10% of the budget of the action

The action will aim at supporting a thematic variety of projects and a sufficient geographical representation within a Region in terms of number of projects per country.

For each Region there is a defined budget. For Sub-Saharan Africa, no country can obtain more than 8% of the funding allocated to the Region.
Further information on the amounts available are published on the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP).

Project strands

In order to respond to the various challenges in the third countries not associated to the Programme, the CBHE action is composed of three specific Strands:

Strand 1 - Fostering access to cooperation in higher education

This Strand is designed to attract less experienced HEIs and small-scale actors to the CBHE action to facilitate access to newcomer organisations. These partnerships should act as a first step for HEIs and organisations with a smaller operational capacity located in third countries not associated to the Programme to access and increase means to reach out to people with fewer opportunities. This Strand will finance small-scale projects to reduce the internationalisation gap among HEIs from eligible third countries not associated to the Programme, from the same country or Region. The projects that fall under this Strand will primarily focus on the following areas within third countries not associated with the Programme:

- HEIs from least developed countries not associated to the Programme;
- HEIs located in remote regions/areas of third countries not associated to the Programme;
- Newcomers or less experienced HEIs and Faculties from third countries not associated to the Programme;
- Students and staff with fewer opportunities.

Activities

The proposed activities and project results should have a clear added-value for the targeted beneficiaries. A non-exhaustive list of possible activities is provided below:

Activities aiming at enhancing the management/administrative capacity of the targeted HEIs such as:

- reforming and modernising the university governance, including the enhancement of services in particular for the benefit of students (student guidance, counselling and job orientation etc.);
- establishing or strengthening international relations offices and elaborating internationalisation strategies;
- establishing new or developing existing quality assurance units and processes/strategy within HEIs;
- creating or increasing the capacity of planning and evaluation units;
- enhancing mechanisms for communication and dissemination of results from international cooperation projects;
- building capacities to support students and staff mobility activities.

Activities aiming at ensuring high quality and relevant education such as:

- modules or study programmes, technical or professional orientations of programmes
- establishing intensive study programmes bringing together students and teaching staff from participating HEIs for shorter study periods
- developing capacities for postgraduate students and academic staff as well as promoting their mobility;
• implementing training courses for HEI academic staff;
• creating synergies and strengthening the links with the business sector and with private or public organisations active in the labour market and in the fields of education, training and youth.

Activities aiming at increasing the accessibility of the students/staff with fewer opportunities such as:

• developing remote and inclusive learning pathways and opportunities by relying on digital technology and e-learning for vulnerable students;
• updating the digital technology to develop specific services aiming at ensuring equal and fair learning opportunities to students with disabilities;
• promoting initiatives aiming at positive discrimination by empowering women and ethnic/religious minorities;
• develop initiatives addressing and reducing barriers faced by disadvantaged groups in accessing learning opportunities;
• contributing to creating inclusive environments that foster equity and equality, and that are responsive to the needs of the wider community.

Strand 2 - Partnerships for transformation in higher education

Projects under this Strand shall address introduce new approaches and initiatives in higher education, based on peer learning and transfer of experience and good practice affecting not only the institutions but also society at large. The projects’ outcomes should have a significant and long-term impact on the targeted HEIs beyond the projects' lifetime and as such benefit the society as a whole.

In particular, these projects will combine the following elements for the benefit of HEIs in the third countries not associated to the Programme:

• **Innovation in higher education** in order to enhance its relevance for the labour market and the society. It is expected that the proposed projects address mismatches between the requirements of employers and the offer of higher education institutions and propose integral solutions to enhance better employability of students. This can be done by implementing comprehensive interventions that include:
  ◦ the design of innovative curricula and introducing innovative elements in the existing curricula;
  ◦ the implementation of innovative learning and teaching methods (i.e. learner-centred and real problem-based teaching and learning);
  ◦ the active engagement with the business world and with research, the organisation of continuing educational programmes and activities with and within enterprises;
  ◦ the strengthening of the capacities of HEIs to network effectively in research, scientific and technological innovation.

• **Promoting reform in HEIs** to become catalysts of economic and social development. Projects should support HEIs to develop and implement the institutional reforms that will make them more democratic, inclusive, equitable, accountable and fully-fledged constituents of civil society. Institutional reforms include new governance and management systems and structures, readiness in terms of digital skills, modern university services, quality assurance processes, tools and methods for professionalisation and professional development of leadership, academic, technical and administrative staff. The development of an entrepreneurial mind-set and improved competencies and skills within the institutions are key aspects for the success of this Strand. Transversal skills learning, entrepreneurship education
and the practical application of entrepreneurial skills will enable HEIs to put their knowledge and resources at the service of their local/national/regional communities.

**Activities**

The proposed activities and project results should have a clear added-value for the targeted beneficiaries. A non-exhaustive list of possible activities is provided below:

- development, testing and adaptation of innovative curricula in terms of content [key competences and transversal skills, (entrepreneurship, problem solving, green jobs etc.)], structure (modular, joint...) and teaching/learning methods (including the use of open and flexible learning, virtual mobility, open educational resources, blended learning, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), etc.);
- development, testing and implementation of new learning methods, tools and materials (like new multidisciplinary curricula, learner-centred and real problem-based teaching and learning) through practical training and placements of students;
- introduction of Bologna-type reforms (three-level cycle system, transparency tools such as credit systems and Diploma Supplement, quality assurance, evaluation, National/Regional Qualification Frameworks, recognition of prior and non-formal learning, etc.) at institutional level;
- introducing practical training schemes, internships and study of real-life cases in business and industry, which are fully embedded in the curriculum, recognised and credited;
- introducing dual learning systems bridging tertiary studies with upper secondary VET as a means to boost the employability of graduates;
- development of solutions for challenging issues, product and process innovation (students, professors and practitioners together);
- development and testing solutions to pressing social demands not addressed by the market and directed towards vulnerable groups in society; addressing societal challenges or relating to changes in attitudes and values, strategies and policies, organisational structures and processes, delivery systems and services;
- support the creation of centres, incubators for innovation, technology transfer and business start-ups, and the integration of education, research and innovation at institutional/regional/national level;
- development and testing of continuous education programmes and activities with and within enterprises;
- set-ups to trial and test innovative measures; exchanges of students, researchers, teaching staff and enterprise staff for a limited period; providing incentives for involvement of enterprise staff into teaching and research;
- reform of governance and management systems and structures at institutional level (incl. quality assurance methods and systems, financial management and HEI autonomy, international relations, student services and counselling, career guidance, academic and research boards, etc.);
- development of strategies and tools for the internationalisation of HEIs (international openness of curricula, interinstitutional mobility schemes), and their capacity to network effectively in research, scientific and technological innovation (scientific cooperation and knowledge transfer, etc.);
- development and testing of solutions to pressing social demands not addressed by the market and directed towards vulnerable groups in society; addressing societal challenges or relating to changes in attitudes and values, strategies and policies, organisational structures and processes, delivery systems and services;
- development of solutions for challenging issues, product and process innovation (students,
Eligibility criteria - Strand 1 and Strand 2

Eligible participating organisations (Who can apply?)

In order to be eligible, applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities, if applicable) must be public or private legal entities falling under the following categories:

- higher education institutions (HEIs) or organisations of HEIs;
- organisations or institutions active in the labour market or in the fields of education, training and youth.

These entities must be established in one of the eligible countries:

- an EU Member State,
- a third country associated to the Programme,
- a third country not associated to the Programme from an eligible region. The eligible regions covered by this action are Regions 1, 2, 3, 5a, 6, 7a, 8a, 9, 10 and 11.

Coordinator

Among the entities described above, only higher education institutions (HEIs) or organisations of HEIs can be coordinators of a CBHE application.

General rules for HEIs:

- HEIs located in an EU Member State or in a third country associated to the Programme must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE).
- HEIs established in eligible third countries not associated to the Programme must be recognised as such by the competent authorities, with their affiliated entities (if any). They have to offer full study programmes leading to higher education degrees and recognised diplomas at tertiary education qualifications level3.

Consortium composition

The following minimum composition must be respected:

National projects (open only for Regions 2, 3, 5a, 6, 7a, 8a, 9):

- at least 2 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme;
  - each each of these countries must involve at least 1 HEI;
- only 1 eligible third country not associated to the Programme;
  - involving at least 2 HEIs5.
- The number of participating organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme must be equal to or higher than the number of participating organisations from EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme.

Multi-country projects (open for all eligible regions):
• at least 2 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme;
  ○ each of these countries must involve at least 1 HEI;
• at least 2 eligible third countries not associated to the Programme;
  ○ each of these countries must involve at least 2 HEIs. Third countries not associated to
    the programme can be from the same Region (regional projects) or from different
    Regions (cross-regional projects);
• The number of participating organisations from third countries not associated to the
  Programme must be equal to or higher than the number of participating organisations from
  EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme.

General rules for all consortia:

In relation to compliance with the minimum criteria on the composition of the consortium described
above, an organisation of HEIs will not be considered as an HEI.

Geographic location (Venue of the activities)

Activities must take place in the countries of the organisations participating in the project.

Duration of the project

Projects should normally last 24 or 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through
an amendment).

Where to apply?

To the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) through the Electronic
Submission System Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP).

Strand 1

• Call ID: ERASMUS-EDU-2024-CBHE
  • Topic ID: ERASMUS-EDU-2024-CBHE-STRAND-1

Strand 2

• Call ID: ERASMUS-EDU-2024-CBHE
  • Topic ID: ERASMUS-EDU-2024-CBHE-STRAND-2

When to apply?

Applicants have to submit their grant application by 8 February at 17:00:00 (Brussels time).

Strand 3 - Structural reform projects

Projects under this Strand shall support efforts in third countries not associated to the Programme
to develop coherent and sustainable systems of higher education to meet their socio-economic needs
and broad ambition to create a knowledge-driven economy. Mainstreaming and upscaling of
successful results as well as synergies with ongoing or pipeline support in the area under bilateral
support programmes are also elements of this Strand. Structural Reform projects will address the
needs of eligible third countries not associated to the Programme to support sustainable systemic
and structural improvement and innovation at the level of the higher education sector. By involving
the competent National Authorities (notably Ministries of Education) of third countries not associated to the Programme, HEIs, Research institutions and other relevant authorities/bodies and stakeholders, these projects will particularly:

- Promote cooperation and mutual learning among and between national public authorities at the highest institutional level to foster systemic improvement and innovation in the higher education sector.
- Promote inclusive higher education systems that can provide the right conditions for students of different backgrounds to access learning and succeed. Particular attention should therefore be paid to people with fewer opportunities.
- Increase the capacities of HEIs of third countries not associated to the Programme, bodies in charge of higher education and competent authorities (notably Ministries) through their participation in the definition, implementation and monitoring of reform processes to modernise their higher education systems, particularly in terms of quality assurance, governance and financing;
- Identify synergies with ongoing EU initiatives in the third country(ies) not associated to the Programme in areas covered by Erasmus+

**Eligibility criteria - Strand 3**

**Eligible participating organisations (Who can apply?)**

In order to be eligible, applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities, if applicable) must be (public or private) legal entities falling under the following categories:

- higher education institutions (HEIs) or organisations of HEIs
- organisations or institutions active in the labour market or in the fields of education, training and youth

These entities must be established in one of the eligible countries:

- an EU Member State
- a third country associated to the Programme
- a third country not associated to the Programme from an eligible region. The eligible regions covered by this action are Regions 1, 2, 3, 5a, 6, 7a, 8a, 9, 10 and 11.

**Coordinator**

Among the entities described above, only higher education institutions (HEIs) or organisations of HEIs can be coordinators of a CBHE application.

**General rules for HEIs**

- HEIs located in an EU Member State or in a third country associated to the Programme must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE).
- HEIs established in eligible third countries not associated to the Programme must be recognised as such by the competent authorities, with their affiliated entities (if any). They have to offer full study programmes leading to higher education degrees and recognised diplomas at tertiary education qualifications level.
Consortium composition

The following minimum composition must be respected:

- At least 2 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme;
  - Each of these countries must involve at least 1 HEI
- At least 1 eligible third country not associated to the Programme;
  - Each participating country must involve at least 2 HEIs and the national competent authority (e.g. Ministry) responsible for higher education in the country.
- The number of participating organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme must be equal to or higher than the number of participating organisations from EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme.

General rules for all consortia

In relation to compliance with the minimum criteria on the composition of the consortium described above, an organisation of HEIs will not be considered as a HEI.

Geographical coverage (Venue of the activities)

Activities must take place in the countries of the organisations participating in the project.

Duration of the project

Projects should normally last 36 or 48 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Where to apply?

To the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) through the Electronic Submission System Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP).

Strand 3

- Call ID: ERASMUS-EDU-2024-CBHE
- Topic ID: ERASMUS -EDU-2024-CBHE-STRAND-3

When to apply?

Applicants have to submit their grant application by 8 February at 17:00:00 (Brussels time).

Award criteria applicable to all strands

The project will be assessed in a two-step procedure against the following criteria:

Step 1

Relevance of the project - (maximum score 30 points)

- **Purpose**: The proposal clearly addresses the pre-defined regional priorities for the target Region(s) and is relevant to the objectives and activities of the CBHE action of the Strand. It constitutes an adequate response to the current needs and constraints of the target country(ies) or Region(s) and the target groups and final beneficiaries. The needs of the
targeted participants with fewer opportunities are taken into account. The proposal addresses the EU overarching priorities.

- **EU Values**: The proposal is relevant for the respect and promotion of shared EU values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as well as fighting any sort of discrimination.
- **Objectives**: the objectives are based on a sound needs analysis; they are clearly defined, and specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART). They address issues relevant to the participating organisations (in line with the modernisation, development and internationalisation strategy of the targeted HEIs), and development strategies for higher education in the eligible third countries not associated to the Programme.
- **Link to EU policy and initiatives**: the proposal takes into account and enhances complementarity/synergies with the Global Gateway Strategy (including investments and other interventions funded by the EU or other entities (donors, public and private), where appropriate.
- **EU added value**: The proposal demonstrates that similar results could not be achieved without the cooperation of HEIs from the EU Member states or third countries associated to the Programme and without the EU funding.

**In particular for Strand 2**

The proposal provides a clear analysis of how the area of intervention is responding to priority areas for socio-economic growth and autonomy in the given region and focuses on innovative elements and state of the art methods and techniques in the identified area of intervention.

**In particular for Strand 3**

The proposal addresses the reform and modernisation of the higher education system(s) in line with the development strategies of the targeted third countries not associated to the Programme.

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

- **Coherence**: the overall project design ensures consistency between project objectives, methodology, activities and the budget proposed. The proposal presents a coherent and comprehensive set of appropriate activities to meet the identified needs and the expected results.
- **Methodology**: the logic of the intervention is of good quality, planned outputs and outcomes are coherent and feasible, and key assumptions and risks have been clearly identified. The structure and content of the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) is adequate, i.e. the choice of objectively verifiable indicators, data availability, baseline data, target values, etc;
- **Work plan**: quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including the extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and the deliverables; the relation between the resources and the expected results is adequate and the work plan is realistic, with well-defined activities, time-lines, clear deliverables and milestones.
- **Budget**: the proposal is cost efficient and allocates the appropriate financial resources necessary for a successful implementation of the project.
- **Quality control**: control measures (continuous quality evaluation, peer reviews, benchmarking activities, mitigating actions etc.) and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is of high quality.
- **Environmental sustainability**: the project is designed in an eco-friendly way and incorporates green practices (e.g. green travel) in different project phases.
Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements - (maximum score 20 points)

- **Management**: solid management arrangements are foreseen. Timelines, governance structures, collaboration arrangements and responsibilities are well defined and realistic.
- **Composition**: the partnership gathers an appropriate mix of organisations with the necessary competences relevant to the objectives of the proposal and to the specificities of the Strand; the proposal includes the most appropriate and diverse range of non-academic partners. For Region 2 countries: for Strands 1 and 2 priority will be given to projects that involve HEIs from non-capital and/or rural and/or more remote regions. For Region 5a, 6, 7a, 8a countries: for Strands 1 and 2 priority will be given to projects that involve HEIs or organisations from least developed countries.
- **Tasks**: roles and tasks are assigned on the basis of the specific know-how, profiles and experience of each partner and are appropriate.
- **Collaboration**: effective mechanisms are proposed to ensure efficient collaboration, communication and conflict resolution between the partner organisations and any other relevant stakeholders.
- **Commitment**: the contribution from the project partners is significant, pertinent and complementary; the proposal demonstrates the partners’ involvement, commitment and ownership of the project’s specific objectives and results, in particular from the third countries not associated to the Programme.

**In particular for Strand 2**

The proposal involves relevant non-academic organisations and stakeholders that will bring an innovative added-value to the proposal objectives. For proposals that aim to supporting value chains in key priority areas of investment at national or regional level, the private sector are included in the partnership and clearly engaged at all necessary levels.

**In particular for Strand 3**

The proposal demonstrates that the competent national authorities for higher education are strongly involved in the steering and implementation of the action.

**Sustainability, impact and dissemination of the expected results - (maximum score 20 points)**

- **Exploitation**: the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the project will be used by the partners and other stakeholders, how multiplier effects will be ensured (including scope for replication and extension of the outcome of the action at sectorial, as well as local/regional/national or international level) and it provides means to measure exploitation within the project funding time and after.
- **Dissemination**: the proposal provides a clear and efficient plan for the dissemination of results, and includes appropriate activities and their timing, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to all relevant stakeholders and non-participating audience, reaching out and attracting relevant stakeholders to the outcomes within and after the project’s funding time;
- **Impact**: the proposal ensures a tangible impact on its target groups and relevant stakeholders at local, national or regional level. It includes measures, as well as goals and indicators to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short-and long-term) at individual, institutional and systemic level.
- **Sustainability**: the proposal explains how the project results will be sustained financially (after the end of project funding) and institutionally (activities and services continuing to be in
place) how the local ownership will be ensured and where relevant, how the private sector will be engaged during and after the project funding.

In particular for Strand 1:

- The proposal ensures a continuous and sustainable response to the existing barriers and the increase of accessibility of students/staff with fewer opportunities to the learning opportunities and resources offered by the HEIs.
- The proposal is likely to increase the international cooperation capacities of institutions in third countries not associated to the Programme.

In particular for Strand 2:

- The proposal ensures a significant impact on the institutions of the third countries not associated to the Programme, in particular on the development of their innovation capacities and the modernisation of their governance, in opening themselves up to the society at large, the labour market and the wider world.
- The proposal demonstrates its potential for wider impact on the society and/or the economic sector.

In particular for Strand 3:

- The proposal demonstrates how the project results will lead to policy reforms or modernisation in higher education at systemic level.

The applications may score up to 100 points. To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least 60 points (out of 100 points in total). Furthermore, they must score at least half of the maximum score points in each of the categories of award criteria mentioned above (i.e. minimum 15 points for the categories ‘Relevance of the project’ and ‘Quality of the project design and implementation’; 10 points for the categories ‘Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements’ and ‘Impact’).

Ex-aequo proposals will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion ‘Relevance’. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion ‘Quality of the project design and implementation’. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion ‘Impact’.

If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

Following this, proposals will be ranked in descending order by Region and by Strand.

Step 2

In a second step, for proposals that are proposed by the Evaluation committee for funding (and the reserve list), the EU Delegation(s) in the relevant eligible third country(ies) not associated to the Programme will be consulted.

Only projects that have passed successfully the consultation of the EU Delegation(s) will be maintained for an EU funding, within the limits of the available budget per region.
An indicative budget is foreseen for each of the three Strands, however a budget transfer from one Strand to another is possible.

**Additional information**

The acceptance of an application does not constitute an undertaking to award funding equal of the amount requested by the applicant. The funding requested may be reduced on the basis of the financial rules applicable to the action Strands and the results of the evaluation.

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.

**Setting up a project**

The following points should be taken into consideration.

1. **Commitment of partner institutions in the project**

   An effective CBHE project must ensure a strong participation of all partner institutions especially the ones in the third countries not associated to the Programme. A shared ownership in the setting up of the proposal will make them responsible for the project outcomes and the sustainability of the project. CBHE projects may involve ‘Associated partners’ which contribute to the implementation of specific project tasks/activities or support the dissemination and sustainability of the project. For contractual management issues, ‘Associated partners’ are not considered as part of the partnership, and they do not receive funding.

2. **Needs analyses**

   Assessing needs is the first important step in the development of a CBHE proposal. The purpose of a needs assessment is to identify those areas/fields that need to be strengthened, and the reasons for the gaps in those areas. That, in turn, provides the basis for designing appropriate interventions to address the gaps and, thereby, build the HEIs capacity.

3. **Implementation and monitoring**

   Once the needs analyses has been completed, an implementation plan can be set up to address the gaps that have been identified.

   The following core elements should be taken into account:

   - **Modernisation/new curricula:** For projects including ‘curriculum development’ it is expected to include training for teaching staff and address related issues such as quality assurance and employability of graduates through links to the labour market. Study programmes should be officially accredited and or licensed before the end of the project’s funding period. The teaching of new or updated courses must start during the lifetime of the project with an adequate number of students and retrained teachers and has to take place during at least one third of the project duration. Training within curriculum reform projects can also target administrative personnel such as library staff, laboratory staff and IT staff. Projects are strongly encouraged to embed in the modernised curricula placements for
students in the business/enterprise. The placements must have a reasonable duration to allow the acquiring of necessary skills

- **Involvement of students**: The projects should foresee the involvement of students (e.g. in the elaboration of new study programmes) and this not only during the testing/piloting phase of the project.

- **Mobility of staff and students**: Mobility must be targeted mainly at students from third countries not associated to the programme and staff from the third countries not associated to the Programme and are addressed to: staff (e.g. managers, research and technology transfer, technical and administrative staff) under an official contract in the beneficiary institutions and involved in the project; students [at short cycle, first cycle (Bachelor or equivalent), second cycle (Master or equivalent) and third or doctoral cycle] registered in one of the beneficiary institutions. Mobility of students within and between EU Member states and third countries associated to the Programme is not eligible. The mobility must be of a reasonable duration to ensure learning and acquiring of necessary skills in line with project objectives and should normally not be shorter than one week. It is advisable to combine physical mobility with virtual mobility. It can be used to prepare, support and follow up physical mobility. It can also be organised to address people with special needs or with fewer opportunities to help them overcome the barriers to long-term physical mobility.

- **Quality assurance** must be an embedded project component to ensure that CBHE projects successfully deliver the expected results and achieve an impact beyond the partnership itself. Quality control measures, including indicators and benchmarks, must be put in place to ensure that the project implementation is of high quality, completed in time and cost-efficient.

- **Consortium agreement**: For practical and legal reasons it is strongly recommended to set up internal arrangements among the members of the consortium that allow to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances. It could be signed by the members of the consortium at the beginning of the project.

- **Partnership agreement**: Detailed implementation modalities of the project must be agreed between the project partners and formalised in a ‘partnership agreement’ to be signed by the partners at the beginning of the project. A copy of the partnership agreement has to be submitted to the Executive Agency within six months of the signature of the grant agreement.

- **Equipment**: Only the purchase of equipment which is directly relevant to the objectives of the Strand and made not later than 12 months before the end of the project can be considered as eligible expenditure. Equipment is intended exclusively for the HEIs of the third countries not associated to the Programme included in the partnership, where it must be recorded in the official inventory of the HEIs for which it is purchased.

- **Impact and sustainability**: CBHE projects are expected to have a long-term structural impact in the eligible third countries not associated to the Programme. The proposals will have to demonstrate the expected impact at the three levels (individual, institutional and system) where relevant and should set up a methodology and identify tools to measure it.

- **Eco-friendly implementation**: The projects should consider environmentally sound practices in the implementation of their activities, including the project management. Projects are expected to record and calculate systematically participants’ individual transport-related carbon footprint.

- **Open access**: The proposal should ensure that the materials, documents and media produced will be made freely available and promoted through open licences and without disproportionate limitations.

**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, the funding rate of 90% and the maximum grant set in the call.

The **EU grant** per project is as follows:

- **For Strand 1** – Fostering access to cooperation in higher education: Between EUR 200,000 and EUR 400,000 per project
- **For Strand 2** - Partnerships for transformation in higher education: Between EUR 400,000 and EUR 800,000 per project
- **For Strand 3** - Other Structural Reform projects: between EUR 600,000 and EUR 1,000,000 per project

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:

- The budget should be detailed as necessary by beneficiaries and organised in coherent work packages (for example divided into ‘project management’, ‘training’, ‘organisation of events’, ‘mobility preparation and implementation’, ‘communication and dissemination’, ‘quality assurance’, “equipment” etc.;
- The proposal must describe the activities/deliverable covered by each work package;
- 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;
- 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);
- The costs for equipment should present a maximum of 35% of the awarded EU grant and the EU grant will cover 100% of the eligible costs;
- The subcontracting should represent a maximum of 10% of the awarded EU grant.
- Financial support to third parties is not allowed.
- Costs relating to volunteers involved in the project are allowed. They shall take the form of unit costs as defined in the to the Commission Decision on unit costs for volunteers.
- SME unit costs are not allowed.

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 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 available in Part C "Check the financial conditions", as well as described in the model Grant Agreement available in the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP).
Footnote

1 Please see definition of newcomer organisation in Part D - Glossary.
2 Organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action.
3 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2013), tertiary education, at least level 5. Post-secondary non-tertiary education ISCED 2011 level 4 is not accepted.
4 Organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action.
5 Exception: In third countries not associated to the Programme where the number of HEIs recognised by the competent national authorities is lower than 5 in the whole country, or in cases where one single institution represents more than 50% of the overall student population of the country, applications counting only one HEI from those countries will be accepted.
6 Exception: See the previous footnote.
7 Organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action.
8 Organisations from Syria (Region 3) are not eligible to participate in this Strand.
9 Exception: In third countries not associated to the Programme where the number of HEIs recognised by the competent national authorities is lower than 5 in the whole country, or in cases where one single institution represents more than 50% of the overall student population of the country, applications counting only one HEI from those countries will be accepted.

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