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**RULES OF PROCEDURE
FOR PROJECT SELECTION UNDER THE SMALL GRANT SCHEME**

JUSTICE PROGRAMME
Programme Area: 22 Domestic and Gender-based Violence

NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2014-2021

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INTRODUCTION

The *Rules of procedure for project selection under the Small Grants Scheme (Rules of procedure)* contain a description of procedures concerning the submission and evaluation of applications, the selection of projects and the conclusion of project agreements. The call for proposals is carried out in accordance with Article 7.4 of the *Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (Regulation)*. The *Rules of procedure*, the *Call for proposals* and the project selection criteria are agreed within the Cooperation Committee for the *Justice Programme*, which includes representatives of the Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partners.

I. THE JUSTICE PROGRAMME

The Ministry of Justice (Department for Strategy and European Funds) is the Programme Operator of the *Justice Programme*, co-financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (Norway Grants). The Donor Programme Partners are the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Service.

The *Justice Programme* has been included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for 2014-2021 - an international agreement signed on December 20, 2017 between the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Poland. The Programme Agreement, concluded between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy on 13 July 2020, and the Programme implementation agreement, between the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy and the Ministry of Justice, are the legal basis for Programme implementation. The total amount allocated to the *Justice Programme* is EUR 68,495,355, including EUR 58,221,052 contribution from Norway Grants.

The Norway Grants represent Norway's financial assistance granted to a number of beneficiary countries in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics. In return for the financial assistance provided, Norway benefits from access to the EU internal market, even though it is not a member of the EU. The overall objectives of the Norway Grants are to contribute to the reduction of social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area (EEA) and to the strengthening of bilateral relations between Norway and the beneficiary countries through financial contributions in the 5 priority sectors listed in the *Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (Regulation)*.

The priority sector "Justice and Home Affairs" (Article 2.1. E of the *Regulation*) includes i. a. programme area 19 "Correctional Services and Pre-trial Detention" and programme area 22 "Domestic and Gender-based Violence" that are covered by the *Justice Programme*.

The *Justice Programme* is contributing to the following expected outcomes:

- PA 19 "Correctional Services and Pre-trial Detention" – Outcome 1: Improved correctional services
- PA 22 "Domestic and Gender-based Violence" – Outcome 2: Improved domestic violence prevention system

The Rules of procedure apply to the **Small Grant Scheme** in the PA 22 – Domestic and Gender-based Violence.

II. SMALL GRANT SCHEME

Two Small Grants Schemes (SGSs), managed by the Programme Operator, are planned under the *Justice* Programme. The SGSs will support projects aimed at contributing to the improvement of the domestic violence prevention system. Potential Project Promoters may apply for funding under the following calls for proposals:

- SGS 1: Pilot implementation of integrated prevention programmes (establishing Family Centres), linked to the Predefined Project No. 2 "The integrated system of domestic violence prevention", implemented by the Institute of Justice in partnership with the University of Stavanger;
- SGS 2: Preventing violence against the elderly and people with disabilities - development of local support systems, linked to the Predefined Project no. 3 "Preventing violence against the elderly and people with disabilities", implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy.

2.1 Pilot implementation of integrated prevention programmes (establishing family centres) (SGS 1)

The aim of the call for proposals is to select projects that will be used to test the new model of domestic violence prevention, developed within the Predefined Project No. 2 "The integrated system of domestic violence prevention", implemented by the Institute of Justice in partnership with the University of Stavanger.

The main result of the projects will be the creation of a system of coordination / integration of services under the so-called Family Centres. The Centre may operate as an institution set up specifically to implement a domestic violence prevention model, or a type of platform that provides a wide range of integrated / coordinated services to reduce risk factors and strengthen protection factors in the field of domestic violence. The concept of the Family Centres functioning, the catalogue of services offered and the profile of engaged specialists, developed under the Predefined Project No. 2, have been indicated in the Call for Proposals - SGS 1.

The total funding available under the call for proposals is EUR 2,000,000. Applicants will be able to apply for funding in the amount from EUR 5,000 to EUR 400,000. The duration of the projects will be up to 12 months.

Entities eligible to apply for funding are local government units at the commune/municipality level.

2.2. Preventing violence against the elderly and people with disabilities – development of local support systems

Within the call for proposals, projects aimed at the development of the local support system for the elderly and people with disabilities, at risk or experiencing violence, and their families, will be financed. Solutions developed and implemented under the projects at the local level will be evaluated, and good practices will be used for the development of a model of prevention and support in the field of preventing domestic violence against the elderly and people with disabilities under the Predefined Project No. 3 "Preventing violence against the elderly and people with disabilities", implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. The

assumptions and types of activities that may be implemented have been indicated in the Call for proposals - SGS 2.

The total grant amount available under the call for proposals is EUR 1,800,000. Applicants can apply for funding in the amount from EUR 5,000 to EUR 75,000. The duration of the projects is up to 12 months.

Entities eligible to apply for funding are local government units at the commune/municipality level.

Detailed information on the above-mentioned calls and the types of activities that can be implemented under the projects have been indicated in the calls for proposals.

III. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS IN THE PROGRAMME AREA 22

Projects implemented under the Small Grants Scheme in programme area. 22 will be aimed at contributing to the outcome of the *Justice* Programme - Improved domestic violence prevention system.

It is obligatory to select both indicators for the Programme Outcome 2, i.e. annual number of cases of domestic violence officially reported (in project intervention areas) and the number of people at risk of domestic violence benefiting from services provided and the appropriate indicators indicated for a given result:

- for SGS 1, indicators for Output 2.2 Comprehensive Domestic Violence Prevention Programme developed: Number of Family Centres established;
- in the case of SGS 2, indicator for Output 2.3 Domestic violence victims with special needs assisted: Number of support models for elderly and disabled victims of domestic violence developed.

Detailed information on the requirements and guidelines for defining indicators for projects is included in the calls for proposals and Instructions for Applicants.

Expected programme results	Indicators
Outcome 2 Improved domestic violence prevention system	Annual number of cases of domestic violence officially reported (in project intervention areas)
	Number of people at risk for domestic violence benefiting from services provided
Output 2.2 Comprehensive domestic violence prevention programme developed	Number of Family Centres established

Output 2.3 Domestic violence victims with special needs assisted	Number of pilot support models for elderly and disabled victims of domestic violence developed
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Indicators for bilateral cooperation

For projects implemented in partnership with a Norwegian entity it is mandatory to select the Bilateral Output 1 of the *Justice Programme* - Number of projects involving cooperation with a donor project partner.

In addition, Project Promoters and Project Partners will be required to take part in a survey conducted by the FMO regarding the Bilateral Outcome indicators defined for the Programme.

Expected bilateral results	Indicators
Bilateral Outcome Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme	Level of trust between cooperating entities in Beneficiary States and Donor States*
	Level of satisfaction with the partnership*
	Share of cooperating organizations that apply the knowledge acquired from bilateral partnership
Bilateral Output 1 Bilateral partnerships supported	Number of projects involving cooperation with a donor project partner
	Number of international networks where partners from Beneficiary States and Donor States participate together

* Survey among the Project Promoters and Project Partners will be conducted by the FMO.

IV. Eligible Applicants

Entities eligible to apply for funding are local government units at the municipality/commune level (gmina):

- urban communes;
- urban-rural communes;
- rural communes.

Under a given call for proposals, the applicant may submit one application for funding.

V. Project Partners

Projects can be implemented in partnership. In accordance with the Programme Agreement, project partners may be non-governmental organizations established as a legal person in

Poland or Norway, as well as Polish or Norwegian public entities working in the field of prevention of domestic and gender-based violence.

In case of partnership projects, the applicants are required to submit a letter of intent confirming partnership, together with the application form. The letter of intent should specify the division of tasks and the role of each partner in the project. Before concluding the project contract, the Programme Operator verifies the draft partnership agreement in terms of compliance with Art. 7.7 of the *Regulation* and consistency with the project application.

If the project partner is an entity from Norway, the partnership agreement is drawn up in English. The partnership agreement must be concluded prior to signing the project contract.

If the partnership agreement is not concluded within 30 days from the approval of the draft partnership agreement by the Programme Operator, the Programme Operator may withdraw the financing for the project. In such a case, funding will be awarded to the next entity on the ranking list.

In order to facilitate partnerships with entities from Norway, the Programme Operator, in cooperation with the Norwegian Programme Partners, will provide information on the possibility of establishing cooperation and organize events for potential Project Promoters.

The Project Partner may not be an entity excluded from the possibility of receiving funding pursuant to:

- 1) Article 207 paragraph 4 of the Act of 27 August 2009 on Public Finance (Journal of Laws of 2021, items 305,1535 and 1773);
- 2) Article 12 paragraph 1 point 1 of the Act of 15 June 2012 on the consequences of entrusting performance of work to foreigners residing on the territory of the Republic of Poland (Journal of Laws of 2021 r., item. 1745);
- 3) Article 9 paragraph 1 point 2a of the Act of 28 October 2002 r. on the liability of collective entities for acts prohibited under penalty (Journal of Laws of 2020 item 358). .

VI. DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION OF A PROJECT PROPOSAL

Calls for proposals are organized by the Programme Operator. Applications for project financing are submitted in response to the call for proposals, posted on the Programme Operator's website. The call for proposals specifies the deadlines and general terms of the call, in accordance with Art. 7.3.2 letters b)-m) of the *Regulation*.

The project proposal should be prepared on the application form provided by the Programme Operator, attached as Annex 1 to the call for proposals.

Information on how to submit a project proposal and the required attachments is included in the Call for Proposals.

VII. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROJECTS

The selection of projects will be carried out on the basis of an assessment of formal criteria (administrative and eligibility criteria) and content-related criteria agreed within the Cooperation Committee. Project proposals that meet the formal requirements will be subject to content-related assessment. The applicants whose project proposals were rejected by the Programme Operator at the stage of formal assessment, may appeal against its negative result to the National Focal Point (NFP), about which they will be informed by the Programme Operator. In case the appeal is granted, the project proposal will be forwarded for further assessment.

7.1. Formal assessment

The formal assessment is carried out by the Formal Assessment Team composed of the employees of the Department of Strategy and European Funds. Before starting the assessment, the members of the Formal Assessment Team sign a declaration of impartiality and confidentiality.

The formal assessment is carried out on the basis of the Formal Assessment Chart attached as Annex 4 to the Call for Proposals, and concerns the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of formal - administrative criteria and eligibility criteria (grade 0-1). To pass the formal assessment the project proposal must meet all the administrative and eligibility criteria.

At the stage of the formal assessment, it is possible to provide additional information/ correct the application in terms of formal criteria that can be supplemented /corrected, as indicated in the Call for proposals, in accordance with the following rules:

- in case of deficiencies in application in terms of the formal criteria that can be supplemented/corrected, the Programme Operator calls the Applicant (via the ePUAP platform) to provide additional information/to correct the application within 7 days from the date of delivery of comments;
- in the event of an obvious error in the fulfilment of formal criteria in the application, the Programme Operator corrects the error ex officio, informing the Applicant about it, or calls the Applicant (via the ePUAP platform) to correct it within 7 days from the date of sending the request.

If the required information is not provided/the application is not corrected or the information/correction is inconsistent with the request, including being delivered after the deadline, the application will be rejected. It is not possible to call the Applicant again to provide information/ correct the application in the same scope.

After completing the formal assessment the Programme Operator informs the Applicant about its results without undue delay. If the application obtains a positive result at the stage of the formal assessment, it is submitted for content-related assessment.

If the application receives a negative result or is not being considered due to failure to meet any of the criteria indicated in points 1-3 or 8-12 of the formal assessment checklist, the information to the Applicant shall include the justification of the assessment result and information on the possibility, procedure and deadline for submitting an appeal.

7.2. Appeal procedure regarding the formal assessment

- 1) In the event of a negative result in terms of compliance with the formal criteria or if the application is left without consideration, the Applicant has the right to appeal in order to re-examine the submitted application in terms of meeting the formal criteria.
- 2) The appeal is submitted to the NFP via the Programme Operator in accordance with the instruction referred to in subchapter 7.1.
- 3) The Applicant may lodge an appeal within 14 days from the date of delivery of the information on the negative assessment of the application or on the application being left without consideration, as referred to in subchapter 7.1.
- 4) The appeal includes:
 - a) designation of the Applicant,
 - b) the application number, previously assigned by the Programme Operator,
 - c) objection to the formal assessment of the project with reference to all unfulfilled formal criteria indicated by the Programme Operator, together with the justification why the Applicant does not agree with the negative assessment with respect to each of these criteria,
 - d) a trusted signature as part of a trusted profile or an electronic signature of a person authorized to represent the Applicant, with an original or copy of a document confirming the authorization of such a person to represent the Applicant, if the authorization does not result from documents previously submitted to the Programme Operator (not applicable when the document is available in public registers).
- 5) If the Programme Operator finds that the Applicant has not been properly requested to provide information/correct the deficiency or to correct the obvious mistake in fulfilment the formal criteria, the Programme Operator returns the appeal to the Applicant and at the same time calls the Applicant to provide information/correct the deficiency or to correct the obvious mistake as regards compliance with the formal criteria of the application, in accordance with subchapter 7.1. In such a case, the Programme Operator repeats the assessment of compliance with the formal criteria of the application, in accordance with subchapter 7.1.
- 6) In case the appeal that does not meet the formal requirements referred to in point 4 or contains obvious mistakes, the Programme Operator:
 - a) calls the Applicant to complete the appeal or to correct the obvious mistakes it contains, within 7 days, or the appeal will be left without consideration, or
 - b) provides the Applicant with the instruction on the possibility of submitting an appeal, in accordance with subchapter 7.1, if the Programme Operator finds that the Applicant has not been properly informed about the possibility of lodging an appeal. In such a case, the Applicant may appeal within 14 days from the date of delivery of this instruction.

7) Completion of the appeal referred to in point 6 a), applies only to the formal requirements referred to in point 4 a), b) and d).

8) The request referred to in point 6 a), suspends the running of the time limit referred to in point 17. The running of the time limit is suspended for the period of completing or correcting the appeal referred to in point 6 a).

9) The Applicant's right to appeal is not adversely affected by an incorrect instruction or lack of instruction referred to in subchapter 7.1.

10) The Programme Operator shall not consider the appeal if, despite the correct instruction referred to in subchapter 7.1, the appeal has been submitted:

a) after the deadline,

b) without meeting the requirements set out in point 4 c)

- what the Applicant is informed about in writing.

11) In case the Programme Operator leaves the appeal without consideration, the Applicant is not entitled to any other means of appeal.

12) The Applicant may withdraw the appeal until the NFP has completed the examination of the appeal.

13) The appeal is withdrawn by submitting to the Programme Operator a written declaration of withdrawal of the appeal. The declaration on the withdrawal of the appeal is submitted in the form provided by the Programme Operator for the appeal.

14) In the event of withdrawal of the appeal by the Applicant, the Programme Operator:

a) leaves the appeal without consideration, informing the Applicant about it in writing;

b) forwards a declaration on the withdrawal of the appeal to the NFP, if the appeal has been submitted to this institution.

15) In the case referred to in point 14 b), the NFP leaves the appeal without consideration, informing the Applicant and the Programme Operator about it in writing.

16) In case the appeal is withdrawn, its re-submitting is inadmissible.

17) The Programme Operator, within 21 days from the date of receipt of the appeal, verifies the results of its assessment of the application in terms of the formal conditions referred to in point 4 c), and:

a) accepts the appeal and changes the decision, which results in sending the project to the appropriate stage of the assessment and informing the Applicant in writing about the positive result of the appeal, or

b) does not accept the appeal and forwards the appeal with the documentation to the NFP, together with the Programme Operator's position regarding the lack of grounds

for changing the decision made, and informs the Applicant in writing about the submission of the appeal.

18) The NFP examines the appeal, verifying the correctness of the project proposal assessment in terms of formal conditions referred to in point 4 c), within no more than 21 days from the date of its receipt.

19) The NFP informs the Applicant in writing about the result of the examination of the appeal. This information contains, in particular, the content of the decision accepting or rejecting the appeal, together with the justification.

20) In case the appeal is accepted, the NFP forwards the project to the appropriate stage of assessment. The NFP may indicate actions to be taken by the Programme Operator.

21) In case the NFP does not accept the appeal, the Applicant is not entitled to any other means of appeal.

22) The Programme Operator informs the Applicant in writing about the result of the assessment of formal conditions, made as a result of the appeal being accepted by the NFP, and:

a) if the formal conditions of the application are positively assessed, the project is forwarded to the appropriate stage of assessment;

b) in case of a negative assessment of the formal conditions of the application, the information shall be additionally accompanied by an instruction on the possibility of lodging an appeal pursuant to the principles specified in items 3 and 4.

7.3. The content-related assessment

The content-related assessment is carried out on the basis of the content-related assessment chart containing the project selection criteria, attached as Annex 5 to the Call for Proposals.

Projects are assessed by the Content-related Assessment Team, consisting of impartial external experts with appropriate knowledge and experience, selected by the Programme Operator in a competitive procedure.

Each application is assessed independently by two experts. Prior to the evaluation, experts sign a declaration of impartiality and confidentiality, which is attached to each evaluated application. The evaluation process is documented in the assessment charts which contain the scores awarded for each criterion and the explanation provided by the experts. Applications are assessed on a scale of 0 to 100 points. The final project score is the average of the points given by two experts.

If the difference between the sum of points awarded by two experts exceeds 30% of the higher score, the Programme Operator shall commission a third, impartial, independent expert to evaluate the project independently. In such cases, for the purposes of drawing up a ranking list of projects, the average score of the two closest scores is used. At the content-related assessment stage, Applicants may be requested to provide additional information or additional documents. Applicants have 7 days from the date of delivery of the request to provide the

required information / documents. Information / documents provided after the deadline or contrary to the instructions shall not be considered during the evaluation. Information about this fact will be documented in the assessment chart.

The Programme Operator may complete or correct the application in terms of obvious mistakes, with the consent of the Applicant. The Programme Operator ensures equal treatment of Applicants when completing or correcting applications.

The application is assessed positively if it meets all the eliminating criteria and obtains minimum **60 points** (average score), including minimum 30 points (average score) in criterion 3 - *Importance of the project and its potential contribution to the development of the system of preventing domestic violence* - and shall be recommended for funding. Positive assessment result is not equivalent to receiving funding.

After completing the assessment of all projects, the Programme Operator draws up a ranking list (ranking lists). The order on the list depends on the number of points obtained by the project (projects are arranged in descending order). The list includes projects that have been positively assessed (average grade minimum 60 points) and projects that have not passed content-related assessment (average grade below 60 points). The Programme Operator presents the ranking list of projects together with the list of applications rejected in formal terms to the Project Selection Committee.

The Applicant is not entitled to appeal against the results of the content-related assessment.

VIII. Approval of projects for funding

The ranking list is submitted to the Selection Committee at least 10 working days before the meeting of the Committee.

The Selection Committee is appointed by the Programme Operator and consists of the Chairman, Secretary, members and observers. The Committee members are 2 representatives of the Programme Operator, 2 representatives of the Donor Programme Partner competent in a given programme area (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security) and 2 representatives of other institutions competent in a given programme area.

The members of the Committee have voting rights (one vote per person), the Committee shall aim at achieving consensus among all members. The Committee operates on the basis of the *Rules of procedure of the Selection Committee*. The Rules of procedure and the composition of the Committee shall be agreed within the Cooperation Committee. Representatives of the NFP, FMO and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway in Poland are invited to the meetings of the Committee as observers.

The Selection Committee reviews the ranking list and may modify it in justified cases. Any changes are listed in the minutes of the Committee meeting, signed by the Chairman. In justified cases, the Committee may recommend awarding a grant in the amount lower than applied for (e.g. in the case of insufficient available allocation).

The Chairperson of the Committee submits to the Programme Operator a list of projects recommended for funding (within the available financial allocation), along with a reserve list and a list of rejected applications (with the reason for their rejection) and information on any changes introduced in the ranking list along with their justification.

The Programme Operator verifies the project selection process in terms of compliance with the *Regulation* as well as the rules and objectives of the Programme. The final list of projects recommended for funding is approved by the supervising member of the Management of the Ministry of Justice.

The Programme Operator will provide the Applicants with information about awarding a grant, as a basis for signing a project contract, or information about not awarding a grant, along with a justification in case of each unmet criterion and, in case of scored criteria, in case of each criterion for which the application has not obtained a maximum score. The results of the call for proposals are also made public on the Programme Operator's website.

By submitting the application the Applicants consent to the use and publication of the Applicants' data by the Programme Operator for the purpose of implementation of the Programme.

IX. Concluding project contracts

Based on the results of the project selection and the Programme Operator's funding decision, a project contract is concluded between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoter. The project contract is the legal basis for the project implementation. A Project Implementation Plan, developed by the Project Promoter and agreed with the Programme Operator is attached to the project contract as an annex.

Project implementation may start from the date of the announcement of the list of selected projects. Projects should be completed by 31 December 2023. The final date of the eligibility for SGS project is 31 January 2024. The date of completion of the project is the date of completion and settlement of all project activities specified in the application.

Detailed conditions and rules of financial support, as well as the scope of the Project Promoter's obligations are specified in the project contract.

By submitting the application in the call for proposals the Applicant accepts the *Rules of procedure for project selection*.

Definitions

Applicant - an entity submitting a project application in response to the call for proposals;

Donor Programme Partners - the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Directorate of the Norwegian Correctional Service;

Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) – the office assisting the NMFA in managing the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021. The FMO, which is administratively a part of the European Free Trade Association, is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 on behalf of the NMFA and serves as a contact point.

National Focal Point (NFP) - Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, Department of Assistance Programs;

Programme Operator - Ministry of Justice, Department of Strategy and European Funds;

Project Partner - an entity actively participating in the implementation of the project and contributing to it effectively. Project partners may be non-governmental organizations established as legal entities in Poland or Norway, as well as Polish or Norwegian public entities operating in the field of preventing domestic violence and gender-based violence.

Project Promoter - an entity that has received support from the Justice Programme for project implementation, which is responsible for the initiation, preparing and implementing a project;

Selection Committee - a committee appointed by the Programme Operator, composed of representatives of the Programme Operator, Programme Partners from the Donor States and other institutions competent in a given programme area.

Important documents

Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for 2014-2021;

Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for 2014-2021;

Programme Agreement for the financing the Justice Programme, concluded between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy of the Republic of Poland;

Guidelines on the project selection procedure under the EEA Financial Mechanism for 2014-2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for 2014-2021;

Guidelines for the award of contracts under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021;

Information and Communication Requirements, the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.