



## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Lisbon Recognition Convention Implementation Project – support for the ENIC Centres  
Call for proposals 2024

<b>Project</b>	Lisbon Recognition Convention Implementation Project – Support for the ENIC Centres
<b>Awarding entity</b>	<b>COUNCIL OF EUROPE</b> Education Department
<b>Funding</b>	Maximum 250 000 €
<b>Duration</b>	Projects shall be implemented by 15 November 2024. Reporting requirements shall be completed by 30 November 2024.
<b>Estimated starting date</b>	22 January 2024
<b>Issuance date</b>	17 November 2023
<b>Deadline for applications</b>	10 December 2023

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This call for proposals is launched in the framework of the Council of Europe Project “**Learners First – Support for the ENIC Centres** “. The project aims to foster the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which is central to ensuring efficient and fair recognition of qualifications in the European Higher Education Area through supporting the ENIC Network.

The present call gives an opportunity to ENIC centres from the countries involved in the Council of Europe Education Programme and the Steering Committee for Education, which are not eligible for the European Commission NARIC call for proposals (i.e. Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Holy See, Kazakhstan, Monaco, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Ukraine, United Kingdom) to formulate proposals aimed at contributing to the goals of the ENIC network and promoting co-operation and mobility in the field of education, especially by striving for ensuring the recognition of higher education qualifications in fair, transparent and non-discriminatory matter. Project proposals shall aim to produce an added value to the Council of Europe efforts in this domain.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For over 25 years [The Lisbon Recognition Convention](#) has facilitated the recognition of qualifications and subsequently contributed to student and staff mobility. Counting 56 countries, the joint CoE/UNESCO Convention is managed through the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee and its Bureau. A European Network of National Information Centres (ENIC) was set up by the Council of Europe and UNESCO in 1994 to assist in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. It is run jointly with the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) Network, which was established in 1984 with the European Commission as Secretariat.

For the efficient functioning of both the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the ENIC and NARIC Networks the renewal process is constantly required, given new developments in the field of higher education.

In September 2023 the Council of Europe member states adopted the Education Strategy. The Education Strategy is based on the following three pillars, which will support the Council of Europe's mandate to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law and reinforce the values underlined in the 4<sup>th</sup> Heads of State and Government Summit, which took place in Reykjavik in May 2023:

- 1) Renewing the democratic and civic mission of education
- 2) Enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education
- 3) Advancing education through a human rights-based digital transformation

The three pillars directly impact the area of recognition of qualifications.

The Council of Europe's Education Strategy supports academic mobility, in particular the participation of students and staff from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds while paying particular attention to the resurgence of the brain drain from Southern and Eastern Europe to Northern and Western Europe. Fair recognition of academic qualifications, including automatic recognition, goes hand in hand with mobility, as stated in the preamble of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), together with the digitisation of student data and qualifications. Digitalisation in higher education has had a significant impact on access, mobility and completion. But technologies also encourage other phenomena, such as the proliferation of fraudulent activities in education, seriously undermining not only the quality of what is on offer but also trust in the education systems of several

countries. The Education Strategy calls to build a culture of trust by promoting ethics, mutual respect and accountability of all actors in education and by preventing education fraud.

In the context of higher education, refugees are among the most vulnerable, facing particular challenges in accessing and participating in further education and employment. This is especially true when their educational records are incomplete or lacking.

### **III. BUDGET AVAILABLE**

The indicative available budget under this call for proposals is **250 000 euros** (two hundred and fifty thousand Euros) over the period from January 2024 to November 2024. The Council of Europe intends to award up to **6 grants amounting to a maximum of 50 000 euros** (fifty thousand euros) each, covering the entire period of the project implementation.

Subject to availability of funds, 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 scheme aims to support ENIC Centres in promoting co-operation and mobility in the field of education, especially by striving for ensuring the recognition of higher education qualifications in fair, transparent and non-discriminatory matter.

Each eligible ENIC Center (see the list of eligible ENIC Centers in the point 4. below) may propose one individual project to be implemented on a national level and/or participate in one international project in a co-operation with one of the eligible ENIC Centres.

To this end, the Grants scheme invites project proposals which:

- a) Promote automatic recognition of qualifications;
- b) Support digitalisation in the recognition of qualifications;
- c) Contribute to the implementation of Article 7 of the Lisbon Recognition Convention<sup>1</sup> (recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situations);
- d) Support the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec (2022) 18 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering education fraud.

#### **2. Means of action**

**Project activities** may include:

- guidelines and tools;
- information and dissemination activities at national or regional level ;

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed information on the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region is accessible on the following webpage: <https://rm.coe.int/168007f2c7>

- studies and reports;
- promotion, translation and adaptation of Council of Europe and UNESCO materials;
- focus group meetings; national training activities;
- website translations in other languages and web information improvement.

The above list is not exhaustive, and applicants may propose to undertake other relevant actions, while keeping in mind the general objective of the Project.

### 3. Implementation period

The implementation period of the projects should **start on 22 January 2024** (see indicative timetable under VIII. below), shall **not extend beyond 15 November 2024**.

Reporting requirements shall be completed as follows:

- transmit to the Council of Europe by **30 June 2024** an interim narrative report on the use made of the grant until 15 June 2024 and an interim financial report on the payments made for the Action until 15 June 2024
- transmit to the Council of Europe by **30 November 2024** a final narrative report<sup>2</sup> on the use made of the grant and a financial report on the payments made for the Action until 15 November 2024

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 the following key stakeholders:

ENIC network centres from the countries where the Council of Europe Education Programme is implemented, and which are not eligible for the European Commission NARIC call for proposals:

- Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Holy See, Kazakhstan, Monaco, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

### 5. Budgetary requirements

Project proposals shall be accompanied by a draft budget (See **Template Budget, in Appendix II**) amounting to a maximum of 50 000 Euros (fifty 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.

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<sup>2</sup> All reports should, unless otherwise agreed between the parties, be submitted in one of the official languages of the Council of Europe (English or French).

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

- Projects/actions targeting development or dissemination of innovating tools and instruments to enhance the efficiency of the ENIC centres

**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, unless the latter requirement cannot be met for duly justified reasons; the narrative report will include a brief account of all the activities implemented in the reporting period and other indications of the project's impact within its context.
- **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 or other similar activities, 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**);
- List of projects that the applicant implemented in the area of recognition of qualifications, if any
- List of team members involved in the activity with their CVs

**Applications that are incomplete will not be considered.**

### 2. Questions

General information can be found on the website of the Council of Europe: [www.coe.int/education](http://www.coe.int/education)

Other questions regarding this specific call for proposals must be sent, latest 6 working days before the deadline for submission of the tenders, in English or French, and shall be exclusively sent to the following address: [Higher.Education.Research@coe.int](mailto:Higher.Education.Research@coe.int), with the following reference in subject: Question related to ENIC call for proposals 2024.

### 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: [Higher.Education.Research@coe.int](mailto:Higher.Education.Research@coe.int).

Emails should contain the following reference in subject: Tender – LRC Implementation Project – support for the ENIC Centres 2024

Applications must be received **before 10 December 2024 (by 23h59 CET)**. 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 four members, including staff members of the Council of Europe.

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](#), as amended by Rule No. 1405 of 15 December 2020, on the basis of Article 43a of the Financial Regulation.

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 or appear to be in a situation of conflict of interest in relation to the tender procedure.

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 13**).

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.

## **2. Eligibility criteria:**

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

- be legally constituted as an ENIC Centre, where the Council of Europe Education Programme is implemented and which are not eligible for the European Commission NARIC call for proposals: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Holy See, Kazakhstan, Monaco, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Ukraine, United Kingdom.
- be entitled to carry out the activities described in its project proposal;
- have sufficient operational and professional capacity, including staff, to carry out activities described in its project proposal;
- have a bank account.

### 3. Award criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- the relevance and added value of the project with regard to the objective of the call (30%)
- the extent to which the action meets the requirements of the call (30%);
- the quality, accuracy, clarity, completeness and cost-effectiveness of the application and the estimated budget (20%);
- the relevance of the experience of the applying organisation(s) and staff (20%).

## 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.**

## VIII. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

Phases	Indicative timing
Publication of the call	17 November 2023
Deadline for submitting applications	10 December 2023
Information to applicants on the results of the award procedure	15 January 2024
Signature of the grant agreements	19 January 2024
Implementation period	22 January – 15 November 2024

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