AI4media
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE MEDIA AND SOCIETY

Annex 1

AI4Media – Open Call #2
Guidelines for Applicants

Project Title	AI4Media - A European Excellence Centre for Media, Society and Democracy
Contract No.	951911
Instrument	Research and Innovation Action
Thematic Priority	H2020-EU.2.1.1. - INDUSTRIAL LEADERSHIP - Leadership in enabling and industrial technologies - Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) / ICT-48-2020 - Towards a vibrant European network of AI excellence centres
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Duration	48 months

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1 Introduction

This document provides the relevant information regarding the second open call for proposals for the AI4Media project, also referred to as **AI4Media – Open Call #2**.

The AI4Media – Open Call #2 aims to engage different entities, including individual entrepreneurs, researchers, and companies, that develop and integrate applied research, and are committed to contribute to the enrichment of the pool of research and technology tools driven by AI4Media.

In addition to the present Annex, all associated annexes must be considered for the submission of a proposal.

General information on the AI4Media project can be found in the AI4Media – Open Call #2 Overview document. The AI4Media - Open Call #2 challenges can be found in Annex 1.1.

2 General Information

2.1 Terms and definitions

This section describes the relevant terms that are used in the open call documentation. Unless otherwise stated, the definition of a term is the one stated in this section.

2.1.1 Persons, entities, and committees

Table 1. Definitions of persons, entities, and committees

Term	Definition
AI4Media consortium / consortium	Group of legal entities that are cumulatively responsible for implementing the AI4Media project as defined in the Grant Agreement number 951911.
Applicant	Individual or organisation that intends to submit or has submitted a proposal to the AI4Media funding programme.
Beneficiary	An individual or organisation that has submitted a proposal to the AI4Media funding programme that has been accepted for funding and has signed or is in the process of signing a sub-grant agreement.
External evaluator	An expert that has been invited by AI4Media to assist in the evaluation of the proposal submitted to the funding programme. Experts cannot have conflicts of interest and are bound by a confidentiality agreement.

2.1.2 Funding programme

Table 2. Definitions of the funding programme

Term	Definition
AI4Media funding programme	Programme under which this present open call is organised. It is defined by the documents and templates provided by the AI4media consortium. The funding programme considers several phases: open call for proposals, evaluation, contract preparation and signing, and implementation with 3 sprints (for selected beneficiaries).
Proposal phase	Period when applicants can submit proposals to the open call. Each open call has a fixed deadline that is automatically enforced.
Evaluation phase	Period when the consortium evaluates and ranks the applications. At the end of this phase, all proposals are notified of the results of the evaluation (whether rejection or advancement).
Contract preparation and signing phase	Period when the selected proposals and the consortium complete the administrative procedures to sign the sub-grant agreement and prepare administrative documents.
Implementation phase	Successive periods of 9 or 12 months, varying according to the track to which a proposal was submitted, when the work is performed by the beneficiary. Structured into three sprints. At the end of each sprint, the project is subject to a formal evaluation made by an internal evaluation team to assess if the project is meeting its objectives.

2.2 Means of submission

The AI4Media page on the F6S platform (*https://www.f6s.com/ai4media-open-call-2/about*) will be the entry point for the submission of all proposals to the AI4Media open calls. Any proposal submitted through other channels will be automatically rejected.

Any documentation that is required and requested by the AI4Media consortium should be submitted via a dedicated channel that will be indicated by the consortium during the execution of the sub-granted projects.

2.3 Language

English is the official language for the AI4Media open calls. Submissions done in any language other than English will not be eligible and will not be evaluated.

Similarly, English is the only official language during the whole implementation of the AI4Media programme. This means that any requested submission of documentation and deliverables will be done in English to be eligible.

2.4 Documentation formats

Any documentation requested in any of the phases of the open call and projects' implementation must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing. For Annex 2.1, formatting guidelines must be respected as defined in the document.

2.5 Data protection

To process and evaluate applications, AI4Media will need to collect personal and industrial data. F6S Network Limited (F6S) will manage the data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure coverage.

It should be noted that AI4Media requests the minimum information needed to carry out the evaluation procedures or the implementation of the funding programme. The following documents are provided for reference and will only be requested if the applicant is accepted to the programme:

- Annex 3: Sub-grant agreement template
- Annex 4.1 or 4.2: Declaration of honour (entities or individuals)
- Annex 5: SME Declaration
- Annex 6: Bank account information.

However, these annexes should be consulted, and their terms accepted prior to submission. Please refer to *https://www.f6s.com/terms* to check the data privacy policy and security measures of the F6S platform.

2.6 Origin of the funds

Selected applicants will sign a dedicated sub-grant funding agreement with the AI4Media consortium. **The funds attached to the sub-grant agreement come directly from the funds of the European project AI4Media and therefore remain property of the EU until the payment of the balance. The management rights to the funds have been transferred to the project partners in AI4Media via European Commission GA no. 951911.**

As detailed in **Annex 3: Sub-grant funding agreement**, this relation between the sub-grantees and the EC through the AI4Media project carries a set of obligations. It is the task of the sub-grantees to achieve them and of the AI4Media consortium partners to inform about them.

3 Eligibility criteria

The following eligibility criteria, related to the applicants, funding, and proposals apply.

3.1 Applicants' eligibility

All applicants must meet the requirements described in this section to be eligible:

1. Submissions will ONLY be accepted through the F6S platform and respective page dedicated to the AI4Media – Open Call #2: *https://www.f6s.com/ai4media-open-call-2/*
2. Fit within the target audience (types of applicants) as indicated in section 3.1.1.
3. Are based in an eligible H2020 country as indicated in section 3.1.2.
4. The application and all requested documents are provided **only in English language**.
5. The proposal description is provided according to the guidelines in the *AI4Media – Open Call #2 Technical Proposal Description Tem*plate (Annex 2.1).

The detailed eligibility criteria as described in the sections below apply:

3.1.1 Types of applicants

The AI4Media – Open Call #2 will fund projects implemented by **single** entities (groups of entities are not eligible) that are considered eligible under H2020 rules. The following type of entities are invited to submit their innovative research or application ideas:

- European mid-caps, SMEs, and micro-SMEs (as defined in EU law – EU recommendation 2003/361[1]).
- Individual entrepreneurs and individual sole-traders (established in an eligible country, section 2.1.2; eligibility is about the person's residence and not origin).
- European secondary and higher education establishments, research institutes and other not-for-profit research organisations.

The following additional conditions apply:

- The participating organisations should not have been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures at the time of applying.
- The organisations or individuals applying should not have convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, and unethical or illegal business practices.
- There should not be any conflict of interest with any of the AI4Media partners (beneficiaries), as detailed in Section 3.1.4.
- Applicants already funded under the AI4Media Open Call #1 are not eligible to participate in Open Call #2.

*Note: Third parties receiving Financial Support from AI4Media through the open call **will not become part of the AI4Media Grant Agreement**. The AI4Media Grant Agreement will not need to be amended to include the selected beneficiaries.*

[1] EC recommendation for Small and Medium- sized Enterprises (SMEs) 2003/361/. *https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en*

3.1.2 Eligible countries

Single legal entities established in any of the following countries are eligible to participate in the AI4Media – Open Call #2:

- The Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions.
- The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to the Member States.
- H2020 associated countries (those that have signed an agreement with the EU as identified in Article 7 of the Horizon 2020 Regulation): according to the *updated list published by the EC*.
- UK applicants are eligible under the conditions set by the EC for H2020 participation at the time of the deadline of the call.

Note: Should the applicant be selected for funding and, if during the contracting or implementation phases the entity changes its registration status to a country not eligible for funding (due to, e.g., acquisition by a non-eligible country from North/South America, Asia), the applicant may be disqualified or have its contract terminated.

3.1.3 Financial eligibility

Each application may receive a maximum of up to €50.000. The total amount requested must represent 100% of the project costs (including indirect cots). All proposals will be required to provide a justification of the planned costs and resources of the project.

For approved projects, the funds will be disbursed in lump sums at the end of the three sprints and pending the achievement of agreed milestones and deliverables. Eligible costs include: project management activities; research activities; technical developments; testing and piloting activities; communication and promotion activities; travel (as required). The type of costs that may be reported include human resources, other direct costs, and indirect costs (25% of personnel and other direct costs). Subcontracting is not eligible in this open call.

3.1.4 Conflict of interest

Applications will not be accepted from entities who are partners (beneficiaries) or linked-third parties in the AI4Media consortium or from entities who are formally linked in any way to the partners/ linked-third parties of the consortium. This excludes, for example, entities that have already engaged with and/ or contributed to the project through specific activities/ initiatives (e.g., AI Doctoral Academy, Associate Members) who remain independent from the project. Any individual/ entity with a previous link to an AI4Media beneficiary (e.g., spin-off), will not be accepted, unless a minimum of 2 years (as of 1 October 2022) has passed since the termination of the link.

Applicants must not have any current and/or potential conflict of interest with the AI4Media – Open Call #2 selection process and for the whole funding programme. Applicants must formally and immediately notify the AI4Media coordinator of any situation constituting, or which is likely to lead to a conflict of interests and take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

All cases relating to conflict of interest will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Applicants must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective evaluation and implementation of the project is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

If a conflict of interest is discovered and confirmed at the time of the evaluation process, the proposal will be considered as non-eligible and will not be evaluated.

3.2 Proposal submissions

The AI4Media – Open Call #2 is a competitive funding programme. Only **one proposal** per applicant (legal entity or natural person) can be submitted to this open call. In the event of multiple submissions by an applicant, only the last proposal received (timestamp of the system) will enter the evaluation process (and regardless of the track to which a proposal is being submitted to). Any other submitted proposals involving the same applicant will be declared non-eligible and will not be evaluated in any case.

Exceptionally, in the case of secondary/ higher education establishments, research institutes and other not-for-profit research organisations, up to two applications can be submitted from different groups/teams within the entity and who must use a different F6S user account. Nevertheless, only **one proposal** will be accepted for funding per applicant (legal entity or natural person).

In the case of an applicant applying as an individual web entrepreneur or sole trader:

- An individual will be selected for funding only once, as in the case of one legal entity.
- If the individual participates in another proposal as part of a different legal entity:
    - The members of the other legal entity will be informed about the participation of an individual in multiple proposals.
    - The individual participating in multiple proposals will be disqualified.

Any proposal from an applicant that has participated in the Open Call #1 will be disqualified.

3.3 Other conditions

Each applicant must confirm that:

- It is not under liquidation or is not an enterprise under difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18.
- The proposed project is based on original research/ ideas and, going forward, any foreseen developments are not limited by third party rights, or are clearly stated if they are limited.
- The project is based on work that has not been developed and offered as a commercial product or solution.
- It is not excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national and EU authority.

4 Open call: submission, selection, and negotiation process

Proposals submitted to the AI4Media – Open Call #2 are submitted in a single stage and evaluated in two steps, as presented in Figure 1.

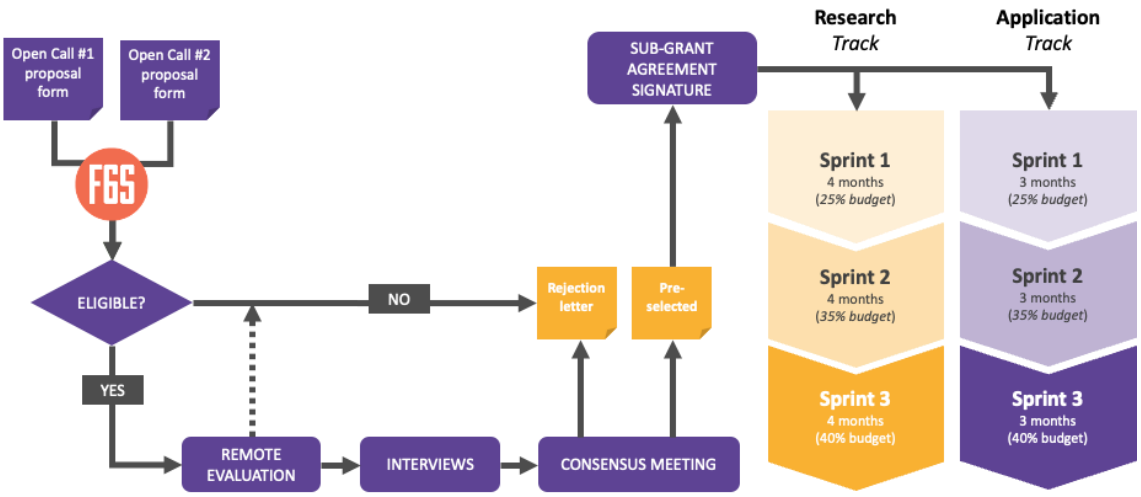

Figure 1. AI4Media Open Call #2 submission and evaluation process

4.1 Proposal preparation and submission

The submission of proposals to the AI4Media - Open Call #2 will follow the steps described in this section.

4.1.1 Applicants' registration

Applicants that wish to submit a proposal must be registered on the F6S platform or should register at the AI4Media F6S page (*https://www.f6s.com/ai4media-open-call-2/*). The F6S platform will be the central interface for managing the proposals during the open call.

A full list of applicants will be prepared containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity, which will also be shared with the European Commission for transparency.

4.1.2 Proposal preparation and submission

The timeline for submission of proposals is from **29 September 2022 to 30 November 2022 (17:00 CET)**. The following steps must be followed when preparing and submitting a proposal:

- Applicants are required to apply online and answer all mandatory questions at: *https://www.f6s.com/ai4media-open-call-2/apply*. Any submission not done via this channel will not be eligible.
- The documentation/ information to be submitted and/ or provided are:

- **Application form:** includes the administrative questions to be completed directly on the F6S platform: https://www.f6s.com/ai4media-open-call-2/apply.
- Selection of the **track and challenge** that your proposal will address (on the application form and technical proposal). Please note that the open call aims to address a broad number of challenges per track and therefore there is a maximum number of proposals that will be awarded for each challenge.
- **Annex 2.1 - Technical Proposal**, submitted as a PDF only. This describes the project and is structured into multiple mandatory sections. *NOTE: The technical annex provides guidance on the required items to be addressed.*
- General questions for statistical purposes
- Tick boxes for the applicants to confirm that they have read and agree with the conditions defined in this Guidelines for Applicants and the open call.

- Applicants are recommended to become familiar with the Annex 3 – Sub-grant agreement; Annex 4.1 - Declaration of Honour (non-individuals/entities) or Annex 4.2 – Declaration of Honour (individuals); and Annex 5 – SME Declaration (applicable to entities that are SMEs). These documents must be provided if the applicant is selected and are mandatory to finalise the contract and enter the funding programme. *NOTE: only a handwritten or electronically verified digital signature is accepted.*
- Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not submit the required information will not be eligible.
- Additional recommendations:
  - Be specific and concise. Some questions have a limited number of characters.
  - It is highly recommended to **submit your proposal before the deadline**. If the applicant identifies an error in their proposal, and provided the call deadline has not passed, the applicant may request the AI4Media team to re-open and re-submit the proposal. **However, AI4Media cannot guarantee a timely resubmission in case the request for resubmission is not received by the AI4Media team with at least 48 hours' notice before the call deadline**.

The open call deadline will not be extended unless a major problem with the F6S platform makes the system unavailable. In case an extension is provided, all applicants will be notified.

NOTE: Failure to submit the proposal on time, for any reason, including network delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the proposal as recorded by the system will be definitive.

4.1.3 Selection of the track and challenge

AI4Media aims to fund innovative research and application projects that contribute to the enrichment of the pool of research and technology tools already developed within AI4Media. The open call is structured into two tracks and several challenges.

AI4Media aims to fund projects addressing different challenges. Therefore, there is a maximum number of proposals (2) to be selected per challenge. If there are multiple challenges without proposals that guarantees this distribution, primacy will be given to the proposals with the highest score, regardless of the challenge and including those submitted to the open challenges.

Table 3 summarises the challenges of the AI4Media – Open Call #2. Descriptions of each challenge are provided in Annex 1.1.

Table 3. Challenges of the AI4Media - Open Call #2

Code	Title	Proposals to be selected
RESEARCH TRACK CHALLENGES		
C1-R	Reinforcement learning and the challenge of generalisation	Maximum 2 for each challenge
C2-R	Evolutionary learning and the challenge of evaluating quality	
C3-R	Scarce data and the cross-media transfer of knowledge	
C4-R	New decentralised collaborative learning paradigms for AI	
C5-R	Quantum Reinforcement Learning for classical data processing	
C6-R	Frugal cross-modal representation for media research	
C7-R	Broadening the spectrum of Interpretable AI	
C8-R	Standardising AI datasets and model creation	
C9-R	Novel AI-powered enablers for social media research	
C10-R	Social media alert system to avoid the attention gathering loop	
C11-R	Representative and Inclusive Depictions of AI	
C12-R-OPEN	Open Research Challenge	
APPLICATION TRACK CHALLENGES		
C1-A	Realising a hybrid AI application in AI4EU Experiments	Maximum 2 for each challenge
C2-A	AI global support to informative content production	
C3-A	New learning methods for music overcoming scarce data	
C4-A	AI for suggesting visually appealing images based on text	
C5-A	Recommender Systems to Support Exploratory Research with Media	
C6-A	AI for automated testing and sound synthesis	
C7-A-OPEN	Open Application Challenge	

4.2 Proposal evaluation and selection

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by the AI4Media consortium with the support of independent external experts. The AI4Media consortium ensures that the process is fair and in line with the principles outlined in the European Commission's rules on proposal submission and evaluation.

4.2.1 Step 1: Eligibility verification

Eligibility to participate in the funding programme is initially verified against several eligibility criteria. This process is carried out by the AI4Media Open Call team. A proposal may be declared ineligible or inadmissible at any stage. The check will verify if:

- Submissions have been made ONLY through the *F6S platform* and by the defined deadline (30 November 2022, 17h00 CET).
- Applicants are **legal entities** established in an **eligible H2020 country** and meet the **financial eligibility requirements** of the open call, as defined in section 3.1.
- The proposal, including the *F6S application form* and all requested and mandatory information and documents, are fully completed and provided in the English language only. This includes a full technical proposal with all sections completed.

A proposal is only considered eligible if its content corresponds to the objectives of the AI4Media – Open Call #2, including the specific eligibility conditions defined in the relevant sections of this Guidelines for Applicants. The eligibility check enables the creation of a shortlist of proposals to be evaluated in the next step of the evaluation process.

Proposals marked as non-eligible (for not meeting one or more of the eligibility criteria) will receive a rejection letter with a justification. **No additional feedback will be given**.

4.2.2 Step 2: External remote evaluation

Proposals considered eligible will move on to the external remote evaluation phase. The external evaluation will be done remotely by expert evaluators and with the support of the F6S platform.

Evaluators will be selected from a pool of experts that will be established through a call for expressions of interest. The experts will be evaluated and selected based on their knowledge of the AI4Media challenges topics and general experience in the evaluation of proposals (e.g., Horizon 2020, FSTP programmes). Expert profiles will be evaluated, and a pool of experts will be established. The top-ranked experts will be invited to evaluate proposals.

The evaluators will perform evaluations on an individual basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country, or any other entity. They are required to be independent, impartial, and objective. All evaluators are required to sign a contract, which includes a declaration of confidentiality and the absence of conflicts of interest. Any known conflict of interest will be immediately communicated to the AI4Media Open Call team. Evaluators will also be bound by strict confidentiality regarding the evaluation process and during the evaluation process.

At least **two external evaluators** will evaluate each proposal and will be distributed across the proposals based on their expertise and, whenever possible, country of origin. AI4Media partner representatives with expertise in the challenge that the proposal addresses may also participate as a third evaluator. The proposals will be scored based on the criteria below (Table 5).

Table 5. AI4Media - Open Call #2 evaluation criteria

Evaluation Criteria (EC)	Description
EC1. Excellence	• The extent to which the proposal is aligned with the selected open call challenge. • Quality of the state of the art and challenge(s) to be solved. • Clarity, robustness, and pertinence of the objectives. • Excellence and innovation of the project concept and expected outcomes. • Novelty of the project and innovation potential. • Technology readiness level: starting and final TRL, and respective rationale (for Application track projects). • Ethical or legal issues associated to the work proposed and how they will be addressed.
EC2. Impact	• Contribution to the AI4Media ecosystem and objectives, considering the scope of the AI4Media project. • Contribution to strengthening the competitiveness and growth of companies by developing research/ innovations that meet the needs of European and global markets; and, where relevant, by delivering such innovations to the markets. • Expected economic effects of the projects. • Quality and effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project, and to manage research data where relevant.
EC3. Implementation	• Quality and logic of the work plan, including activities and outputs. • Quality, relevance, and achievability of milestones and KPIs. • Quality of the barriers and risks that may affect the workplan. • Appropriateness of the skills and experience of the project team; quality of the gender balance.
EC4. Value	• Justification of project costs, including those for the team and for other resources.

Each criterion will be scored between 0 and 5. For each criterion under examination, the score values will indicate the following rationale:

Table 4. AI4Media - Open Call #2 scoring rationale

Score	Rationale
0	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
1 / POOR	The proposal addresses the criterion in an inadequate manner or there are significant weaknesses.
2 / FAIR	The proposal addresses the criterion broadly, but there are still several weaknesses.
3 / GOOD	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but improvements are necessary.
4 / VERY GOOD	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but some improvements are still possible.
5 / EXCELLENT	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The final score (including for each criterion) is calculated based on the average of the scores provided by the evaluators. The threshold for each criterion is three (3), therefore the overall score threshold is 12. This indicates that if a proposal scores less than 3 in any criterion or an overall score less than 12, the proposal is automatically rejected.

Each evaluator will record his/her individual assessment of each proposal using an Individual Evaluation Report (ISR). The evaluators will then hold a consensus meeting to prepare a single consensus Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) for each proposal, representing opinions and scores on which the evaluators agree and which they will sign.

4.2.3 Step 3: Intermediate ranking of proposals

At the end of the external remote evaluation process, all proposals will be ranked in the research or application tracks, but independently of the track challenges being addressed. The criteria for the ranking of the proposals will be semi-automatic following the rules below:

- **Rule 1:** Proposals will be ranked based on their overall score (sum of scores for criteria 1 to 4).
- **Rule 2:** After applying Rule 1 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have the highest score on **EC2. Impact.**
- **Rule 3:** After applying Rule 2 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have the highest score on **EC1. Excellence.**
- **Rule 4:** After applying Rule 3 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have the highest score on **EC3. Implementation**.
- **Rule 5:** After applying Rule 4 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have the highest score on **EC4. Value**.

- **Rule 6:** After applying Rule 5 and if there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to those led by women or with a share of women and men in the team that is closer to 50/50[2].

The top-ranked proposals – at least twice the total number of proposals to be funded per track (tentatively 10 proposals per track) – will be invited to an online interview. Furthermore, at least two proposals per track challenge (if their score meets the minimum threshold) will be invited to the online interview. This applies in the case that proposals have been submitted to all track challenges.

4.2.4 Step 4: Online interview

The objective of the interview is to better understand the proposal, particularly its quality and excellence, the expected impact and exploitation potential, quality of the workplan, and quality of the applicant (individual or entity implementing the project). Any complementary material that can support the presentation of the project is acceptable during the interview.

Interviews will be carried out by a selection of the external evaluators. Members of the AI4Media team directly involved in the challenge that each proposal is addressing may participate in the interview and respective evaluation process.

Interviews are expected to last approximately 1 hour. Applicants are expected to prepare and present a presentation (approximately 20 minutes) and answer any questions regarding their proposal from the evaluators (approximately 30 minutes). At least 2 evaluators are expected to participate in each interview.

The online interviews will evaluate proposals against the following evaluation criteria (Table 5):

Table 5. AI4Media - Open Call #2 online interview evaluation criteria

Interview Criteria (IC)	Description
IC1. Concept and innovation	• Alignment with/ contribution to AI4Media and its ecosystem. • Quality and novelty of the proposed project concept and innovation (research or application/ technology focused).
IC2. Impact and exploitation	• Impact on the AI and media ecosystem. • Path towards exploitation of results in AI/media applications and/or by the market.
IC3. Workplan and applicant	• Rationale and ambition of the workplan. • Capacity and experience of the applicant. • Motivation to participate in the programme and expectations.
IC4. Value for money	• Rationale of the project budget and resources

[2] In accordance with the Horizon 2020 guidelines to encourage gender balance and equal opportunities for women and men, consortia applying to the open call should seek to include both men and women in the teams, with a participation as close as possible to 50/50 women and men. Further information: https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/gender_en.htm

As with the external remote evaluation (section 4.2.2), evaluators will score each criterion between 0 and 5. For each criterion, score values will be based on the rationale presented in Table 4.

If at any time during the interview the applicants do not commit to what was included in the submitted proposal, the proposal will be automatically disqualified.

If after the interview process the evaluators still have questions, the applicant may be requested to provide additional information in writing.

4.2.5 Step 5: Consensus meeting

Evaluators involved in the online interviews will carry out a consensus meeting with the objective of gathering their evaluations, defining a common score for the proposals, and preparing evaluation reports.

4.2.6 Step 6: Final ranking and selection

At the end of the online interview process, all proposals will be ranked according to the average scores obtained from (1) the external remote evaluation and (2) the online interviews. Each evaluation phase will have a different weight, which will be taken into consideration when calculating the final scores, namely: remote evaluation (50% weight) and online Interviews (50% weight).

Five proposals will be selected for each track (total of 10). All proposals will receive an acceptance or rejection letter together with an anonymised version of their ESR. Proposals not having passed to the online interview stage will receive a report with results of the external remote evaluation. Proposals that passed to the online interview will receive a report with information from both the remote evaluation and interview stages.

4.3 Redress process

An applicant may submit a request for redress if they believe the results of the eligibility checks have not been correctly applied, or if they feel that there has been a shortcoming in the application of the rules of the AI4Media - Open Call #2. Requests for redress must:

- Be received within three (3) working days from the reception of (1) a rejection letter considering the proposal as non-eligible or (2) the ESR information letter.
- Indicate the subject of the complaint and clearly describe it, with arguments/ evidence that sustain the complaint.
- Be sent by the entity's legal representative that has also submitted the proposal.

In case a request for redress is received, an internal review committee from AI4Media will examine the applicant's complaint. The committee will review the complaint and recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the

eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated. Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the eligibility/ evaluation organisation process. The committee will not question the scientific or technical judgement of the expert evaluators applied in evaluating the proposals.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to fund the proposal or not.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.
- Anonymous or incomplete complaints will not be considered.
- Only one request for redress per proposal will be considered by the committee.

All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and must be sent to AI4Media at: *opencall2@ai4media.iti.gr*.

4.4 Sub-granted project negotiation and onboarding

At the end of the evaluation phase, five proposals from each track will be selected. The other proposals that were invited to the interview stage will remain on a reserve list in case one of the selected proposals fails to sign the sub-grant agreement.

4.4.1 Step 1: Contract preparation and negotiation

After the evaluation phase is concluded and the projects have been selected, the AI4Media consortium will start the contract preparation phase in collaboration with the representatives of the projects that have been selected for funding.

Contract preparation will run through an administrative and financial check (and potentially into technical or ethical/security negotiations) based on evaluators' comments. If needed, a phone call or teleconference may be required and organised to clarify any pending questions.

The objective of the contract preparation (Table 6) is to fulfil the legal requirements between the AI4Media consortium and each beneficiary of the open call.

Note: the contract as provided to the sub-grantee is final and may not be changed, including the addition or removal of any articles or other content.

All documentation that requires a signature (e.g., Declaration of Honour, SME Declaration (if applicable), Bank Account, and sub-grant agreement must be signed by hand (e.g., with the same signature on the identity card) or with a valid electronic digital signature. AI4Media reserves the right to request one or the other types of signatures for specific documentation.

Table 6. Requirements for contract preparation

For legal entities	For individuals (natural persons)
Proof of legal existence: ● Company register, official journal or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).	**Proof of legal existence:** ● A copy of the individual's national ID card or passport is required. ● Proof the individual is legally established and working in an eligible country, as defined in section 3.1.2.
Specific to SMEs: 1. Proof of the SME condition is required: ● If the applicant has been fully validated as an SME on the Beneficiary Register of the H2020 Participant Portal, the PIC number must be provided. ● If the applicant has not been fully validated as an SME on the H2020 Participant Portal, the following documents will be required to prove the status as an SME: a. SME declaration (Annex 5) *signed (with a valid e-signature or by hand) and stamped*: In the event the beneficiary declares being non-autonomous, the balance sheet and profit and loss account (with annexes) for the last period for upstream and downstream organisations is required. b. Status Information Form, which includes the headcount (AWU), balance, profit & loss accounts of the latest closed financial year and the relation, upstream and downstream, of any linked or partner company. 2. Supporting documents. **In cases where either the number of employees or the ownership is not clearly identified: any other supporting documents which demonstrate headcount and ownership such as payroll details, annual reports, national regional, association records, etc.**	
Bank account information (Annex 6) The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a specific form signed by the entity, individuals, and the bank owners. The holder of the account will be the entity/ individual.	
Sub-grant agreement (Annex 3) Signed between the AI4Media consortium, represented by its coordinator (CERTH), the Treasurer (F6S), and the beneficiary (see section 4.4.2). The sub-grant agreement will also include the comments (if any) of the proposal's ESR to the work plan.	

It should be emphasised that each participating **entity should provide a valid VAT[3] number during the contract preparation stage. Failure to provide a valid VAT number will automatically result in exclusion from the contract preparation.**

[3] To be checked at European Commission services such as http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/vies/

The list of requested documentation by the AI4Media consortium will be sent to the sub-granted project representatives, including deadlines regarding when information and documentation should be sent. In general, the sub-granted project negotiation should be concluded within 2 weeks. An additional week may be granted by the AI4Media coordinator in case of valid reasons for delays provided by the sub-granted project representatives. In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the proposal will be automatically rejected and the next proposal in the reserve list is invited to initiate the contract preparation.

4.4.2 Step 2: Contract signature

At the end of the contract preparation and negotiation phase, the sub-grant agreement (Annex 3) will be signed between the AI4Media consortium represented by its coordinator (CERTH), the Treasurer (F6S), and the sub-granted project representative.

The sub-grant agreement (contract) will cover the three (3) sprints of the sub-granted project, further detailed in section 5.

5 Implementation and reporting

After the finalisation and signing of the sub-grant agreement, the selected sub-granted projects will move into the implementation phase.

As shown in Table 7 and depending on the track under which the sub-granted project has been funded, each project will run from 9 to 12 months, structured into three sprints, each with specific objectives and requirements. At the end of each sprint, the sub-granted project must produce a report with the status of their project and the results of the work carried out. A report template will be made available at the start of the implementation phase.

Table 7. AI4Media implementation timetable and requirements

Stage	Schedule	Reports and requirements	Payment
Track: RESEARCH [12 months]			
Sprint 1 *4 months*	March – June 2023	• At M1: Deliver **R1 - Detailed implementation plan**, including objectives, milestones and KPIs. • At M4: Deliver **R2 - Preliminary report**, with status and progress of the project. • At M4: Participate in an online review meeting to assess report R1 and R2.	25%
Sprint 2 4 months	July – October 2023	• At M8: Deliver **R3 - Interim report**, with status and progress of project. • At M8: Participate in an online review meeting to assess report R3.	35%
Sprint 3 *4 months*	November – February 2023	• At M12: Deliver **R4 - Final report**, with results of the project. • At M12: Participate in an online review meeting to assess report R4.	40%
Track: APPLICATION [9 months]			
Sprint 1 *3 months*	March – May 2023	• At M1: Deliver **R1 - Detailed implementation plan**, including objectives, milestones and KPIs. • At M3: Deliver **R2 - Preliminary report**, with status and progress of the project. • At M3: Participate in an online review meeting to assess report R1 and R2.	25%
Sprint 2 3 months	June – August 2023	• At M6: Deliver **R3 - Interim report**, with status and progress of project. • At M6: Participate in an online review meeting to assess report R3.	35%

Stage	Schedule	Reports and requirements	Payment
Sprint 3 *3 months*	September – November 2023	• At M9: Deliver **R4 - Final report**, with results of the project. • At M9: Participate in an online review meeting to assess report R4.	40%

The sub-granted project must submit to the AI4Media consortium the report(s) corresponding to each sprint by the last calendar day of the respective sprint, as defined in Table 7, unless otherwise indicated by the AI4Media consortium.

Table 10 presents the requirements (objectives and expected contents) for the deliverables associated to each of the sub-granted project stages.

Table 10. Deliverable requirements associated to the stages of the sub-granted project

Sprint	Report	Deliverable requirements
Sprint 1	R1 - Detailed Implementation Plan (M1)	• **Objective**: Provide a detailed planification and workplan of the work to be carried out in the project. • **Contents**: Specific objectives, milestones, KPIs, timeline and respective alignment with expected results.
	R2 - Preliminary Report (M3/M4)	• **Objective**: Provide a status and review progress achieved in Sprint 1. • **Contents**: Progress towards objectives and milestones; achievement of KPIs; deviations (if applicable); next steps for Sprint 2.
Sprint 2	R3 - Interim Report (M6/M8)	• **Objective**: Provide a status and review progress achieved in Sprint 2. • **Contents**: Progress towards objectives and milestones; achievement of KPIs; deviations (if applicable); challenges/ mitigation; use of resources; next steps for Sprint 3, including towards exploitation.
Sprint 3	R4 - Final Report (M9/M12)	• **Objective**: Provide a status and review progress achieved in Sprint 3. • **Contents**: Review of work done; achievement of milestones and KPIs; exploitation and promotion actions implemented.

A review will be held between 10 to 20 calendar days after the end of the sprint so that the sub-granted project consortium can present their work (as reported in the respective report) and provide answers to questions from the AI4Media consortium. Payments associated with each sprint will be disbursed pending the approval of the respective report, and successful achievement of milestones and KPIs defined in the sub-granted project work plan.

6 Additional information for applicants

6.1 Timeline

Table 8 presents the indicative timeline during which each phase of the AI4Media – Open Call #2 will take place. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the AI4Media team along the process and are not restrictive.

Table 8. Summary of the AI4Media - Open Call #2 timeline

Phase	Indicative timeline
Call publication	29 September 2022
Call deadline	30 November 2022 (17h00 CET, Brussels time)
Evaluation period	1 December – 3 February 2023
Notification of results	6 February 2023
Contracting and signature of sub-grant agreement	7 February – 28 February 2023
Sprint 1	1 March – 31 May 2023 (A) / 30 June 2023 (R)
Sprint 2	1 June / 1 July – 31 Aug. 2023 (A) / 31 Oct. 2023 (R)
Sprint 3	1 Sep. / 1 Nov. – 30 Nov. 2023 (A) / 28 Feb. 2024 (R)

6.2 Intellectual property rights

The results and IPR developed by the sub-granted project will be the exclusive property of the developing parties. Any data and/or knowledge provided by AI4Media will remain the property of the AI4Media partners that provided them. The sub-granted project contracting parties and relevant AI4Media partners are free to discuss and agree on any complementary IPR ownership that should be defined in a separate agreement.

6.3 Responsibilities of beneficiaries

The selected entities are indirectly beneficiaries of EC funding. As a result, the selected entities are responsible for the appropriate use of the funding and must comply with obligations under H2020 specific requirements as described in Horizon 2020. The obligations that are applicable to the recipients include:

6.3.1 Conflict of Interest

The beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the sub-granted project is compromised for reasons involving

economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify the AI4Media consortium without delay of any situation, which constitutes or is likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The AI4Media coordinator will verify if the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specific deadline.

If a sub-contract consortium member breach any of its obligations, the sub-grant agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, as a result, costs may be rejected.

6.3.2 Data protection and confidentiality

During the implementation of the sub-granted project and for the following five (5) years after its end, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents, or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at sub-grant agreement signing time ('confidential information').

If a beneficiary requests it, the EC and the AI4Media consortium may agree to keep selected information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five years. This will be explicitly stated in the sub-contract.

If information has been identified as confidential during the sub-granted project implementation or only verbally, it will be confidential only if this is accepted by the AI4Media coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of the verbal disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the agreement.

The sub-granted project consortium may disclose confidential information to the AI4Media consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

6.3.3 Promoting the action and give visibility to the EU funding

The beneficiary must promote the sub-granted project, the AI4Media project and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner and to highlight the financial support of the EC.

Any communication or publication of the beneficiaries must clearly indicate that the sub-granted project has received funding from the European Union via the AI4Media project, therefore displaying the EU and AI4Media project logo on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases.

Further guidance on the specific requirements for promoting EU funding will be established in the signed sub-grant agreement.

6.4 Checks and reviews

The EC may, at any time during the implementation of the sub-granted project and up to five years after the end of the sub-granted project, arrange for a check and review to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves, including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC.

There will be no financial checks, reviews, or audits to check costs, since beneficiaries have no obligation to document the costs incurred for the action. Checks, reviews, and audits will focus on the technical implementation of the action.

The beneficiary shall make available directly to the EC all information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, in view of verifying that the sub-grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions.

Further guidance on the specific requirements relating to checks and reviews will be established in the signed sub-grant agreement.

7 Contact information

The AI4Media consortium will only provide information to applicants via the F6S platform or communications from *opencall2@ai4media.iti.gr*.

- More info at: *https://www.f6s.com/ai4media-open-call-2/about*
- Apply via: *https://www.f6s.com/ai4media-open-call-2/apply*
- Online Q&A: *https://www.f6s.com/ai4media-open-call-2/discuss*
- F6S support team (for platform issues during the application): *support@f6s.com*

AI4media

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR THE MEDIA AND SOCIETY

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info@ai4media.eu www.ai4media.eu