**Contracting party**:

Macedonian Young Lawyers Association

**CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS FOR NATIONAL GRANTS**

 **for enhancing access to social and economic rights of vulnerable groups of foreigners in North Macedonia**

Guidelines
for grant applicants

Deadline for submission of application: **20 January 2024**

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1. **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE CALL**

**Background**

In the EU reports, the situation in the Western Balkan countries is still marked with significant shortcomings in fulfilling the key political criteria. The region is in early stage of preparation of freedom of movement of workers and access to the labour market. But although the institutional and legislative frameworks for the protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms and protection against discrimination are developed and mostly aligned with the EU legislation, in practice, ensuring equal opportunities, especially for foreigners and marginalized groups, remains challenging. Economic plan for investment in the Western Balkans 2021-2027 EU aims to foster regional cooperation and convergence with the EU and offers a path for a successful regional economic integration that will ultimately speed up the process of EU integration. To achieve this, it is crucial inter alia to enhance overall social inclusion in the WB societies, including the inclusion of foreigners. The Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 acknowledges that the challenge of integration and inclusion is particularly relevant for migrants. Furthermore, it emphasises that promoting integration and inclusion is strongly linked with the imperative of economic development.

The Presidency discussion paper on strengthening migration management system in the WB region (2020) has noted that integration and labour migration schemes are among the least supported areas of engagement and that for further improvement all aspects of migration capacities should be upgraded. With the launching of the Open Balkan initiative and strengthening of the Berlin Process, it is expected that migration movements within the region will intensify. Although the states are responsible to provide appropriate services, to a large extent the enjoyment of fundamental human rights of foreigners depends on CSOs assistance and support. In such a context, migration dynamics creates need for additional empowerment and upgrading of knowledge of CSOs. CSOs from across the WB region will be trained on creating functional systems that enable foreigners to access the fundamental rights, including integration programs and community support. The action will strengthen the capacities of the CSOs and national human rights institutions (NHRI) to contribute in policymaking, promotion and protection of human rights of foreigners and their inclusion into sustainable social and economic development of the WB region. CSOs will be empowered with knowledge and skills in developing and implementation national and regional projects and advocacy materials to improve the social and economic rights of vulnerable foreigners.

Regarding the situation at the national level, in 2022 a total of 5169 temporary residence permits were issued in North Macedonia: 2140 to Turkish citizens, 946 to Kosovo citizens, 595 to Albanian citizens, 406 to Serbian citizens, 162 to Ukrainian citizens, 139 to German citizens and the remaining to others. From all temporary residence permits, 2071 were issued for labour purposes, 1151 for education/studying, 1545 to family relatives of citizens of North Macedonia, 108 for humanitarian reasons, and the rest for other reasons.

In the same period, in the Republic of North Macedonia, 29394 illegal crossings (illegal transit of migrants) were registered and 168 requests for asylum requests, out of which there were no refugee status and subsidiary protection recognized[[1]](#footnote-1).

**Purpose of the Call**

This action is launched within the project “Inclusion of FOreigners in WB – accesS To social and Economic Rights (FOSTER)” that was developed as a regional response of 7 CSOs affiliated in the Balkan Refugees and Migration Council (BRMC)[[2]](#footnote-2) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) to address common migration-related challenges in the Western Balkan region, with the focus on fundamental human rights of different vulnerable groups of migrants and foreigners, particularly their access to social and economic rights. The project is funded by European Union within the scope of EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023 (IPA III) under the lot “Human Rights, Anti-discrimination and Inter-Cultural Dialogue”.

1. **OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND TARGET GROUPS**

The **overall objective** is fully protected and promoted fundamental rights of foreigners within the WB region, according to the EU standards, with special focus on economic and social rights of vulnerable foreigners.

The **specific objective is** strengthened capacities of the CSOs and human rights institutions to contribute to relevant policymaking, promote and protect fundamental rights of vulnerable foreigners and their inclusion into sustainable social and economic development in the WB region.

**Target groups**

1. Vulnerable groups of foreigners, such as regular and irregular migrants, refugees, victims of different crimes, and other vulnerable persons among foreigners in the WB countries;
2. State and local institutions;
3. Media;
4. Local citizens and municipalities.
5. **FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY**

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 22.000,00**. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

**Size of grants**

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must **up to EUR 5,500.00 EUR**.

The grant will cover the entire eligible costs of the action.

**Number of grants**

The overall number of national grants will be **up to four**.

1. **Rules FOR the call for proposalS**

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

***Eligibility of applicants***

In order to be eligible for a grant, the applicant must:

* be a legal entity registered before 1 December 2023
* be established in North Macedonia
* be non-profit-making;
* civil society organisation;
* be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action.

Applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG) at the moment of the award decision cannot be awarded the contract[[3]](#footnote-3).

***Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made***

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of an action may not exceed **6 (six)** months.

Location

Actions must take place in the following country: North Macedonia

Types of action

The actions proposed under this call for proposals must be contribute to the realisation of its the specific objective. Indicative list of actions is as presented below:

1. Support services related to protection of foreigners;
2. Dissemination of information/awareness campaign;
3. Research and analysis;
4. Legal support;
5. Implementation of relevant policies and reforms.

The following types of action are ineligible:

* actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses,
* actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses.

Types of activity

* workshops, seminars and other training and mentoring actions, particularly including those aimed at supporting relevant internal capacity development (of the applicant organisations);
* activities aiming to deliver concrete services responding to the needs of vulnerable foreigners and/or other relevant target groups, including legal aid, psychosocial support, healthcare, etc.;
* activities promoting social inclusion, gender issues, inter-cultural and/or inter-religious literacy and dialogue;
* activities aimed at fighting discrimination and/or cooperation with relevant independent bodies;
* public awareness and communication campaigns;
* media campaigns, production of news and relevant information tools (leaflets etc.);
* education and training, including of local media as target groups;
* activities strengthening the watchdog role of CSOs in the implementation of relevant policies and reforms;
* policy monitoring and publication of relevant monitoring reports;
* research, analysis and advocacy activities;
* activities that promote implementation of relevant laws and regulations;
* activities that support discussion between different stakeholders and/or consultation with stakeholders, including establishment of dialogue with political parties or local legislative bodies;
* activities that promote cooperation and exchange between different local communities and local self-governments, in support to the position of the foreigners in their communities;
* activities strengthening networking and coalition building, particularly through information sharing, experience exchange and joint advocacy;
* other activities enhancing the promotion and protection of fundamental rights and access to services.

Financial support to third parties[[4]](#footnote-4)

Applicants **may not** propose **financial support to third parties**.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. As far as possible, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must incorporate information and communication activities designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

Applicants must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing (see “Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions” specified and published by the European Commission at: <https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility-guidance-external-actions_en>).

Number of applications and grants per applicants

The applicant **may not** submit more than **1** application under this call for project proposals.

The applicant **may not** be awarded more than **1** grant under this call for project proposals.

***Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included***

Only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for ‘eligible costs’.

**Eligible costs** are actual costs incurred by the grant beneficiary which meet all the following criteria:

1. they are indicated in the estimated Budget proposal;
2. they are incurred during the implementation of the action;
3. they are necessary for the implementation of the project activities;
4. they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary(ies) and determined according to the accounting standards and the usual cost accounting practices applicable to the beneficiary(ies);
5. they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
6. they are reasonable, justified and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

**Non-eligible costs**

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

1. debts and debt service charges (interest);
2. provisions for losses, debts or potential future liabilities;
3. VAT
4. costs financed by another action or work programme;
5. purchases of land or buildings;
6. currency exchange losses;
7. credits to third parties;
8. salary costs of the personnel of national administrations;
9. bonuses included in costs of staff.

**The reimbursement of eligible costs is based on:**

1. **unit costs**: covering all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by reference to an amount per unit.
2. **lump sums**: covering in global terms all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance.

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant contract do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the contracting authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant as a result of these corrections.

It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

***Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct***

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular, and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

**Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment**

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The European Commission reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, ‘corrupt practices’ are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

d) Unusual commercial expenses

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

e) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

1. **HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW**

 ***Application forms***

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions for the applications in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A).

Applicants must apply in **English** or in **Macedonian**

Any error or major discrepancy/inconsistences presented in the various sections of the Application form and/or Budget breakdown may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that only the grant application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

Incomplete applications will be rejected.

No additional annexes should be sent.

***Where and how to send applications***

Applications must be submitted in electronic format to:

contact@myla.org.mk

***Deadline for submission of applications***

The deadline for submission of applications is **20 January 2024**.

Application submitted after given deadline will not be taken into consideration and will be rejected.

***Further information about applications***

An information session on this call for proposals will be held online on **27 December 2023 at 11:00h**. (All interested parties can register to participate in the information session until 26.12.2023 at the email address; contact@myla.org.mk. Registered parties will receive a link with instructions to join the info session)

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 10 days before the deadline for the submission of applications to the below address(es), indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: contact@myla.org.mk

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 7 days before the deadline for the submission of applications.

Please note that the contracting authority may decide to cancel the call for proposals procedure at any stage.

1. **EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS**

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the Selection Committee. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the Eligibility criteria stated in Section 4, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

STEP 1: OPENING & ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS

During the opening and administrative check the following will be assessed:

1. If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
2. If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the in Section 4. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION

The full applications that pass this check will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants. They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below.

**EVALUATION GRID**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Maximum Score** |
| **1. Relevance** | **30** |
| * 1. How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants?
 | **15** |
| * 1. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target groups?
 | **5** |
| * 1. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?
 | **5** |
| * 1. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)?
 | **5** |
| **2. Design of the action** | **20** |
| 2.1 How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged results? | 15 |
| 2.2 Is analysis of the problems involved and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders included? Does the designed action properly reflect them? | 5 |
| **3. Implementation approach** | **15** |
| 3.1 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible?  | 5 |
| 3.2 Is the timeline realistic? | 5 |
| 3.3 Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)? | 5 |
| **4. Sustainability of the action**  | **20** |
| 4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups? | 10 |
| 4.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing? | 5 |
| 4.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable?- Financially *(e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs)*- Institutionally *(will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local ‘ownership’ of the results of the action?)*- At policy level (where applicable) *(what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods)* | 5 |
| **5. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action** | **15** |
| 5.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? |  5 |
| 5.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory? |  10 |
| **Maximum total score** | **100** |

**PROVISIONAL SELECTION**

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (*see Section 7 below*). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

The eligibility of applicants will be verified according to the criteria set out in *Section 4*.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals.

1. **SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR PROVISIONALLY SELECTED APPLICATIONS**

An applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents in order to allow the contracting authority to verify the eligibility of the applicant:

1. The statute or relevant articles of the statute confirming mandate of the association;
2. A copy of valid registration form of the association;
3. A copy of the applicant’s latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed);
4. A financial identification form of the applicant conforming to the model attached as Annex C of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the applicant is established.

The documents must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals.

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided before the deadline indicated in the request for supporting documents sent to the applicant by the contracting authority, the application may be rejected.

After verifying the supporting documents, the Selection Committee will make a final decision on the award of grants.

1. **NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY’S DECISION**

The applicants will be informed about the Call for Proposals results within 60 days from the day when the Call for Proposals was announced. The list of approved applications will be published on Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLAs) website.

1. **LIST ANNEXES**

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

Annex A: Grant application form (Word format)

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Financial identification form (only for provisionally selected)

1. **INDICATIVE TIMETABLE**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **DATE** |
| **1. Info session**  | No later than 27 December 2023 |
| **2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority** | 10 January 2024 |
| **3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority** | 12 January 2024  |
| **4. Deadline for submission of applications** | 20 January 2024  |
| **5. Information to applicants on opening, administrative checks, evaluation of applications and provisional selection (Step 1 and 2 )** | 10 February 2024 |
| **6. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)** | 18 February 2024  |
| **7. Publishing the list of approved applications** | 20 February 2024 |
| **8. Contract signature** | 15 March 2024  |

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure.

\* \* \*

1. Data obtained from the report of the Ministry of the Interior for 2022 and free access to public information. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC), Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), Civil Rights Program Kosovo\* (CRP/K), Group 484, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA), Legal Centre Podgorica and Vaša prava Bosnia and Herzegovina (VP BiH). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The updated lists of sanctions are available at [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu).

Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)