



Funded by the
European Union

Contracting Authority: Ecorys led consortium implementing the EU funded project “EU Civil Resilience Mechanism (EU CRM) – Phase II: Support for Civil Society and Grassroots Organisations” (SEA-2023-43018)

Call for Proposals for In-Kind Support to Civil Society Organisations:

Supporting Young People for Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship in Kočani Region

Guidelines for applicants

Reference No: SEA-2023-43018/ EUCRM-II (01)

Deadline for submission of applications: 16/11/2026 at 17:00 (local time)

Apply at www.EU4CR.mk¹

¹ Online submission via EU CRM is mandatory for this call for proposals (see Section 3). Applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit, as system congestion or technical issues shortly before the deadline are not grounds for an extension.

NOTICE

This document constitutes the Guidelines for Applicants for the Call for Proposals for In-Kind Support to Civil Society Organisations “*Supporting Young People for Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship in Kočani Region*”. The Call is launched under the **EU Civil Resilience Mechanism (EU CRM) – Phase II**, a programme financed by the European Union under the IPA III Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of North Macedonia 2024-2025.

These Guidelines set out all essential information on the objectives and priorities of the Call, the eligibility of applicants, actions and costs, the evaluation and award procedure, and the instructions on how to prepare and submit an application. This is a single-stage Call for proposals for In-kind support, where all documents are submitted together: Application Form (Annex A), Budget (Annex B), the signed Declaration by the Applicant and the supporting documents. All Applications are checked for administrative compliance and eligibility before proceeding to quality assessment. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed ‘declaration by the applicant’ sent together with the application.

Preparation: Information sessions

To help applicants familiarise themselves with this Call and with the application process before submission, three information sessions will be organised — one in person in Kočani and two online — in October and November 2026.

Should you be interested in attending, please send an email by **9/10/2026 at 17:00 (local time)** to crm-helpdesk@eu4cr.mk indicating the name and email address of the persons who will participate and the name of their organisation (maximum two participants per organisation). No costs incurred by applicants for attending an information session are reimbursable.

Contents

NOTICE	2
GLOSSARY	4
1. THE EU CIVIL RESILIENCE MECHANISM PROGRAMME AND THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR IN-KIND SUPPORT	5
1.1 Background	5
1.2 Objectives of the programme and priority issues	6
1.3 Financial Allocations for In-Kind Support.....	6
2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR IN KIND SUPPORT	7
2.1 Eligibility of applicants	7
2.2. Eligibility of actions: actions for which an application may be made.....	7
2.3 Eligibility of Costs.....	12
3. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW	14
3.1 Required Supporting Documents	14
3.2 Questions and Clarifications	15
4. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS	15
4.1 Step 1 – Administrative Compliance and Eligibility Check.....	15
4.2 Step 2 – Quality Assessment	15
4.3 Ranking and award decision.....	17
5. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE	17
6. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS	18
6.1 Do No Harm	18
6.2 Data Protection	18
7. CRM HELPDESK AND CAPACITY-BUILDING SUPPORT	19
7.1 CRM Helpdesk	19
7.2 Information Sessions	19
7.3 Capacity-Building Support for CSOs Operating in the Kočani region	19

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Action	The project or initiative proposed by an Applicant and, if approved, implemented by a Beneficiary under an In-kind Support Contract (PRAG terminology).
Associate	An organisation or individual that plays a real role in the Action but does not receive support from it and does not have to meet the eligibility criteria. Associates are described in 2.1.1
Applicant	A civil society organisation applying under this Call.
Beneficiary	An Applicant whose application has been approved and who has signed an In-kind Support Contract with the Contracting Authority.
Call for proposals for in-kind support	The present competitive procedure through which civil society organisations submit proposals for actions to be supported in kind by the Contracting Authority.
Contract	The legally binding agreement between the Contracting Authority and the Beneficiary governing implementation, reporting, and financial management of the Action.
Contracting Authority	The entity responsible for managing the Call and issuing In-kind Support Contracts on behalf of the EU.
Do No Harm	Principle requiring that all supported Actions avoid causing unintended negative consequences to individuals, communities, or existing processes.
EU Visibility Guidelines	Rules set by the European Commission requiring that all EU-funded outputs acknowledge EU support through the EU emblem and standard acknowledgement statements.
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach, a framework ensuring Actions are participatory, inclusive, non-discriminatory, and accountable.
Implementation Manual	The document explaining, step by step, how supported Actions are implemented, procured, documented and reported. It is provided to Beneficiaries and presented during the mandatory capacity-building sessions.
In-kind Support	Non-cash assistance provided through direct payment by the programme to service providers and vendors on behalf of Beneficiaries.
PRAG	Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions, the EU standard procedural framework governing grant management.
Request for Clarification	Formal communication from the CRM team to an Applicant requesting missing or incomplete information.
Service Provider	A trainer, coach, consultant, or vendor contracted by the Beneficiary to deliver services within the Action and paid directly by the Contracting Authority.
Target group / final beneficiaries	The groups directly reached and positively affected by the Action (target group) and the wider group that benefits from it in the longer term (final beneficiaries).

1. THE EU CIVIL RESILIENCE MECHANISM PROGRAMME AND THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR IN-KIND SUPPORT

1.1 Background

The accession to the European Union is a strategic objective for the Western Balkans and Türkiye, and the role of, and cooperation among, governments, civil society and media organisations in this process is crucial. A functioning civil society is a key indicator of a country's readiness to become part of the EU: its effectiveness is assessed as part of the political criteria, and in particular under the "Functioning of Democratic Institutions". Engaging civil society and media organisations in the EU negotiation dialogue ensures that the reforms undertaken are not solely institutional, government-led exercises, but are grounded in meaningful consultation and genuine civic participation. To play that role, civil society requires strategic, long-term support that secures its uninterrupted operation and the continuous upgrading of its capacities. The **IPA Civil Society Facility (CSF)**, introduced for the first time in 2008², has proven to be a powerful means to strengthen participatory democracies and freedom of media in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. For this reason, the **IPA III Multi-Country Civil Society Facility & Media Programme 2024-2025**³ for the Western Balkans and Türkiye identified priorities for further political and financial engagement with civil society and media organisations in the enlargement countries. The programme priorities are largely inspired by the *DG NEAR Guidelines for EU support to civil society in the enlargement region 2021-2027*⁴ (hereinafter referred to as EU Guidelines). The guidelines translate the objectives of the *Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)*⁵, for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework period and of the Enlargement package into a concrete results framework with measurable outcomes.

The overall aim of the **IPA III Civil Society Facility and Media Programme (CSF) for the Republic of North Macedonia 2024-2025**⁶ is to support active involvement of civil society and media organisations in decision-making and in the key sector reforms, in line with the EU guidelines for support to civil society. The specific focus of the Programme is to support actions of CSOs for an enabling environment for civil society, also involving the business community and public institutions, both at the central and local level.

The EU Civil Resilience Mechanism (EU CRM) is an in-kind support⁷ programme for civil society organisations (CSOs) in North Macedonia, funded by the European Union under the IPA Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2024-2025, and implemented under the EU-funded project "EU Civil Resilience Mechanism (EU CRM) – Phase II: Support for Civil Society and Grassroots Organisations."⁸ The present Call for proposals for in-kind support is an activity of this project and is financed under the IPA III Civil Society Facility and Media Programme.

² COM (2008) 127 - "Western Balkans: Enhancing the European Perspective" [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2008\)127&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2008)127&lang=en)

³ COM (2024) 2097 EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2024- 2025 https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/commission-implementing-decision-242024-financing-multi-country-multiannual-action-plan-eu-civil_en

⁴ DG NEAR Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement region 2021-2027 <https://tacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/EU-Guidelines-for-Support-to-Civil-Society-in-the-Enlargement-region-2021-2027-1.pdf>

⁵ Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) 2021-2027 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en

⁶ Action Document for "EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of North Macedonia 2024-2025"

https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/8c819ddb-dcb4-452f-8faa-edbae1f6b0be_en?filename=AD%2006%20MK%20CSF%20and%20Media%202024-2025-FINAL.pdf

⁷ **In-kind support** means non-cash assistance provided through direct payment by the programme to service providers and vendors on behalf of Beneficiaries. (see section 2.3).

⁸ Information on the EU CRM – Phase II project, the support provided and the organisations supported is available at www.eu4cr.mk.

EU CRM Phase II's global objective is to further foster a vibrant civil society in North Macedonia by strengthening democratic participation in policy and decision-making and by promoting a culture of fundamental rights and dialogue. Its specific objective is to strengthen civil society and grassroots organisations — both their own capacities and the environment in which they operate — by providing in-kind support for actions in their communities that address local reform priorities, help citizens cope with rapid social change, and explain what EU accession and the related sector reforms mean for everyday life.

The EU Civil Resilience Mechanism was launched in 2022. Building on the results of Phase I (2022-2024), which supported 49 civic initiatives with approximately EUR 0.9 million in in-kind support, Phase II continues to provide flexible, accessible and rights-based support to small, local and under-resourced organisations, in particular those working outside major urban centres or with marginalised communities. Further information on the programme and on the initiatives supported to date is available at www.eu4cr.mk.

In line with this specific objective, the present Call for proposals for in-kind support, *Supporting Young People for Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship in Kočani Region*, supports civil society organisations in the Kočani region⁹ in carrying out actions for and with young people. It focuses on the economic empowerment of young people, supporting Actions that build digital and AI competences, strengthen employability and entrepreneurial skills, and foster locally rooted innovation.

1.2 Objectives of the programme and priority issues

The **global objective** of this Call for proposals for in-kind support is to strengthen the position of young people in the Kočani region in the labour market and in the local economy, by supporting civil society-led initiatives that build their digital, AI, innovation and entrepreneurial competences.

The **specific objectives** of this call for in-kind support are:

- To strengthen the digital, AI, and innovation competences of young people in Kočani region, enhancing their employability and capacity to participate effectively in the digital economy.
- To foster entrepreneurial and social entrepreneurial skills among young people, supporting the creation of youth-led enterprises and small start-ups that generate economic and social value in the local community.

The **priorities** of this Call for proposals for in-kind support are:

Priority 1 Digital Skills, AI Literacy & Youth Economic Empowerment

Priority 2 Youth Entrepreneurship & Social Entrepreneurship

(!) Applicants are required to choose ONE of the two priorities and clearly state their choice in the proposal.

1.3 Financial Allocations for In-Kind Support

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 300,000**. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Size of In-Kind Support

Any in-kind support requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- minimum amount: **EUR 10,000**
- maximum amount: **EUR 15,000**

All costs related to eligible activities under the selected Actions will be covered at 100%.

⁹ For the purposes of this Call, the **Kočani region** comprises the municipalities of Kočani, Češinovo-Obleševo, Zrnovci and Vinica.

Note: The EU Civil Resilience Mechanism is a grant scheme in a form of an in-kind support. All payments will be made by the contracting authority directly to service providers. The only monetary transfer to the successful applicant will be a compensation for the project team which will be transferred to the selected civil society organisations.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR IN KIND SUPPORT

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

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

- (1) the **applicant** i.e. the entity submitting the application form (2.1);
- (2) the **action** for which a grant proposal may be awarded (2.2);
- (3) the eligible **costs** (2.3).

2.1 Eligibility of applicants

In order to be eligible for the in-kind support, the applicant must:

- be a legal person
- be non-profit-making
- be a non-governmental organisation
- be established in the Republic of North Macedonia in line with the Law on Associations and Foundations, and registered and operating in the Kočani region¹⁰ for at least three months before the publication date of this Call
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action, not acting as an intermediary, and
- have an annual turnover below EUR 50,000 in the last closed financial year¹¹.

The applicant is required to apply as a sole applicant. No co-applicants or partner organisations are required.

2.1.1 Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the Action as associates. Associates play a real role in the Action but do not receive in-kind support for their own costs, except for travel and subsistence costs directly linked to activities of the Action. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria set out above. Associates must be described in Annex A – Application Form.

2.2. Eligibility of actions: actions for which an application may be made

Definition

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The duration of an action must be **10** months.

¹⁰

For the purposes of this Call, the Kočani region comprises the municipalities of Kočani, Češinovo-Obleševo, Zrnovci and Vinica.

11 Important: Where financial accounts show donations received for emergency humanitarian response or disaster relief, that amount does not count towards the turnover threshold, provided documentary proof, such as a donation agreement or award letter, is submitted confirming the purpose of those funds.

Sectors or themes

Specific sectors or themes to which the actions must relate are those directly contributing to the achievement of the objectives and priorities as per section 1.2 above.

In particular for:

Priority 1 – Digital Skills, AI Literacy & Youth Economic Empowerment

Digital transformation is a central pillar of North Macedonia's EU accession path and of the EU's engagement with the Western Balkans. The Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans¹² and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans¹³ commit the region to gradual integration into the EU Digital Single Market, while the EU Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030¹⁴ sets clear targets for digital skills, requiring that at least 80% of adults possess basic digital competences. The rapid development of artificial intelligence, and the adoption of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act¹⁵ as the first comprehensive European regulatory framework in this field, make digital and AI literacy an essential precondition for young people to participate meaningfully in the economy and society of tomorrow.

North Macedonia has taken important steps to align with these developments, including the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Plan 2023 - 2026¹⁶ — the first of its kind in the Western Balkans — the National Youth Strategy 2023-2027¹⁷ and the national strategic framework for digital transformation, ICT Development Strategy: SMART/MK 2030¹⁸. Nevertheless, considerable gaps remain. The 2025 EU Country Report for North Macedonia¹⁹ notes that the level of basic digital skills remains well below the EU average, while youth unemployment and the share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) remain persistently high. These problems are intensified by the continued emigration of young, skilled people, which weakens the country's long-term development potential.

The Kočani region especially needs support for its young people. The fire of 16 March 2025 took the lives of 63 young people and injured more than 190 young people from Kočani and the surrounding municipalities, and the region is still dealing with its consequences. Hope is restored through practical results: young people who can learn, find work and build their futures in the region. The digital economy makes that possible — digital, AI and innovation skills open access to quality education, remote work, freelancing and youth-led enterprises that are not limited by geography, and give young people reasons to stay and advance in their own community.

Civil society organisations, through non-formal education, mentoring, digital and AI literacy programmes and support to economic empowerment, can reach young people who are not reached by formal education and employment services, and can build partnerships with schools, businesses and other stakeholders that keep opportunities open locally. The impact of this priority will be seen in young people who hold digital and AI competences they can use, in more of them moving into work, further learning or income from freelance and online services, and in a local pool of skills that employers and new youth-led ventures in the Kočani region can draw on.

Priority 2 - Youth Entrepreneurship & Social Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship and the social economy are now seen as key drivers of inclusive growth in both the EU and the enlargement region. The EU Social Economy Action Plan²⁰ points out how social enterprises can create good jobs and help solve social challenges. The Growth Plan for the Western Balkans²¹ and the Economic and

¹² Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans, launched June 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_4242

¹³ Communication on a Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, COM(2023) 691 final, 8.11.2023, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/growth-plan-western-balkans_en

¹⁴ Decision (EU) 2022/2481 establishing the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/2481/oj>

¹⁵ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 (Artificial Intelligence Act), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj>

¹⁶ Youth Guarantee Plan 2023 – 2026

<https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/republic-of-north-macedonia/36-integration-of-young-people-in-the-labour-market>

¹⁷ National Youth Strategy 2023-2027, Agency for Youth and Sport — <https://cms.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/mladi/NYS%2023-27%20Final%20text%20ENG.pdf>

¹⁸ ICT Development Strategy: SMART/MK 2030 <https://mdt.gov.mk/en-GB/regulativa/strategija-za-razvoj-na-ikt-smart-mk-2030>

¹⁹ North Macedonia 2025 Report, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2025_en

²⁰ EU Social Economy Action Plan, COM(2021) 778 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0778>

²¹ Communication on a Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, COM(2023) 691 final, 8.11.2023, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/growth-plan-western-balkans_en

Investment Plan²² also stress the need for private-sector growth, innovation, and giving young people more economic opportunities to help the region move closer to the EU. Inclusive entrepreneurship is a big part of the EU's overall goals. The EU Gender Action Plan III²³ supports economic empowerment for women and girls, while the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030²⁴ and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities²⁵, which North Macedonia has ratified, call for equal access to jobs and self-employment for people with disabilities.

At the national level, the National Youth Strategy²⁶, National Employment Strategy²⁷, and Gender Equality Strategy²⁸ all make youth entrepreneurship and equal economic participation top priorities. There are also ongoing efforts to create laws and support systems for social entrepreneurship²⁹. However, young people—especially young women, those with disabilities, and youth from smaller or rural areas—still face big challenges when starting a business. They often lack access to funding, mentoring, business skills, and local support services. The 2025 EU Country Report for North Macedonia³⁰ notes that youth unemployment and NEET rates remain high, and highlights that the social economy could help include more disadvantaged groups in the workforce.

In Kočani, these challenges are even greater because the community is looking for renewal after the tragedy on 16 March 2025 that took the lives of 63 young people and injured more than 190 young people from the surrounding municipalities. Supporting young people in Kočani to gain skills for entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship directly helps the region's future. Youth-led businesses and small start-ups can create local jobs, address community needs, and give young people, including young women and those with disabilities, a real voice in their community. Social entrepreneurship, in particular, combines business activity with social value, allowing young people to turn their ideas and energy into projects that strengthen the community and offer new hope.

Civil society organisations can contribute by offering training, mentoring, business incubation and connections to markets, funding and institutions that help young people turn their ideas into real businesses. They can also make sure this support reaches those who have the least access to opportunities. Support under this priority will help young people in Kočani build both business and social entrepreneurship skills, promote equal participation of young women and people with disabilities, and help create a local economy shaped by and for the community's youth.

NOTE: Actions supported under the EU CRM should be of public benefit³¹. Entrepreneurship development may constitute an activity of public interest where it contributes to education and skills development, local economic development, social inclusion, sustainable development, employment creation or other clearly demonstrated community/public benefit.

Location

Actions must take place in the Kočani region.³²

²² Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, COM(2020) 641 final <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0641>

²³ EU Gender Action Plan III, JOIN(2020) 17 final — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0017>

²⁴ EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, COM(2021) 101 final — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0101>

²⁵ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities — <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

²⁶ National Youth Strategy 2023-2027, Agency for Youth and Sport — <https://cms.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/mladi/NYS%2023-27%20Final%20text%20ENG.pdf>

²⁷ National Employment Strategy 2021-2027, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy <https://portal.mdt.gov.mk/post-body-files/strategii-met-file-lelC.pdf>

²⁸ Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2027, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3_isn=116973

²⁹ National Strategy for Development of Social Enterprises 2021-2027, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy <https://centarsp.mk/en/national-strategy-for-development-of-social-enterprises-in-north-macedonia/>

³⁰ North Macedonia 2025 Report, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2025_en

³¹ **Public benefit** activity is an activity that is socially useful. Article 74 of the Law on Associations and Foundations lists actions/activities of public benefit. The Law is available here <https://rcgo.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Zakon-za-zdruzenija-i-fondacii.pdf>.

³² For the purposes of this Call, the **Kočani region** comprises the municipalities of Kočani, Češinovo-Obleševo, Zrnovci and Vinica.

Types of activity

Project proposal should be a self-contained action with a coherent set of activities achievable within the timeframe of the Call. Activities should be designed to respond to the specific needs of young people in the Kočani region as identified by the applicant. Only activities falling under ONE of the two priorities (section 1.2) are eligible for the in-kind support under this Call.

Proposed actions should be designed to produce concrete results in response to clearly identified problems and needs of the target groups. Each proposal should clearly describe what it aims to achieve and how the planned activities will lead to the expected results. Proposals will be assessed on the basis of their expected results, the relevance of the proposed activities to the selected priority, and the alignment between the requested in-kind support and the stated objectives.

The following list of indicative activities may be supported under this Call:

Priority 1 – Digital Skills, AI Literacy and Youth Economic Empowerment;

- Basic digital literacy for young people starting from a low level, as a bridge to the more advanced modules.
- Digital skills labs (ICT, productivity tools, web design, coding, digital services).
- AI skills development (AI tools for research, writing, design, coding, productivity).
- AI for entrepreneurship (business plans, market analysis, content creation, task automation).
- Media literacy and responsible AI use (fact-checking, critical assessment of AI-generated content).
- Online business development (e-commerce, freelancing, digital content creation, remote work readiness).
- Training young people in digital service skills (e.g. virtual assistance, content creation, data entry, customer support) to enable them to offer digital services to local and international clients, including through freelance and outsourcing platforms.
- Digital art and creative industries (graphic design, video production, digital illustration, music/audio production, content creation for cultural and community initiatives).
- Innovation labs and clubs (hackathons, design-thinking, problem-solving challenges).
- New learning formats (project-based learning, peer-to-peer teaching, blended/online modules).
- Peer-learning, networking, and exchange of experience with organisations from other countries or regions that have supported the recovery and healing of communities affected by similar mass-casualty incidents or disaster events, with a view to sharing good practice on trauma-informed community support and long-term recovery.

Priority 2 - Youth Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurship

- Entrepreneurial mindset development (initiative-taking, teamwork, resilience, critical thinking)
- Entrepreneurship training (business models, market analysis, financial literacy, business registration).
- Business plan development workshops.
- Light incubation and mentoring support (business planning, legal/finance basics, access to local ecosystems).
- Youth start-up pitching events and Business Innovation Challenge.
- Social entrepreneurship trainings (concepts, business models, impact measurement).
- Social Innovation Challenge (youth teams design solutions to local social or economic problems).
- Youth-led community services and micro-enterprises, such as repair, reuse and upcycling initiatives, community-based tourism, and local food schemes.
- Creative industries as social enterprise (design studios, creative workshops generating income and social impact).
- Digital marketing and branding (social media marketing, SEO, online advertising for small businesses).
- Access to digital platforms and ecosystems (freelancing platforms, online marketplaces, digital payment tools).

NOTE: The above lists of types of activity are not exhaustive, but only illustrative and appropriate activities that are not mentioned above will also be considered for support.

Particular value-added elements of the action

Respect for EU core values. The EU CRM is guided by the core values of the European Union — human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities — as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. All supported Actions must contribute to promoting and protecting these values at the local level and must reflect them in their design and implementation.

This call for proposals will support projects that respect the **human rights-based approach (HRBA)**³³ **methodology**. All proposals must therefore be designed according to an HRBA. The HRBA is a working methodology based on internationally recognised human rights and is directed to promoting and protecting human rights in practice. An HRBA integrates the norms, standards and principles of international human rights law into the plans, policies and processes of development programmes and projects. It implies that target groups are considered as ‘rights-holders’ with legal entitlements, and government institutions are not mere service providers but ‘duty-bearers,’ who are under an obligation to deliver on people’s human rights. At the heart of the RBA is the recognition that unequal power relations and social exclusion deny people their human rights and often keep them in poverty. The approach therefore puts strong emphasis on marginalised, disadvantaged, and excluded groups.

The five working principles of the human rights-based approach (applying all human rights for all, meaningful and inclusive participation and access to decision-making, non-discrimination and equality, accountability and rule of law for all and transparency and access to information) should be implemented as appropriate in relation to any proposed project.

Equality and inclusion. Particular attention is expected to gender equality, youth participation and the inclusion of young people in vulnerable or under-represented situations, including young women, young people with disabilities and young people from rural areas of the region. Applicants should indicate how the Action removes barriers to participation, and should disaggregate participant data by sex and, where relevant, by other characteristics.

The following types of action are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions and measures that may result in violation of human rights or causing significant adverse effects on the environment or the climate³⁴ ;
- actions discriminating against individuals or groups of people on grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack of them, or their ethnic origin;
- actions concerned only or mainly with “one-off” conferences, and similar events;
- actions concerned only or mainly with academic research and/or feasibility studies;
- actions concerned with infrastructure investments and/or essentially focused on purchasing of equipment;
- actions linked to political parties or of political/partisan or religious nature;
- actions that fall within the general activities of competent state institutions or state administration services, including local government;
- retrospective financing for projects already in implementation or completed;
- actions for the exclusive benefit of individuals or exclusive restricted groups of individuals;
- core funding of the applicant (i.e. when budget is mainly for organisational expenses);
- actions related to charitable donations and humanitarian activities;
- renovation of buildings or offices and/or reconstruction works.

³³ <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=50108948>

³⁴ Article 29 NDICI.

-
- activities undertaken before signature of the contract; and
 - actions aimed at profit-making activities. **IMPORTANT:** This does not exclude activities that build the entrepreneurial competences of young people, or that support young people in establishing their own economic activity, where the Action itself is of public benefit, and the applicant does not derive profit from it.

Visibility

- Applicants must take all necessary steps to ensure the visibility of the European Union as the funder of the Action, through the correct and prominent display of the EU emblem and the relevant funding statement. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding published by the European Commission.
- All measures and activities relating to visibility and communication must comply with the latest *Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU-funded External Actions*, laid down and published by the European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/comm-visibility-requirements_en.
Practical guidance on applying these requirements, including the correct use of the emblem, is provided to Beneficiaries during the mandatory capacity-building described in section 7.

Number of applications per applicant

The applicant **may not submit more than one (1) application** under this Call for proposals for in-kind support.

2.3 Eligibility of Costs

Coverage of costs

Support under this Call is provided in kind. Only ‘**eligible costs**’ can be covered. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The Budget (Annex B) is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for “eligible costs”.

Eligible costs are covered at actual cost.

Eligible direct costs

The budget headings and the types of eligible costs that may be entered under each of them are set out in **Annex B – Budget** and explained in the "Description of Eligible Costs" sheet of that Annex. Applicants should budget only what the planned activities actually require.

The following general principles apply:

- **Necessity and sound financial management:** costs must be necessary for the implementation of the Action, provided for in the Budget annexed to the In-kind Support Contract, identifiable and verifiable, and reasonable in relation to the results pursued.
- **Non-retroactivity:** Costs incurred before the start date of the Action implementation period as specified in the In-kind Support Contract are not eligible under any circumstances.
- **No-profit rule:** In-kind support under this Call must not generate a financial profit for the Beneficiary. Any surplus will be recovered by the programme.
- **Non-cumulation:** Actions or costs already receiving EU funding or funding from another donor source may not be funded again under this Call. Double funding is strictly prohibited.
- **Non-retroactivity of contracting:** No procurement or service contracting activities may commence before the In-kind Support Contract has been signed.

NOTE – Action team compensation (maximum 20% of the total eligible costs)

Budget line 1.1 – Action team compensation. This is the **only** budget line under which funds are transferred directly to the Beneficiary organisation. It covers the fees of the staff directly and exclusively assigned to the implementation of the Action (for example a project coordinator and a project assistant), remunerated on a monthly fee basis corresponding to their level of engagement, and may not exceed **20% of the total eligible costs** of the Action.

All other costs necessary for the implementation of the Action are contracted and paid directly by the Contracting Authority to the service providers, on the basis of the activities and quantities set out in the approved Budget.

NOTE – Volunteer expenses (maximum 10% of the total eligible costs)

- Volunteer expenses are costs linked to the implementation of activities and are covered directly by the Contracting Authority. They cover food and local transport costs of volunteers engaged in delivering the Action, in accordance with Article 10 of the Law on Volunteering. Reimbursement per volunteer may not exceed, per month, 15% of the average monthly net wage in the Republic of North Macedonia for the preceding calendar year, as published by the State Statistical Office (stat.mk). Such reimbursement is exempt from personal income tax under Article 13 of that Law.
- Reimbursement must reflect actual expenses agreed in advance between the Beneficiary and the volunteer, and may not be paid as a flat fee or honorarium. Volunteer expenses do not count towards the 20% ceiling for the Action team compensation.
- Detailed conditions and documentation requirements — including volunteering contracts and the engagement of foreign volunteers under the Law on Volunteering — are set out in the Implementation Manual and in the notes to Annex B.

Non-eligible costs

The following costs are not eligible under any budget heading:

- compensation of staff of public administration;
- costs concerned with personal earnings, benefits, bonuses or salary top-ups;
- costs of profit-making or commercial activities, and any start-up capital, loans or equity for individual businesses;³⁵
- scholarships and individual sponsorships;
- costs already financed by the European Union or by another donor, and co-financing of EU or other donor-funded projects;
- debts and debt service charges (interest), provisions for losses or potential future liabilities, and credit to third parties;
- currency exchange losses;
- fines, financial penalties and costs of litigation;
- recoverable value added tax;
- costs incurred for activities implemented before the signature of the In-kind Support Contract;
- purchase of land or buildings, office rental or purchase, office utilities, infrastructure works, and the renovation or refurbishment of buildings;

³⁵ IMPORTANT: The in-kind support covers the services and goods needed to build young people's entrepreneurial competences — training, mentoring, coaching, business advisory services, materials, venues, events and promotion — but it cannot be used to capitalise a business. Seed grants, cash prizes, loans, equity, working capital, and the costs of an individual business such as registration fees, equipment, stock or premises, cannot not be budgeted under this Call. Awards funded under this Call must therefore be non-monetary — for example additional mentoring or training, promotion, or access to services or equipment used during the Action. This does not prevent an applicant from organising a pitching event or innovation challenge at which monetary awards are provided by another donor, sponsor or partner, provided that such funds are not part of the Action budget, that their source is clearly stated, and that the same costs are not financed twice.

-
- purchase of equipment, other than the rental of equipment necessary for the activities as provided for in Annex B;
 - costs supporting political parties or political agendas;
 - costs of religious activities.

2.4 Ethics and values

Absence of conflict of interest

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

Respect for environmental legislation and core labour standards

Applicants who are awarded a grant must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

Respect of EU values

Applicants awarded in-kind support must commit to, and ensure, respect for the core values of the European Union — human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities — as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. In the context of North Macedonia's EU accession, these values are translated into concrete support for civil society actors contributing to democratic participation, accountability, inclusion and community resilience, and they must be reflected in both the design and the implementation of the Action.

3. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

Applicants must apply using the **Application Form (Annex A)** and the **Budget (Annex B)**, submitted online at www.eu4cr.mk, together with the signed **Declaration by the Applicant** and the supporting documents listed below.

Only the Application Form and the Budget are evaluated; no annexes other than the supporting documents listed below should be sent. Handwritten forms are not accepted. Each applicant may submit only **one** application under this Call. Incomplete applications may be rejected; applicants are advised to use the checklist at the end of the Application Form before submitting.

Deadline for submission: 16/11/2026 at 17:00 (local time). Applications submitted after the deadline are not accepted. Applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit, as system congestion or technical issues shortly before the deadline are not grounds for an extension.

3.1 Required Supporting Documents

Applicants must submit, together with the Application Form and Budget:

- A copy of the registration certificate, including statute or articles of association.
- A copy of the latest available financial accounts, or, for newly established organisations, a statement of no prior financial activity.
- Where financial accounts include donations received for emergency humanitarian response or disaster relief, a donation agreement or award letter confirming the purpose of the funds.

3.2 Questions and Clarifications

Questions on this Call may be sent to the CRM Helpdesk at crm-helpdesk@eu4cr.mk, quoting the reference of the Call, **no later than 10 days before the deadline for submission of applications**. The Contracting Authority has no obligation to provide clarifications in response to questions received after that date. **Answers are published no later than 5 days before the deadline for submission**.

No individual replies are given. All questions and answers are published at www.eu4cr.mk under Frequently Asked Questions. The FAQ section is updated regularly throughout the Call, including with questions raised at the information sessions, so applicants are advised to consult it regularly.

To ensure the equal treatment of applicants, the Contracting Authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, of an Action or of specific activities or costs, and cannot advise on the content of an individual application.

4. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications are evaluated in two sequential steps; each step must be passed before proceeding to the next. The evaluation is carried out by an evaluation committee, with the support of external assessors, on the basis of the criteria set out below.

4.1 Step 1 – Administrative Compliance and Eligibility Check

During the administrative compliance check, it will be verified that:

- the application was submitted by the deadline set out in this Call (applications submitted after the deadline are automatically rejected);
- the Application Form is complete, Annex B – Budget, Declaration by the Applicant is signed and all supporting documents listed in section 3.1 are included;
- the total in-kind support requested is between EUR 10,000 and EUR 15,000;
- the proposed duration of the Action is 10 months;
- the Action is to be implemented in the Kočani region;
- one of the two priorities has been selected.

Where information is missing or unclear, the applicant may be requested, in writing and with a deadline for response, to provide clarifications or missing administrative documents. Failure to respond within the deadline will result in rejection of the application.

An application passes the Eligibility Check if the applicant:

- is a non-profit civil society organisation, established under the Law on Associations and Foundations, registered and operating in the Kočani region for at least three months before the Call's publication date.
- had an annual turnover below EUR 50,000 in the last closed financial year (organisations with no prior financial activity are also eligible)³⁶.
- is directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the action, and not act as an intermediary.

Applications failing either check are rejected; applicants are informed in writing of the grounds. The Contracting Authority may request clarifications during the Eligibility Check; failure to respond by the deadline may result in rejection.

4.2 Step 2 – Quality Assessment

Applications passing Step 1 are assessed against five criteria, broken down into sub-criteria as set out below. Each sub-criterion is scored from 1 to 5: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good. Sub-

³⁶ Where financial accounts show donations received for emergency humanitarian response or disaster relief, that amount does not count towards the turnover threshold, provided documentary proof, such as a donation agreement or award letter, is submitted confirming the purpose of those funds.

criteria 2.1 and 3.1 are weighted double, with a maximum of 10 points each. The maximum total score is 100 points.

Criterion	Sub-criterion
1. Background of the Applicant (15)	1.1 Does the applicant have sufficient organisational capacity to implement an Action of the proposed scale, supported by relevant experience and expertise demonstrated through its previous activities or through its proposed key staff and volunteers? - Maximum 5 points
	1.2 Does the applicant demonstrate relevant experience and expertise in reaching, engaging and supporting the participation of vulnerable or under-represented young people, as evidenced by the organisation's previous activities or by the experience and expertise of its proposed key staff or volunteers? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	1.3 Does the applicant demonstrate a clear understanding of and commitment to the human rights-based approach (HRBA), including participation, equality and non-discrimination, accountability and transparency? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
Subtotal (out of 15):	
2. Relevance (25)	2.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives, priorities and specific requirements of the Call for In-Kind Support? <i>Score × 2 – Maximum 10 points</i>
	2.2 Are the target groups and final beneficiaries ³⁷ clearly identified and appropriately selected, including their estimated numbers, needs, barriers and expected benefits? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	2.3 Is the needs analysis clear and supported by relevant evidence and/or knowledge of the local context? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	2.4 Does the action respond specifically to the needs, constraints and barriers faced by vulnerable or under-represented young people in the Kočani region? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
Subtotal (out of 25):	
3. Design of the Action (35)	3.1 Are the proposed activities and methods clearly linked to the objectives and expected outputs? <i>Score × 2 – Maximum 10 points</i>
	3.2 Is the implementation plan realistic and feasible, with logically sequenced activities and clear roles, responsibilities and management arrangements? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	3.3 Are the expected outputs concrete, measurable and achievable within the proposed timeframe? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	3.4 Are the proposed methods appropriate, accessible and inclusive, and do they ensure meaningful participation of young people and address barriers to participation? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>

³⁷ The groups directly reached and positively affected by the Action (target group) and the wider group that benefits from it in the longer term (final beneficiaries).

Criterion	Sub-criterion
	3.5 Are the proposed communication and visibility measures clear, realistic and likely to reach young people and the wider community while ensuring the visibility of EU support? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	3.6 Does the proposal clearly identify the main risks and possible unintended negative effects, including risks to participants, and propose realistic measures to prevent or mitigate them? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
Subtotal (out of 35):	
4. Sustainability (10)	4.1 Long-lasting benefits: Is the Action likely to generate long-lasting and meaningful benefits for the target groups and final beneficiaries? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	4.2 Multiplier effects: Is the Action likely to produce multiplier effects through replication or extension of its approach and the sharing of experience and knowledge? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
Subtotal (out of 10):	
5. Budget (15)	5.1 Does the budget represent good value for money in relation to the proposed activities, objectives and expected outputs? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	5.2 Are the budgeted costs necessary and adequately justified? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
	5.3 Is the budget complete, clear and consistent with the action plan and implementation period? - <i>Maximum 5 points</i>
Subtotal (out of 15):	
TOTAL SCORE (out of 100):	

4.3 Ranking and award decision

Following the quality assessment, only applications that receive a minimum overall score of 60 out of 100 points, including at least 15 out of 25 points under Section 2 – Relevance, will be considered for support. Applications meeting both thresholds will be ranked according to their total score. In-kind support will be awarded in descending order of score until the funds available under this Call are exhausted.

Where two or more applications receive the same total score, priority will be given to the application with the higher score under Section 2 – Relevance.

The Contracting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds, in accordance with section 1.3.

5. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE³⁸

Stage	Indicative date
1. Publication of the Call	30/09/2026

³⁸ This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 1, 3, 4 and 5) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure.

Stage	Indicative date
2. Information sessions	15/10/2026 (Kočani, venue TBC) at 11:00 (local time) 27/10/2026 (online) at 11:00 (local time) 06/11/2026 (online) at 11:00 (local time)
3. Deadline for questions to the CRM Helpdesk (10 days before the submission deadline)	06/11/2026 at 17:00 (local time)
4. Last date on which answers are published (5 days before the submission deadline)	11/11/2026 at 17:00 (local time)
5. Deadline for submission of applications	16/11/2026 at 17:00 (local time)
6. Information to applicants on the administrative compliance and eligibility check (Step 1)	December 2026
7. Quality assessment (Step 2)	December 2026
8. Notification of the award decision to all applicants	December 2026 / January 2027
9. Signature of the In-kind Support Contracts	January 2027
10. Start of implementation of the Actions	January 2027

6. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

6.1 Do No Harm

Actions must be designed and implemented to avoid unintended negative consequences for individuals, communities, or existing processes. Applicants must:

- Identify and coordinate with programmes already operating in Kočani, to avoid duplication and maximise synergies.
- Treat all participants with respect and dignity; activities must not exploit or stigmatise vulnerable persons or communities.
- Obtain informed consent before collecting personal data or involving participants in activities; where participants are under 18, consent must also be obtained from parents or guardians.
- Ensure AI tools and digital technologies are used safely, transparently, and without discrimination, with young people informed of how these tools work and their limitations.
- Avoid activities exposing participants to online risks, harmful content, or misuse of personal data.
- Ensure no participant is pressured, exploited, or disadvantaged as a result of taking part.

If unintended harm is identified during implementation, the organisation must inform CRM immediately so corrective measures can be agreed.

6.2 Data Protection

Personal data provided by applicants will be processed in line with applicable EU and national data protection rules, used only to manage the Call, select beneficiaries, and monitor supported Actions, and retained only as long as necessary. Applicants may request access to, rectification of, or deletion of their personal data by contacting the CRM Helpdesk at crm-helpdesk@eu4cr.mk.

7. CRM HELPDESK AND CAPACITY-BUILDING SUPPORT

7.1 CRM Helpdesk

The CRM Helpdesk answers questions on this Call before the submission deadline. It provides procedural clarifications — on the rules of the Call, the eligibility criteria, the required documents and the use of the Application Form and the Budget template. To ensure the equal treatment of applicants, the Helpdesk does not review draft applications, does not advise on the content or the budget of an individual application, and does not give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, an Action or specific activities or costs.

Questions must be submitted in writing by the deadline set out in section 3.2. All questions and answers are published at www.eu4cr.mk under Frequently Asked Questions.

Helpdesk Email	crm-helpdesk@eu4cr.mk
Website	www.eu4cr.mk

7.2 Information Sessions

Three information sessions are organised under this Call: one in person in Kočani and two online. Each session presents the EU CRM programme and this Call, and provides practical guidance on completing the Application Form and the Budget. Attendance is strongly recommended. The online sessions are recorded, and the recordings and presentations are published at www.eu4cr.mk. Dates and registration details are published at the same address.

7.3 Capacity-Building Support for CSOs Operating in the Kočani region

Beneficiaries receive structured capacity-building support during the implementation of their Action, in addition to the in-kind support itself. Applicants indicate their capacity-building needs in the Application Form.

The following training is mandatory for Beneficiaries and is a condition of the In-kind Support Contract:

- Indicators: outputs, outcomes, and impact measurement.
- Procurement under the in-kind modality (competitive process, three offers, service-provider selection).
- Activity planning and scheduling.
- Financial documentation and budget management, including EU visibility and communication requirements applicable during implementation.

Additional modules are offered to Beneficiaries during implementation, based on the needs indicated in the Application Form and on the progress of the Action — for example, advocacy and campaigning, awareness-raising and the rights-based approach, communication for grassroots CSOs, financial management, rights-based event management, social marketing and fundraising, networking and partnership development, social media management, and documentation, reporting and closure.

The EU CRM also offers capacity-building activities to civil society organisations operating in the Kočani region that do not receive in-kind support under this Call. These are not part of this Call; information on the modules available, and on how to register, is published at www.eu4cr.mk and presented at the information sessions.

8. Annexes

Documents to be completed and submitted

Annex	Document
Annex A	Application Form (Word format) with signed Declaration form
Annex B	Budget, including the notes on eligible costs (Excel format)