

Internal Security Fund (2021-2027)

Eligibility Guidance Notes

Call Name: Training and Capacity Building on Hate Crime and Hate Speech for Law Enforcement Authorities and other stakeholders

Call Number: ISF Call number 18

Specific Objective 3

Supporting the strengthening of Member States' capabilities in relation to preventing and combating crime, terrorism and radicalisation, as well as managing security-related incidents, risks and crises, including through increased cooperation between public authorities, relevant Union bodies, offices or agencies, civil society and private partners in different Member States



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1. Scope of the Eligibility Guidelines

The scope of these Eligibility Guidelines is to provide assistance to prospective Applicants when applying for projects part-financed by the Internal Security Fund (ISF) Programme 2021-2027.

In Malta, the Internal Security Fund (ISF) falls under the responsibility of the Managing Authority (MA), the Funds and Programmes Division (FPD), within the Ministry responsible for EU funds.

Potential Applicants are encouraged to read through these Eligibility Guidelines and the relevant sections of the ISF Programme¹ as will be highlighted in the sections below, in order to avoid submitting ineligible applications.

Prospective Applicants are also encouraged to go through the Indicator Guidance Notes for better understanding of what is requested with regards to the indicators section.

2. Background information on the ISF 2021-2027 programming period

The ISF objective is to ensure a high level of security in the Union, in particular by preventing and combating terrorism and radicalisation, serious and organised crime, and cybercrime, by assisting and protecting victims of crime, as well as by preparing for, protecting against and effectively managing security-related incidents, risks and crises. ISF shall contribute to the following three specific objectives:

- to improve and facilitate the exchange of information between and within competent authorities and relevant Union bodies, offices and agencies, and, where relevant, third countries and international organisations
- to improve and intensify cross-border cooperation, including joint operations, between competent authorities in relation to terrorism and serious and organised crime with a cross-border dimension
- to support efforts to strengthen capabilities to combat and prevent crime, terrorism and radicalisation, as well as manage security-related incidents, risks and crises, including through increased cooperation between public authorities, relevant Union bodies, offices or agencies, civil society and private partners across the Member States.

3. Context of the Call

Call 18 under the ISF is an open call for project proposals targeting law enforcement authorities and other relevant stakeholders. The applicable co-financing rate is 75% of the total eligible expenditure of the project.

In line with the ISF National Programme, this call will support actions aimed at strengthening the capacities of law enforcement authorities and other relevant stakeholders to prevent and combat hate crime and hate speech through targeted training and improved victim reporting mechanisms. Funded interventions may include the delivery of specialised training programmes, the enhancement of reporting and referral pathways for victims, the development of awareness-raising initiatives, and the strengthening of inter-agency cooperation. Through these measures, the call seeks to improve the prevention, detection, and response to hate crime and hate speech, enhance victim protection and support, and foster greater societal resilience, in line with the objectives of the Internal Security Fund.

Only proposals which can demonstrate their contribution to the above Specific Objective are eligible to apply.

At project evaluation stage, the Project Selection Committee shall consult the State Aid Monitoring Board to obtain clearance regarding the involvement of state aid.

¹ The document can be downloaded from:

ISF – <https://fondi.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/ISF-MT-Programme-v.3.0.pdf>

4. The Application Process

Applications should be submitted in pdf and word format through the online portal <https://sfd.gov.mt/Application/> by not later than **12th February 2027, noon**.

Submission of an Application Form is considered as a formal statement by the applicant organisation that all the details in the application form are factually correct. It is also a confirmation that should the project be approved, the Applicant will carry out the project as described in the application form, including any amendments that may be proposed by the Project Selection Committee during evaluation or by Managing Authority, in line with the conditions stipulated in the Grant Agreement, and the applicable procedures, rules and regulations applicable to the fund concerned.

5. Project Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Projects submitted will be evaluated by the Project Selection Committee according to the eligibility and selection criteria (refer to table below) which have been approved by the Monitoring Committee in line with Article 40 of the Common Provision Regulation (EU) 2021/1060. These criteria aim at ensuring that the projects are being selected within the Specific Objective parameters and can concretely contribute to the achievements of the objectives and results of the Programme. For a project to be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, it must pass all the Eligibility Criteria and must also obtain a minimum of 50% of the total marks allocated to the Selection Criteria. However, the project must achieve the threshold for each of the relevant selection criteria (where applicable) in order to be considered further, even if the total points achieved exceed 50%.

Moreover, the assessment will take into consideration the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union when applying criteria and procedures, as well as accessibility to persons with disabilities as per Articles 23 and 26 of the respective Charter, ensure gender equality as per Article 23, and take account of the principle of sustainable development and of the Union policy on the environment in accordance with Article 11 and Article 191 (1) TFEU.

Table 1 below indicates the approved eligibility and selection criteria.

- **Eligibility criteria** are the essential criteria that all projects must meet to be admissible for a further qualitative assessment. Such eligibility criteria are normally assessed through a technical assessment which ensures that all applications have reached a minimum standard. Projects which do not comply with the gateway eligibility criteria will not proceed to full appraisal and scoring.
- **Selection criteria** are designed to assess the fit and contribution of project proposals with the Programme strategy, its target groups and its objectives. These criteria are divided in a way to capture both quantitative assessment and qualitative assessment. The evaluation will combine both data (quantitative and qualitative) to have a comprehensive understanding of the proposal

Table 1: Project eligibility and selection criteria

Eligibility Criteria	Assessment	Selection Criteria	Marks
The application must be submitted within the deadline defined in the Call.	Yes/No	Relevance and Justification	Total Points: 20 Threshold: 10
The application submitted must be complete.	Yes/No	Quality of the Application Form	Total Points: 10 Threshold: 5
The applicant shall be an eligible applicant.	Yes/No	Capacity of the Organization to implement the activities proposed	Total Points: 15 Threshold: 8
The applicant must declare to implement the project respecting the non-profit principle.	Yes/No	Outputs and Result Indicators	Total Points: 15 Threshold: 10
Project remit must be in line with the mandate of the Beneficiary.	Yes/No	Cost Effectiveness and Sustainability	Total Points: 20 Threshold: 10
The proposed action has a duration that does not exceed the implementation period of the ISF Programme i.e. 31 December 2029.	Yes/No	Dissemination of Project Results	Total Points: 5 Threshold: NA
Proof of co-financing must be provided (when applicable).	Yes/No	Complementarity with Other Actions Funder by the EU or National Programmes	Total Points: 5 Threshold: 2
The objective(s) of the proposed action correspond(s) to the relevant objectives defined under the ISF Programme.	Yes/No	Readiness	Total Points: 10 Threshold: 5
Addresses at least one of the output and result indicators of the ISF National Programme.	Yes/No		
The action does not involve State Aid.	Yes/No		

Ensures that selected operations are not directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement under Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of operations.	Yes/No		
Ensure climate proofing of investments in infrastructure and which are to have an expected lifespan of at least 5 years. (When applicable).	N/A		
Project implemented within the eligible territory.	Yes/No		

6. Eligibility Criteria

As explained above, a project must fulfil the following criteria to be eligible for further assessment:

- a) Submission of a complete project application as published in the call: The Applicant must present a complete application form, filled in with all relevant details and documentation using the system made available by the MA, unless otherwise stipulated by the MA. No outline applications or incomplete applications shall be considered. Submission of project proposals must be made within the time-limit set for receipt of applications.
- b) Applicant Organisation is an eligible Applicant as outlined in the relevant call. Supporting documentation related to the legal status of the Applicant, as required in the call, would need to be provided by the Applicant.²
- c) Applicant Organisation is to declare that the project to be implemented will respect the non-profit principle.
- d) Applicant is not in an exclusion situation in accordance with Art 136 (1) and Art 141 (1) of 2018/1046 Financial Regulation and CPR Art 73(2)(i): The Applicant should sign a declaration confirming that they or any person involved in the project are not in an exclusion situation in accordance with the Financial Regulation and Common Provisions Regulation.
- e) Applicant Organisation has remit to implement the project within its mandate: Applicants must be publicly mandated or authorised to implement the project by virtue of the applicable law establishing the Organisation or by the respective Statute, in the case of NGOs. In case of the latter, the parameters and the objectives of the project must fall within the remit and mandate of the Applicant; however, in absence of such detail, the PSC might consider the eligibility of the NGO if additional supplementary documentation proving past experience in dealing or implementing projects on or related to the objectives of the Call. Supporting documentation as required in the call would need to be provided.³
- f) Proof of co-financing (where applicable)⁴: In cases where Government is not co-financing the project from the national budget, applicants must submit, together with the application form, evidence of co-financing such as bank statement/s or equivalent, signed by the Financial Controller. Declarations will only be considered if substantiated by official financial documents.
- g) Selection of a relevant Specific Objective as published in the call: Only proposals that selected the relevant Specific Objective/s as published in the call will be considered.
- h) Addresses at least one output indicator and/or one result indicator linked to a relevant Specific Objective as published in the call: The project must have at least one output and/or at least one result indicator of the ISF Programme.
- i) Action does not involve State Aid: Projects involving state aid are not eligible under this call, however ALL applicants of ISF assisted projects must ensure compliance with State Aid rules.
- j) It is to be ensured that selected operations are not directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement under Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of operations. This is in line with 73 (2)(i) of CPR- upon project selection, whereby projects are not directly and overtly infringing an opinion given by the Commission, based upon Art. 258 TFEU- that risks expenditure, performance or breaks any regulation/law, neither state nor EU.

² Determining the eligibility of applicants includes due diligence checks on the applicant organization (excluding government entities). Such checks include whether organizations have a valid VO number and have submitted the latest audited accounts, necessarily to determine their compliance or otherwise.

³ Applicant needs to submit legal and official documentation which clearly demonstrate the remit and mandate of the beneficiary to implement the proposed project activities, and other proof documenting past experience in implementing similar projects related to the objective of the Call.

⁴ Not required in case of Government bodies.

- k) Status of operation is either ongoing or not yet started unless otherwise allowed by the specific applicable regulation: Unless otherwise allowed by the specific applicable regulations, operations shall not be considered eligible for support by the Funds, where they have been physically completed or fully implemented before the application for funding under the Programme is submitted, irrespective of whether all related payments have been made.
- l) Ensure climate proofing of investments in infrastructure and which are to have an expected lifespan of at least 5 years: 'climate proofing' means a process to prevent infrastructure from being vulnerable to potential long-term climate impacts whilst ensuring that the 'energy efficiency first' principle is respected and that the level of greenhouse gas emissions arising from the project is consistent with the climate neutrality objective in 2050 (when applicable).
- m) Project to be implemented within the eligible territory: The eligible territory for the Programme is the whole territory of the Republic of Malta. All or part of an operation may be implemented outside of a Member State, including outside the Union, provided that the operation contributes to the objectives of the Programme and provides direct benefits to the targeted territory of Malta.

Selection Criteria

The Applicant organisation will be assessed on the below parameters, which the voting members of the PSC are to follow as their guidance when assigning points for each section:

a) **Relevance and Justification** (Total: 20 marks. Threshold: 10 marks)

- Does the proposal address an existing EU-relevant need, backed up by relevant policies, strategies and CION recommendations?
- Does the applicant demonstrate a clear understanding of the context and of the need that the organization represented by the applicant (within Malta and the EU) is planning to address?
- Does the proposal add value in relation to previous projects of similar nature, or results achieved of previous Programmes?
- Are the proposed activities adequately justified⁵ and designed to address the issue and to achieve the stated objectives?

b) **Quality of the Application Form** (Total: 10 marks. Threshold: 5 marks)

- How well is the proposal prepared in terms of information (qualitative and quantitative) provided, clarity of action, work-plan, implementation period?
- Is the proposed action 'feasible' in terms of the budget (e.g. has market research been undertaken)?⁶

c) **Capacity of the organization to implement the activities proposed** (Total: 15 marks. Threshold: 8 marks)

- Does the organization have the sufficient capacity, experience, expertise, reliability, and financial resources to implement the project?
- Does the Project Leader have sufficient experience in project management?
- Does the applicant have the necessary resources and processes available to ensure a proper and successful implementation of the project?
- Do the actors/partners involved in the project - if any - have the adequate knowledge and expertise to contribute to the project's objectives?

⁵ The applicant is to ensure that any gaps and needs in the particular field (e.g. security, etc.) are identified and is to demonstrate, through the proposal, how such gaps/needs are to be narrowed down or addressed.

⁶ Marks are awarded for 'feasibility', by demonstrating or guiding a research study or equivalent which highlights or proposes a plan of action.

- How well is the Project Leader versed with EU funding rules?
- Is the experience of the Project Leader in the field of migration substantial?

d) **Outputs and Result Indicators** (Total: 15 marks. Threshold: 10 marks)

- Does the proposal identify quantifiable outputs and results as indicated in the Operational Programmes?
- Is the calculation provided in line with the CION guidance on indicators?
- Does the proposal address more than one indicator?

e) **Cost effectiveness and sustainability** (Total: 20 marks. Threshold: 10 marks)

- What is the added value of the project?
- Is the proposed expenditure justified in the light of the activities and objectives proposed?
- How cost effective/sustainable is the proposal?
- Does the proposal address cost reduction through effective procurement, if applicable?
- How does the project present the best relationship between the amount of support, the activities undertaken and the achievement of objectives, in accordance with Article 73(2)(c) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060?

f) **Dissemination of project results** (Total: 5 marks. Threshold: NA)

- Does an appropriate plan exist for the dissemination of results and knowledge transfer?
- Does an appropriate strategy exist for publicity and visibility of the EU funding to a broad audience, where applicable?

g) **Complementarity with other actions funded by the EU or National Programmes** (Total: 5 marks. Threshold: 2 marks)

- The extent to which the project is compatible with existing national policies.
- The extent to which the project complements other actions funded by the general budget of the EU or as part of National Programmes, if applicable.
- Avoidance of duplication of effort with existing projects or services in the relevant geographical area.

h) **Readiness** (Total: 10 marks. Threshold: 5 marks)

- How ready is the project to start: (have tenders/request for quotations been launched)?
- Have participants and stakeholders been identified?
- Have the relevant partners identified their respective roles and functions?
- Is there anything hindering the start of implementation?

Support

Further information and generic queries on this call and on the Internal Security Fund (ISF) 2021-2027 may be obtained from <https://fondi.eu/> or from FPD's e-mail for Calls for Proposals 2021-2027 fondi.eu@gov.mt