
CALL NO. 1

**“ENHANCING ROMA INCLUSION
AND EMPOWERMENT”**

- OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS –

Round 2

Launched on January 06th, 2021

Deadline for projects submission: April 15th, 2021

JANUARY 2021

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Preamble

This document aims to provide the necessary information for potential applicants (Project Promoters – PP) under the call for proposals “**Enhancing Roma Inclusion and Empowerment**”, Round 2, a call launched on January 06th, 2021, by the Romanian Social Development Fund (RSDF), under the Programme “Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Roma Inclusion” (hereinafter referred to as the Programme).

Before filling-in your application, we recommend that you make sure you have gone through all the information presented in this document and in the Guide for Applicants, and that you have understood all the aspects related to the specificity of the projects financed by EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 and the manner of their implementation¹.

1. General information on the Programme

The Programme is financed by the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 and is implemented by the Romanian Social Development Fund - RSDF (as Programme Operator – PO). The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) is the Donor Programme Partner and the Council of Europe (CoE) is the International Partner Organization.

The objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 are to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen the bilateral relations between the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and the beneficiary states by financing five priority areas:

1. Innovation, research, education and competitiveness
2. Social inclusion, youth employment and poverty reduction
3. Environment, energy, climate changes and an economy with low carbon emissions
4. Culture, civil society, good governance and fundamental rights and
5. Justice and home affairs

The Programme covers 5 of the 23 Programme areas covered by the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021, respectively:

- Area no 7 Roma Inclusion and Empowerment
- Area no 8 Children and Youth at Risk
- Area no 10 Local Development and Poverty Reduction
- Area no 16 Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency
- Area no 17 Human Rights –National Implementation

The overall objective of the Programme is to actively contribute to strengthening the economic and social cohesion at national and local level in Romania and to strengthening the bilateral relations with the Donor States. In this respect, the PO facilitates and encourages the establishment of partnerships between entities from Romania and the Donor States, i.e Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

The Programme has a total value of **86,941,176 Euro**, out of which:

- 25,000,000 Euro financing from EEA Grants 2014-2021
- 48,900,000 Euro financing from Norway Grants 2014-2021

¹ An indicative list of documents is presented at the end of this call text, as well as the addresses of the web pages where these documents can be consulted.

- 13,041,176 Euro financing from the Romanian state budget (15% co-financing)

During the implementation of the Programme, the principles of cost-effectiveness, transparency and responsibility in the management of the funds should be observed to the highest degree, and also the principles of good governance, sustainability of results, ensuring equal opportunities and of gender, must be observed. All the projects shall apply the values and fundamental principles of the European Union and the Council of Europe (e.g.: *respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, respect for the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities etc.*). The Programme will be conducted in accordance with applicable national and European law, as well as the specific rules applicable to the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021.

2. Open call for proposals “Enhancing Roma Inclusion and Empowerment”

This call for project proposals falls under the **programme area no. 7 “Roma Inclusion and Empowerment”** and contributes to the achievement of the programme outcome “**enhanced inclusion and empowerment of Roma**” in Romania.

2.1 Objectives of the call for proposals

The call shall support projects that will contribute to an **enhanced inclusion and empowerment of Roma in Romania** and that will be in line with the following **10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion**:²

- **Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory projects.** Projects aiming at the inclusion of Roma people shall respect and realise the core values of the European Union, which include human rights and dignity, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity as well as economic development. The projects shall be integrated with mainstream policies, particularly in the fields of **education, employment, social affairs, housing and health**, as well as **non-discrimination and antigypsyism**.
- **Explicit but not exclusive targeting.** This approach implies focusing on Roma people as a target group without excluding others who live under similar socio-economic conditions.
- **Inter-cultural approach.** Through this approach, projects shall provide the majority population with tools and competences to help them understand the Roma culture, and the Roma with tools and competences to understand mainstream culture. As a result, promoting mutual understanding helps tackle prejudice on both sides.
- Aiming for the **mainstream**. Projects will contribute to including Roma people in the mainstream of society (mainstream educational institutions, mainstream jobs, mainstream housing). Thus, projects will **avoid measures that risk strengthening segregation** or even creating new forms of segregation and will actively support **de-segregation**³.
- Awareness of the **gender dimension**. Roma inclusion projects shall take account of the needs and circumstances of Roma women, who suffer disadvantages such as limited access to employment,

² The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion have been presented for the first time at the meeting of the European Platform for Roma inclusion in Prague on 24 April 2009. On 8 June 2009, the EU Council of Ministers in charge of Social Affairs annexed the Principles to their conclusions and invited Member States and the Commission to take them into account. Available at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7573706d-e7c4-4ece-ae59-2b361246a7b0/language-en>

³ Under the present Call, the conceptual framework provided by the European Commission shall be used, as detailed in the Guidance for Member States on the use of European Structural and Investment Funds in tackling educational and spatial segregation, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/thematic_guidance_fiche_segregation_en.pdf

education, health and social services, often being victims of multiple discrimination: on the grounds of gender and ethnic origin.

- **Transfer of evidence-based policies.** Projects will support exchange of good practices between various stakeholders from Romania and from the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).
- **Use of EU instruments.** Projects shall support and promote the EU legislation supporting Roma inclusion (such as Racial Equality Directive, Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia).
- **Involvement of regional and local authorities.** Projects shall be designed, implemented and evaluated in partnership with authorities and public entities at local or regional level, as they are essential for Roma inclusion.
- **Involvement of civil society.** Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in general and Roma NGOs and networks, in particular, have a valuable expertise to offer, adding value to the design, implementation and evaluation of projects.
- **Active participation of the Roma.** Roma involvement must take place in projects through the input of expertise from Roma experts and civil servants, as well as by consultation with a range of Roma stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects.

Projects funded under the present call shall contribute to meeting one or more of the following **objectives of the call for proposals**:

- **Objective no 1: Increasing the access and quality of sectorial or integrated services for Roma**, in the following sectors: social assistance, education, employment, health and housing.

Objective no 2: Empowering Roma people, especially Roma women, youth, experts and leaders.

In the framework of the present call, empowerment of Roma people is considered as the process of expansion of their assets and capabilities both at individual level (health, education, housing etc) and at collective level (ability to organise and mobilise to take collective action for solving their problems) in order to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives⁴.

- **Objective no 3: Combating all forms of discrimination** of Roma people. The call will support projects that will promote respect of rights of Roma people, fight against anti-Gypsism, stereotypes and harassment, at the same time increasing the awareness on intercultural approaches (collecting and promoting experiences on groups of Roma, cultures, languages etc).

Depending on the number of call objectives addressed, projects will distinctly receive points in evaluation.

2.2 Expected results at call level

The projects funded under this call shall contribute to achieving the following programme results:

No	Expected programme results	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Source of verification	Target value at call level
Outcome 1	Enhanced inclusion and empower-	IP02 Number of Roma individuals with ID documents secured <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by gender)</i>	Number	PP's records	100

⁴ World Bank (2002) Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Source book. Washington D.C.: The World Bank. Available at:

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/15239/multi0page.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

No	Expected programme results	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Source of verification	Target value at call level
	ment of Roma	IP04 Number of Roma that have received education services <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by gender)</i>	Number	PP's records	7000
		IP05 Number of Roma that have received employment services <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by gender)</i>	Number	PP's records	400
		IP06 Number of Roma that have received health services <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by gender)</i>	Number	PP's records	600
		IP07 Number of Roma that have received housing services <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by gender)</i>	Number	PP's records	100
		IP08 Number of Roma that have received integrated ⁵ services <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by gender)</i>	Number	PP's records	4500
		IP03 Number of Roma reached by empowerment measures ⁶	Number	PP's records	8000
		IP01 Level of acceptance by majority population (within the project intervention areas) of Roma	Scale 1-10	Survey results (surveys made by PPs) ⁷	(+10%)

⁵ “**Integrated services**” implies that at least two types of services (securing ID documents, education services, employment services, health services, housing services) were provided to the same person in combination. **This indicator is NOT the sum of all the service provision indicators (IP02, IP04-IP07).**

⁶ Double counting with beneficiaries of services provided in the project (if the case) should be **strictly avoided**. Roma beneficiaries of services should be included in the programme indicators IP02, IP04-IP08 (see EEA Grants Core indicators 2014-2021, available at

<https://eeagrants.org/content/download/13378/187695/version/4/file/Core+Indicators+Guidance+FM14-21.pdf>)

⁷ This indicator will be measured using surveys carried out by the PPs or their partners in two stages: at the beginning (so that they allow, according to the Programme Agreement, the calculation of the baseline value at programme level no later than 6 months after the last relevant project selected under the call has been contracted) and at the end of the implementation period, based on a common methodology for all other projects measuring this indicator, proposed by PP and agreed at the level of the PO and FMO. The subjects of the surveys shall be the members of the majority population in the project implementation areas, **in which awareness campaigns have been implemented** (see eligible activities under Call objective no 3. Combating all forms of discrimination of Roma people).

The PP and / or the project partners, as the case may be, will ensure that they have the necessary human and financial resources to develop a proposal for a methodology and data collection tool (questionnaire), collecting and processing data, and reporting the results to the PO.

No	Expected programme results	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Source of verification	Target value at call level
Output 1.1	Social inclusion services provided to Roma	IP09 Number of counties where social inclusion services are provided to Roma	Number	PP's records	25
Output 1.2	Awareness raising campaigns on Roma inclusion conducted	IP10 Number of awareness raising campaigns targeting majority population	Number	PP's records, Audio/video/print material produced as part of the campaign	10
		IP11 Number of awareness raising campaigns targeting Roma	Number	PP's records, Audio/video/print material produced as part of the campaign	5
		IP12 Number of people reached by awareness raising campaigns <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by Roma)</i>	Number	PP's records	7500
Output 1.3	Professionals working with Roma trained	IP13 Number of professionals trained in working with Roma <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by gender, Roma)</i>	Number	List of training participants	1000
Output 1.4	Roma experts and leaders trained to defend Roma rights	IP14 Number of Roma experts and leaders trained to defend Roma rights <i>(during project implementation, data will be reported disaggregated by gender)</i>	Number	List of training participants	600
Output 1.5	Anti-discrimination tools developed to be applied in working with Roma	IP15 Number of anti-discrimination tools developed	Number	PP's records	5
Bilateral outcome	Enhanced collaboration between Beneficiary and Donor	IP54 Level of satisfaction with the partnership <i>(data reported disaggregated by Beneficiary State, Donor State)</i>	Scale 1-7	Survey results made by FMO	≥ 4.5, and an increase in the baseline

	States entities involved in the programme	IP55 Level of trust between cooperating entities in Beneficiary State and Donor States (<i>data reported disaggregated by Beneficiary State, Donor State</i>)	Scale 1-7	Survey results made by FMO	≥ 4.5, and an increase in the baseline
		IP56 Number of letters of intent on future collaboration	Number	PP's records	3
		IP57 Share of cooperating organizations that apply the knowledge acquired from bilateral partnership (<i>data reported disaggregated by Beneficiary State, Donor State</i>)	Percentage	Survey results made by FMO	60%
Bilateral output 1	Exchanges ⁸ between Beneficiary and Donor States entities supported	IP58 Number of participants from Beneficiary States in exchanges ⁹ (<i>data reported disaggregated by gender, Donor State</i>)	Number	List of participants	10
Bilateral output 2	Professional exchanges with representatives of relevant entities from Romania and Donor States supported	IP59 Number of participants from Donors States involved in exchanges ¹⁰ (<i>data reported disaggregated by gender, Donor State</i>)	Number	List of participants	10

While a single project must NOT necessarily contribute to ALL the above-mentioned programme indicators, its contribution to achieving programme results and indicators will be assessed in the content evaluation stage, as detailed in the relevant section of this call.

Information on the methodology for measuring the programme result indicators (outcome and outputs) is presented in the Guide for Applicants.

The contribution of each project to achieving the expected results must be proportional with the requested grant, the average cost per beneficiary from the target groups being estimated at **750 Euro**¹¹.

The minimum number of beneficiaries from the main target groups is of **400 persons per project**.

⁸ See the provisions of the FMO Guide “Core indicators 2014-2021” regarding the programmes/activities considered to be “exchanges”.

⁹ Individuals from Beneficiary State who participated in exchange programmes/activities between the Beneficiary State and a Donor State and completed such programmes/activities.

¹⁰ Individuals from Donors States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) who participated in exchange programmes/activities between the Donor State and the Beneficiary State and completed such programmes/activities.

¹¹ Taking into account the present call’s estimated number of beneficiaries corresponding to programme indicators IP02-IP08 and IP13 (21.300 beneficiaries) and the total financial allocation for both rounds of the call (16.000.000 EUR), an average cost per beneficiary of 750 EUR results. As a result, for example, a 300.000 EUR project should target at least 400 beneficiaries from the main target groups

In determining the number of project beneficiaries, the PP shall take into account that the project must have a reasonable balance between the expected results and the estimated costs, aspect which will be considered in evaluation. Therefore, it is recommended that PP pursues a proper balance between the number and complexity of interventions, the type/complexity and the length of an intervention for the same beneficiary, the expected impact, in correlation with the requested budget and the contribution to the expected results of the Programme.

2.3 Eligibility of target groups

General provisions regarding the target groups

Priority is given to:

1. Projects implemented in **rural or urban disadvantaged areas with over 20% of Roma population**¹². The identification of an area as having over 20% of its population composed of Roma can be done by any of the following methods:
 - (a) reference to any official data such as census data, reports of local, national or international institutions etc.;
 - (b) statement issued by the local authority from each implementation area;
 - (c) statement issued by local educational institutions (kindergardens, schools, highshools), Roma political parties, regional public entities with competences in the area of Roma empowerment or inclusion, such as the County Roma Offices or local / regional / national NGOs with a proven record of working with Roma in the respective communities;
 - (d) conclusions drawn from meetings/interviews with local Roma community leaders / informal leaders / activists / members of the community carried out during the PP's own consultation meetings/research¹³ aimed at identifying the need for project implementation.
2. Projects that address **a need at national level, strategic for the Roma inclusion field in Romania.**

The aforementioned criteria are **not** eligibility criteria and not respecting them does not lead to the rejection of the project proposal. However, projects respecting at least one of the two criteria will receive distinct points in evaluation. Details are provided in the Guide for Applicants.

In line with the principle of “explicit, but not exclusive targeting”, projects funded under the call will focus on Roma people as target group, but **may also address the needs of non-Roma persons in vulnerable situations**, provided that (1) they live under similar socio-economic conditions, at risk or facing various forms of social-economic exclusion and (2) the number of Roma beneficiaries of the project **is at least 2/3 of the total number of beneficiaries.**

During the project implementation, the belonging of a target group member to Roma ethnicity will be determined based on the **self-identification method** and will be reported based on a standard statement issued by the respective person (or by parents/tutors in case of minors). As an exception, where self-identification cannot be performed (due to, for example, the reticence of Roma participants to assume their ethnical identity), the percentage of target group members belonging to Roma ethnicity can be determined indirectly, by either of the following methods:

- a. Statement issued by an institutional stakeholder with access to information on the ethnicity of the members of the target group, as long as this information was obtained through self-

¹² Percentage calculated in relation with the total population of the locality (SIRUTA code, level 3), in case of rural localities or in relation with the neighbourhood, in case of cities/towns.

¹³ Where this method of determining the ethnic composition of the population is used, the PP will ensure to keep a signed copy of the supporting documents/research summary which will also contain the names of the Roma leaders / activists / community members who have been consulted and will, upon request, support the PO to verify with these stakeholders the conformity of the information included in these documents.

identification methods (e.g. the local school can issue a statement on the percentage of Roma members in the target group, based on the self-identification as Roma by the parents of the children attending it).

- b. Identification done by local Roma stakeholders (formal / informal Roma community leaders / activists).

Eligible target groups

The projects submitted under the present call for proposals shall mandatorily address the needs of at least one of the following **main target groups**, corresponding to one or several **outcome** programme indicators (see indicator table in section 2.2):

1. **Roma persons and/or families (children, youth and adults) in vulnerable situations**, at-risk or facing various forms of social-economic exclusion, who are in need of **receiving ID documents, education, employment, health and/or housing services**.

In implementation, persons will be eligible as target group if they are recipients of various social benefits or if other documents are provided (social inquiry, unemployment certificate etc) issued by a specialist (working in the project or from a third party) certifying the vulnerability situation and the needs as a basis for provision of services in the project. It is encouraged the provision of integrated services to individuals and focusing the intervention on families in vulnerable situations.

2. **Roma persons** (adults, youth or children), especially **Roma women and youth**, with low levels of awareness regarding their rights and participation in community life, who are in need to participate in **empowerment activities**.
3. **Roma experts and leaders** - persons acting as individuals or in NGOs, action groups, community groups, public authorities and institutions, trade unions, pupil or student organisations, political parties, youth organisations or other associative types, persons in formal or informal positions of leadership in relation with the Roma persons and/or families in vulnerable situations (including social, health, school mediators etc.). This target group shall be included in the project **only in conjunction with at least one of the previous main target groups**.

The following **secondary target groups** may also benefit from project activities:

- **Specialists/volunteers** from the fields of education, health, employment, social services, public administration, NGOs etc involved in the provision of services to Roma persons.
- **Community members belonging to the majority population** from the project implementation areas, living under similar socio-economic conditions, at risk or facing various forms of social-economic exclusion.
- **Community members belonging to the majority population**, living in the project implementation areas, as subjects of awareness campaign(s).

PP will describe in the project proposal the criteria and the selection process of the persons composing the target groups, in compliance with the equal opportunities principle.

Projects targeting secondary target groups will receive distinct points in evaluation.

2.4 Eligibility of activities

General provisions regarding the activities. Respect of legislation. Avoiding double funding

In terms of **activities**, it is recommended that partners develop the project proposals in a consultative manner, with potential beneficiaries and stakeholders, aspect which will be described in the application.

Project services and activities have to be adapted to the existing specific conditions in the implementation area, to take into account the provisions of European, national, regional and micro-regional/local strategic documents relevant for the Roma inclusion field and to be developed in a participatory and integrated¹⁴ manner, with the aim to achieve concrete results at the level of the target groups, both during the project implementation and on medium and long term (depending on the size and complexity of the project).

In particular, projects aiming to provide social inclusion services at local level, must justify the relevance of the proposed services and, if the case, investment, by identifying in the project proposal either the existing strategic documents (local development strategies and action plans of Local Action Groups, action plans developed under other various programmes and initiatives, Romania's Government Strategy for Inclusion of Roma etc) or the results of the community consultation process that support the necessity and opportunity of the respective services and investment for the needs of the target groups.

All projects will promote the compliance with the principles of „Involvement of local and regional authorities”, „Involvement of civil society” and „Active participation of the Roma”¹⁵ in a way that will demonstrate the involvement of the relevant stakeholders (members of target groups, Roma organisations and networks, academics, public authorities at community level etc) in the selection of the proposed project services/activities and, if the case, investment, which will provide transparency to the decision-making process and will increase the accountability of the local authorities. In this regard, partners will organize a process of community consultation on the purpose of the project and proposed activities. Details regarding the minimum requirements for community consultation are provided in the Guide for Applicants.

Depending on their specificity, each activity/service provided in the project will comply with the applicable legislation regarding accreditation/licensing/authorisation of its provider/premises, responsibility which belongs to the providing institution. Meeting this criterion may become an eligibility condition for project costs before the project closure, depending on the specificity of the project.

In activities and methodologies, projects will valorize potential synergies with other EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 Programmes, in particular with Programme “European Public Health Challenges” (Programme Operator – Ministry of Health) and Programme “Active Citizens Fund” (Fund Operator – Civil Society Development Foundation), at the same time preventing any overlap.

Under this call, in order to avoid overlapping and double funding with other similar initiatives, there will not be eligible activities that have already been or are going to be carried out through other projects (financed from structural funds or other national non-reimbursable funds, EEA and Norwegian etc) be it under implementation/within the mandatory sustainability period at the time of grant application submission or at the time of contracting the project (if the grant is awarded)¹⁶.

More over, in order to avoid double funding, there are not eligible, under the present call, activities which fall under the PP/partners obligation to ensure sustainability of projects previously funded under RO10 Programme „Children and Youth at Risk and Local and Regional Initiatives to Reduce National Inequalities and to Promote Social Inclusion”, funded by EEA Grants 2009-2014.

Also, there are not eligible activities promoting political parties and activities that directly or indirectly promote a religious doctrine, mission or proselytism related to the beliefs of a particular faith.

¹⁴ In designing the project methodology, PPs shall consider the identified complex problems (both at community and individual level) as a whole, rather than approaching individual components in a separated way. They will deal with these problems in a holistic manner, addressing multiple aspects of a problem and linking the various thematic areas to address a specific situation.

¹⁵ See the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, previously referred to in section 2.1 Objectives of the call for proposals

¹⁶ The estimated date for contracting is the middle of the second semester of 2021.

These conditions shall be confirmed by the PP at the time of the grant application submission under this call by signing a specific Statement and also at the time of contracting, when the PP will have to sign this Statement once more, if changes occur.

If the project is funded and such breaches are acknowledged by the PO during project implementation, the respective activities shall be declared retrospectively ineligible and the corresponding amounts spent shall be returned to the PO.

Eligible activities

The project activities shall directly address the needs of the main and secondary target groups (see section 2.3 Eligibility of target groups), shall lead to measurable improvements of their situation, leading to the achievement of programme and project level indicators and of the objectives of the call.

The projects may also propose other types of activities than the ones falling in the below main categories (if not otherwise specified under each category), with the condition that they are justified in relation with the target groups' needs and that they contribute to achieving call objective(s).

One such category of eligible activities in the current context is the one dealing with prevention and fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as with its negative social and economic impact on the target groups, at community level.

All project activities must comply with the non-segregation principle, as described in section 2.1 Objectives of the call for proposals.

Activities contributing to Call Objective no 1: Increasing the access and quality of sectorial or integrated services for Roma

Support for obtaining identity documents

- Legal assistance for obtaining valid identity documents (birth certificate, identity card or equivalent) and other documents necessary as a prerequisite for obtaining these.

Education services for Roma persons in vulnerable situations

- Activities for increasing the access and participation of children (aged 0-6) to quality and inclusive early education and care (ISCED 0): establishment/development of local services (creche, kindergarten, day centre etc), provision of support measures etc;
- Activities for stimulating school participation and preventing dropout/early school leaving in primary and secondary education (ISCED 1-3), as well as for school reintegration and improving the learning outcomes, such as: school mediation, educational and vocational counselling and guidance; literacy, remedial activities, "school after school" type activities, "second chance" type activities, tutoring and mentoring programmes etc;
- Non-formal education and leisure activities aiming to support participation in education of Roma persons in vulnerable situations: preventing school dropout/early school leaving through sport, creativity activities, excursions and thematic camps etc;
- Incentives for increasing the motivation and mobilisation of persons to participate in project activities (non-financial benefits for beneficiaries to participate in certain activities, ensuring transport expenses for attending school and non-formal education activities etc);
- Support for participation in post-secondary (including vocational and technical education) and university-level education of Roma persons in vulnerable situations (such as educational counselling, tutoring and mentoring programmes, mobility support for participation in education);
- Other types of formal, non-formal and informal education activities and support measures for Roma children, youth and adults in vulnerable situations conducting to the increase of the

project impact.

Employment services

- Vocational evaluation, information and counselling (including support in CV preparation and sending job applications);
- Evaluation and certification, according to the applicable legal framework, of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. The courses must be provided exclusively by legal persons authorised according to the law and must be finalised with certificates of professional competences, with national recognition;
- Vocational training courses, including mobility costs for participation (transport, accommodation, meals). The courses must be provided exclusively by legal persons authorised under G.O. 129/2000 and must be finalised with qualification or completion certificates (as the case may be) with national recognition.
- Mediation for job placement and job retention etc.

Health services

- Provision of primary healthcare services in the project (including dental care services), that are not covered by the national health system;
- Health mediation, activities for promoting and facilitating the respect of basic hygiene rules (establishing public baths, community laundry rooms) and healthy nutrition; vaccination campaigns, family planning etc.

Improvement of housing conditions

The present call will finance exclusively one or more of the following activities of improving the housing conditions of Roma persons in vulnerable situations:

- Construction, rehabilitation and refurbishment of **social houses**¹⁷, provided that the facility will start to be used by target group members during the life of the project and alternative decent housing conditions will be offered to the target group living in the respective houses along the duration of the infrastructure works/refurbishment, if the case. As part of the sustainability obligations, PP/partners shall ensure the continuous use of the social houses by the respective Roma beneficiaries, as long as the eligibility criteria continue to be met (or by other Roma beneficiaries in similar conditions);
- Legal assistance for clarification of individual housing situation and rights (legal fees, taxes etc);
- Connection of individual households to utility networks (including internet) or development of independent solutions (heating, sewage solutions); extension of living space, repairs to individual houses, construction of sanitary facilities (bathrooms, toilets). This activity is eligible provided that the PP/partners:
 - comply with the provisions of applicable legislation in the construction field and ensure that the works do not put in danger the initial household infrastructure (technical expertise);
 - describe in the relevant section of the project proposal, and subsequently enforce in implementation, a specific methodology for selection of beneficiaries, ensuring their involvement as volunteers in the activity.

It is recommended that families benefitting from the housing improvement activity benefit also from at least one other service provided in the project (education, employment, health etc), as the case may be,

¹⁷ As defined by Law 114/1996, as subsequently amended and supplemented.

in order to ensure the sustainability of the respective support measures. Donations of construction materials to physical persons and construction of new houses (other than the social houses, as defined by the law) are not eligible activities.

The maintenance of the above facilities/housing improvements will be part of the PP/partner responsibilities in the sustainability period, reason for which PP/partners are encouraged to further formalise these legal responsibilities in relation with the respective beneficiaries.

Training of professional staff and volunteers (from the fields of education, health, employment, social work, from public administration and NGO sector) in working with Roma. Training activities are eligible only if they include both theoretical and practical activities, monitored by trainers or mentors along their implementation and whose impact on the target group is demonstrated by evaluation reports.

Parental education programmes for raising awareness regarding the role of the family in the **education** of the child, encouraging participation of parents in the educational process both in school and outside, including for acquiring child rearing abilities, support groups for mothers etc;

Information and awareness raising activities and campaigns¹⁸ targeting Roma persons and/or families in vulnerable situations, aiming to support their participation in project **activities**;

Activities of improving the infrastructure necessary for provision of services from the above mentioned main categories, justified in relation with the needs in the implementation area:

- construction, rehabilitation, extension and refurbishment of service provision facilities, including provision of utilities, sanitary conditions and heating. In well justified situations, procurement of buildings and land with the above mentioned destinations is also eligible;
- procurement of furniture, equipments, didactic aids, devices and materials, vehicles for facilitating the participation of target groups in project activities;

Material support for promoting participation of target groups in project services: health and nutrition supplies, school supplies, clothing and footwear, medical tests, vitamins, hygiene **products**, food etc. Meals offered to children and youth will meet the minimal legal provisions regarding the caloric content and health benefits. PP will describe in the project the methodology for delivery of material support (selection criteria, conditions for continued aid provision etc) and will condition its delivery, in implementation, on participation to project activities;

Best practice exchange activities with entities from Donor States in any of the project **intervention** areas.

Projects providing **integrated services** to target groups (person receiving at least two services from the following categories: securing ID documents, education, employment, health and housing services) will receive distinct points in evaluation.

Activities contributing to Call Objective no 2: Empowering Roma people:

Development of Roma people's individual capabilities via formal, non-formal and informal education tools and instruments, such as: development of socio-emotional skills, including by promotion of success models and self-esteem; development of employability by acquiring soft skills necessary at the workplace (communication and assertiveness, team work, conflict resolution, time management);

¹⁸ An awareness raising campaign is a planned series of coordinated communication activities that are realised to achieve a common goal, for a defined target group and are conducted in a defined time period. Awareness raising campaigns should have a common subject of communication activities and a common message. A single project could encompass more than one awareness raising campaign, but the subject and the goals of the campaigns must be clearly defined and distinguished. A single communication activity (i.e. single event, advertisement, announcement(s) in social media etc. is not considered as a campaign, but as part of one, and must not be counted separately).

learning Romani or majority language (when requested by the Roma community); participating in cultural activities aimed at showcasing or appreciating Roma culture etc.;

Providing information to Roma people, especially Roma women and youth (girls), regarding how to assert rights, ways to access services and hold state and nonstate actors accountable, delivered not only in print but also via group discussions, storytelling, debates, family and household budgeting, including training of trainers for Roma leaders and experts on how to apply these tools etc. It is encouraged the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), in project activities, for ensuring the access of Roma people to information. Donations of ICT equipment to individuals are not eligible.

Inclusion and participation of Roma persons in decision-making at various levels, such as mechanisms for co-opting representatives of the Roma community in decisions regarding projects to be submitted on investment at commune/town level; participation in the receipt of investment works in the benefit of the Roma community; participative budgeting mechanisms at community level; training of Roma experts and leaders on advocacy techniques etc.

Activities of increasing the accountability and capacity of public authorities and institutions to be more inclusive, such as training of professionals from public administration on working together with Roma; development of internal procedures; increasing the cultural sensitivity of the staff etc.

Community facilitation - Activities promoting local organisational capacity, i.e. the ability of people to work together, organise themselves and mobilise resources to solve problems of common interest:

- Identification of Roma formal and informal leaders and community stakeholders;
- Education for democratic citizenship and human rights education, delivered using various non-formal education tools and instruments;
- Training of Roma leaders and experts, Roma youth, on various community facilitation related topics;
- Carrying out consultative meetings with the participation of local authorities and community initiative groups for identification of problems and solutions at community level;
- Mobilisation of community initiative groups;
- Development of local action plans for implementing the identified solutions;
- Short term, small scale actions / projects aiming at solving community problems in the areas of social inclusion, identified as part of the community facilitation process. These actions/projects must contribute to meeting at least one of the call objectives and must have impact on achieving some of the programme indicators (see section 2.2 Expected results at call level). The community actions/projects will be implemented by PP / partners according to a methodology (to be developed by PP/partners according to guidelines that will be received from the PO). The methodology will be approved by the PO during the project, prior to the implementation of the respective actions/projects.
The total amount that can be budgeted for such actions is of maximum 45.000 EUR per the entire project and shall be specifically included under budget chapter 5 Other costs for providing services to beneficiaries. The eligible costs for the respective actions are only those eligible under the previously mentioned budget chapter (therefore infrastructure is excluded) and do not represent re-granting;
- Other activities of developing the local organisational capacity.

Awareness raising campaigns on empowerment related topics, targeting Roma persons, especially Roma women and youth with low levels of awareness regarding their rights and participation in community life;

Best practice exchange activities with entities from Donor States on empowerment issues.

The eligible budget for the last two mentioned activities is of maximum 15% of the total project costs (total for both activities) and will be included in separate lines under budget chapter 6 Other project costs.

Activities contributing to Call Objective no 3: Combating all forms of discrimination of Roma people, projects may include activities from the following categories:

Awareness raising campaigns on anti-discrimination issues, targeting majority population in project implementation areas, promoting respect of rights of Roma people, fighting against anti-Gypsyism, stereotypes and harassment;

Development of anti-discrimination tools such as public policies, legislative initiatives, strategic documents, action plans, working methodologies and instruments, curricula, guidelines etc;

Training of professional staff and volunteers (training of trainers in the fields of education, health, employment, social work, from public administration and NGO sector) on anti-discrimination issues. Training activities are eligible only if they include both theoretical and practical activities, monitored by trainers or mentors along their implementation and whose impact on the target group is demonstrated by evaluation reports. Projects that include development and/or provision of training courses accredited as continuous training by relevant authorities and professional bodies (for example, Ministry of Education, College of Social Workers, College of Psychologists, College of Physicians etc) or training courses that follow the curricula and manuals of the Council of Europe¹⁹ will receive distinct points in evaluation.

Organisation of public events with active participation of Roma and majority population, aiming to promote the knowledge of the history, culture and traditions of Roma community

Best practice exchange activities with entities from Donor States in the field of fighting against discrimination and promotion of human rights.

2.5 Financial allocation

The total amount allocated to this call is **7.806.133,95 Euro**, including EEA Grants 2014-2021 (85%) and public co-financing (15% to be increased in case savings will be identified and allocated to the programme area no 7 "Roma Inclusion and Empowerment" .The respective increase, if any, will be publicly announced by the PO.

The minimum amount (grant) that can be requested for the implementation of one project is **300.000 Euro**, and the maximum amount is **1.000.000 Euro**.

2.6 Grant rate and private contribution

If the PP is a public entity the grant rate shall be 100% of the project eligible expenses of the project, and this shall apply to all project partners.

If the PP is a public entity, it may allocate additional funds for the implementation of the project other than those provided by the Grant, funds that will not be mentioned in its budget. In this case, RSDF will not be responsible for monitoring these expenses, and the proper implementation of the project must not be conditioned by the availability of other funds than those provided for in the Grant.

If the PP is a non-governmental organization (NGO), a waiver pursuant to Article 14.5. of the Regulation is granted for the co-financing requirements set in Article 6.4.3. of the Regulation and the project grant rate may be up to 100% of the eligible expenditure of the project. While co-financing is not mandatory and can be brought in cash and/ or in kind, in the form of voluntary work, it can be appreciated as a valuable contribution to the sustainability, if provided, and it will be scored in evaluation.

¹⁹ Please refer to the following web page for a list of manuals and handbooks produced by the Council of Europe in the area of Non-Formal Education, Human Rights Education and Intercultural Learning: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/manuals-and-handbooks>

According to Art. 1.6.1 (n) of the applicable Regulation, a non-governmental organization is a non-profit voluntary organization established as a legal entity, having a non-commercial purpose, independent of local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organizations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered as NGOs.

The projects financed under this call shall not, under any circumstances, include activities that fall under the State and Minimis aid.

2.7 Project duration and implementation period

In determining the duration of the project, the PP shall take into account the limits set by the Programme (the minimum and/or maximum duration of a project, the latest date for finalizing the implementation of the project), the application of procurement procedures, the specificity of the reporting and payment system, but also the individual aspects of the project (types of activities and impact on target groups, types and level of estimated costs).

The recommended date for finalizing the implementation of projects financed under the Programme is **November 30th, 2023** and the recommended duration of a project is **between 12 and 24 months**.

2.8 Eligible Project Promoters

In compliance with the provisions of chapter 2 - Eligibility, of the Annex II – Operational rules, PA 10, of the Programme Agreement, under the call for proposals “Enhancing Roma Inclusion and Empowerment” the eligible project promoters are legal persons established in Romania, according to applicable national legislation:

1. **non-governmental organisations²⁰** (NGOs).
2. **public entities** (*for ex., central and local public authorities, including agencies, structures/other bodies in their subordination/coordination and other public bodies with responsibilities in the project field etc*);
3. **associations of local authorities²¹**;

The eligibility of the PP (legal person, type of organisation, status etc.) shall be demonstrated with legal documents at the submission of the project.

Eligible PPs can submit in this capacity one single proposal under this Round 2 of the Call (therefore, PPs that have submitted a project under Round 1 of the Call can still apply for a grant under the present Round 2 of the Call). In case the project does not fulfil this criterion, it shall be subject to further clarification during the formal verification stage, when PP shall be requested to choose which of the projects submitted is kept in competition and which one/ones is/are withdrawn.

In determining the number of proposals to be submitted, a PP must consider the rule that, at the level of the entire Programme, one PP can receive funding, in this capacity, for maximum two projects, submitted under the various calls and grant schemes²². This represents an eligibility criterion. If, at the moment of project submission under this call, the PP has already been granted two projects in this capacity, the project application(s) received under this call shall be automatically excluded.

The entities in one of the following situations are not entitled to receive a project grant:

- *are bankrupt, are under the administration of a judicial authority or under liquidation procedures, have suspended their business activities, are the subject of proceedings*

²⁰ Under the present Call, an NGO is a legal person fiscally registered in Romania that fulfills the conditions of the previously mentioned definition.

²¹ Associations of local authorities are associative structures of the local public administration authorities, of general interest, established according to the law. Under the present Call, associations of local authorities are NOT considered NGOs (see definition), therefore art. 6.4(3) of the Regulation does not apply.

²² Projects submitted under the small grant scheme „Access to Funding”, in the framework of the Programme, are not considered.

- concerning the above mentioned matters, or are in any similar situation arising from a similar procedure applied under the provisions of the national legislation or regulations;*
- *are guilty of serious professional misconduct proven by any means, which the PO can reasonably justify;*
 - *have not fulfilled its obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or payment of taxes to the state budget, in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are registered/established;*
 - *are subject to a final legal judgment “res judicata”, for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization or any other illegal activity affecting the financial interests, without any evidence that they have taken in recent years corrective measures in this regard;*
 - *they have been declared to be in a serious breach of the contractual obligations regarding procurement procedures or procedures for the award of grants;*
 - *they are in a situation of a conflict of interest with the organization or persons directly or indirectly involved in the grant award procedure, regardless the moment when the PO ascertains this situation;*
 - *they are guilty of serious misrepresentation occurred in the process of supplying the information required by the PO or fail to provide the requested information, regardless the moment when this situation occurs.*

In order to be eligible, **NGOs acting as project promoters** must also have a minimal previous experience in projects implementation by having implemented in the last 7 years (January 2014 – December 2020), as project promoter/applicant or partner, projects with budgets aggregated value, **effectively spent**, in Euro²³, **of at least ½ of the value of the total grant** requested under this call for proposals. In fulfilling this criterion, PP shall consider²⁴ the entire project(s)' budget(s) managed as PP/ applicant (that could be different, lower in most of the cases, from the budgets contracted) and/ or own project(s) budget(s) managed as partner within project(s). In case the PP does not fulfil this criterion, the project shall be rejected during the formal evaluation stage.

This condition does **not** apply to public entities acting as project promoters, **nor** to NGOs acting as partners.

PPs that have amongst their board members at least 50% Roma representatives or at least 20% Roma ethnics in their staff/team will receive distinct points in evaluation.

2.9 Eligible partners

Under the present call, **the partnership between public entities / associations of local authorities and NGOs (including Local Action Groups) from Romania is mandatory** and represents an eligibility criterion which, upon failing to be met, results in the exclusion of the project in the formal verification stage.

²³ Where the project budget has been expressed in other currency than Euro, the InforEuro exchange rate of the month when the funding contract has been signed shall be used.

²⁴ In case a project has started before or ends after the reference period, i.e. January 2014 – December 2020, the project promoter shall calculate and take into consideration only the corresponding budget(s) effectively spent for the year(s) included in this period. For example: if a project managed as applicant/ promoter has started in 2012 and it was implemented for 3 years (2012-2014), the budget effectively spent taken into consideration for demonstrating the fulfilment of this criterion is only the budget spent during 2014.

The PP has the obligation of carefully calculating the values of different budgets effectively spent for demonstrating this criterion, as PO might require documents/ proofs (financial reports, letter of acceptance of expenses issued by Management Authorities/ Intermediary Organism/ Programme Operators/ other authorised bodies, balance sheets etc) for the amounts included in the Annex Relevant experience of PP in the project field (Annex 7 to the Application form).

The Programme aims to support initiatives to strengthen the cooperation at different levels between public entities and the civil society, between entities in Romania and Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). In this respect, partnership projects with entities from Romania and/or Donor States are encouraged and, depending on the value added to the partnership, will receive specific points in evaluation.

The Partners (from Romania and/or Donor States) shall be actively involved and shall effectively contribute to the implementation of the project, sharing with PP the joint goal which is to be achieved through the implementation of the project. In this respect, it is recommended that partners have the capacity to act in the project's area, in accordance with the role assumed and in accordance with their legal responsibilities or status.

Under this Call, in compliance with the provisions of chapter 2 - Eligibility, of the Annex II – Operational rules, PA 10, of the Programme Agreement, the following public or private legal entities are eligible as partners:

- a. from Romania: public entities, associations of local authorities (including Intercommunity Development Associations) and nongovernmental organisations, including local action groups (GAL), established as Romanian legal persons.
- b. from Donor States: any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as nongovernmental organisations established as legal persons in the Donor States.

The eligibility of the partner (legal person, type of organisation, status etc.) shall be demonstrated with legal documents at the submission of the project.

In case of partners from Romania, the same entity can be project partner in maximum three projects submitted under this Round 2 of the Call (in case it has submitted one project as PP, it can act as project partner in only two other projects). This represents an eligibility criterion and shall be complied with. If during the formal verification stage, the above-mentioned criterion is not fulfilled, the project partner will be requested to choose which of the project applications submitted under this call remains in the competition and which one/ones is/are withdrawn, with due consequences in the content evaluation stage for the entire project application.

In deciding the participation in projects, applicants must consider the rule that, at the level of the entire Programme, one entity can receive funding (be it as PP or a partner) for maximum three projects, submitted under the various calls and grant schemes of the programme²⁵ (in these cases, it must prove that it has the necessary capacity to carry out the assumed tasks, with the available financial, material and human resources).

The entities in one of the following situations are not entitled to be partners in the project:

- o *are bankrupt, are under the administration of a judicial authority or under liquidation procedures, have suspended their business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning the above mentioned matters, or are in any similar situation arising from a similar procedure applied under the provisions of the national legislation or regulations;*
- o *are guilty of serious professional misconduct proven by any means, which the PO can identify or reasonable justify;*
- o *have not fulfilled its obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or payment of taxes to the state budget, in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are registered/established;*

²⁵ Projects submitted under the small grant scheme „Access to Funding”, in the framework of the Programme, are not considered.

- *are subject to a final legal judgment “res judicata”, for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization or any other illegal activity affecting the financial interests, without any evidence that they have taken in recent years corrective measures in this regard;*
- *they have been declared to be in a serious breach of the contractual obligations regarding procurement procedures or procedures for the award of grants;*
- *they are in a situation of a conflict of interest with the organization or persons directly or indirectly involved in the grant award procedure, regardless the moment when the PO ascertains this situation;*
- *they are guilty of serious misrepresentation occurred in the process of supplying the information required by the PO or fail to provide the requested information, regardless the moment when this situation occurs.*

Partners that have amongst their board members at least 50% Roma representatives or at least 20% Roma ethnics in their staff/team will receive distinct points in evaluation.

Selection of partners

The creation and implementation of the partnership will comply with the applicable national and EU legislation on public procurement, Article 8.15 of the Regulation, as well as the provisions of Chapter V, Article 14 of Government Emergency Ordinance (GEO) No. 34/2017, applicable to Romanian public entities.

Article 14 of GEO No. 34/2017 stipulates that Romanian public entities acting as PP must, when selecting Romanian NGOs to act as project partners, apply a transparent and non-discriminatory partner selection procedure. The selection methodology has to be prepared by the PP and approved by the legal representative of the PP. The PP is entirely responsible for the partner selection procedure and will have to declare to the PO, in writing, that it has complied with the applicable legal provisions. Information about the minimum documents to be provided by PP at the contracting phase proving the respect of this requirement are provided in the Guide for Applicants.

Partnership agreement

The PP will sign a *Partnership Agreement* with the project partners (recommended template provided in the Guide for Applicants). The Partnership Agreement must clearly set out the roles, responsibilities and budget of the parties, coordinating bodies, financial arrangements between the parties etc. (see Article 7.7 of the Regulation). The draft of the Partnership Agreement shall be submitted as an Annex to the grant application and shall be finalized and signed by the partners before signing the project financing contract. If, for objective reasons, the PP cannot sign a single partnership agreement with all the partners, separate agreements may be concluded. In these situations, the PP is responsible for informing all the partners on the details related to the project implementation and of the other partners (e.g. their identity, role and attributions of each, the budget allocated to each etc).

If the case, in addition to the partnership agreement, a letter of intent is required for the partners from Donor States (see the recommended template provided in the Guide for Applicants).

Both partnership agreement(s) and letter of intent are mandatory documents and constitute criteria for formal verification. Failure to meet any of them leads to project rejection.

Collaboration agreement

For other entities, that do not have the status of partners and do not have a budget allocated from the project grant, support the project application elaboration and shall be involved in the project implementation (e.g. local or central public administration authorities, decentralized public services, schools, etc.), the PO recommends the conclusion of a Collaboration Agreement, either prior the submission of the application (to be attached to the grant application), or during the project

implementation, after they are identified. However, the PO might request the conclusion of such a collaboration agreement in the evaluation or selection stage, if considered necessary.

Funds for bilateral relations

During the project proposal preparation period, the PO can provide to entities from Donor States and Romania that are eligible under the call, in the framework of a call for bilateral activities proposals, funds for the organization of bilateral activities with the purpose to facilitate partnership relations, respectively to prepare and/or conclude a partnership agreement for the project, and to effectively and jointly prepare the project application. The bilateral activities may be organized in Donor States or in Romania. The maximum amount that may be claimed by an applicant for a bilateral initiative is 5,000 Euro. More details on how to access these funds can be found on PO's website: www.frds.ro

2.10 Eligible costs

As a general implementation rule, the costs are eligible if they were made from the start date of the project (the date of signing the project financing contract) to the date mentioned in the financing contract, with the subsequent amendments and additions, as might be the case, but not later than 31.12.2023 or another date set by the PO. At the closure of the project, all the project activities will be completed and all the expenses will be incurred. Further information on the general eligibility of costs can be found in the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (Chapter 8) and the Guide for Applicants.

The same rules on eligibility of costs apply to both PP and partner. All non-eligible costs shall be borne by the PP and/or its partners, as the case may be.

The budget of the project will be expressed in RON and EUR (using the InforEuro exchange rate for January 2021, 1 EUR = 4,8681 lei) and will include only eligible costs (direct costs, indirect costs and contingency costs).

Compliance with the budgetary limits for the requested grant (minimum 300.000 EUR, maximum 1.000.000 EUR) constitutes eligibility criterion. Failing to meet this criterion leads automatically to the rejection of the project.

The project budget shall include proportionate, necessary and accurate costs in relation with its planned objectives, activities and results. In this respect, as justification of the project proposed budget, the PP shall mandatorily present a detailed breakdown of the estimated costs (type of costs, unit prices are required). The budget, along with its detailed justification and breakdown of costs, shall be an important part of project evaluation and, if they deem as necessary, the evaluators may request additional information and could propose a budget revision.

The main categories of eligible costs are:

Direct costs

- The cost of staff assigned to the project, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that this corresponds to the Project Promoter's and project partner's usual policy on remuneration. The corresponding salary costs of staff of national administrations are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;
- Travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project. Having regard to the principle of proportionality, travel costs, including subsistence allowance, may be calculated as a lump sum, on the basis of rules applicable in the Programme;

- Cost of new or second hand equipment²⁶. Where new or second hand equipment is purchased, only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be considered eligible expenditure. In case the Programme Operator determines that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of that equipment may, by way of exception from the rule contained in paragraph 4 of Article 8.2 of Regulation, be eligible.
- Purchase of land and real estate under the conditions set in Article 8.6 (see applicable provisions of the Guide for Applicants);
- Costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
- Costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a Project Promoter for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement and this Regulation; and
- Costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project.

The investment costs include equipment costs, construction works costs, land and real estate purchasing costs. Depending on the objectives and complexity of each project, the investment costs shall be reasonable and proportionate to the effectiveness of objectives' achievement, not exceeding 60% of the project total cost (grant + co-financing, if any). If the PP finds that, in order to achieve the objectives of the project, it is necessary to purchase a plot of land and / or a building, it will take into account the provisions of art. 8.6 of the Regulation. The value allocated to the procurement will not exceed 10% of the project total cost and is included in the category of investment costs at the project level.

These represent eligibility criteria; failing to comply with these provisions shall entail the rejection of the project during the formal evaluation stage.

Indirect costs²⁷

For entities from Romania, the indirect costs of the project shall be determined either on the basis actual costs and shall be justified by the analytical accounting system (Art. 8.5, lit. a) of the Regulation), or on the basis of a flat rate calculation (Art. 8.5, lit. c). The indirect costs calculation method shall be stipulated in the project financing contract and in the Partnership agreement (if applicable). The entities from Donor States may identify their indirect costs according to one of the methods mentioned in the Regulation (Article 8.5 Indirect costs in projects - overheads). The indirect costs calculating method cannot be changed during the project implementation.

Contingency

The maximum amount for these costs is 5% of the eligible direct costs. The contingency can only be used with the prior approval of the PO, and the available amounts shall be re-distributed to the other budget headings as their utilization is approved.

2.11 Excluded costs

Costs such as the following are not considered eligible:

- Interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;

²⁶ Equipment includes fixed assets (tangible and non-tangible, with an individual procurement value of more than 2,500 lei and a service life longer than one year) and inventory items of the nature of fixed assets (having an acquisition value of up to 2,500 lei and a service life longer than one year).

²⁷ Costs that cannot be directly attributed to the project and cannot be identified by the PP and/or project partners as directly attributable to the project but can be identified and justified by the accounting system as being committed in direct relation with the eligible direct costs of the project.

- Charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs related to accounts required by the FMC, the National Focal Point or the applicable law and costs of financial services imposed by the project contract;
- Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- Exchange losses;
- Recoverable VAT;
- Costs that are covered by other sources;
- Fines, penalties and costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project; and
- Excessive or reckless expenditures.

2.12 Durability of projects

PP/partners will have to demonstrate the capacity to use the results also after the project completion and to bear the cost of support services created/ developed by the project. In this regard, a plan on the sustainability of the project results shall be developed, according to the specific of the project as a whole, specifying the commitments regarding durability per objectives/activities, which shall be included in the relevant section of the application form. PP shall be guided by the aim of promoting sustainability of ensuring that the financial support provided to the project generates the maximum benefits to its target group and final beneficiaries. PP will also take into account the requirements of the Regulation (Art. 8.6 and 8.14).

Real estate and/or land (including construction and/or renovation): the minimum post-completion operation for projects that involve investment in real estate and/or land (including those proposing rehabilitation works), is of at least five years after the project completion, period in which the real estate and/or the land shall be used for the purpose of the project as described in the project contract, including the provision of services/activities for which the construction and/or rehabilitation were executed.

Purchase of equipment: in case of projects in which the entire price of the purchase of the equipment²⁸ is determined as eligible by the PO, the minimum post-completion operation is also of at least five years after the project completion, period in which the PP/partners shall keep the equipment in their ownership, shall use it for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project, shall ensure it against losses and shall set aside appropriate resources for its maintenance (according to Art. 8.3 paragraph 2 of Regulation).

Projects not involving investment in real estate and/or land (including renovation) and/or procurement of equipment for which the entire purchase price of equipment is determined as eligible by the PO²⁹, shall have a minimum post-completion operation as follows:

- 3 years for the services provided under call objective no 1 (securing ID documents, education, employment, health, housing and integrated services);
- 1 year for the empowerment activities.

Details on durability of projects and applicable conditions are provided in the Guide for Applicants and shall be also regulated by grant contract provisions.

3. Projects verification, evaluation, selection and contracting

As PO, RSDF is responsible for collecting applications, organizing the selection process of the submitted applications and signing the project contracts.

²⁸ See footnote no 26.

²⁹ Idem

All projects selection and approval operations shall observe the principles of confidentiality and impartiality.

Project proposals received during the call will be analysed, per each thematic pre-allocation, against specific criteria, following several steps:

3.1 Formal (administrative) verification

During the formal verification stage, the following are verified:

- a) Observance of administrative compliance

Administrative compliance criteria refer to:

- compliance with the means of submission and with the announced deadline:
The project proposal was submitted in the online system until the date and time announced as deadline; All projects submitted in the online system after this deadline or arriving at RSDF through any means other than the ones specified in this call for proposals will be rejected and will not be considered as received during this call for proposals, whether submitted in person or sent by email, traditional mail or courier services;
- the project proposal folder is complete and compliant (all the required and mandatory documents are attached, according to the list provided in the Guide for Applicants, and they comply with the formal requirements mentioned in the call documents. Important notice: in case of projects that include construction works that require obtaining a building permit, the PP shall mandatorily annex to the project proposal the feasibility study / DALI);
- an entity has submitted as PP one single proposal under this Round 2 of the Call or maximum three as partner (in case it has submitted one project as PP, it can act as project partner in only two other projects). Failure to meet one of these conditions is subject to clarifications as detailed in the Guide for Applicants. If after clarifications, there is still a non-compliance with any of these two criteria, it shall lead to the rejection of the projects overcoming these limits;
- at the level of the entire Programme, one entity from Romania can receive funding for maximum two projects as PP or three projects as partner (or as the case may be, one project as PP and two as partner, two projects as PP and one other as partner), submitted under the various calls and grant schemes³⁰.

Important notice: Failure to fulfil one of the administrative conformity criteria mentioned above automatically leads to the rejection of the application file at this stage.

- b) Compliance with **eligibility criteria**

The eligibility criteria refer to:

- financial allocation and grant rate: the requested amount (grant) is within the specified limits (minimum 300.000 EUR and maximum 1.000.000 EUR) calculated at the InforEuro for January 2021, 1 EUR = 4,8681 lei;

The verification is carried out in relation with the amounts specified by the PP in the budget form (Annex 1a to the Application form).

- Project duration: is between 12 and 24 months. The estimated date of finalising the project is end of November 2023 the latest;
- Project Promoter:
 - the PP is eligible (as described under section 2.8);

³⁰ Projects submitted under the Small Grant Scheme "Access to financing" are not taken into account in this calculation.

- the NGO acting as PP (if the case) has a minimal previous experience in projects implementation by having implemented in the last 7 years (January 2014 – December 2020), as project promoter/ applicant or partner, projects with budgets aggregated value, effectively spent, in Euro, of at least ½ of the value of the grant requested under this call for proposals (according to provisions of section 2.8 Eligible project promoters);
- Partners, partnership:
 - eligibility of the partners: all identified partners are eligible (as described under section 2.9);
 - the proposed project will be implemented in partnership between public entities (including associations of local authorities) and NGOs from Romania (including local action groups - LAG);
 - partners' selection: in case PP is public authority, or an institution financed through public funding, the selection of private partners (Romanian NGOs) has been done in full accordance with the specific legislation (art. 14 of the GEO no 34/2017);
 - for all identified partners, draft Partnership Agreements are submitted (applies to all partners from Romania and Donor States – if the case);
 - in case of partners from Donor States, a Letter of Intent is submitted;
- Project target group(s) and indicators:
 - the project addresses the needs of beneficiaries from the main target groups, in the required minimum numbers, according to the documents of the Call (section 2.2 Expected results at call level) - **min. 400 beneficiaries** – and the results are reflected in the programme indicators;
 - the number of Roma beneficiaries of the project is at least 2/3 of the total number of beneficiaries (at least 2/3 of the total target group), according to the documents of the Call (section 2.3 Eligibility of target groups); activities contributing to Objective no 2 Empowering Roma people address exclusively Roma persons as main target group;
 - the project activities have not been funded by other grants, according to section 2.4 Eligibility of activities (according to a statement on own responsibility);
 - the activities of the project do not overlap with sustainability activities of projects previously financed under the Programme RO10 “Children and Youth at Risk and Local and Regional Initiatives to Reduce National Inequalities and to Promote Social Inclusion” financed from EEA Grants 2009-2014 (according to a statement on own responsibility);
 - project activities are in compliance with the non-segregation principle (according to Statement of compliance with the non-segregation principle).
- Cost eligibility:
 - the investment costs (comprising equipment costs³¹, costs related to the accomplishment of construction works, purchase of land and real estate) do not exceed 60% of the project total cost (as defined under 2.10 Eligible costs);
 - purchase of real estate and/or land (if the case) does not exceed 10% of the total eligible expenditure of the project;
- Project durability: durability complies with provisions of section 2.12;

Important notice: Failure to fulfil one of the eligibility criteria mentioned above, automatically leads to the rejection of the application file, which is excluded from the subsequent selection stages.

The formal evaluation is performed by the PO's specialists, observing the principles of confidentiality and impartiality and avoidance of conflict of interests.

³¹ See footnote no 26

If, during the formal verification, the information included within the project application is not sufficient and/ or clear enough to be able to make an objective decision on whether or not a certain administrative compliance or eligibility criterion is fulfilled, the PO may send the PP requests for clarification and/or ask for submission of documents that clarify certain aspects/ bring additional information. The requests for clarifications are not mandatory for the PO.

The PP shall respond within the deadline established by the PO, not less than 5 working days from receiving the request.

Only the projects proposals that fulfil all the administrative conformity and eligibility criteria shall pass to the content evaluation stage.

The applicants with projects rejected as noncompliant or non-eligible shall be notified on the results of the formal evaluation within 45 working days from the deadline for projects submission (the period will be extended by the time the clarification are requested). In well-justified cases, when the number of received project proposals is high or in other justified situations, the PO may decide to extend this deadline; in this respect, the PO shall publish an announcement on the programme’s website informing the applicants about the new deadline.

The project proposals and all the documents related to the verification/ clarifications will be kept by the PO and some of the relevant data will be recorded in the database (MIS).

3.2 Content evaluation

The content evaluation (desk evaluation) is performed by independent experts, selected and contracted by the PO. The selection of these experts shall be performed based on criteria related to their qualification, competence and experience in the social inclusion field, as well as in the field of projects evaluation. Each project proposal that fulfils the administrative and eligibility criteria is evaluated independently by 2 experts. If the difference between the scores given by the two evaluators is more than 30% of the highest score, a third evaluator shall be appointed by the PO to perform an independent evaluation of the project. In such cases, the average of the nearest scores shall be considered for ranking the projects. In case the evaluated project cannot obtain the minimum score needed to obtain the financing (65/100), regardless of the score the third evaluator would have awarded, the third evaluation shall no longer be performed.

The main criteria on which the projects shall be evaluated are:

No	Evaluation criteria	Maximum score
1.	Relevance of the project	30
1.1	<p>Relevance to the Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The project is relevant to the objectives of the call/programme area and to the European, national and regional/local strategic documents in the field (the project mentions and provides plausible arguments regarding its contribution to achieving the objectives of the call; it mentions and provides plausible arguments regarding its contribution to European, national and regional/local strategic documents in the field of Roma inclusion and empowerment, such as the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, Romania’s Roma Integration Strategy, local development strategies etc)³² – max. 3 points</i> ▪ <i>The project, through its indicators and activities, directly contributes to achieving at least two of the Call Objectives – max 2 points</i> 	5

³² See also the documents published on PO’s website, the Strategic and Legislative Framework, at <http://www.frds.ro>

1.2	<p>Contribution to achieving the programme/call results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The project directly contributes to the Programme’s outcome indicators IP02-IP08 – max. 3 points ▪ The project directly contributes to the indicator IP13 Number of professionals trained in working together with Roma and the target is adequate in relation to the scope and content of the project – max. 1 point ▪ The project directly contributes to the indicator IP14 Number of Roma experts and leaders trained to defend Roma rights and the target is adequate in relation to the scope and content of the project – max. 1 point 	5
1.3	<p>Need for project implementation</p> <p>The problem that the project approaches is justified and in line with the context from the implementation area(s) (the proposal identifies and documents the need for project implementation; the target group(s) and their needs are identified, described and quantified using sources such as: existing statistical data, own research and/ or other relevant studies etc.) – max. 5 points</p>	5
1.4	<p>Relevance of the project approach to the needs of the target group/groups</p> <p>The solutions proposed in the project in relation to the needs/problems identified are relevant and demonstrate the integrated and systemic character of the project intervention; a proper balance between the number and complexity of interventions, the type/complexity and the length of an intervention for the same beneficiary, the expected impact, in correlation with the requested budget – max. 5 points</p>	5
1.5	<p>Relevance of the project implementation area for the Roma inclusion in Romania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage of the localities / neighbourhoods (in urban areas) in which the project is implemented have a percentage of Roma of over 20% (0-19% - 0 points; 20-29% - 3 points; over 30% - 5 points or ▪ The project addresses a need at national level, strategic for the Roma inclusion field in Romania – max. 5 points 	5
1.6	<p>Context/ coherence/ synergy with other initiatives</p> <p>The project clearly identifies and describes the local and national context in which it shall be implemented (other projects/ initiatives/ programmes, national or international previously and currently funded or to be funded and implemented during the project implementation, relevant in the field and/or addressing similar issues or the same target group); it presents a detailed analysis of the complementarity of these projects/ initiatives/programmes and clearly demonstrates their correlation and complementarity and clearly proves that there are no overlaps – max. 5 points</p>	5
2	Technical consistency/methodology	35
2.1	<p>Project objectives</p> <p>The project objectives are properly identified and formulated (using the SMART³³ approach) and directly contribute to the achievement of the objective(s) of the call. There is a clear, correct and realistic correlation</p>	5

³³ A “SMART” objective is specific, measurable, realistic and achievable in the proposed time.

	<i>between objectives – activities – results – impact on the target group – max. 5 points</i>	
2.2	Project activities and results <i>The activities are well chosen, realistic, feasible, comply with the applicable legislation and contribute to the achievement of the project objectives and results, are clearly described in detail, their planning is logical/adequate and their immediate results are measured by output indicators – max. 5 points</i>	5
2.3	Methodology of the project <i>The methodology of the intervention is clear, coherent and detailed, risks are properly identified and addressed by mitigation measures, visibility of the project is well described and it respects programme requirements – max. 5 points</i>	5
2.4	Stakeholders consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The project implements the principles of “Involvement of civil society”, “Active participation of the Roma” and “Involvement of regional and local authorities”, i.e it was developed in consultation with relevant Roma organisations or networks, or academics, or members of target groups at community level, or with relevant public authorities and envisages a continuous consultation with these stakeholders in the implementation period – max 3 points</i> ▪ <i>PP/partner(s) have amongst their board members at least 50% Roma representatives or at least 20% of their staff/team is Roma – 2 points</i> 	5
2.5	Innovation and added value in the field of empowering Roma women/girls/youth <i>The project presents innovation and added value by means of specific activities of empowering Roma women, Roma girls and/or Roma youth – max. 5 points</i>	5
2.6	Innovation and added value in the field of participation of Roma persons in decision-making at various levels <i>The project presents innovation and added value by means of activities that contribute to the inclusion and participation of Roma persons in decision-making at various levels, such as mechanisms for co-opting representatives of the Roma community in decisions regarding projects to be submitted on investment at commune/town level, participation in the receipt of investment works in the benefit of the Roma community, participative budgeting mechanisms at community level etc. – max. 5 points</i>	5
2.7	Strategic impact of learning activities <i>The project includes development and/or provision of training courses (for staff/volunteers working with Roma people) accredited as continuous training by relevant authorities or professional bodies (for example, Ministry of Education, College of Social Workers, College of Psychologists, College of Physicians etc) or training courses that follow the curricula and manuals of the Council of Europe – max. 5 points</i>	5
3	Economic efficiency	15
3.1	Budget justification and correlation with the planned activities <i>The proposed costs are eligible and directly related to the activities and outcomes – the expenditure calculation manner is clearly and explicitly</i>	5

	<i>presented (unit price and number of units, frequency and total expenditure are mentioned, there are no calculation errors etc.), the applicable rules on costs for human resources, indirect costs, depreciation etc. are observed – max. 5 points</i>	
3.2	Costs proportionality and necessity <i>The proposed costs are realistic, not excessive in relation to the objectives, are indispensable for the achievement of the estimated results and the cost/ benefit ratio is positive (there are no cost over or sub-evaluated and the unit costs/ budget prices are within reasonable limits for the profile market at the respective moment, and also for the project specificity) – max. 5 points</i>	5
3.3	Material resources/spaces and ownership <i>The allocated material resources and spaces are adequate as nature, structure and size relative to the proposed activities and expected results – max. 3 points</i> <i>NGO as PP - Private co-financing is provided - max. 2 points</i> <i>or</i> <i>Public entities as PP - own human resources are mobilised for the project implementation – max. 2 points</i>	5
4.	Implementation capacity, partnership and sustainability	20
4.1	Project team qualification/ experience/ expertise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The structure of the project team (management and implementation) is described in detail and adequate for the project implementation (number and types of positions, functional relationships etc.). Job requirements for the staff proposed in the project (qualification/ competencies, required experience) are adequate for the activities to be carried out by each; there are clearly defined responsibilities for each position satisfactorily defining each role, the assigned working hours are appropriate; the specialized staff proposed for the project has the qualification/competencies and experience required for the activities to be carried out – max. 4 points</i> ▪ <i>The project team includes Roma members from the communities in which the project is implemented, adequate in number in relation to the scope and content of the project – max. 1 point</i> 	5
4.2	Partners' experience and technical capacity for implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The role and responsibilities of each partner are clearly delimited in the Partnership Agreement – max. 2 points</i> ▪ <i>The PP and its partner/ partners significantly contribute to the project, demonstrating relevant experience and/ or expertise in the field/ area of intervention of the project (e.g. they have carried out similar activities from their own budget and/ or projects with external financing, they have involved experts with relevant competencies and experience etc.) – max. 3 points</i> 	5
4.3	Added value of the partnership <i>The partnership includes Roma stakeholders from the field of Roma inclusion and empowerment, relevant in relation with project's objectives – max. 5 points</i>	5
4.4	Sustainability and development/ multiplication of the results <i>The project describes how the obtained results shall be maintained (identifies the activities that shall continue, specifies the service capacity</i>	5

	<p><i>after the end of financing, identifies resources for taking over the costs for services functioning, including the costs for ensuring the maintenance of buildings/ equipment etc.) and ensures that it continues to generate maximum benefits to its target groups and final beneficiaries.</i></p> <p><i>In addition to maintaining the project results, the project identifies and describes possibilities for developing and/ or multiplying these results after the end of financing (e.g. offers feasible/ realistic solutions for broadening the sphere of intervention in terms of target groups, number of beneficiaries, geographic area, proposes public policies at local/ county/ micro- or macro-regional level, etc.) – max. 5 points.</i></p>	
Total score		100

Each criterion is divided into sub-criteria. For each sub-criterion, the independent expert will award a score between 0 and 5 points, corresponding to degree of meeting the respective sub-criterion and in full accordance with the maximum points indicated within the above evaluation grid.

In order to be taken into account for funding, the project proposal must meet cumulatively the following conditions³⁴:

1. Minimum score requirements:
 - to obtain at least 3 points for sub-criteria 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 under criterion no. 1 Relevance of the project;
 - to obtain at least 3 points to sub-criteria 3.1 and 3.2 under criterion no. 3 Economic efficiency;
 - to obtain at least 3 points for sub-criteria 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4 under criterion no. 4 Implementation capacity, partnership and sustainability;
 - to obtain a total score³⁵ of at least 65 points of the 100 possible.
2. Requested documents have been provided by PP at the PO's request according to Annex B to Guide for Applicants – Section II Documents to be submitted after publication by the PO of the List of projects accepted to the content evaluation stage and receipt of PO's notification.

During desk evaluation, only in case of projects that include construction works or procurement of real estate, a technical expert will analyse all documents/ information related to the infrastructure component and provide the independent evaluators with a technical opinion that shall be considered when scoring the project from the point of view of necessity, opportunity, feasibility, proportionality, cost efficiency and efficacy (sub-criteria/ criteria 2.2, 2.3, 3 and 4.4)

After finalizing the desk evaluation, the Ranking list of the project proposals (presented in descending order of the final scores), together with the most relevant remarks of the evaluators, shall be drafted.

The PO shall submit the list to the members of the Selection Committee³⁶ (SC), and they shall decide on the strategy for on-site verification of the projects. Depending on this decision, the PO shall organize the on-site verification of the projects, on behalf of the SC.

During the field visit, the independent evaluator / technical expert, as the case may be, shall verify the compliance between the information provided in the project file and the field reality. If deemed as necessary, the technical expert shall participate in the field verification, for the verification of the infrastructure component.

³⁴ If, at any stage during the content evaluation, the project application does not meet any of these criteria it gets automatically rejected.

³⁵ The average between the two scores awarded by the independent evaluators.

³⁶ The Selection Committee (SC) consists of three persons with relevant experience in the field (out of which at least one is external in relation to the PO and its Board). Representatives of the National Focal Point (NFP) within the Ministry of European Funding, of FMO, of Norway Embassy in Romania and of Programme partners (KS and CoE) are invited to attend the SC meetings, as observers.

Upon the completion of the field verification, the *Ranked list of projects* shall be filled-in with the most relevant observations and recommendations of the field evaluators.

For the project applications recommended for financing, additional information may be requested at this stage. The *Ranked list of projects* with all information is made available to SC members.

3.3 Projects selection and approval

The SC recommends to the PO the projects to be financed and this may result in the modification of the projects ranking in justified cases. The justification for the change shall be detailed in the minutes of the meetings and all the affected applicants shall be informed in writing on the justification for the change. The SC shall modify the ranking if the field verification report reveals important inconsistencies between the information provided in the file and the reality in the field, shall also seek to avoid double funding/ overlaps with other financed programmes and avoid duplication of projects by the same PP under different calls, will take into consideration geographical distribution, innovative approaches, necessity to meet programme level indicators for Programme Area no 7 Roma Inclusion and Empowerment etc. SC may also request the accomplishment of conditions to be fulfilled by PP before PO approval or before the contracting stage.

The PO shall verify that the selection process has been carried out in compliance with the provisions of Regulation and that SC recommendations comply with the programme's rules and objectives. After these verifications, the PO shall make a decision, through its Steering Committee, on the projects that will be financed/ rejected/ put on the reserve list, depending on the available funds. Subsequently, the PO will conclude financing contracts with the PP.

The list of the projects selected for funding will be submitted also to the EEA Financial Mechanism Office (FMO).

Until the final decision is taken, all the documents related to the projects evaluation shall be confidential.

All persons involved in the evaluation process shall sign confidentiality and conflict of interest statements.

3.4 Applicants notification

All the applicants (except for those who submitted projects that were rejected during the formal verification stage and who have already received notifications) shall be notified on the results of the projects evaluation *within maximum 30 working days after the final decision of the PO*. PO will make efforts to finalize the selection process in about 6 months from the deadline for submission of projects. In the case of projects approved for funding, the notification shall also comprise the conditions to be fulfilled for signing the project financing contract. If there are projects rejected as a result of SC's decision to change the initial or final ranking of the projects, the applicants affected by this change shall be informed in writing on the justification.

After finalizing the contracting stage, the final list of projects to be financed shall be published on RSDF's website at www.frds.ro.

3.5 Appeals procedure

The applicants may appeal the rejection of their project proposal **only during the formal evaluation stage**, in which case they may file an appeal **within maximum 30 calendar days** from the date of receiving the notification.

The PO will formulate and send a response within a maximum of 30 working days from the date of receipt of the appeal.

There is **no appeal procedure as concerns the SC's decision** (and consecutively as concerns the PO decision, if it corresponds to the SC decision).

3.6 Projects contracting

For each project approved for funding, the PO will conclude a *project financing contract*, after the accomplishment of conditions established for contracting for each project.

During the project implementation, if necessary, the provisions of the financing contract/its annexes may be mutually amended within certain limits (without causing substantial changes to the initially approved proposal) or by the PO, in the conditions specified in the financing contract. The amendments might be subject of addendums to the financing contract, as the case may be.

3.7 Reporting and payment system

As a rule, the PP shall submit interim reports to the PO, twice a year (for a period of 6-8 months). Also, progress reports (technical details showing progress in project implementation) shall be submitted at 3-4 months (in between interim reports). After finishing the project implementation period, the PP shall send the final report. For each project, the reporting schedule shall be mentioned in the project financing contract.

The programme applies the pre-financing system. The payments to the PPs shall be made by the PO in the form of advance payments, interim payments and payment of the final balance. Depending on the duration of the project, the PP may require an advance between 20 and 40% of the project grant, as provided by the Programme Agreement (section 6.1 Payment flows). The following payments shall be performed after the approval of the interim reports based on the supporting documents submitted by the PP (technical and financial), based on the estimate of expenses for the following period. The project funds (in Lei) shall be transferred to the accounts specifically opened by the PP for the project at the local treasury or at a commercial bank, depending on the type of entity of the PP.

4. Preparation and submission of the project proposal

If the PP calls on the services of a consultant for the preparation of the application/preparation of the application file, the consultant's name shall be mentioned in the application form, in the specific field of the form.

4.1 Help-desk services and information seminars

During the period when the call for project proposals is open, the PO provides the PPs and their partners, upon request, with help-desk services (information and clarifications). These services are provided in the main office and in the two branch offices.

The applicants may submit questions and requests by e-mail (info@frds.ro) or during direct meetings with PO representatives agreed upon in advance with help-desk operators.

Requests for information and clarifications related to the call may be submitted to the PO no later than 10 working days before the deadline for submission of projects within the call. Subsequent requests will no longer be answered.

The PO shall to its best as to answer to the questions received from the potential applicants within 3 working days after receiving the message. PO will not answer questions which suppose verification of eligibility or content evaluation of activities, results etc. referred to by the PP in the question.

The most frequent and relevant **Questions and Answers** on the call papers shall be published on the PO's website at www.frds.ro. These shall be updated periodically, depending on the questions received from potential applicants. We also recommend periodic consultation of RSDF's site in order to get access to additional and/or updated information, respectively prior access to the Questions and Answers section, before calling the help-desk.

Also, after launching the call, the PO will organize informative seminars, for the potential applicants under this call (the estimative period is January 2021)³⁷.

In addition, PO will organise a **match-making seminar** for identifying possible future partners from the Donor States in order to commonly elaborate and implement projects under this call. (the estimative period of this seminar is February 2021)³⁸. More precise information on the date and venue of these events shall be communicated by the OP on the webpage of the programme www.frds.ro and on the [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/dezvoltare.locala/?ref=bookmarks) page of the Programme, <https://www.facebook.com/dezvoltare.locala/?ref=bookmarks>.

4.2 Project proposal file preparation

The application form must be filled in according to the requirements described in the Guide for Applicants (both documents are published on PO's website at: www.frds.ro).

When preparing the application file, the PP shall make sure to comply with the form and content requirements mentioned in the documents of this call under section 3.1, Formal verification stage. Otherwise, the application file shall be rejected at that stage.

The grant application and all its annexes shall be all drafted in Romanian, on the templates provided by the PO. In case one of the partners is from Donor States, its documents (including for example the Letter of intent, CVs, legal status) shall be translated into Romanian language and become part of the application.

The grant application shall be accompanied by a package of documents (e.g. activities implementation schedule, budget justification, partnership agreement, communication and promotion plan, eligibility statements from the PP and project partners, documents proving the legal status of the PP and partners, CVs of the staff, technical documentation for construction works, etc.). The list of required documents to be submitted together with the grant application is available in the Guide for Applicants.

PP and partners shall verify the conformity and compliance of the project application file by completing the Conformity check list (see the template provided in the Guide for Applicants).

The project proposal file will be submitted exclusively in electronic format, through the online submission system, according to the online upload procedure described in Annex G of the Applicant's Guide.

In order to submit the project proposal file in the online system, it is necessary to have an extended electronic signature, based on a qualified certificate, issued by an accredited certification service provider. The electronic signature must belong to the legal representative of the PP or to the person specially empowered by the legal representative to conclude documents in the name and on behalf of the legal person (PP) in order to submit projects within the Local Development Programme.

Also, for the online submission of the project proposal file, it is necessary to create a user account in the name of the project promoter. An applicant can create a single account, being identified by the tax registration code.

Account creation details are described in Annex G of the Applicant's Guide.

Please note that in case the PO will publish a corrigendum/ corrigenda, during the period the call is open, it is compulsory that the application proposal is in line with the latest approved and published forms/ documents/ annexes etc., otherwise this will automatically lead to the rejection of the application file at the formal (administrative) verification stage.

³⁷ Depending on the developments on the current pandemic situation, the seminars may be organized online.

³⁸ Depending on the developments on the current pandemic situation and the travel restrictions, the seminars may be organized online.

4.3 Project proposal submission

The project proposal file will be submitted exclusively through the online submission system, following the registration and upload instructions presented as annex to the Guide for Applicants.

The deadline for submitting / registering the project proposal file in the online system is April 15th, 2021, at 17:00.

In order to avoid blocking the electronic system near the deadline, it is recommended to upload the project proposal in time, before the deadline. This responsibility belongs exclusively to PP, the PO cannot be held responsible for the PP's failure to meet the deadline.

Files sent to the PO by other means / in a form other than the one indicated above, (for example, by post, courier, fax or e-mail services, submitted in person) will NOT be considered valid and, therefore, will be considered as project proposals submitted to this call.

Files sent to the PO by other means / in a form other than the one indicated above, (for example, by post, courier, fax or e-mail services, submitted in person) will NOT be considered valid and, therefore, will not be considered as project proposals submitted to this call.

Until the deadline for submitting the project proposal file expires, if an applicant wishes to modify a submitted and validated project, it will request the PO to cancel that project and will resume the upload process. The canceled project proposal will not be taken into consideration when determining the maximum number of projects for the PP.

After the deadline for submitting the project proposal file expires, the PP will no longer be able to initiate corrections or revisions of the project proposal file.

At any time, before the approval by the PO, the PP may opt for the withdrawal of the project proposal from the competition, in which case the PP will send an official information to the PO. In this way, the PO will take note of the PP's decision on the withdrawal of the project proposal. .

5. Further useful information

For a better understanding of the specificities of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 and the overall project framework, we recommend consulting the following documents (the list is not limited):

- [Memorandum of Understanding signed between Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Kingdom of Norway and the Government of Romania on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021;](#)
- [Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021;](#)
- [Program Agreement signed between the NFP and the donor states' representatives for the implementation of the programme, as subsequently amended;](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data;](#)
- [Government Emergency Ordinance no. 34/2017 on the Financial Management of the Non-Reimbursable External Funds related to the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, as subsequently amended and supplemented and Order no. 2.840/6.560/2017 Methodological norms for applying the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 34/2017;](#)
- [Law 98/2016 on public procurement published in the Official Monitor no. 390/2016, as subsequently amended and supplemented and the Government Decision 395/2016 for the approval of the Methodological Norms for the application of the provisions regarding the award of the public procurement contract / the framework agreement in Law 98/2016, as subsequently amended and supplemented;](#)

- [Government Emergency Ordinance no 98/2017 on the ex ante control function of the process of awarding public procurement contracts/ framework sectoral contracts and of works concession and service concession contracts;](#)
- [Law 101/2016 on remedies and remedies in connection with the award of public procurement contracts, sectoral contracts and works concession and services concessions contracts, as well as for the organization and operation of CNSC, as subsequently amended and supplemented;](#)
- [Order of the Minister of European Funds no. 1284 regarding the approval of the competitive procedure applicable to the private applicants / beneficiaries for the award of services or works supply contracts, financed from European funds, published in the Official Monitor no. 618 of August 12, 2016, as subsequently amended and supplemented;](#)
- [Order MDRAPFE / ANAP no. 6.712 / 890/2017 regarding the approval of the procurement procedures for the projects with European financing implemented in partnership;](#)
- [Order No 348/2018 on the approval of the rules for the application of lump sums for travel expenses financed from the Bilateral Relations Fund and Technical Assistance Fund of the EEA and the Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021;](#)
- [HCD Nr. 4/XI/SO-14.11.2019 of the PO Steering Committee regarding the approval of methodology for the calculation and payment of lump sums for travel expenses in localities from Romania, between localities or abroad, at programme and projects level, financed from the EEA and the Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021;](#)
- [Government Emergency Ordinance 66/2011 on the prevention, detection and sanctioning of irregularities in the obtaining and use of European funds and / or related national public funds, as subsequently amended and supplemented and Government Decision 875/2011 for approving the Methodological Norms for the application of the provisions of Government Emergency Ordinance no. 66/2011 on the prevention, detection and sanctioning of the irregularities in obtaining and using the European funds and / or the related national public funds;](#)
- [Government Decision 519/2014 regarding the setting of the rates related to the percentage cuts / financial corrections applicable for the deviations provided in the Annex to GEO 66/2011, as subsequently amended and supplemented;](#)
- [Guides adopted by FMC / NMFA in accordance with applicable Regulations](#) (For more details use the following link: https://eeagrants.org/resources?title=&field_resource_type_target_id=112&page=1)
- [Manual for Project Implementation and its annexes, published by the PO](#) (please make sure you check the latest version).
- Local Development Programme website, "Resources" section: <https://dezvoltare-locala.frds.ro/resurse>