



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

Brussels
HOME.E.1/AF

HOME-Funds/2022/21

COMMITTEE FOR THE HOME AFFAIRS FUNDS

Subject: Launch of the call for expression of interest for the “Specific Action on the provision of services to victims of trafficking in human beings – THB” under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) – Reference ISF/2022/SA/3.3.1

1. INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EU) 2021/1149 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Internal Security Fund¹ for the duration of the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 provides that Member States may receive funding for specific actions in addition to their initial allocation in their respective programmes.

Specific actions aim to fund transnational or national projects that bring high Union added value in accordance with the objectives of the Fund and in line with agreed Union priorities, in particular in order to contribute to preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.

They will be implemented as one of the components of the Thematic Facility in line with Articles 8 and 15 of the above mentioned Regulation.

On 26 November 2021, the Commission adopted the financing decision and the work programme for 2021-2022 Internal Security Fund (ISF) Thematic Facility².

By the present note, the Commission launches a call for expression of interest for “Specific Action on the provision of services to victims of trafficking in human beings”, in line with the actions listed in the above mentioned Commission’s financing decision and work programme.

¹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1149](#)

² Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 8460 final of 26/11/2021

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The actions will be implemented by one or more Member States participating in the Fund via funding received in addition to the allocation under the Member States' 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 this 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 the 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 ISF Regulation and the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)³.

Your attention is in particular drawn to one provision of the CPR. As regards the valued 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 ISF Thematic Facility work programme indicates that for all specific actions under this Fund EUR 22 million are available.

The indicative amount envisaged for this call is EUR 2 million.

Requested amounts (i.e. EU contribution to a Member State's ISF programme for this specific action) should ideally range between EUR 250 000 and EUR 500 000 per application.

³ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy.

3.2. Background for the specific action

The EU has in place a solid legal and policy framework to address trafficking in human beings, anchored in Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims (“EU Anti-trafficking Directive”). The EU 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.

The EU Anti-trafficking Directive contains specific provisions for the assistance, support and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings. Under Article 11(5) of the Directive, Member States have an obligation to provide assistance and support measures on a consensual and informed basis, which include “*at least standards of living capable of ensuring victims’ subsistence through measures such as the provision of appropriate and safe accommodation and material assistance, as well as necessary medical treatment including psychological assistance, counselling and information, and translation and interpretation services where appropriate*”. Member States are further required to provide child victims with assistance, support and protection, with the child’s best interests being a primary consideration (Article 13). Moreover, children should receive additional services under Article 14, including “access to education” and a guardian where parents are not available to ensure the child’s best interests.

According to the latest available data, between 2017 and 2018, there were more than 14 000 registered victims within the European Union⁴. The actual number is likely to be significantly higher as many victims remain undetected. Nearly half of the victims of trafficking within the European Union are EU nationals and a significant number of them are trafficked within their own Member State. 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, most of them EU citizens and trafficked for sexual exploitation. Article 16 of the Directive provides specific provisions for the assistance, support and protection of unaccompanied child victims of trafficking in human beings to find durable solutions based on an individual assessment of the best interests of the child and appointment of a guardian, as well as a representative in criminal investigations and proceedings.

Trafficking in human beings brings high profits to criminals and carries with it enormous human, social and economic costs. In the EU, these costs are estimated to be up to EUR 2.7 billion in a single year. The Commission’s [Study on the economic, social and human costs of trafficking in human beings within the EU \(2020\)](#) underscores that victims of trafficking are legally entitled to specialised services⁵, which are organised at the level of the Member States. These include accommodation, medical and psychological assistance, legal assistance, education, training, job placement, reintegration assistance, return assistance. The study provided estimates on the costs of specialised services per victim, amounting to EUR 11 355 per victim and EUR 91 149 042 in total in the EU in 2016.

⁴ 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.

⁵ See Articles 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the Anti-trafficking Directive.

The Commission's [Study on Reviewing the Functioning of Member States' National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms](#) (2020) highlighted that in the majority of Member States, victims of trafficking in human beings have access to dedicated services and accommodation, as well as assisted accommodation, supervised apartments, safe houses, hostels or hotels. Nevertheless, sustainable funding to civil society organisations running shelters, as well as specialised facilities for victims of trafficking based on their sex, age, and the specific consequences of the forms of exploitation that they have experienced, remain to a large extent unavailable. There are also discrepancies in the way specialised services, such as medical and psychological assistance, are provided to victims depending on the Member State where they are. The provision of support and services to vulnerable groups is also a challenge. Several Member States do not have specialised accommodations for child victims of trafficking, who are often placed in foster care or institutions. The study further showed that very little data is available on the provision of specific support for victims with special needs and victims from particularly vulnerable groups, which may mean that they are not sufficiently taken into account in support systems.

Protecting, supporting and empowering the victims, especially women and children, is a priority under the [EU Strategy on combatting trafficking in human beings \(2021-2025\)](#).

This specific action relates in particular to the Strategy's key action for the Commission to enable targeted funding support to specialised shelters for victims of trafficking, including specialised facilities for trafficked women and children via Internal Security Fund. Victims of trafficking should have access to appropriate and safe accommodation that allows them to escape from traffickers and that is adapted to their specific needs and circumstances. Safe shelters are needed for children, women and men. Same-sex shelters that also provide trauma-focussed support can effectively help victims' recovery.

Proposals under this specific action should take into account and explain their relevance in relation to the priorities and key actions of the [EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings \(2021-2025\)](#). Other documents relevant in that context should also be considered in the proposals, in particular reports published by the European Commission⁶ and EU agencies⁷, such as:

- [Third \(2020\) report](#) on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings and its accompanying [Staff Working Document](#);
- [Study on Data collection on trafficking in human beings](#) (2020);
- [Study on Reviewing the Functioning of Member States' National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms](#) (2020);
- [Study on the economic, social and human costs of trafficking in human beings within the EU](#) (2020);
- [Joint report of the JHA agencies' network on the identification and protection of victims of human trafficking](#) (2021);
- Europol's [European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment](#) (2021);

⁶ Other relevant Commission's publications to take into account: [Study on Comprehensive Policy Review of anti-trafficking projects funded by the European Commission](#) (2016); [Study on High risk groups for trafficking in human beings](#) (2015); [Study on gender dimension of trafficking in human beings](#) (2016).

⁷ Other relevant EU agencies' publications include for instance: Europol 2018 [Report on Criminal networks involved in the trafficking and exploitation of underage victims in the EU](#); Fundamental Rights Agency 2019 guide to enhance child protection focusing; EIGE 2018 [Report on Gender-specific measures in anti-trafficking actions](#).

- Europol's [European Migrant Smuggling Centre 5th Annual Report](#) (2021);
- Eurojust's [Report on Trafficking in Human Beings: Best practice and issues in judicial cooperation](#) (2021).

Proposals under this specific action should only target activities that support victims of trafficking in human beings who hold the citizenship of an EU Member States or are long-term residents in one of the EU Member States participating in the Internal Security Fund.

3.3. Scope and purpose of the specific action

This call targets single EU Member States participating in the ISF, and in particular, Member States with a high number of registered victims who are EU citizens, including their own nationals, taking into account the findings of the Commission's 2020 Study on Data collection on trafficking in human beings in the EU for the years 2017-2018⁸.

Its objective is to contribute to the effective implementation of the EU Strategy on combating trafficking in human beings (2021-2025), including key actions targeted to the Member States. This specific action should address the above-mentioned challenges. The Commission has encouraged Member States to finance specialised shelters for victims of trafficking in human beings, including specialised facilities for trafficked women and children, via their ISF programmes. This specific action aims at providing assistance and support services for victims of trafficking in human beings, including in the context of shelters and specialised facilities, taking into account their immediate and longer-term needs, as well as a gender and child-sensitive approach. The "Specific Action THB" should enable victims to have access to appropriate and safe accommodation and services in order to help them in their recovery from the trafficking, accompany them in their re-integration into society and avoid their re-trafficking.

Proposals under this call should focus on the provision of services to victims of trafficking in human beings who are EU citizens or persons with a long-term residence permit in one of the EU Member States participating in the Internal Security Fund. These services can include physical and mental health services, counselling, translation and interpretation services where appropriate, material assistance (e.g. food, clothing and other in-kind support), legal assistance, cultural mediation, education, job counselling and training. Activities in the proposals can also include specific services for child victims of trafficking in human beings, such as individual assessments, access to education and appointment of a legal guardian for child victims if relevant. The specific action should promote a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach, as well as involve multilingual staff in order the assistance and support to be efficient.

In addition, the proposals could make available special assistance measures for vulnerable groups, such as children, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds, such as those belonging to marginalised Roma communities. Member States should take into account, where relevant, the findings of the Commission's Third report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings and the Study on National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms, which identify

examples and good practices, as well as the gaps in the area of assistance and support to victims.

Proposals should be implemented in cooperation with civil society organisations.

The proposals **should include** one or more of the following activities related to the provision of support and specialised services to victims of trafficking in human beings:

- Training and workshops for staff working in accommodation or specialised facilities for victims of trafficking in human beings and more generally providing assistance and support to victims of trafficking in human beings, notably through the production of information material such as handbooks or manuals;
- Measures aimed at fostering a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach, including public authorities, social workers, child protection services, legal guardians, psychologists, medical staff, linguistic and cultural mediators, etc.;
- Creation of hotlines and apps providing information on available local services for victims of trafficking in human beings;
- Provision of material, medical and psychological support to victims of trafficking in human beings, counselling, translation and interpretation services, cultural mediation, legal and administrative assistance in accessing their rights or in criminal proceedings;
- Provision of individual risk assessments, taking into account the specific needs of the victims and vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, LGBTIQ people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds, such as those belonging to marginalised Roma communities, with the aim to avoid re-trafficking or re-victimisation;
- Access to education, vocational training, apprenticeship programmes, job placement services or skills enhancement, including in order to facilitate the re-integration of the victims into society after leaving the shelter or specialised facility;
- Provision of services adapted to the specific needs of child victims of trafficking in human beings, such as individual assessments, taking into account the best interests of the child, appointment of a legal guardian and/or representative, access to education;
- Cost of staff providing medical, psychological, social, material, linguistic, educational, legal, administrative (amongst other) assistance and support to victims.

If the proposals require the purchase or rental of equipment this should be done within the limit of the 35% threshold stipulated in Article 13(7) of the ISF Regulation.

Finally, the proposals should provide for a report outlining the results achieved and presenting recommendations how these results could be consolidated and continued in the Member State concerned (“sustainability”), as well as considered for replication in other Member States. The report should also draw lessons learnt on the cooperation between public authorities and civil society organisations.

The specific action proposed **should not include** activities related to the construction of shelters or specialised facilities for victims of trafficking in human beings. Where relevant, the specific action can complement national programmes in terms of victims’

assistance and support. The provision of services for the victims should be financed under this specific action, notably in the context of the shelters and specialised facilities that Member States were encouraged to establish under their ISF programmes.

3.4. Expected results following the call

The selected projects should have a concrete operational impact on the assistance and support of victims of trafficking in human beings. The (non-exhaustive) expected results would be:

- Improved quality of, and better access to dedicated services to victims of trafficking in human beings, taking into account their specific needs and circumstances;
- Increased number of victims of trafficking in human beings receiving appropriate and specialised assistance and support, including specialised services for vulnerable groups;
- Creation of a safer and more adapted environment for victims of trafficking in human beings to recover from the trafficking and avoid re-trafficking, including within the context of shelters and specialised accommodation;
- Increased capacity of staff working in shelters and specialised facilities, as well as other relevant stakeholders to provide specialised assistance and support to victims of trafficking in human beings.

The overall expected Union benefit from all projects selected under the specific action is the increased level of protection for vulnerable EU citizens and long-term residents who are victims of trafficking in human beings, which will further contribute to protecting society from crime.

Moreover, with the dissemination of the reports referred to above, the projects will contribute to the EU dialogue on adequate implementation of the policy framework to address trafficking in human beings and the identification of solutions to address the shortcomings identified in the 2020 Study on Reviewing the Functioning of Member States' National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms.

The outputs and results of the projects selected should contribute to the indicators from Annex VIII of the ISF Regulation listed in Annex 2.

4. PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

4.1. Admissibility and assessment aspects

All EU Member States participating in the ISF are eligible.

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

The proposals submitted by the Member States will be assessed by DG HOME.

To be considered admissible a proposal

1. has to be submitted within the deadline (see below) to the ISF specific actions functional mailbox HOME-ISF-SPECIFIC-ACTIONS@ec.europa.eu in the

ISF/2022/SA/3.3.1 Application Form attached to this Note, together with its annexes, and 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 specific action in the Member State (in the lead for the action).

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 award criteria:

A. 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 project:** degree to which the proposal identifies and seeks to address the shortcomings at national level in the provision of services to victims of trafficking in human beings.
3. **Complementarity:** The Member State should demonstrate the complementarity of the project with the Member State's programme and other EU funding instruments.

B. Quality (40 points)

1. **Maturity of the proposal, the appropriateness of the design** and planned implementation, taking into account the envisaged implementation methodology (including operational and financial management), the **organisation of work and strategy for project management and monitoring, as well as for the preparation of the report;** and the **measures undertaken to mitigate the identified risks.**
2. **Purpose and scope of the proposed activities related to the provision of support and specialised services to victims of trafficking in human beings:** degree to which these activities support the implementation of the Directive, address vulnerable groups and ensure **compliance with the EU acquis including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.**
3. **Degree to which civil society organisations working with victims of trafficking in human beings, as well as, where relevant, the National Referral Mechanisms and other relevant actors, are involved in the proposal.**

C. Impact (30 points)

1. The 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. **The expected impact of the proposal in the Member State concerned for the target population** (i.e. the degree of change in terms of the quantity and quality of provision of services to victims of trafficking in human beings).
3. The expectations for the **sustainability of the project.**

4.2. Application procedure

Deadline for the application: Member States are invited to submit their proposals by **3 June 2022** at the latest, using the ISF/2022/SA/3.3.1 Application Form attached to this Note, together with its annexes.

The proposals should be submitted to the ISF specific actions functional mailbox HOME-ISF-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 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.

Member States will receive information on the successful proposals towards September 2022, while the respective revisions of the ISF Programme(s) will be carried out immediately after.

5. AMENDMENT OF THE ISF PROGRAMMES AND ELIGIBILITY OF EXPENDITURE

After information on the outcome of the call for expression of interest is provided by the Commission to the Member States, DG HOME will invite successful Member States to submit a reasoned request for an amendment of their ISF programme, together with amended programme, setting out the expected impact of that amendment on the achievement of the programme's objectives pursuant to Article 24 of the CPR. They should amend the output and result indicators as well as include the costs linked to this "Specific Action THB" breaking down the costs by type of intervention (respectively under tables 2.1 and 2.1.3 of each relevant specific objective of their ISF programme in SFC). The Monitoring Committee shall approve any proposal by the Managing Authority for the amendment of the ISF programme per Article 40(2)(d) of the CPR Regulation.

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

1. For Member States that have included types of interventions (listed in Annex VI table 2 of the ISF regulation) relevant to this "Specific Action THB" in the tables 2.1.3 of each relevant specific objective in their initially adopted ISF programme, expenditure for the "Specific Action THB" would be eligible as of 3/6/2022.

2. For Member States that have not included types of interventions (listed in Annex VI table 2 of the ISF regulation) relevant to the “Specific Action THB” in the tables 2.1.3 of each relevant specific objective in their initially adopted ISF programme, expenditure for the “Specific Action THB” will be eligible from the date of the submission by the Member State of its request for the amendment of the ISF programme to which new types of interventions will be added accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Electronically signed

Chiara GARIAZZO
Chair of the Committee for the
Home Affairs Funds

p.o. Beate GMINDER

Enclosures: Application form
 Annex I Budget form
 Annex II Output and result indicators

c.c.: JHA Counsellors