

Programme “Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Roma Inclusion”  
financed by EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021

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# SMALL GRANT SCHEME “PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS FOR ROMA COMMUNITIES”

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**BUCHAREST, 2021**



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## Preamble

This document aims to provide the necessary information for potential applicants (Project Promoters – PP) with regards to the call organized under the small grants scheme “Priority Interventions for Roma Communities” launched by the **Romanian Social Development Fund (RSDF)** under the Programme “**Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Roma Inclusion**”.

Before filling-in your application, we recommend that you make sure you have gone through all the information presented in this document in the [Guide for Applicants](#) and in the annexes, and that you have understood all the aspects related to the specificity of the projects financed by EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021, the manner of their implementation<sup>1</sup> and the procedure of submission.

### 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 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 Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

The Programme has a total value of **86,941,176 Euro**.

Details on the objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021, as well as on the “Local Development” Programme can be found by accessing <https://dezvoltare-locala.frds.ro/en/programme-management/>.

### 2. The Small Grant Scheme “Priority Interventions for Roma Communities”

This small grant scheme 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.

The overall objective of the small grant scheme is to contribute to the improvement of living and educational conditions **in disadvantaged communities with high percentage of Roma population by funding community – level** (i.e., developed within a single administrative territorial unit) **projects** which address specific priority needs **identified in a participatory manner**.

All projects funded under this call of the small grants scheme must be in line with the **10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion**<sup>2</sup>. Attention will be given to ensuring that all

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

<sup>2</sup> 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>

funded projects will promote and adhere to the highest standards with regards to respecting human rights and dignity, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity. Project Promoters will have to be aware of the gender dimension of the proposed interventions and will have to ensure that any and all barriers to the participation of Roma women and girls in the project activities are mitigated.

The present small grant scheme is complementary to the previous call launched within the same Programme Area no. 7 (“Enhancing Roma Inclusion and Empowerment” – Round 1 and Round 2), having a more focused and limited scope, mainly at community level. Preference will be shown to projects focusing on priority needs affecting disadvantaged / isolated communities, lacking resources and / or with a low capacity of attracting funding and implementing projects. The call encourages **projects focusing around investments and activities that generate direct, simple, visible, concrete and measurable results** for their direct beneficiaries during the project implementation and subsequently within the sustainability period, reason for which those projects will benefit from distinct points during evaluation.

Moreover, the PPs (and partners, if the case) shall apply a community driven development approach to their project proposal in a way that will demonstrate the involvement of the target groups (i.e. Roma) in the identification and prioritization of the needs addressed by the project, will provide transparency to the decision-making process and will make sure that the solutions to the identified problems have been agreed with the target groups and are accepted by them. In this regard, the PP shall organize a process of community consultation. Details regarding the minimum requirements for community consultation are provided in the Guide for Applicants.

## 2.1. Expected results

Projects financed under the Small Grants Scheme "Priority Interventions for Roma Communities" are required to contribute to at least one of the following mandatory programme indicators results:

No	Expected programme results	Indicator <sup>3</sup>	Unit of measurement	Source of verification	Target value at SGS level
<b>Outcome 1</b>	<b>Enhanced inclusion and empowerment of Roma</b>	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	50
		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	500
		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	200
		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	50

<sup>3</sup> The methodology on how to calculate the indicator values at project level is presented in Annex F to the Guide for Applicants.

In order for a project to be considered as contributing to one of the programme indicators mandatory for this call, it will have to include soft measures aimed at reaching the respective indicator(s).

Optionally, the projects may also contribute to any of the programme indicators in Annex 1 to this call, provided that these are obtained through activities which aim primarily at reaching the mandatory programme results mentioned in the above table or through support activities aimed at maximizing the impact of the project.

When 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 thoroughly considered in evaluation.

## **2.2. Eligibility of target groups**

The projects submitted under the present call for proposals shall mandatorily address priority problems affecting the main target group, represented **by Roma persons and/or families (children, youth and adults)** living in disadvantaged / isolated communities<sup>4</sup> with a population comprised of over 10% members of the Roma minority. The identification of a community as having over 10% of its population composed of Roma<sup>5</sup> 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 (kindergartens, schools, high-schools), Roma political parties, regional public entities with competences in the area of Roma empowerment or inclusion, such as the County Roma Office;
- 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/research aimed at identifying the need for project implementation.

In line with the principle of "explicit, but not exclusive targeting", projects funded under the call may also bring benefits to a secondary target group, represented by non-Roma persons in vulnerable situations, living in the same area as the people belonging to the main target group and under similar socio-economic conditions (e.g. have similar needs as the main target groups, solving the problems of the main target group represent a priority and bring similar benefits to the secondary target group etc.), at risk or facing various forms of social-economic exclusion.

Additional secondary target groups to the above mentioned are represented by:

- **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.)
- **Specialists/volunteers** from the fields of education, health, employment, social services, public administration, NGOs etc involved in the provision of services to Roma person

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<sup>4</sup> To be considered a disadvantaged / isolated community, a community is lacking resources, is isolated and/or it has a low capacity to implement project and/or it has a low capacity to attract investments and/or it is economically underdeveloped and/or it is affected by demographic decline etc.

<sup>5</sup> 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. When determining this percentage, PPs are allowed and encouraged to take into account informal Roma settlements (for which there isn't any official data), provided that they attach documents (photos, statements from informal leaders / community members etc.) to support the description of these settlements.

**Important notice:** the number of beneficiaries belonging to secondary target groups (non-Roma persons in vulnerable situations, Roma experts and leaders and specialists / volunteers) **must not exceed 1/3 of the total number of the project's beneficiaries.**

In implementation, persons benefiting from services offered within the project will be eligible as target group if they are recipients of 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) or by an authorized institution certifying the vulnerability situation and the needs as a basis for provision of services in the project. It is encouraged to focus the intervention on families in vulnerable situations.

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 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-identification methods, is in line with data protection standards / GDPR and is provided in an aggregated and anonymised form (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 / experts).

### **2.3. Eligible activities**

To be eligible, project activities will need to be implemented in disadvantaged communities with a significant percentage of Roma population. Projects will have to include activities which aim to bring improvements into at least one of the following 4 areas:

1. Education (improvement of educational conditions/facilities);
2. Health (improvement of sanitary (health) conditions/facilities);
3. Housing (support in the field of housing improvement);
4. Legal (restricted to obtaining identity or property documents and to the clarification of individual housing situation and rights).

Project activities may fall in any of the categories of hard measures (activities which include investments<sup>6</sup>), and soft measures (activities which involve working directly with members of the project's target groups). It is mandatory for a project to include soft measures.

All projects including investments in the rehabilitation / refurbishment of public facilities and social housing (small-scale infrastructure) will have to make sure that such facilities / social housing will start to be used by target group members during the life of the project, and will continue to be used during the entire sustainability period of the project.

Projects that will include activities aimed at preventing and combating the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impact on the project's target groups will benefit from specific points in evaluation, if proving the necessity of the intervention.

Examples of eligible activities (the list is not exhaustive; project promoters may propose other activities in addition to the ones mentioned below, if addressing the above thematic areas):

1. Support for the improvement of educational conditions/ facilities:

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<sup>6</sup>The existence of such activities will have to be reflected under budgetary chapter 3, Costs of investments, of Annex 1b of the Application Form, Detailed budget, and of Annex 1c of the Application form, Costs justification.

Hard measures in the area of education:

- a. Small-scale investments in renovation and improvement of the conditions offered by the spaces where the educational activities take place (painting works, roof works, organization of indoor toilets, sanitations of educational spaces etc.), including connections to utility networks (drinking water, sewerage, electricity, internet etc.);
- b. Investments aimed at equipping the spaces where the educational activities take place (equipment required for the educational process, furniture etc.);
- c. Investments aimed at ensuring easier access of children and young people to the spaces where the educational activities take place (small-scale works to improve access infrastructure, repairs of the means of public transport for pre-school children and pupils etc.);
- d.

Complementary activities in the area of education (soft measures):

- a. Support for children enrolled in early education and care, primary, secondary and high school education, as well as young people enrolled in universities, to stimulate their access to education (food, educational materials, clothes, shoes, supplies etc.);
- b. Support for school enrolment and participation, school dropout prevention and re-enrolment (school mediation, school and vocational counselling and guidance, literacy, remedial activities, "school after school" activities, prevention of school dropout through sports or other leisure activities and non-formal education, financial support for transport expenses for participation in formal and informal education activities etc.)
- c. Activities aimed at improving the school or academic results of children and young people enrolled in school, high school or university education (mentoring and tutoring programs and networks, including online, digital literacy education, etc.)
- d. Activities designed to involve parents in the educational process of children and young people belonging to the target groups of the project (workshops for acquiring parenting skills, spaces for mothers or other family members, including young Roma women and girls, to socialize etc.)

## 2. Support for the improvement of sanitary conditions / facilities:

Hard measures in the area of health:

- a. Investments aimed at the establishment, equipping and improvement of small-scale medical infrastructure (renovation and equipping of functional public dispensaries);
- b. Investments aimed at the establishment, equipping and improvement of small-scale sanitary infrastructure (establishment of public baths or community laundry spaces etc.);

Complementary activities in the area of health (soft measures):

- a. Provision of basic medical services within the project (including dental care), which are not reimbursed/ supported/ organised by the national health system in the geographical area of the project or for the project's target group;
- b. Purchase of sanitary materials for members of the target groups of the project,

- c. Health mediation, in particular in the field of reproductive health (promotion and support of the participation of pregnant women to specialized medical examinations - usually in the public health system),
- d. Health and healthy lifestyle education and activities to promote compliance with the basic rules of hygiene and healthy nutrition, vaccination campaigns, family planning, etc.

### 3. Support in the field of housing improvement:

Hard measures in the area of housing:

- a. Investments in the construction, rehabilitation and refurbishment of **social houses**<sup>7</sup>, 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 project beneficiaries, as long as the eligibility criteria continue to be met (or by other beneficiaries in similar eligibility conditions);
- b. Investments in the 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:
  - i. 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);
  - ii. describe in the relevant section of the project proposal, and subsequently enforce in implementation, a specific beneficiary selection methodology<sup>8</sup>, ensuring their involvement as volunteers in the activity.
  - iii. present the legal situation of the individual households and the proposed interventions towards the sustainability of the investment
  - iv. present the agreement of the owners of the house<sup>9</sup>.

Complementary activities in the area of housing (soft measures):

- a. Legal assistance for clarification of individual housing situation and rights (legal fees, taxes etc.);
  - b. Legal assistance for victims of evictions.
- ### 4. Support in obtaining identity documents (soft measures):
- a. Legal assistance for obtaining valid identity documents (birth certificate, identity card or equivalent) and other documents necessary as a prerequisite for obtaining these.

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<sup>7</sup> As defined by Law 114/1996, as subsequently amended and supplemented.

<sup>8</sup> In case of investments in connecting individual living spaces to utilities, the beneficiary selection methodology will mandatorily include a criterion related to a realistic estimate of the beneficiaries' ability to pay for the utilities to which they will be connected. For beneficiaries where the analysis revealed an increased risk of non-payment of utilities, independent solutions (heating, sewerage, etc.) will be developed or, if these solutions are not feasible, the project sustainability plan will include measures to support these beneficiaries in paying their utilities.

<sup>9</sup> If the owner of the property is not the same person as the project beneficiary which is part of an eligible target group as described above, then the owner of the property must make a legal commitment to ensure the continuous use of the property by the respective project beneficiary, or by other beneficiaries in similar eligibility conditions, throughout the duration of the project, as well as throughout the duration of the sustainability period of the project.

When designing the project activities, special attention will have to be paid to concerns particular to Roma women and girls (such as possible barriers to the effective participation of Roma women and girls in the project, activities addressing some of the problems / needs specific to Roma women and girls etc.). This represents a content evaluation criterion and specific points are allocated to it.

Donations of equipment (e.g., digital devices such as phones/ tablets, washing machines, boilers etc.) to individuals are not eligible. The PP / the partner purchasing such equipment will keep them in its ownership and will conclude loan agreements with the beneficiaries of the project (including for the sustainability periode), so that they have the right to use them.

In case of projects proposing activities such as works / procurements for the benefit of the target groups, project promoters are encouraged to include activities aimed at maximizing the effects of said works / procurements and that involve working directly with / together with members of the target groups (for example, if the project involves setting up indoor toilets within a school, activities such as those aimed at improving the school results of children belonging to the target groups of the projects will also be included). The projects which respect this recommendation will benefit from specific points in the content evaluation stage.

The projects may also propose other types of activities than the ones falling in the 4 thematic areas mentioned above, with the condition that they are justified in relation with the target groups' needs and that they contribute to achieving the objective of the call.

**All project activities must comply with the non-segregation principle.**

**All project activities will have to generate benefits for the target groups by the end of the project at the latest<sup>10</sup>.** Otherwise, these activities will be considered ineligible.

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 / initiatives (financed from structural funds or other national funds, EEA and Norwegian Grants, donations, 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)<sup>11</sup>.

Moreover, 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.

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.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the connection of houses to the gas network will not be eligible unless, by the end of the project, the equipment required to make use of this connection (gas stove / heating system connected to radiators, etc.) will be installed in the beneficiary's houses.

<sup>11</sup> The estimated date for contracting is the first trimester of 2022.

## **2.4. Financial allocation**

The total amount allocated to the small grants scheme Priority Interventions for Roma Communities is 1,647,059 Euro, out of which 1,400,000 Euro (85%) represents the financing from EEA Grants 2014-2021 and 247,059 Euro (15%) represents public co-financing.

The minimum grant amount that can be requested by a PP is **20,000 Euro** (98,550 RON<sup>12</sup>), and the maximum amount is **50,000 Euro** (246,345 RON<sup>13</sup>).

## **2.5. Grant rate**

2.5.1. If the PP is a local authority the grant rate shall be 100% of the project expenses, and this shall apply to all project partners.

2.5.2. If the PP is a non-governmental organization (NGO), a waiver pursuant to Article 14.5. of the Regulation<sup>14</sup> is granted for the co-financing requirements set in Article 6.4.3. of the Regulation<sup>15</sup> 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 (up to maximum 10% of the eligible expenditures) in cash and/ or in kind, in the form of voluntary work, it can be appreciated as a valuable contribution to the sustainability, and will benefit from distinct points during content evaluation.

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

The PP/partners may not allocate additional funds for the implementation of the project other than those provided by the Grant.

## **2.6. Project duration and implementation period**

In determining the duration of the project, the PPs shall take into account the limits set by the programme (the estimated 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 (type of activities, type and level of estimated costs etc.).

The expected implementation period of a project is between 6 and 16 months.

## **2.7. Eligible Project Promoters**

The eligible project promoters (PP) under this call are:

- Local authorities from rural or urban administrative territorial units;
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Under the present call, an NGO is an entity established as a legal person fiscally registered in Romania that fulfils the conditions of the definition mentioned in the 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

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<sup>12</sup> According to the InforEuro exchange rate for July 2021, 1 Euro = 4.9275 RON

<sup>13</sup> Idem.

<sup>14</sup> Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, available [here](#).

<sup>15</sup> Idem.

and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organizations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered as NGOs<sup>16</sup>.

In order to be eligible, NGOs acting as PP must, over the last 5 years before the launch of this SGS (i.e. July 2016 – June 2021), have implemented at least one project / activity in the social field/ life improvement for different target groups and the total value, in Euros<sup>17</sup>, effectively spent of the projects / activities implemented by the PP over this period<sup>18</sup> must be of at least ½ of the value of the total grant requested under this call for proposals. In case the PP does not fulfil these criteria, the project shall be rejected during the formal verification stage.

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

Eligible PPs can submit in this capacity one single proposal under the small grant scheme "Priority Interventions for Roma Communities". In case the project does not fulfil this criterion, it shall be subject to further clarification during the formal verification stage, when the 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 schemes<sup>19</sup>. 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.

Entities acting as PP must comply with the **general eligibility requirement** – i.e., not be in one of the following situations:

- *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;*
- *are guilty of serious professional misconduct proven by any means, which the PO can reasonably justify;*

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<sup>16</sup> When evaluating the independence of the organization from local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organizations, the PO's experts will check that: (1) neither public authorities, public entities or political parties, nor for-profit entities represent a majority of the organization's members; (2) ) neither public authorities, public entities or political parties, nor for-profit entities represent a majority of the organization's members with voting rights in the organization's Board or Members' Assembly; (3) the organization's operational and organizational structures are set in a way so that its decision are not significantly influenced by neither public authorities, public entities or political parties, nor by for-profit entities

<sup>17</sup> The exchange rate to be used in determining the value of the expenditures, expressed in Euro, will be selected as follows: (1) for expenditures carried out through projects, 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; (2) for expenditures from sponsorships / own resources, the InforEuro exchange rate of the last calendar month of the year in which the expenditure was carried out shall be used.

<sup>18</sup> In case a project has started before or ends after the reference period, i.e. July 2016 – June 2021, 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 2014 and it was implemented for 2 years (2014-2016), the budget effectively spent taken into consideration for demonstrating the fulfilment of this criterion is only the budget spent during 2016, starting with July.

The PP has the obligation of carefully calculating the values of different budgets effectively spent for demonstrating this criterion, as the 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).

<sup>19</sup> Projects submitted under the small grant scheme „Access to Funding”, in the framework of the Programme, are not considered.

- *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.*

## **2.8. Eligible partners**

Under this small grant scheme, the PP may decide to submit and implement the project on its own or in partnership with other entities. The PP's decision in this regard will be assessed during the content evaluation stage from the point of view of the PP's capacity to implement the project alone or, as the case may be, from the point of view of the added value brought to the project by the partnership and the PP's and partners' capacity to implement it.

For projects implemented in partnership, the partners (from Romania and/or Donor States) will be involved in designing the concept of the project proposal. In this respect, it is recommended that partners have the capacity to act in the project area, in accordance with the role assumed and in accordance with their legal responsibilities or status.

Under this call, the following public or private legal entities are eligible as partners:

- a. from Romania: public entities, associations of local authorities and nongovernmental organisations, 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 deciding the participation in projects, partners 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 programme<sup>20</sup> (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). 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. In this case, the PO will ask the PP to redistribute the activities, budget and the sustainability obligations of the partner which has withdrawn among the remaining partners or, if the PP becomes the only entity implementing the project, to take them over itself; the project proposal will be assessed in the content evaluation stage taking into account the new structure of the partnership, which will impact the score received under criterion 4 “Implementation capacity and sustainability”.

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<sup>20</sup> Projects submitted under the small grant scheme „Access to Funding”, in the framework of the Programme, are not considered.

Entities acting as partners must comply with the same **general eligibility requirement** as the entities acting as PP<sup>21</sup>.

### **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 No. 34/2017, which foresees those Romanian public entities acting as PPs 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 process and will have to declare to the PO that it has complied with the applicable legal provisions. Information on the type of documents that the PP has to submit during the contracting process are included within the Guide for Applicants (annex to the current document of the call).

### **Partnership agreement**

If the project is going to be implemented by a consortium of organizations, the PP will sign a *Partnership Agreement* with the project partners (recommended template provided as an annex to the Grant application). The Partnership Agreement must clearly set out the roles, responsibilities and budget of each partner, coordinating bodies, financial arrangements between the parties etc. (see Article 7.7 of the Regulation). The Partnership Agreement may be submitted in draft as an appendix to the project proposal and will be finalized and signed by the partners before signing the project financing contract. For partners from Donor States, a letter of intent is also accepted when submitting the application (see the recommended template provided by PO in the application), provided that the conclusion of the draft version of the partnership agreement could not be done in time; the signed partnership agreement will have to be submitted at a later time.

### **Collaboration agreement**

For other entities that do not have the status of partners and do not have a budget allocated from the project grant, but shall be involved in the project implementation or in ensuring its sustainability (e.g. local or central public administration authorities, decentralized public services, schools, etc.), the PO recommends the conclusion of a Collaboration Agreement, either prior to 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 the collaboration agreement has an impact on the sustainability of the project or in any other situation considered necessary by the PO.

### **Funds for bilateral relations**

During the project proposal preparation period, the PO can provide to entities from the Donor States and Romania that are eligible under the call, in the framework of the Call 1 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 a PP for a bilateral initiative is 5,000 Euro. More details on how to access these funds can be found on Programme's website: <https://dezvoltare-locala.frds.ro/apelul-1/>.

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<sup>21</sup> According to the enumeration from section 2.7 Eligible project promoters.

## **2.9. Eligible costs**

As a general rule, the costs are eligible if they were incurred during the eligibility period. The eligibility period for expenditures is limited to the implementation period for project activities and may not exceed April 30, 2024.

The eligibility period of the costs begins on the starting date of the project (which usually is the date of signing the project financing contract) and ends at the date defined in the financing contract (with the subsequent amendments and additions, as might be the case). Costs associated with the preparation of the project proposal (consulting services, feasibility studies, cadastral measurements etc.) are not eligible.

At the end of the project, all the planned activities will be completed and all the expenses will be incurred/ committed. Further information on costs eligibility can be found in the Regulation (Chapter 8) and the Guide for Applicants.

The budget of the project shall be expressed in RON and EUR (using the InforEuro exchange rate for July 2021, 1 EUR =4,9275 lei) and shall exclusively comprise eligible costs (direct costs, indirect costs and contingency costs, if the case).

### **Direct costs**

The eligible direct costs of the project are:

- The cost of staff assigned to the project, provided that this corresponds to the Project Promoter's and project partner's usual policy on remuneration. The corresponding salary costs of staff of public entities are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public entity would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;
- Travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project. 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 equipment<sup>22</sup>. 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;
- 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, necessary 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.

Investment costs/ hard measures costs (costs of purchasing equipment and costs of construction / renovation / rehabilitation works) will not exceeding 80% of the project total cost (grant + co-financing, if any). The value allocated to the procurement of land and real estate will not exceed 10% of the total costs of the project and is included in the category of investment costs at the project level.

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<sup>22</sup> 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).

Costs dedicated to project promotion are eligible within 10% of the project's total budget, as detailed in the Guide for Applicants.

Human resources costs (salaries and taxes, including taxes imposed on the employer) are eligible within 30% of the project's total budget, as detailed in the Guide for Applicants.

As a general rule, the project costs shall be reasonable and proportional with the proposed objectives, in accordance with the market prices, both for the designing services and for the estimation of the investment costs at project level, as well as for the other types of costs included into the project budget, so as to ensure efficiency and efficacy use of public funds.

### **Indirect costs**

For entities from Romania, the indirect costs of the project shall be determined either on the basis of actual costs (see Art 8.5.1, lit. a, of Regulation), or on the basis of a flat rate calculation (Art. 8.5.1, lit. c, of Regulation). The entities from Donor States may identify their indirect costs according to one of the methods mentioned in the Regulation (Article 8.5).

### **Contingency**

The maximum value of these costs is 5% of the eligible direct costs.

For detailed information on eligible project costs, please see the specific section of the Guide for Applicants.

#### ***2.10. Non-eligible costs***

- Interests on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
- 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;
- Costs associated with the preparation of the project proposal (consulting services, feasibility studies, cadastral measurements etc.);
- 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 expenditure.

#### ***2.11. Durability of projects***

PP/partners will have to demonstrate the capacity to use the results also after the project completion. In this regard, a plan on the sustainability of the project results shall be developed, which shall be included in the relevant section of the application form. PP shall be guided by the aim of promoting sustainability and 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). The ability to financially support the implementation of the sustainability plan will need to be demonstrated. The implementation of the plan can also be assumed by entities with which the PP has concluded a collaboration agreement, insofar as this agreement contains an explicit provision in this respect.

Investments in real estate and equipment: the minimum post-completion operation for projects that involve investment in real estate is of at least five years after the PO's approval of the project completion report; for projects that involve investment in equipment, the minimum post-completion operation is of at least five years after the project completion. During the post

completion operation period, the real estate or equipment shall be used for the purpose of the project as described in the project contract, including the provision of services/activities for which the investment was made.. The real estate / equipment which was the object of the investment shall be ensured against losses, destruction and, as case may be, theft and appropriate resources for their maintenance shall be set aside. 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 PO<sup>23</sup>, shall have a minimum post-completion operation of 1 year.

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. Project verification, evaluation, selection and contracting**

As PO, RSDF is responsible for collecting the project proposals to be funded under the present call, for selecting projects to be financed and for signing the project contracts.

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

The project proposals shall be analysed against specific criteria, following two steps: formal verification and content evaluation.

#### **3.1 Formal verification**

During the **formal verification stage**, the following shall be checked:

- a) Administrative compliance

**The administrative compliance criteria** refer to:

- compliance with the announced deadline (the project proposal was uploaded and submitted in the online system until the date and time announced as deadline; after the deadline has expired, the submission of any document will be impossible)<sup>24</sup>;
- compliance with the required submission method/ ways (the project proposal was submitted in the online system, according to the procedure explained in the Guide for Applicants, on the mentioned online platform; any proposal submitted using any other method (e.g., sent by email, fax, courier services, personally delivered, wetransfer, etc.) will be rejected<sup>25</sup>;
- all requested documents are attached and comply with the form requirements (all the required and mandatory documents are attached 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).

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<sup>23</sup> 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).

<sup>24</sup> This criterion is eliminatory, without the PO asking for any clarification.

<sup>25</sup> Idem

- the eligible entities have complied with the requirements regarding the maximum number of project proposals submitted under this call as well as with those regarding the maximum number of projects, at the level of the entire Programme, in which an entity can participate, according to sections 2.7 Eligible project promoters and 2.8 Eligible partners, as well as the Guide for Applicants. Except for the situations in which the PP / partners have already received funding for the maximum number of projects allowed in the Programme, in which case the project proposal will be automatically rejected, failure to meet any 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;

b) Compliance with eligibility criteria

**The eligibility criteria** refer to:

- eligibility of the PP and partners (where case may be), as described in 2.7 Eligible Project Promoters and 2.8 Eligible partners;
- the project contributes to reaching at least one of the following programme indicators: IP02, IP04, IP06, IP07;
- the requested amount falls within the set limits;
- the conditions set forth in section 2.5 Grant rate, respectively sub-sections 2.5.1. and 2.5.3, are complied with;
- the project duration is within the limits set in the present call, i.e., 6-16 months;
- the project is being implemented at the level of a single administrative territorial unit;
- the conditions set forth in section 2.2 Eligibility of target groups are complied with;
- a public consultation aimed at identifying the priority problems affecting the community as well as at validating the intervention / activities proposed by the project has been carried out and involved the members of the community;
- the intervention / activities proposed by the project are in compliance with the non-segregation principle (according to Statement of compliance with the non-segregation principle from Application form, section 18);
- Project durability complies with the provisions of section 2.11

The project proposals must fulfil all administrative and eligibility criteria in order to pass to the content evaluation stage.

The formal evaluation is performed by the PO's specialists.

In case the provided information is not sufficient or/ and clear enough to be able to make an objective decision as to whether a certain administrative conformity or eligibility criterion is fulfilled or not, the PO may send the PPs requests for clarification and/ or may ask the PP to submit additional documents (other than the ones that the PP should already have submitted with the project application). The PPs shall respond within the deadline expressed in the PO's request, which is usually 5 working days. Any document/ clarification received after this deadline cannot be considered valid and shall not be taken into account. It is not mandatory for the PO to ask for clarifications.

If one or more of the above criteria have not been met, the project proposal is rejected (either as non-compliant or non-eligible) and is excluded from subsequent stages of the selection.

The PPs with projects rejected as noncompliant or non-eligible shall be notified within maximum 45 working days after the deadline for projects submission with regard to the results of the formal evaluation. In well-justified cases, e.g., 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 PPs about the new deadline.

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

### 3.2 Content evaluation

The **content evaluation** is performed by independent experts, selected and contracted by the PO.

Each project proposal that fulfils the administrative and eligibility criteria is evaluated by two independent 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 two scores shall be considered for ranking the projects. In case the evaluated project cannot obtain the minimum score needed to be considered for 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
<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevance, necessity and opportunity</b>	<b>50</b>
1.1	The project is relevant to the objective of the small grants scheme and provides plausible arguments regarding its contribution to it. The project contributes directly and significantly to the mandatory Programme's indicators. Only activities falling in the category of soft measures are considered to contribute to reaching the mandatory Programme's indicators.	5
1.2	The problem addressed by the project is relevant, represents a priority at the community level and was identified through a participatory process <sup>26</sup> and solving it or mitigating its effects leads to tangible benefits for the members of the target group.	5
1.3	The solutions proposed in the project in relation to the identified needs / problems are relevant. The solutions respect the Romanian legislation, are in line with the national strategy on Roma inclusion and adhere to good practices in the field.	5
1.4	The PP has convincingly proven, by offering credible arguments in the dedicated section of the Grant application and, whenever possible, attaching documents that the project addresses a disadvantaged community (the community is lacking resources, is isolated and/or it has a low capacity to implement project and/or it has a low capacity to attract investments and/or it is economically underdeveloped and/or it is affected by demographic decline etc.)	5
1.5	The project targets one or more communities with significant percentages of	5

<sup>26</sup> In order to demonstrate the participatory nature of the problem identification process, referencing studies / documents carried out independently of the drafting of the funding application will also be accepted, as long as said studies / documents were drafted after direct consultations with community members and reflecting identification and prioritization of needs following their involvement.

No.	Evaluation criteria	Maximum Score
	<p>the Roma population.  <i>The score will be differentiated according to the number of Roma residents in the community / communities<sup>27</sup>, as follows: over 10% and less than 15% 1 point is awarded; over 15% and less than 20% 2 points are awarded; over 20% and less than 25% 3 points are awarded; over 25% and less than 30% 4 points are awarded; over 30% - 5 points are awarded.</i></p>	
1.6	The proposal clearly identifies and describes other projects / initiatives that have been, are or will be implemented during the project implementation, addressing similar issues or having the same target groups and presents a detailed analysis of how the proposed project works together with these other projects / initiatives to improve the lives of the community, clearly demonstrating that there are no overlaps.	5
1.7	For project involving both hard and soft measures: The activities targeting infrastructure improvements/ facilities / equipment for the benefit of the target groups (hard measures) are connected and create synergies with the complementary activities (soft measures) – <i>maximul 15 points are awarded. For projects involving strictly soft measures, only 5 points will be awarded.</i>	15
1.8	<p>The project pays special attention to concerns particular to Roma women and girls (the project takes into account possible barriers to the effective participation of Roma women and girls in project activities and provides for effective measures to eliminate them; the project includes activities to address some of the problems / needs specific to Roma women and girls, etc.). – maximum 3 points.</p> <p>The project contains explicit measures which combat and prevent the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on members of the target groups in the thematic areas targeted by the project. – maximum 2 points.</p>	5
<b>2.</b>	<b>Technical consistency / Methodology</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1	The methodology and activities of the project follow the recommendations of the "The 10 common basic principles on Roma inclusion" vademecum <sup>28</sup> . The project promotes and adheres to the highest standards with regards to respecting human rights and dignity, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity.	5
2.2	The objectives of the project are leading to direct, concrete and visible results. The activities are eligible, 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	5
2.3	The methodology of the intervention is clear, coherent and detailed, risks are properly identified and addressed by mitigation measures.	5
2.4	The project presents innovation / 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 the implementation of the	5

<sup>27</sup> If the project is implemented in more than one community, the percentage will be calculated as the average of the Roma percentage in each of the communities targeted by the project, i.e. the sum of all percentages divided by the number of communities (e.g. if a project targets two communities, C1 and C2, and the percentage of the Roma population in C1 is 10% and in C2 it is 30%, then the percentage taken into account for this criterion is  $(10+30)/2 = 20\%$ )

<sup>28</sup> The vademecum is available at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7573706d-e7c4-4ece-ae59-2b361246a7b0/language-en>

No.	Evaluation criteria	Maximum Score
	project, participation in the receipt of investment works in the benefit of the Roma community, hiring Roma people from the community to act as members of the project implementation team etc.	
3	<b>Economic efficiency</b>	15
3.1	The proposed costs are eligible, fall within the set limits <sup>29</sup> and are directly related to the activities and outcomes – the expenditure calculation manner is clearly and explicitly 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.	5
3.2	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 costs 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). The mandatory visibility activities (according to the specific Annex) are included and are proportional with the scale of the proposed intervention.	5
3.3	NGO as PP: Private co-financing of a relevant rate to the project budget is provided (at least 2% of the total value of the project) or Public entities as PP: own human resources are involved in working directly with the target group / are Roma ethnics / are Roma experts.	5
4	<b>Implementation capacity and sustainability</b>	15
4.1	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. The project team includes specialized staff if infrastructure works are planned.	5
4.2	The implementation of the project in partnership or only by the PP is credibly motivated. For projects implemented by a single organization, the PP has the capacity and the experience required to implement the project. For projects implemented in partnership, the role and responsibilities of each partner are clearly delimited in the Partnership Agreement and 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.)	5
4.3	The project describes how the obtained results shall be maintained (identifies the activities that shall continue, specifies the service capacity after the end of financing, identifies resources for taking over the costs for services functioning, including the costs for ensuring the maintenance of	5

<sup>29</sup> Compared to the total budget of the project, the investments costs do not exceed 80%, the costs with human resources - 30% and the costs for communication activities and for the purchase of real estate do not exceed 10% each.

No.	Evaluation criteria	Maximum Score
	buildings/ equipment etc.) and ensures that it continues to generate maximum benefits to its target groups and final beneficiaries. Durability requirements are well considered and ensured.	
<b>Total score</b>		<b>100</b>

Each criterion is divided into sub-criteria. For each sub-criterion, the evaluator may award a score between 0 and the maximum value for the respective criterion, according to the grid above.

In order to be eligible for funding, the project proposal must meet cumulatively the following conditions:

- To obtain a minimum of 25 points under criterion no. 1 Relevance, necessity and opportunity of the project, as well as at least 3 points to each of the sub-criteria 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.8<sup>30</sup>;
- To obtain under criterion no. 2 Technical consistency / methodology minimum 3 points to sub-criteria 2.1 and 2.2
- To obtain under criterion no. 3 Economic efficiency minimum 3 points to sub-criteria 3.1 and 3.2;
- To obtain under criterion no. 4 Implementation capacity and sustainability minimum 3 points to sub-criteria 4.3;
- To achieve a total score of at least 65 points<sup>31</sup> out of the 100 possible, during the evaluation.

During desk evaluation, a technical expert will assess 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 1.3, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 and 4.3)

After concluding the desk evaluation, the *Ranked list of projects* (outlined in descending order of the final scores), together with the most relevant remarks of the evaluators, will be drawn up. The list is made available to the members of the Selection Committee<sup>32</sup> (SC).

### **3.3 Project selection and approval**

The SC recommends to the PO the projects to be financed based on the conclusions of evaluation carried out by the independent evaluators and may modify the projects ranking in justified cases. The justification for the change shall be detailed in the minute(s) of the meeting(s) and all the affected PPs shall be informed in writing on the justification for the change.

<sup>30</sup> If, after verifying the first criterion *Relevance, necessity and opportunity of the project*, the project proposal does not meet the requirement, the project is rejected at this stage.

<sup>31</sup> The average of the two independent appraisers' scores.

<sup>32</sup> The Selection Committee consists of three members: two representatives of the PO and one external expert. The representatives of the Programme Partners (KS and CoE) are invited to participate in the SC's meetings in an advisory capacity and the representatives of the National Focal Point (NFP) from the Ministry of Investments and European Projects and the FMO are invited to participate as observers.

The PO shall verify that the selection process has been carried out in compliance with the provisions in the Regulation and the SC recommendations and complies with the programme's rules and objectives. After these verifications, the PO, through the Steering Committee<sup>33</sup>, based on the SC recommendations, will make a decision regarding the projects that will be funded/ rejected/ put on the reserve list, depending the available funds and will award the projects. The PO decision is final.

The PO will subsequently sign funding contracts with the PP.

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

Until the final decision is taken, all the information related to the results of the projects' evaluation shall be confidential.

All persons involved in the evaluation process shall sign statements on confidentiality and the avoidance of conflicts of interest.

### **3.4 Notification of project promoters**

All PPs (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 selection within maximum 45 working days after the final decision of the PO. In the case of projects approved for financing, the notification shall also comprise the conditions to be fulfilled for signing the project financing contract, if any. In the case of projects rejected for financing, the notification shall comprise the ranking position, total points, and main reasons for rejection.

After finalizing the selection and approval stage and after notifying the PPs, the final list of the projects approved for financing shall be published on the Programme's website at <https://dezvoltare-locala.frds.ro/>.

### **3.5 Appeals procedure**

The PPs 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 concerned the PO decision, if it correspond 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.

## **4. Reporting and payment system**

The Programme applies the pre-financing system. In the case of projects selected for financing under this call, the payments to the PP shall be performed by the PO under the form of an advance payment (up to 80%), the interim payment and payment of the final balance (if applicable). The interim payment (up to 30%) is performed based on the interim report containing supporting documents (technical and financial) and following the authorisation by PO

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<sup>33</sup> The Steering Committee is the ruling body of the PO, according to the law 129/1998 and subsequent amendments

of the declared expenses. The project funds (in Lei) shall be transferred to the accounts specifically opened by the PP for the project at the local treasury (if the PP is a public entity) or at a commercial bank (if the PP is an NGO).

## **5. Preparation and submission of the project proposal**

If the PPs use 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 specific field of the application form.

### **5.1 Help-desk services**

During the period the call for project proposals is opened, the PO provides the potential PPs and project partners or other stakeholders, upon request, with help-desk services (information and clarifications). These services are provided by experts working in the main office and in the two branch offices of the PO.

The PPs can send questions by e-mail at [info@frds.ro](mailto:info@frds.ro).

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

We recommend periodic consultation of the Programme's website (<https://dezvoltare-locala.frds.ro/>) in order to have access to additional and/or updated information

### **5.2 Informative seminar**

After the launch of this call, the PO will organise an online informative seminar for potential project promoters (the estimated date for the seminar is July 2021). Exact information on the date of this event will be published by the PO on the Programme's website <https://dezvoltare-locala.frds.ro/> and on the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/dezvoltare.locala/>.

### **5.3 Project proposal file preparation**

The grant application form must be filled-in according to the requirements described in the Guide for Applicants (both documents are published at the following address: [www.frds.ro](http://www.frds.ro)).

The grant application and the annexes will be drafted in Romanian, on the template provided by the PO.

The grant application shall be accompanied by a package of additional documents. The list of documents to be submitted together with the grant application is available in the Guide for Applicants.

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. A PP can create a single account, being identified by the tax registration code.

Account creation details and the online submission method are described in Annex G of the Guide for Applicants.

Please note that in case the PO will publish a corrigendum/ corrigenda, during the period in which the call is open, it is requested that the application proposal is in line with the latest approved and published forms/ documents/ annexes etc., otherwise the application might be non-compliant at the formal (administrative) verification stage or at the content evaluation.

#### **5.4 Project proposal submission**

The project proposal file will be sent exclusively through the online submission system, following the online upload procedure detailed in annex G of the Guide of Applicants, no later than the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, 2021, 17:00 hours.

We highly recommend to upload the grant application file in a timely manner as to avoid overloading the electronic system or even blocking it. The responsibility for uploading and submitting the project proposal in a timely manner/ before the deadline belongs to the project promoter, and the PO cannot be held responsible for failure to meet the deadline and having the project proposal rejected for this reason.

The files submitted by courier, postal services, fax or e-mail, or in person, as well as those submitted through any other means than above-mentioned shall not be considered valid and shall be rejected.

By the submission deadline, if any applicant wants to modify a submitted and validated project, a request shall be sent to the PO to cancel this project and resume the upload process. The cancelled project proposal will not be quantified at the maximum number of projects for the PP or for the partners.

After the deadline for projects submission has expired, the applicants can no longer upload and send projects or take initiative to make corrections / revisions of the project proposal file.

At any time before the PO's approval, the applicants may choose to withdraw the project proposal from the competition. In this case, PP will send an official information the PO and PO will approve the withdraw of the project proposal.

#### **6. Further useful information**

For a better understanding of the aspects related to the specificity of the interventions financed from EEA and Norwegian Grants 2014-2021 and the overall projects implementation 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;](#)

- [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](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>