



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Support to local self-governments and/or civil society organisations (CSOs) for combating discrimination and hate speech
HF 28

Project	Horizontal Facility – Joint EU/CoE Action HF28 – “Combating Hatred and Intolerance in North Macedonia”
Awarding entity	COUNCIL OF EUROPE PROGRAMME OFFICE IN SKOPJE
Funding	European Union and Council of Europe
Duration	Projects shall be implemented by 31 March 2026. Reporting requirements shall be completed by 30 April 2026.
Estimated starting date	1 July 2025
Issuance date	14 April 2025
Deadline for applications	15 May 2025

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APPENDICES:

- Appendix I - Application Form
- Appendix II - Provisional budget (Template)
- Appendix III - Template Grant Agreement (for information only)

HOW TO APPLY?

- Complete and sign the **Application Form** (See **Appendix I**)
- Attach a provisional budget (using the template reproduced in **Appendix II**)
- Attach the other supporting documents:
 - Work plan of the proposed project;
 - Organigram of the unit/organisation for implementing the proposed project;
 - CV of project staff involved in the implementation of the proposed project;
 - Two (2) References for previously implemented projects;
 - Bank certificate confirming the solvency of the account with the minimum liquidity of 2000 Euro (or its equivalent in the local currency);
 - Registration documents/settlement status (statut).
- Send these documents in electronic form (Word .and/or PDF) to the following e-mail address: anti-discrimination@coe.int. Emails should contain the following reference in subject: HF 28 - APPLICATION FOR GRANT.

I. INTRODUCTION

This call for proposals is launched in the framework of the joint European Union and Council of Europe programme “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye” (Horizontal Facility III) and its Action “Combating Hatred and Intolerance in North Macedonia” It aims to co-fund national/local projects aimed at local self-governments and/or civil society organisations.

The Call aims to support selected grantees in developing concrete responses on combating hate speech, including hate speech on grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Project proposals shall aim to produce an added value to the European Union/the Council of Europe efforts in this domain.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION/THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE ACTION

The purpose of the Action is to enhance the implementation of mechanisms on combating hate speech and discrimination especially those on combating intolerance, hate speech and inequality, in line with the ECtHR case law, recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), as well as other applicable standards such as the latest Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers on combating hate speech and Committee of Ministers’s Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

In [ECRI’s General Policy Recommendation No.15](#), ECRI recommends that member states “*seek to identify the conditions conducive to the use of hate speech as a phenomenon and the different forms it takes, as well as to measure its extent and the harm that it causes, with a view to discouraging and preventing its use and to reducing and remedying the harm caused*”. In its General Policy Recommendation No.15, ECRI also recommends that member-states “*undertake a vigorous approach not only to raising public awareness of the importance of respecting pluralism and of the dangers posed by hate speech but also to demonstrating both the falsity of the foundations on which it is based and its unacceptability, so as to discourage and prevent the use of such speech*” and “*provide support for those targeted by hate speech both individually and collectively*”.

The Action also aligns to support the implementation of the recommendations and conclusions from the EU progress reports for North Macedonia. Namely, in the latest [EU Report on North Macedonia](#), October 2024, it is stated that that “*the country continues to meet its general obligations on fundamental rights, but legislation and pertinent strategies should be implemented in a systematic manner*” and “*the legal framework and interinstitutional capacity to combat hate speech and hate crime needs further improvement, notably to include sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds of hate speech. The country should follow up on ECRI’s General Policy Recommendation No 15 on combating hate speech and fully address the findings and recommendations set out in ECRI’s report of September 2023.*”

In particular, it aims to continue revising and developing legal framework in line with European standards as well as to continue enhancing the implementation of the current relevant laws, through capacity building for relevant institutions. The objective is to implement the respective action plans, strategies and other government’s guidelines and support them to better tailor their interventions to counter discrimination, hate speech and to promote tolerance and inclusion. In addition, the action aims to support the fight against hate speech, improve the protection and inclusion of vulnerable groups and promote rights of the LGBTI persons.

Project partners include institutions of North Macedonia such as the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth, Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, Ombudsman, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, etc. Other partners include the Delegation of the European Union in Skopje, civil society organisations, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

III. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The indicative available budget under this call for proposals is 20.000 Euros (twenty thousand Euros). The Council of Europe intends to award 2 (two) grants of a maximum amount of 10.000 Euros (ten thousand Euros) each.

Subject to availability of funds and extension of the initial duration of the Action “Combating Hatred and Intolerance in North Macedonia”, the Council of Europe reserves the right not to award all available funds, and/or to redistribute the available funds in a different manner depending on the project proposals received and on the outcome of the call for proposals.

IV. REQUIREMENTS

1. General objective

The grants will fund activities aimed at supporting the concrete implementation and/or follow-up at local level of the recommendations of the Council of Europe’s monitoring body in the field of anti-discrimination, namely the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), other applicable standards such as the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on combating hate speech and the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on combating discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as other relevant documents such as the Strategy for Equality and Nondiscrimination adopted in 2022 and its Action Plan, as well as the recommendations from the Data Analysis on Hate Speech and Hate Crime.

Projects designed could address the following issues:

- Combating hate speech and/or countering intolerance, exclusion, discrimination, inequality, hatred and racism in local communities in North Macedonia, whereby focusing on vulnerable groups such as Roma, people with disabilities, people of different ethnicity/religions, LGBTI people, etc.
- Creation and promotion of counter and alternative narratives to hatred and intolerance and enhancing dialogue among different groups in the society.
- Promotion and protection of rights of LGBTI persons in the local communities in North Macedonia related to access to health and education, in the area of sports, media and administration, protection against hate speech and hate crime, etc.

2. Means of action

Projects should include specifically tailored activities aiming at supporting the implementation of one or more recommendations/documents and/or issues linked to the topics.

Applicants should refer to the relevant recommendations/documents at the following links:

- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#)
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2010\)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity](#)
- [Recommendations by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\) for North Macedonia](#)
- [ECRI's General Policy Recommendation \(GPR\) no. 2 on Equality Bodies to Combat Racism and Intolerance at national level](#)
- [ECRI's General Policy Recommendation \(GPR\) no.7 on National legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination](#)
- [ECRI GPR No.10 on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education](#)

- [ECRI's General Policy Recommendation \(GPR\) no.11 on Combating racism and racial discrimination in policing](#)
- [ECRI GPR No.12 on combating racism and racial discrimination in the field of sport](#)
- [ECRI's General Policy Recommendation \(GPR\) no.13 on Combating antigypsism and discrimination against Roma](#)
- [ECRI's General Policy Recommendation \(GPR\) no.15 on Combating hate speech](#)
- [EU's Progress Report on North Macedonia \(2024\)](#)

Sample of activities could include the following:

- **Countering hate speech and promoting diversity, equality, inclusion and tolerance:** combating hate speech; activities towards changes of policies; raising awareness about hate speech and its negative effects; activities towards facilitating prosecution of hate speech; raising awareness through authorities and CSOs about entitlements and access to services for all persons, regardless of their status; involvement of the authorities, schools, religious and sports communities in combating hate speech and promoting diverse and inclusive society; supporting initiatives and actions that promote and encourage fighting discrimination on ground of ethnic or national origin; and enhancing intercultural dialogue, mutual respect, understanding and cooperation among all persons living in the local community, including different vulnerable groups, etc.
- **LGBTI:** fighting human rights violation of LGBTI people; activities towards changes of policies; involvement of authorities, local self-governments, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders in promoting equality and diversity and combating discrimination and violence, etc.

The proposed areas are not exhaustive, the call is also open to other suggestions and proposals.

The applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that restrictions apply to the engagement of local¹ civil servants and other public administration staff under this grant procedure.

First, applicants are informed that if a Grantee intends to procure, in connection with a part of the Action, the consultancy services of a civil servant or other public administration staff or to assign the performance of a part of the Action to a civil servant or other public administration staff, only civil servants or other public administration staff falling under one of the following categories may be engaged

- I) Educational staff (including academics, pedagogical institutes, pre-university teachers, school teachers, curriculum experts).
- II) Judges, prosecutors, staff from the prosecution offices and judicial and prosecutorial bodies.
- III) Staff from the ministries for social affairs, ministries of justice, ministries of interior and ministries of health and public institutes.
- IV) Law enforcement staff (including staff from the specialised police departments and Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs)),
- V) Staff from equality bodies and central electoral commissions.

In addition, where a Grantee procures the consultancy services of a natural person in connection with a part of the Action or assigns the performance of a part of the Action to an individual within the Grantee organisation and that natural person is a local civil servant or other public administration staff under the third phase of the Horizontal Facility, the Grantee must confirm that neither the signatory of the service contract, nor if relevant the organisation he/she represents, are in a situation of a conflict of interests or a potential conflict of interest in relation to this procedure; the signatory and if relevant the organisation have been notified and understand that a conflict of interests may arise, in particular, from economic interests, political or national affinities, emotional or family ties or any other type of shared relationship or interest.

¹ For the purpose of this document, the term « local » designates consultants from one of the Horizontal Facility Beneficiaries region and Türkiye.

The Grantee must undertake to verify and provide the Council of Europe with the necessary supporting documents confirming that this individual belonging to the category of civil servant or other public administration staff under the third phase of the Horizontal Facility:

- a) has obtained authorisation of his/her public employer to carry out this secondary activity
- b) the performance of his/her obligations under this Agreement goes beyond the scope of his/her regular official duties
- c) undertakes this secondary activity on a temporary and short-term basis and that it will be performed outside his/her working hours or when he/she is on leave of absence from his/her official public duties
- d) obtained the confirmation from his/her employer that national/local legislation does not prohibit civil servants or other public administration staff from undertaking secondary activities
- e) is not in a situation of conflict of interests as described above
- f) has not been involved in the Action design or that the public institution for which he/she works will not be a beneficiary thereof unless foreseen otherwise by the Horizontal Facility Description of Action.

3. Implementation period

The implementation period of the projects should start on 1 July 2025 (see indicative timetable under VIII. below) and shall not extend beyond 31 March 2026.

Reporting requirements shall be completed on 30 April 2026 **at the latest**.

Projects completed prior to the date of submission of the applications will be automatically excluded. As regard projects started prior to the date of submission of the applications, or prior to the date of signature of the grant agreement, only those costs incurred after the date of submission of the grant application could be eligible (provided the agreement concerned so provides).

4. Target stakeholders

Projects should target in particular the following key stakeholders:

- Local self-governments
- Civil society organisations
- Youth
- General population
- Vulnerable groups such as Roma, people with disabilities, people of different ethnic/religions, LGBTI persons, etc

The above list is not exhaustive and projects may propose to target other relevant stakeholders, while keeping in mind the general objective of the Project.

5. Budgetary requirements

Project proposals shall be accompanied by a draft budget (See **Template Budget, in Appendix II**) amounting to a maximum of 10.000 Euros (ten thousand Euros). The estimated budget must be consistent, accurate, clear, complete and cost-effective, in the light of the activities proposed.

Each Grantee shall also be required to contribute to the project either by way of its own resources or by contribution from third parties. Co-financing may take the form of financial or human resources, in-kind contributions or income generated by the action or project.

The applicants should include some visibility activities in their project proposals through introducing relevant costs in the estimated budget even if the visibility and work with media are not the focus of their project proposals.

6. Further to the general objective, preference will be given to:

- Projects proposed by a local self-government in cooperation with CSOs or proposed by a CSO in cooperation with local self-government or/and other relevant stakeholders/institutions;
- Projects and their activities implemented in partnership between local self-governments/CSOs from different entities of North Macedonia
- Projects that aim to fight multiple forms of discrimination or to support multiple vulnerable groups;
- Projects/actions that involve vulnerable groups themselves;
- Projects that make links between strategies in fighting discrimination and hate speech that exists at the local level towards above mentioned groups or that support the preparation of such strategies;
- Projects that incorporate gender mainstreaming elements;
- Projects that include a list of visibility activities that should be implemented through the grant, aiming to: promote tolerance, intercultural dialogue and cultural pluralism among general public - public has access to fact-based/well-researched information about sexual minorities (and their rights) and/or on hate speech. Based on this it can make a positive connotation with issues linked to the vulnerable groups in society; stimulate media interest and to increase the number of media reports aimed at increasing awareness related to the promotion of tolerance, combating hate speech; provide visibility of the contribution of the Horizontal Facility Programme, following the established visibility guidelines of the Horizontal Facility Programme.

7. The following types of action will not be considered:

- Projects/actions providing financial support to third parties (re-granting schemes);
- Projects/actions concerning only or mainly individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- Projects/actions supporting political parties.

8. Funding conditions:

The funds for each grant should in principle be distributed as follows:

- 80 % will be paid to the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium when the Grant Agreement between the Parties is signed;
- the balance will be paid to the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium based on actual expenditures incurred, and after the presentation and acceptance by the Council of Europe of the final narrative and financial reports for the Grant implementation.

9. Reporting requirements:

- **narrative reporting** requires a full narrative report on the use made of the grant and a copy of the register of the persons present during each of the activities, including names and signatures of participants;
- **financial reporting** requires in particular a statement in the currency in which the Grant Agreement will be concluded (Euros or local currency), in English, stating the payments made for the implementation of the activities, certified by the responsible financial officer of the Grantees, accompanied by “appropriate original supporting documents” (see below). The Council of Europe reserves the right to ask for summary translations of invoices into English. If for legal reasons the original documents must be retained by the Grantees, certified copies must be submitted with the financial statement.

“Appropriate original supporting documents” refers to signed contracts, invoices and acceptances of work (for all transactions), payment authorisation for all transactions should also be provided in case the Grantees use such practice, and reliable evidence of payment (authorised payment order and bank statement).

As regards round tables / conferences, presenting “appropriate original supporting documents” requires presentation of a programme indicating the title, dates, venue, and agenda of the event; the names of persons facilitating the event, a signed list of participants, the contracts with the owner of venue of the event (e.g. hotel) for the rent of premises, food and beverages of participants, invoices from the owner of the venue of the event for the above services, and a report on the results of the event (see narrative reporting above).

As regards consultancy services, presenting “appropriate original supporting documents” requires presentation of evidence of the outputs produced, contracts with experts and consultants containing a specific description of services to be carried out, invoices produced after the works have been performed and delivered (the specialities of the consultants shall correspond to the nature of activities for which they are contracted).

As regards travel fees / lodging of experts and participants, presenting “appropriate original supporting documents” requires presentation, where relevant, of contracts with a travel agency for travel fees and lodging, invoices of the travel agency indicating destinations, dates, ticket costs, and names of the travelling persons, a programme of the event indicating the names of the experts and signed lists of participants.

The above description is not comprehensive. Any doubt regarding the interpretation of the notion of “appropriate original supporting documents” should lead the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium to consult the Council of Europe.

V. HOW TO APPLY?

1. Documents to be submitted:

Each application shall contain:

- the completed and signed **Application Form** (See **Appendix I**);
- a provisional budget (using the template reproduced in **Appendix II**);
- the other supporting documents:
 - Work plan of the proposed project;
 - Organigram of the unit/organisation for implementing the proposed project (or link to the relevant web-page)
 - CV of project staff involved in the implementation of the proposed project;
 - Two (2) References for previously implemented projects;
 - Bank certificate confirming the solvency of the account with the minimum liquidity of 2000 Euro (or its equivalent in the local currency);
 - Registration documents/settlement status (statut).

Applications that are incomplete will not be considered.

2. Questions

General information can be found on the website of the joint EU and Council of Europe [Horizontal Facility III programme](#) and information of interest concerning the Action “Combating Hatred and Intolerance” can be found on the website of the [Council of Europe Programme Office in Skopje](#).

Other questions regarding this specific call for proposals must be sent at the latest one week before the deadline for the submission of proposals, in English and shall be exclusively sent to the following address: anti-discrimination@coe.int with the following reference in subject: **HF 28 – QUESTION FOR GRANT**.

3. Deadline for submission

The application form, **completed and signed by all Grantees**, together with the supporting documents, must be submitted in electronic form (Word and/or PDF) to the following e-mail address: anti-discrimination@coe.int Emails should contain the following reference in subject: **HF 28 APPLICATION FOR GRANT**.

Applications must be received **before 15 May 2025 (at 23:59 CEST)**. Applications received after the above mentioned date will not be considered.

4. Change, alteration and modification of the application file

Any change in the format, or any alteration or modification of the original application file, will cause the immediate rejection of the application concerned.

VI. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

The projects presented will be assessed by an Evaluation Committee composed of three Council of Europe members.

The procedure shall be based on the underlying principles of grant award procedures, which are transparency, non-retroactivity, non-cumulative awards, not-for-profit, co-financing and non-discrimination, in accordance with [Rule 1374 of 16 December 2015 on the grant award procedures of the Council of Europe](#).

The applicants, and their projects, shall fulfil all of the following criteria:

1. Exclusion criteria:

Applicants shall be excluded from the grant award procedure where they or, in the case of legal persons, their owner(s) or executive officer(s):

- a) have been sentenced by final judgment on one or more of the following charges: participation in a criminal organisation, corruption, fraud, money laundering, terrorist financing, terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, child labour or trafficking in human beings;
- b) are in a situation of bankruptcy, liquidation, termination of activity, insolvency or arrangement with creditors or any like situation arising from a procedure of the same kind, or are subject to a procedure of the same kind;
- c) have received a judgement with res judicata force, finding an offence that affects their professional integrity or constitutes a serious professional misconduct;
- d) do not comply with their obligations as regards payment of social security contributions, taxes and dues, according to the statutory provisions of the country where they are established;
- e) are an entity created to circumvent tax, social or other legal obligations (empty shell company), have ever created or are in the process of creation of such an entity;
- f) have been involved in mismanagement of the Council of Europe funds or public funds;
- g) are included in the lists of persons or entities subject to restrictive measures applied by the European Union (available at www.sanctionsmap.eu).

By signing the Application Form, applicants shall declare on their honour that they are not in any of the above-mentioned situations (See **Appendix I, Item 12**).

The Council of Europe reserves the right to ask applicants at a later stage to supply the following supporting documents:

- for the items set out in paragraphs a), b), c) and f), an extract from the record of convictions or failing that an equivalent document issued by the competent judicial or administrative authority of the country where the applicant is established, indicating that these requirements are met;
 - for the items set out in paragraph d), a certificate issued by the competent authority of the country of establishment;
1. for the items set out in paragraph e);
 1. for natural persons, a scanned copy of a valid photographic proof of identity (e.g. passport)
 2. for legal persons, an extract from the companies register or other official document proving ownership and control of the applicant.

2. Eligibility criteria:

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

- be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation or as a local self-government in North Macedonia;
- be entitled to carry out activities in North Macedonia described in its project proposal;
- for CSOs: have been active for at least three years in the field of human rights/anti-discrimination, hate speech;
- have sufficient financial capacity on the bank account: at least 2000 Euro or the equivalent in the local currency
- have sufficient operational and professional capacity, including at least two staff members, to carry out activities described in its project proposal and who have at least three years experience in project implementation

Multiple applications are not allowed and shall lead to the exclusion of all applications concerned.

3. Award criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- the relevance and added value of the project and its activities with regard to the implementation of recommendations/documents (listed under 2. *Means of action and 6 Further to the general objective, preference will be given to* which are to be found under Section IV Requirements of the present document), thus meeting the requirements of the call (60%)
- the quality of the application, cost-effectiveness and relevance of the experience of the applicant (30%)
- sustainability of the activities (10%)

VII. NOTIFICATION OF THE DECISION AND SIGNATURE OF GRANT AGREEMENTS

On completion of the selection process, all applicants will be notified in writing of the final decision concerning their respective applications as well as on the next steps to be undertaken.

The selected Grantees will be invited to sign a Grant Agreement (See Appendix III, for information only), formalising their legal commitments. **Potential applicants are strongly advised to read the draft contract, in particular its requirements in terms of payment and reporting.**

I. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

Phases	Indicative timing
Publication of the call	14 April 2025
Deadline for submitting applications	15 May 2025 (at 23:59 CEST)
Information to applicants on the results of the award procedure	20 June 2025
Signature of the grant agreements	25 June 2025
Implementation period	1 July 2025 – 31 March 2026

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