

Creating a Winning CoVE Project Application (Erasmus+ 2026 Call)

Updated to reflect 2026 Programme Guide requirements (Call ID: ERASMUS-
EDU-2026-PEX-COVE)

8.12.2025
Helsinki
Jouni Hytönen



© https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/team-happy-employees-winning-award-celebrating-success-business-people-enjoying-victory-getting-gold-cup-trophy-vector-illustration-reward-prize-champions_s_10173649.html image by jck-vector/a on Freepik



INTRODUCTION

- We'll guide you through the process while taking into account the evaluation criteria that will help your application stand out.
- This session includes major updates introduced in the 2026 Programme Guide.
- We will highlight changes in award criteria, activity clusters, partnerships, budget model, and required long-term impact plan.



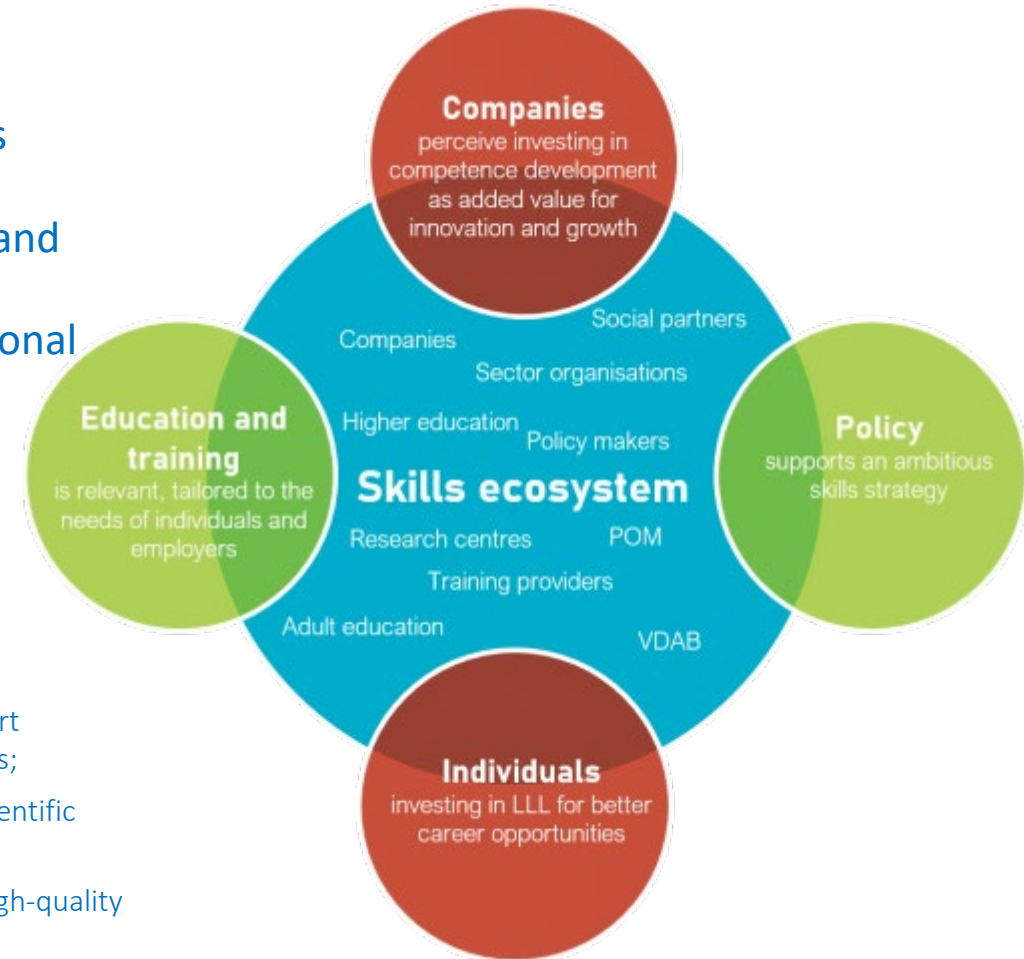
UNDESTANDING THE CALL

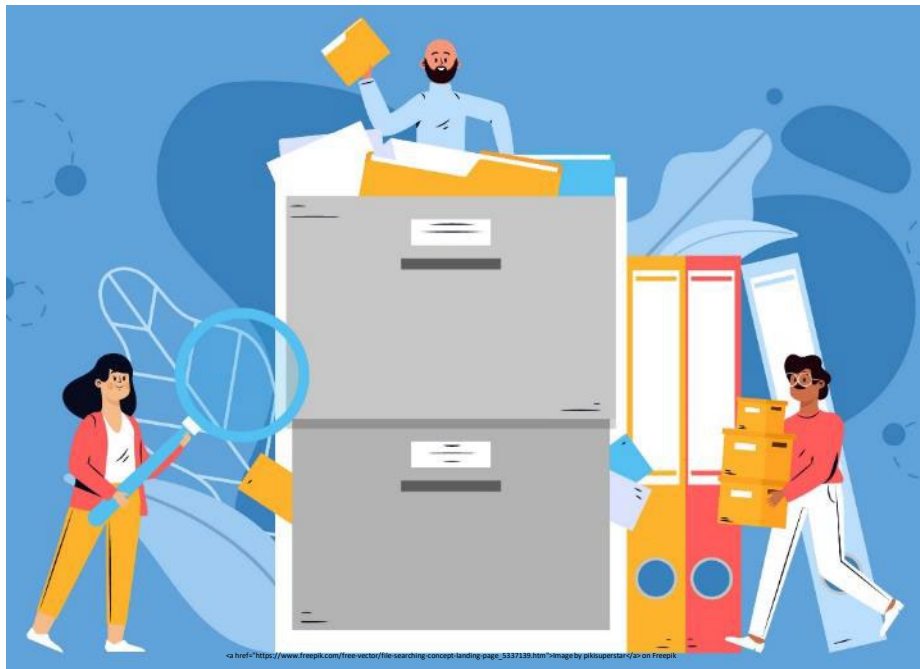
- Before you start, carefully read the Call documentation to understand its goals and objectives.
- Start the application process early enough (recommendation at least six months before the deadline)
- Pay close attention to eligibility criteria and submission deadlines.
- Do remember to have enough planning meet ups in this complex project Call
- Reference to **Herning Declaration, Union of Skills, Competitiveness Compass, Clean Industrial Deal.**
- Clarify that CoVE projects must show **alignment with past CoVE projects (2021–2024) and avoid overlaps.**



PROJECT CONCEPT

- Develop a clear and innovative project concept that aligns with the Call's objectives.
- The concept must show contribution to local/regional skills ecosystems and smart specialisation.
- Highlight how your project addresses the needs and challenges in vocational education.
- Consider synergies with Blueprints, Net-Zero Industry Academies, Skills Academies.
- Integrate micro-credentials aligned with EU standard.
- A holistic learner centred approach in which VET
 - is an integrated part of skills ecosystems, contributing to regional development, innovation, smart specialization and clusters strategies, as well as to specific value chains and industrial ecosystems;
 - is part of knowledge triangles, working closely with other education and training sectors, the scientific community, and business;
 - enables learners to acquire both vocational (job specific) as well as key competences through high-quality provision that is underpinned by quality assurance;
 - builds innovative forms of partnerships with the world of work, and is supported by the continuous professional development of teaching and training staff, innovative pedagogies, learner and staff mobility and VET internationalization strategies





RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

The project must choose relevant activities providing details on the concrete actions and deliverables indicated under the following three clusters:

- at least 4 of the activities listed in the Application Form under Cluster 1 - Teaching and learning
- at least 3 of the activities listed in the Application Form under Cluster 2 - Cooperation and partnership, and
- at least 2 of the activities listed in the Application Form under Cluster 3 - Governance and funding

- Cluster 1 activities now include: STEM emphasis, anticipating future skills needs, use of micro-credentials, learning factories, interdisciplinary learning.
- Cluster 2: Must involve skills governance, ecosystem co-creation, engagement with CoVE Community of Practice.
- Cluster 3: Stress financial sustainability, use of EU instruments, public-private funding models.

PARTNERSHIPS

Establish strong partnerships with relevant stakeholders, such as educational institutions, industry experts, and community organizations.

- The partnership must include at least 8 applicants (coordinator and full partners) from a minimum of 4 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Program.
- Each EU Member State or third country associated to the Program must include:
 - a) at least 1 enterprise, industry or sector representative organization
 - b) at least 1 vocational education and training provider (at secondary and/or tertiary level).
- Organisations from non-associated third countries (regions 1–3) may now join as beneficiaries if they bring essential added value.
- Belarus is explicitly not eligible.
- Further composition of the partnership should reflect the specific nature of the proposal. Explain how these partnerships will contribute to the success of your project.
- Affiliated entities and associated partners do NOT count toward minimum consortium composition.





DETAILED PROJECT PLAN

- Mandatory work package structure (max 12 WPs):
 - WP1: Project management
 - WP2: Long-term impact plan
 - WP3–12: Implementation WPs
- Must explain how activities align with past CoVE projects and how synergies with Blueprints etc. are ensured.
- Create a comprehensive project plan that outlines objectives, activities, timelines, and deliverables.
- Emphasize the scalability and sustainability of your project.
- Use the official application template (Part B – Word file).

BUDGET AND RESOURCES

- Prepare a realistic budget that covers all project expenses and is in balance with the contribution of each partner.
- Clearly demonstrate how the requested funds will be used to achieve project goals.
- The Excel budget tool helps you structure the Work Packages and distribute partner resources, but the funding is granted as a lump sum. (while setting the partners and the WP's the Excel tool automatically generates the budget template)
- Applicants must provide: A work package–based budget breakdown
Share of funds per partner and per WP
Description of activities, resources, subcontracting (if any)
- Pay attention also to outsourced resources. Subcontracting cannot cover core activities.



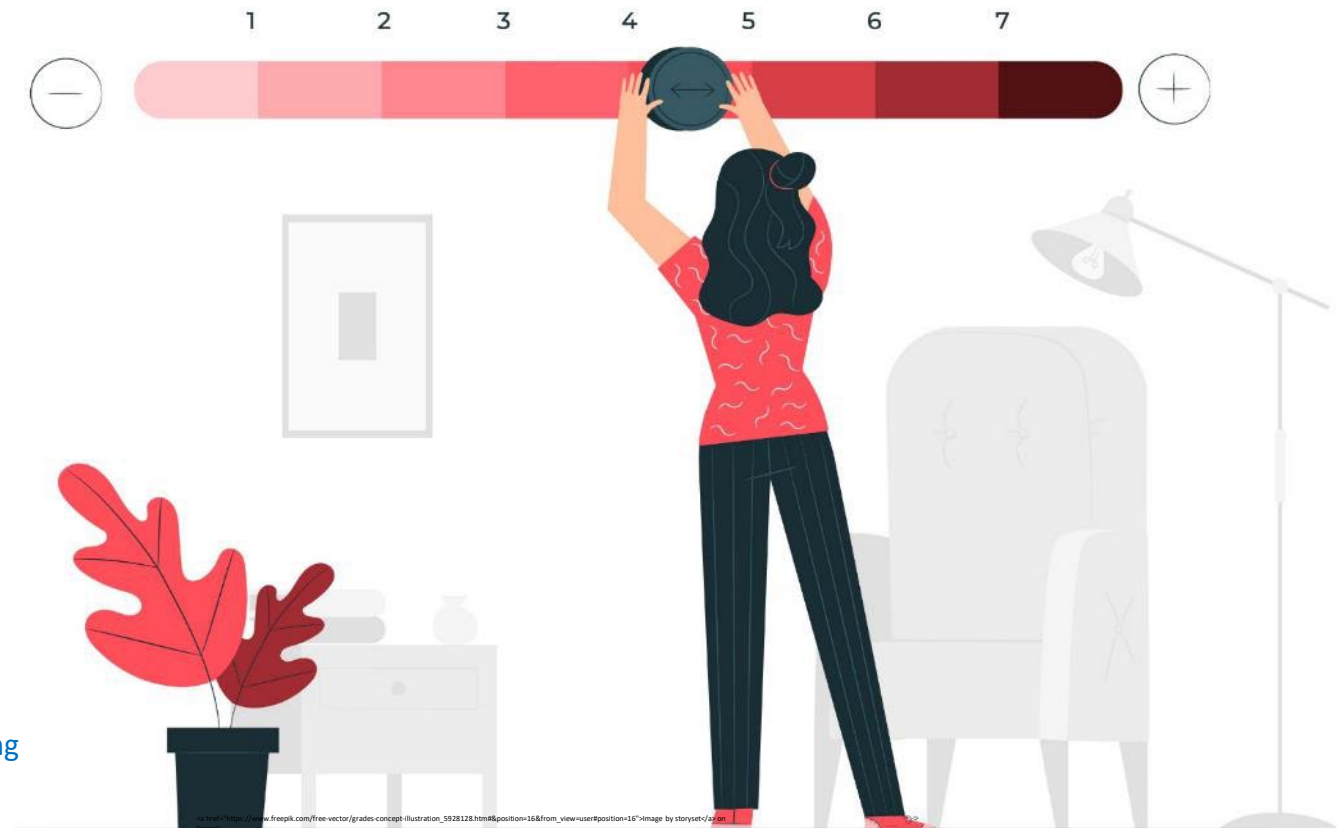


IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Describe the expected impact of your project on vocational education and the community.
- Provide measurable indicators (KPI) to track progress and success.
- The long-term action plan must include: Governance structure, Scalability model, Identification of future funding sources (RRF, ERDF, ESF+, InvestEU, private funding)
- How training programmes will be updated after the project
- Stronger emphasis on political-level dissemination.

EVALUATION (AWARD) CRITERIA

- Familiarize yourself with the evaluation criteria outlined in the Call documentation.
- Tailor your application to address each criterion explicitly.
- CRITERIA:
 - Relevance of the project (maximum score 35 points)
 - Link to policy
 - Consistency
 - Activities
 - Innovation
 - Regional dimension
 - Cooperation and partnerships
 - European added value
 - Internationalisation
 - Digital skills
 - Green skills
 - Social dimension
 - EU Values
 - Synergies with existing CoVEs
 - Alignment with Competitiveness Compass, Union of Skills, Herring Declaration
 - Contribution to sectors facing labour shortages



EVALUATION (AWARD) CRITERIA

- **CRITERIA:**

- Quality of the project design and implementation (max. 25 points)

- Coherence
- Activities
- Methodology
- Management
- Budget
- Work plan
- Financial and quality control
- mobility activities
- Mandatory work package structure
- Clear link to skills intelligence
- Micro-credentials design following EU principles

- Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements (max. 20 points)

- Configuration
- Upward convergence
- Geographical dimension
- Involvement of third countries not associated to the Programme
- Collaboration
- Clarify the role of non-associated countries
- Governance involvement of stakeholders

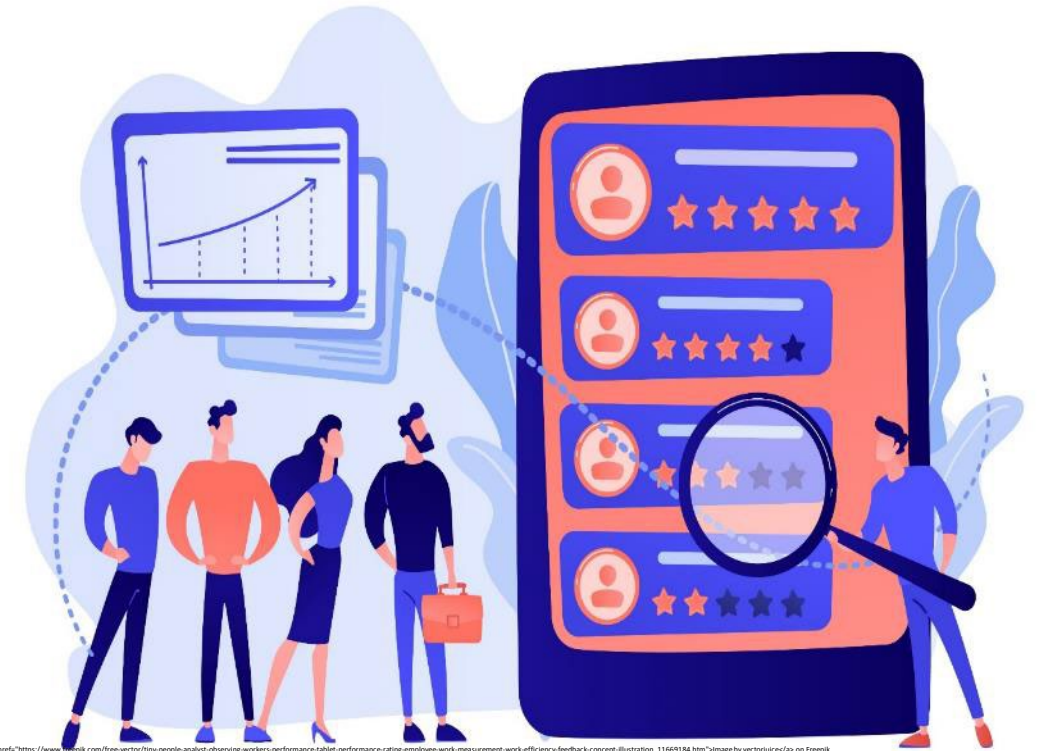
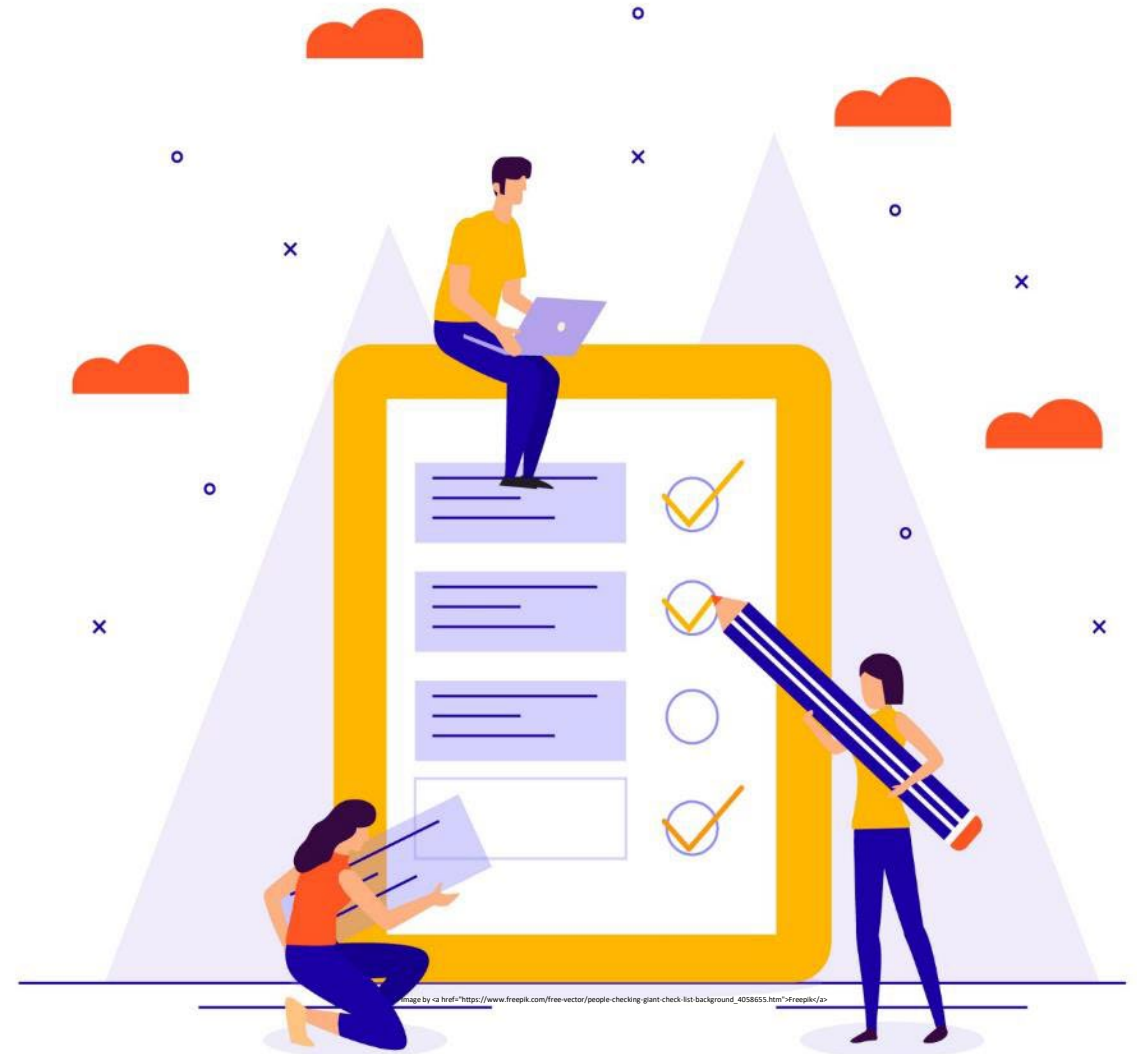


Image by vectorjuice/ps on Freepik

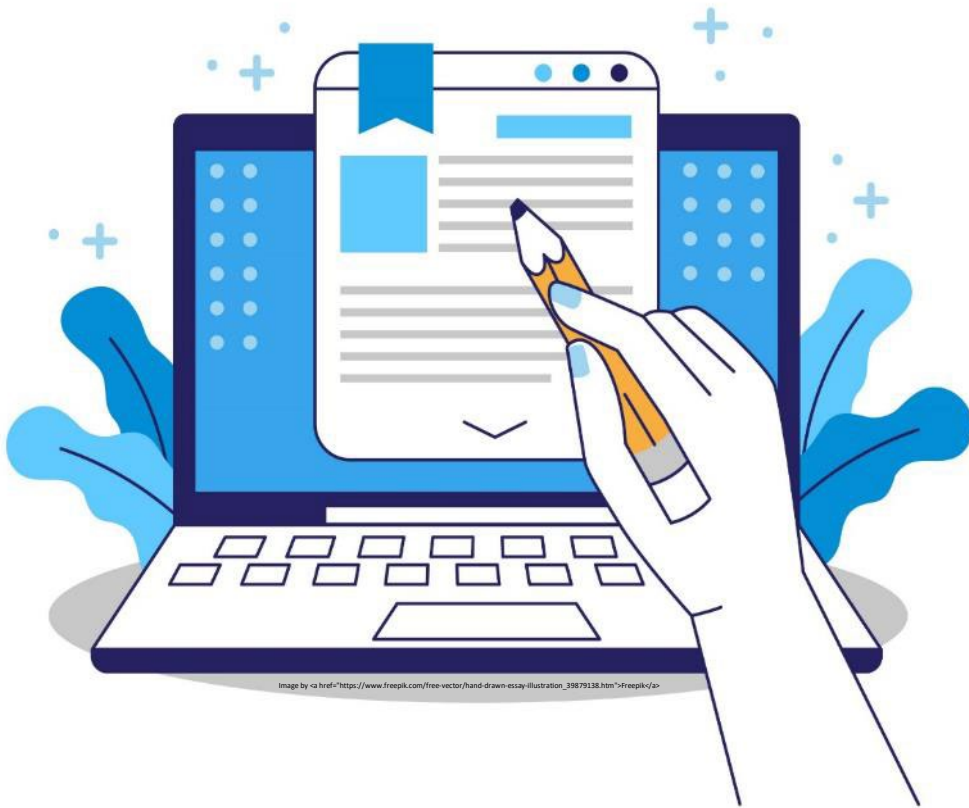
EVALUATION (AWARD) CRITERIA

- **CRITERIA:**

- Impact (maximum score 20 points)
 - Exploitation
 - Dissemination
 - Impact
 - Sustainability
 - Requirement for OER (open access)
 - Detailed long-term action plan obligations
- To be considered for funding, applications must score at least 75 points (out of 100 points in total), also taking into account the necessary minimum pass score for each of the four award criteria: minimum 18 points for the “relevance of the project” category; minimum 13 points for “quality of the project design and implementation” and 11 points for the categories of “quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements” and “impact”. In ex aequo cases, priority will be given to highest scores for "relevance of the project" and then “impact”.



WRITING THE APPLICATION



- Craft a compelling narrative that showcases your project's uniqueness, feasibility, and potential impact.
- Ensure clarity, coherence, and conciseness in your writing.
- Share writing responsibilities to each WP leader and commit them to create early drafts.
- Follow the instructions carefully in the application (Word-template).
- How to demonstrate compliance with EU micro-credential standard, skills ecosystems, synergies.
- Importance of aligning with previously funded CoVE projects.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- Include all required attachments and supporting documents, such as partnership list
- Organize your application for easy review.
- Mandatory WP structure
- Mandatory long-term action plan
- Clear description of each selected activity in clusters 1–3





REVIEW AND REVISION

- Have multiple team members review and proofread the application.
- Address any feedback and make necessary revisions.
- Alignment with 2026 award criteria
- Checking overlaps with past CoVE projects

SUBMISSION

- Submit your application before the deadline using the designated submission platform:
 - **Deadline: 3 September 2026 at 17:00 Brussels time**
 - Online platform (Part A, Part B, Part C)
 - Start early enough to take all partners to the online platform
 - Ask partners to fill their organization basic information
 - Upload the project application into the online platform
 - Upload the budget into the online platform
- Double-check that all required documents are included.
- If selected for funding, the evaluators will determine the final lump-sum amount based on the assessed quality of the proposal.





FOLLOW-UP

- After submission, maintain open communication with the relevant authorities (EACEA).
- Be prepared to answer any additional questions or provide clarifications.
- Expect grant reductions if WPs are not completed fully under the lump-sum model.



Good Luck for your
forthcoming COVE-project!

THANK YOU!



jouni.hytonen@bc.fi