

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR CENTRAL COORDINATION BODIES
AND MANAGING AUTHORITIES
PILOT ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN MONITORING EU-FUNDED PROJECTS IN THE
“OPENCOHESION SCHOOL”**

I. Context

- (1) OpenCohesion School (“A Scuola di OpenCoesione, in Italian, www.ascuoladiopencoessione.it/about-opencoessione-school/) is an educational challenge and a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) designed for high-school students. It promotes the engagement of students in monitoring the effectiveness of EU cohesion policy investments via the use of public open data. The educational challenge is coupled with a competition: students should produce a communication product to illustrate their findings and submit to the competition.
- (2) OpenCohesion School was launched in 2013 as part of the national open government strategy, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Representation Office of the European Commission in Italy. The project is also supported by the European Commission’s network of Europe Direct Information Centres. The project encourages active participation of civil society organisations in supporting the schools for their researches.
- (3) Since its inception, almost 20,000 students have participated in OpenCohesion School in Italy: from 7 secondary school classes in 2013-2014 to 200 classes and 5,000 students in 2018-2019. The educational challenge is based on a model that combines online content with group work in the classroom, using online tools, blogs and social networks. It focuses on cohesion policy, methods and techniques of statistical data analysis, storytelling and communication together with “soft” skills (project management, teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving). The winning classes participate in educational trips to Rome and Brussels. In addition, after completion of the research, OpenCohesion School promotes ongoing monitoring by collecting follow-up videos on the implementation of EU projects.
- (4) The European Commission considers OpenCohesion School a unique practice at the EU level, and has launched a pilot project to support the replication of the format in 3 to 5 additional Member States. The pilot project aims at promoting good governance on regional development, given the importance of open data at EU and national level on cohesion policy and the information and communication requirements in the CPR of the current programming period, as reinforced in the EC proposals for 2021-2027.

II. Objectives

- (5) To involve high-school students in the monitoring of EU-funded projects in the area where they live or study and, hence, promote active citizenship in order to achieve a more efficient and effective use of funds.

(6) To increase awareness of the results and impact of cohesion policy and the EU as a whole among the young population.

(7) To challenge students in a contest to tell stories about EU-funded projects.

III. How it works

(8) Secondary schools sign up to the contest at the beginning of the school year. Each school can enrol different classes. For a pilot phase, approximately 5-7 classes for each Member State is a realistic target.

(9) Schools have access to a learning module composed of steps or sessions. The first sessions are online training courses focused on:

- Public policies and EU funding
- ICT and open data analysis
- Civic monitoring and citizen participation
- Data journalism and storytelling

(10) During one of the final sessions, students visit EU-funded projects on the spot and interview players involved in the projects' implementation and beneficiaries

(11) The course ends with a public event addressed to the local communities and institutions where students meet local communities and policy-makers to discuss their findings.

(12) After having followed all the steps, students produce a creative communication product (such as videos, comics, blog articles, radio programmes,...) on their research findings and submit the product to the competition

(13) The best classes are invited to participate in an award ceremony in the national capital, and the winning school wins a trip to Brussels to visit the EU institutions.

(14) The technological requirements are: internet connection in the school, a multimedia board or other interactive tools, access to the main social networks and collaborative cloud computing.

IV. Who can apply (eligibility criteria)

(15) The Call for expression of interest targets all public authorities involved in the management of the operational programmes (i.e. coordinating bodies, managing authorities, intermediate bodies, joint secretariats) co-financed by the ERDF and/or the Cohesion Fund.

(16) To be eligible, the expression of interest will have to meet all the following eligibility criteria:

Eligibility criteria		Reference in the application form
1.A	The central coordination body, the managing authority, intermediate body or joint secretariat has created a national website/portal featuring or linking to all the list(s) of projects co-funded by EU cohesion policy in an open data format	
1.B	The central coordination body, the managing authority, intermediate body or joint secretariat has established (or is proceeding in establishing) a framework of collaboration between the central authority responsible for cohesion policy and the Ministry of Education	
1.C	The central coordination body, the managing authority, intermediate body or joint secretariat has involved the European Commission Representation Offices (European Parliament Information Offices) in the country and other EU information networks such as Europe Direct and European Documentation Centres.	

V. How the Commission would support the interested countries?

- (17) Providing hands-on support to the set-up of the project, ad hoc tools and expertise – i.e. toolkit, on-the-spot training, mentoring.
- (18) Making available for free on-line the content of the learning module in the national languages.
- (19) Offerig support and cooperation throughout the first school year.

VI. Expected outcomes

- (20) All supporting material envisaged will be produced by end 2019.
- (21) The selected authorities will implement the project in 2019-2020 school year.
- (22) Their experience, lessons learnt and recommendations will be shared also with all other potentially interested Member States who are willing to implement a similar initiative.

VII. Assessment process

- (23) Expressions of interest will be checked against the eligibility criteria and assessed according to the selection criteria of this call.
- (24) A selection panel consisting of representatives of the European Commission will carry out the assessment. The European Commission will take the final decision on the shortlist.
- (25) All applicants will be informed about the decision taken.
- (26) At this stage of the call, the shortlisting of an expression of interest does not constitute a binding commitment – either implicit or explicit – on the part of the European Commission to provide support to a managing authority.

VIII. Procedure for submission of expression of interest

- (27) Central coordination bodies or managing authorities expressing their interest to participate in the pilot should complete the application form provided in the Annex 1 of this Call.
- (28) The application form is to be completed in English, French or German.
- (29) The expression of interest should be submitted electronically to the following email address: regio-external-communication@ec.europa.eu

IX Deadline for submission of expression of interest

- (30) The deadline for submitting an expression of interest is Friday 29 March 2019.
- (31) Expressions of interest submitted after the deadline of this call will not be considered.