



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

Brussels
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HOME-Funds/2022/20

COMMITTEE FOR THE HOME AFFAIRS FUNDS

Subject: **Launch of the call for expression of interest under the Specific Action “Trafficking in Human Beings – Early identification and prompt referral of victims” under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Reference AMIF/2022/SA/1.2.1.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EU) 2021/1147 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)¹ provides that Member States may receive funding for specific actions in addition to their initial allocations in their respective programmes.

Specific actions aim to fund transnational or national projects that bring Union added value in accordance with the objectives of the AMIF for which one, several or all Member States may receive an additional allocation to their programmes.

They will be implemented as one of the component of the Thematic Facility in line with Art. 11 of the AMIF Regulation.

On 25 November 2021, the Commission adopted the financing decision and the work programme for 2021-2022 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Thematic Facility.²

By the present note, the Commission launches a call for expression of interest for Specific Action “Trafficking in Human Beings – Early identification and prompt referral of victims”, in line with the actions listed in the above-mentioned Commission’s financing decision and work programme.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1147 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 8458 final of 25/11/2021

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Specific actions will be implemented by one or more Member States participating in the AMIF via funding received in addition to the allocation under their AMIF programmes.

Funding for specific actions is added to the Member States' programme allocations at the time of the approval of the initial programme or by means of a programme amendment. That additional funding is earmarked for the specific action concerned and shall not be used for other actions in the Member State's programme, except in duly justified circumstances and as approved by the Commission through the amendment of the Member State's programme. This means that, as a rule, in case of under-spending or non-implementation of the specific action, Member States will not be able to use the corresponding amount to support any other action of their programme. In such cases, any unused amount would be reimbursed to the Union budget and/or decommitted, except under the circumstances referred to above.

Whereas the regular EU co-financing rate under the Member States' programmes will not exceed 75% of total eligible expenditure, projects implemented under specific actions may benefit from an increased co-financing rate of 90% of total eligible expenditure.

The specific action must be implemented by the Member States in accordance with the AMIF Regulation and the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR).

As regard the value added tax (“VAT”) eligibility regime, Article 64 (1)(c) of the CPR provides that VAT is not eligible, except:

- (i) “for operations the total cost of which is below EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT);
- (ii) for operations the total cost of which is at least EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT) where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation”.

3. CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

3.1. Indicative Budget available

The 2021-2022 AMIF Thematic Facility work programme indicates the overall budgetary allocation reserved for specific actions in the years 2021 and 2022.

The amount envisaged for this call is EUR 4 million.

The requested amounts (i.e. EU contribution) to a Member State's AMIF programme for this Specific Action

- must not be lower than EUR 500 000 per application.
- should ideally range between EUR 500 000 and EUR 1 000 000 per application. In order to optimise the use of AMIF funding, the requested amount per application can be higher than the ‘ideal range’ if duly justified, yet should ideally not exceed EUR 1 500 000.

3.2. Background for the Specific Action

3.2.1 Human trafficking - a transnational crime

Half of the victims of human trafficking identified in the European Union are non-EU citizens, mainly from Africa, Western Balkans and Asia³. Victims are also trafficked in mixed migration flows⁴ to the EU via all routes. The current global and regional migration situation heightens the risks of trafficking, with traffickers abusing asylum procedures, including by legalising their own status and that of their victims. Children in migration, in particular unaccompanied migrant children, are especially vulnerable to traffickers. The identification and detection of victims or potential victims of trafficking in mixed migration flows remains a challenge. According to the latest available data, between 2017 and 2018, there were more than 14000 registered victims of human trafficking within the European Union⁵. The actual number is likely to be significantly higher as many victims remain undetected. The majority of the victims in the EU are women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation. Almost every fourth victim of trafficking in the EU is a child.

The [EU Strategy on combatting trafficking in human beings \(2021-2025\)](#)⁶ emphasised that third country national victims of trafficking in the European Union face additional difficulties. Traffickers can more easily prey on irregular migrants, which can fall victim of trafficking and be exposed to risks of being re-trafficked. Early identification of victims is important to promptly assist, support and protect victims of trafficking in human beings and enables police and prosecution authorities to better investigate and punish traffickers. Frontline officers, such as border guards, police officers, social workers and inspector services are crucial in this respect. The involvement of civil society organisations in the identification of victims and their referral for support is a challenge, just as the lack of training of professionals in providing effective support in cross-border cases.

Many victims initially do not recognize themselves as such, especially if they are in a transportation, post-recruitment or pre-exploitation phase, and thus it is possible that no exploitation has occurred yet. Others, particularly undocumented irregular migrants, may avoid identifying themselves to authorities due to fear of return, retaliation by their traffickers, or because their behaviour has been pre-conditioned by religious rituals or beliefs that have been imposed upon them. In some cases, the victim may have a relationship with the trafficker, or may fear stigmatization, especially if the abuse they have suffered was sexual in nature. A special challenge of alleged victims are irregular migrants moving across Member States either upon their own will or by being pressured by their traffickers. In the meantime it is well possible that they launch applications for international protection in more than one Member State and Member States authorities assess their victim status differently.

3.2.2 EU policy framework

³ Data collection on trafficking in human beings in the EU (intap-europe.eu), (2020)

⁴ Mixed movements (or mixed migration) refers to flows of people travelling together, generally in an irregular manner, over the same routes and using the same means of transport, but for different reasons (www.unhcr.org/asylum-and-migration.html)

⁵ European Commission, Study on Data Collection on Trafficking in Human beings in the EU (2020); Third report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, COM(2020) 776 and its accompanying Staff Working Document, SWD(2020) 226.

⁶ COM(2021) 171, 14.4.2021.

The EU has in place a solid legal and policy framework to address trafficking in human beings, anchored in the Anti-trafficking Directive (Directive 2011/36/EU)⁷. The Anti-trafficking Directive establishes robust provisions on victim's protection, assistance and support, as well as on prevention and prosecution of the crime. It takes a zero-tolerance approach towards traffickers, adopts a strong human rights-based approach, and incorporates a gender-specific perspective, recognising that women and men are often trafficked for different purposes.

AMIF explicitly supports Member States in their implementation of the Anti-trafficking Directive (Recital (30) of the AMIF Regulation). Supported measures mentioned are the early identification of victims of trafficking in human beings and their referral to specialised services, while taking into account the gender-specific nature of trafficking and the specific needs of child victims. Article 3(2) point (a) of the AMIF Regulation refers to support the identification of applicants with special procedural or reception needs. These include victims of trafficking regarding their referral to specialised services such as psycho-social and rehabilitation services.

However, a failure to identify a trafficked person is likely to result in a further denial of that person's rights. Member States are therefore under an obligation to ensure that such identification can and does take place.

According to the third progress report on trafficking in human beings⁸ all but one Member State have national referral mechanisms in place, to improve early identification, assistance and support to victims of trafficking. Referral mechanisms aim at properly identifying and referring the victims of trafficking to appropriate assistance and support services, including through an efficient coordination between civil society organizations, international organizations, criminal investigation agencies and judicial authorities, as well as with interdisciplinary and inter-agency administrative anti-human-trafficking agencies, taking into account their specific needs. The scope, functioning and level of formalisation of the referral mechanisms vary across Member States. All Member States have in place at least some type of measure and procedure aiming at improving identification (e.g. indicators, guidelines focused on specific high-risk groups, joint initiative of law enforcement, labour inspectors, and migration services).

Civil society organisations are pointing to some persistent shortcomings in ensuring a multidisciplinary approach in individual Member States and across the Union. They also note failures to involve civil society, the lack of appropriate training and capacity building for all actors involved; and the lack of uniformity in decisions related to victims' referral.⁹

3.3. Scope and purpose of the action

3.3.1. Objectives of the projects

The projects under this call should be transnational and at least involve three Member States.

⁷ Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA (OJ L 101, 15 April 2011, p.1)

⁸COM(2020) 661, 20.10.2020

⁹SWD(2018) 473

The Commission's intention with this call is to reinforce the capacity of Member States to operate adequate early victim of trafficking in human beings identification regimes and to encourage the cooperation between Member States to gradually develop a coherent European referral mechanism.

The projects under this call should aim to enhance exchanges of best practices across Member States, including on cross-border cooperation between the competent authorities in victim referrals; to facilitate advisory services by practitioners to reinforce multi-agency cooperation and coordination with third countries on identification and referral of victims of trafficking of human beings.

The projects under this call should serve as pilot projects, developing possible models for such a European mechanism. They could provide the Commission and the Member States with lessons learnt, good practices, shortcomings and an evaluation on feasibility of new elements, tools, measures and/or concepts developed and tested.

This should allow the EU to identify a number of recommendations for early victim of trafficking in human beings identification regimes and establish gradually, in the near future, a European referral mechanism across all Member States.

Consequently, the projects under this call should combine at least two of the following **objectives**:

1. The establishment and testing of new elements of a victim of trafficking in human beings identification regime¹⁰ in first reception and identification centres for refugees and migrants. As well as within the police, border management authorities, the work of medical and welfare professionals, prosecutors, cultural mediators and interpreters. MS could work in parallel here and compare results, which would contribute to the overall evaluation of the project in the end, identify shortcoming and establish best practices.
2. The development of a concept for a transnational referral mechanism amongst a group of Member States and testing its feasibility (including for example a single point of reference in each Member States and clear communication channels regarding established victims of human trafficking). This should not necessarily entail setting up an independent instrument but rather build on existing referral structures in each Member State and on the procedures already established at national, bilateral and multilateral levels.
3. Analysis, conclusions and recommendations for models for a coordinated, long-term cooperation mechanism with countries of origin and transit of human trafficking victims, ensuring that the return of victims to third countries excludes the possibility of retrafficking, based on exchange of views, the comparison and identification of good practices and the application of evaluation methods between a group of Member States.

The actions should ideally entail:

¹⁰ E.g. Setting up sustainable training and sensitization mechanisms that target all actors involved to be capable to firmly detect early signs when a migrant has likely fallen victim of human trafficking

- Identifying the most appropriate supportive action for the victims and their separation of their traffickers
- Involvement of child protection services to ensure the well-being of the child is a precondition for any action
- Identification of traffickers

The projects under the call can also involve third countries, which intend to be part of a transnational referral mechanism.

The projects under the call have to involve civil society organisations and efficiently work together to achieve the highest results under the objectives listed above.

3.3.2. Possible new elements to develop and test under the projects

One or more of the following new elements could be developed and tested within the existing victim of trafficking in human beings identification regimes include:

- a) development of a unified set of identification indicators for victims of trafficking
- b) establishment of clearly defined processes and reporting lines with clear responsibilities for all stakeholders (border guards, law enforcement officers, health authorities, labour inspectorates, care workers, personal operating reception facilities)
- c) identification of databases to be used to store the victims identity and whereabouts that have the potential to be interoperable and operate at transnational / EU level;
- d) new capacity building measures in Member States for the inclusion of first responders into the national referral mechanism; especially the creation of special units within competent authorities or civil society organisations to deal with trafficking in human beings coming from third countries for all forms of trafficking taking into account the special needs of children and the specificities of different forms of trafficking;
- e) new forms of joint training activities at European level for frontline officers (law enforcement, border guards, immigration personnel), for mental and health care practitioners, social workers, educational personal and for transport operators (airlines, ferries, etc.) to detect and identify potential victims of trafficking; the training is to promote the adoption of a multi-agency approach¹¹; including live-simulation training activities as referred in the EU Strategy 2021-2025. The joint training should provide specific training curriculum on trafficking in human beings to offer tailored services to victims including linguistic and cultural mediators.

¹¹ a multi-agency approach should provide an interface for policy, systems and practice that are at the same time consistent and not repeatedly changing, reinforcing the importance of resourcing, communication and efficient relationships for effective multi-agency working.

- f) creation of apps and hotlines on which potential victims may seek help and rescue in a confidential manner; and awareness campaigns, such as eye-catching street banners advertising these hotlines and apps;
- g) establishment of an adequate national IT infrastructure for the timely exchange of information at national level on potential victims, perpetrators and cases. It may also include the establishment of a single register for the registration of victims to avoid double-counting.
- h) further development of data collection and disaggregation at European level for measuring the scale of the phenomenon and identifying the needs that are to be addressed;
- i) development of individual risk assessment and risk management action plans for the third country victims in order to prevent absconding and re-victimisation;

The projects proposed should not include activities related to general victim support or to the integration of third-country nationals. It cannot serve the financing of already existing mechanisms or measures. Meetings, workshops and events taking place at the Headquarters of EU institutions, bodies or Agencies (or any alternative premises made available by them in their respective host cities) will not be eligible for the purposes of this call.

Projects could include an event / forum / session where all MS and the Commission come together to share final results, evaluate the projects and on this basis discuss next steps.

In the projects, Member States should also ensure respect for the horizontal principles described in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

3.4. Expected results following the call

Five to eight projects bringing together different groups of minimum three Member States to develop and test early identification regimes and referral mechanisms.

The projects should lead to a combination of the following results:

- To present a model for capacity building / tools or set up a new good practice with high union added value. Notably this will address a combination of the proposed activities/goals resulting in the introduction of a sustainable identification regime and a stable referral mechanism.
- To contribute to the development towards a European referral mechanism (see also point 3.2.3, last paragraph) by establishing structured cooperation among national mechanisms of two or several Member States in order to clarify the identity or personal circumstances and specific needs of victims in concrete cases. This could in turn lead to common procedures, an established communication channel, clear contact points in Member States as well as agreed databases containing the identity details of the victims and their whereabouts.
- To increase significantly the number of migrants identified as victim of trafficking in human being the earliest possible after entering EU territory. In particular it should

ensure that thanks to the early detection and identification, victims are rescued from the traffickers and placed under protection in a safe environment. This should avoid their re-trafficking.

- To result in improved understanding of the human trafficking phenomenon in all organisations, which are involved in transporting, accommodating, interviewing or caring for migrants. It should also induce structural changes in an organisation e.g. within the police, border force, judiciary, asylum authorities, such as the establishment of groups/units specialised on human trafficking.
- To allow that personnel of reception centres and health care services are adequately trained to identify trafficking victims as they are among the first ones who enter in close contact with migrants and therefore their expertise is indispensable to detect the signs of sexual abuse.
- To lead to a more efficient, timely and structured information exchange among the different stakeholders within a Member States on alleged victims of trafficking and an enhanced IT infrastructure ensuring that no information gets lost and the stakeholders can access the relevant information in a rapid and reliable manner.

4. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

4.1. Admissibility and assessment aspects

All EU Member States participating in the AMIF are eligible.

The specific action proposed should not start before 3 June 2022 and be completed by 31 December 2025.

To be considered admissible, a proposal

1. has to be submitted within the deadline (see below) to the AMIF specific actions functional mailbox HOME-AMIF-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu in the official AMIF/2022/SA/1.2.1. Application Form attached to this Note, together with its annexes, and be readable and complete (all fields necessary for assessment are filled in),
2. has to be submitted by the Managing Authority on behalf of the entity in the Member State that will be responsible for the implementation of the specific action,
3. has to identify a project beneficiary (an entity) that will be responsible for the implementation of the action in the Member State (in the lead for the action),
4. has to include partnership declaration forms of all participating Member States, involved in the project proposal. In case of a transnational project proposal, the lead Member State will have to make sure that all participating Member States duly sign the “Partnership Declaration Form” and that they are listed in the Application Form, indicating the share each will receive from the specific action’s amount allocated if the submitted project proposal is successful. Based on this common agreement, each partner will have a role and resulting responsibilities in the implementation of the project and delivering on its objectives.

Other entities can be involved in the implementation of the specific action as co-beneficiaries.

DG HOME will assess admissible proposals on the basis of the following criteria:

– **Relevance (30 points):**

1. Clarity and consistency of the objectives and scope of the proposal seen against the objectives and expected impact/outcomes as identified in this call for expression of interest
2. Targeted nature of the proposal: degree to which the proposal identifies and seeks to addresses shortcomings at national level in the identification and referral of Trafficking of human being victims, who are third country nationals
3. Cost-effectiveness: the degree to which the proposal aims to achieve results on the ground in relation to the target population and stakeholders, with the available budget proposed

– **Quality (40 points):**

1. Maturity of the proposal, the appropriateness of the design and planned implementation, taking into account the envisaged activities methodology, (including operational and financial management), the organisation of work and strategy for project management and monitoring, as well as the measures undertaken to mitigate the identified risks
2. Nature and scope of the consortium of organisations working together to carry out the proposal
3. Nature and scope of the innovation as regards the implementation of existing trafficking of human beings victim identification regimes and referral mechanisms
4. Degree of involvement of civil society organisations in the proposal

– **Impact (30 points):**

1. Impact or effect of the proposal in relation to the objective of the call for expression of interest for the EU (Union added value)
2. Expected impact of the proposal in the Member State concerned for the target population: the degree of change in terms of the quantity and quality of the identification and referral of victims of trafficking in human beings who are third country nationals, as testified inter alia in the changes to the programme's output and results indicators listed in Annex VIII of the AMIF Regulation
3. Expectations for the sustainability of the project

4.2. Application procedure

Deadline for the application: Member States are invited to submit their proposals by 03 June 2022 at the latest, using the official AMIF/2022/SA/1.2.1. Application Form attached to this Note, together with its annexes.

The proposals should be submitted to the AMIF specific actions functional mailbox HOME-AMIF-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu. Member States may submit additional documentation if necessary.

Deadline for any clarification requests on this Note: Member States can send requests by 13 May 2022 at the latest to HOME-AFFAIRS-FUNDS-COMMITTEE@ec.europa.eu.

The Commission may also contact the lead Member State to request further specific information. A reply should be provided by the Member State within 3 working days.

In order to ensure equal and fair treatment of the proposals and allow the Commission to allocate at the same date all the available funding, DG HOME will assess all proposals simultaneously. Therefore, proposals submitted after the deadline will not be admissible.

The Members of the Committee for the Home Affairs Funds will be informed at the latest 10 working days before the deadline for the submission of the proposals in case the deadline for the submission of proposals is extended.

DG HOME will inform Member States of the outcome of the assessment of the proposals towards September 2022.

5. AMENDMENT OF THE AMIF PROGRAMMES AND ELIGIBILITY OF EXPENDITURE

After having been informed of the outcome of the call for expression of interest, each successful Member State shall submit to the Commission a request to amend its AMIF programme via SFC. The amended programme should include a short description of the specific action, adjust the output and result indicators and include the costs and codes linked to this specific action (respectively in the description and under tables 1, 2 and 3 of the relevant specific objective, and table 6 of the programme).

If the Specific Action is included in the programme after its initial approval by the Commission: The Monitoring committee should approve any proposal by the managing authority for the amendment of the programme (Article 40(2)(d) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060).

When amending an AMIF programme of a Member States, two situations may arise regarding the eligibility of expenditure¹²:

1. For Member States that have included all the types of interventions listed in Annex VI table 1 of the AMIF Regulation that are relevant for the Specific Action “Trafficking in Human Beings – Early identification and prompt referral of victims” in table(s) 2.1.3 of the relevant specific objective(s) in their *initially approved* AMIF programme: expenditure for the Specific Action will be eligible as of 3/6/2022.

¹² Art. 63(7) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

2. For Member States that have *not* included all the types of interventions listed in Annex VI table 1 of the AMIF Regulation that are relevant for the Specific Action “Trafficking in Human Beings – Early identification and prompt referral of victims” in the tables in the table(s) 2.1.3 of the relevant specific objective(s) in their initially approved AMIF programme: expenditure for the Specific Action will be eligible from the date of submission by the Member State of its request for amendment of the AMIF programme that will add the respective types of interventions in the programme.

Yours faithfully,

Electronically signed

Chiara GARIAZZO
Chair of the Committee for the
Home Affairs Funds

p.o. Beate GMINDER

Enclosure: Application form
 Annex I Budget form
 Annex II Output and result indicators
 Annex III Partnership Declaration form

c.c.: JHA Counsellors