

## **TRADE UNIONS FOR A FAIR RECOVERY**

*Strengthening the role of trade unions in mitigating the impact  
of the COVID-19 crisis*

### **CALL FOR PROPOSALS** **ADDRESSED TO NATIONAL TRADE UNION** **CONFEDERATIONS**

#### **I. Background**

This call for proposals is launched in the context of an EU-funded Project “TRADE UNIONS FOR A FAIR RECOVERY: Strengthening the role of trade unions in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis”. This call invites national trade union confederations to devise a capacity-building workplan and submit a cascading grant application.

COVID-19 has underlined the importance of Social Dialogue in societies across Europe. While it has come to the forefront during the pandemic, it is crucial that effective social dialogue is at the heart of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs).

The pandemic has been asymmetrical, affecting different countries in different ways. To adequately tackle this, strengthening the role of trade unions and social dialogue (bi- and tripartite) is crucial. This project is led by the ETUC and aims to support capacity-building and empower trade union organisations. A parallel project is managed by the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). There are two cascading grant schemes, one managed by the ETUC and the other by the EFJ, to channel the capacity-building funds to the national level.

**National, cross-sectoral confederations are invited to apply for a cascading grant by submitting a capacity-building workplan following this call.** These workplans should aim to enable trade unions to meaningfully impact discussions on national recovery plans across Europe. More broadly, it is envisioned that workplans will also assist the development of



digital trade unionism, supporting digital skills and digital tools of trade unions. This will overall build their capacity to effectively communicate with members and pursue a strengthened role in national social dialogue institutions.

## II. Objectives and expected results

The overall purpose of this call is to channel funding to national-level trade union organisations and promote national capacity-building workplans to ‘build back better’. **Capacity-building workplans must therefore incorporate activities which focus on key strategic issues with a view to achieve (at least some of) the following outcomes:**

1. Build and **promote digital trade unionism**. This should broaden the range of digital tools available to (and strengthen the digital skills of) trade union officers. This will strengthen their organising capacity, their communication with members and their role within national social dialogue institutions.
2. Strengthen **capacity-building for collective bargaining and social dialogue** when addressing the impact and mitigating the consequences of COVID-19 (at both national and EU level discussions). This initiative aims to support unions in their activities to shape national recovery plans that deliver secure jobs with decent pay and conditions.
3. **Enhance the visibility, outreach, organising capacity, and promote a stronger voice of Trade Unions in support of democracy**. This is particularly important in regions/countries where corruption and far-right extremism may be more prevalent and where trade union membership is low. Activities should empower trade unions to better combat corruption and protect whistleblowers.
4. Projects should also seek to investigate and tackle the impact COVID-19 has had on **women**, and on specific social groups, especially **youth, and a-typical workers**.

The above will contribute to the consolidation of a strengthened role of social dialogue within future Social Partners’ agreements. It further foresees the enhanced involvement of Trade Unions at EU-level (European Semester process) and national level in crafting NRRPs alongside the design and implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Lastly, with a view to the future, the anticipated outcomes will ensure that trade unions are able to adjust to the (green and digital) transitions and ensure fair restructuring processes. The role of collective bargaining and social dialogue, at bi- and tri-partite level, must have a continued presence in society – not just during times of crisis.



### III. Eligibility: organisations, types of activities, costs

#### Eligible organisations

Cascading grant applicants must be based in an **EU Member State, UK, Iceland, Norway or in EU candidate countries** (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey).

Beneficiaries must be a **cross-industry trade union confederation** representing workers in their national Social Dialogue institutions, affiliated to an EU-level social partner organisation consulted in accordance with Article 154 TFEU.

#### Eligible projects and activities

Capacity-building workplans should be planned over a period of 12-15 months. The following types of activities will be eligible for funding:

- **Events, meetings, and training exercises** – including preparation meetings and participation in national (bi- and tri-partite) social dialogue bodies; internal coordination meetings between confederations and their member unions, subdivisions/youth sections, regional branches, experts and institutes. Outreach and visibility/awareness raising events are also eligible, as well as trade union training courses and seminars.
- **Communication and dissemination exercises** – developing online tools to strengthen the digital capacity of trade unions. Internally, this may cover the development of digital trade unionism, enabling confederations to enhance outreach and communication with members (e.g. via online platforms, intranets and databases). Externally, this may see the development of social media campaigns, e-newsletters and awareness raising exercises to reach new audiences.
- **Research and Expertise** – projects which envision relevant analytical research and/or build expertise are eligible for funding. This may include meetings with experts, studies carried-out by experts, but also research trips and study visits if deemed necessary by an organisation.

#### Eligible costs

As indicated above, each national confederation may apply for up to €120.000. All applicants must include a budget estimate for the activities foreseen in their capacity-building workplan (the budget template form, to be filled-in by applicants, is annexed to this call).



ETUC will provide financial support via a blend of two approaches: both the (I) “**reimbursement of actual costs**” and the (II) “**simplified cost option (lump-sum approach and flat rate)**”, as defined by the European Commission.

(I) The following costs are eligible under the **reimbursement of actual costs**:

- **Services** (expertise, interpretation, translations, IT services, web platforms, audio-visual material, graphic design, creation of leaflets, etc)
- **Travel and subsistence** (where necessary in workplans)
- **Administrative costs** (room rentals, interpretation equipment)

These costs must be reported upon and documented with the relevant/corresponding invoices and reimbursement sheets. These documents must be submitted by the national beneficiaries as each activity is completed, and at the latest at the end of the 2022 calendar year (for the costs incurred in 2022) and at the end of the project (for the costs incurred in 2023).

(II) To reduce administrative burden, the following costs are eligible for reimbursement under the **simplified cost option (lump-sum approach and flat rate)**:

- **Staff costs**: a lump sum, defined per type of activity will be used to reimburse grant beneficiaries for the work they invest in the coordination of activities under their respective workplans.
- **Overhead costs**: 7% of the budget estimated for the capacity-building workplans will be added to cover overhead costs of beneficiaries.

A realistic and reasonable lump sum has been established for **four different categories of activities**, each with varying sub-categories depending on the scale and scope of the event/activity. This has been carefully devised based on ETUC’s experience in running events and activities.

A lump-sum should be used to reimburse the work and time invested by trade union officers into the organisation/coordination of capacity-building events/activities (See Annex 5 for more details). National beneficiaries must provide the following documentation for an event to be eligible for a lump sum reimbursement:

- An invitation and an agenda of the event/activity



- A signed list of participants or a screen capture showing participants' names if the event/activity has taken place virtually
- A brief report, relaying key points and outcomes of the event/activity

#### **IV. Budget available and awarding of cascading grants**

The total funding available, which ETUC will be able to cascade via this call for proposals, amounts to 3.6 million EUR.

- Maximum amount per cascading grant: national applicants may request a **maximum of 120.000 EUR** to carry-out their national capacity-building workplans.
- Co-financing rate: the cascading grant may not exceed 95% of the total costs of the national capacity-building workplans. National applicants must demonstrate that they are able to cover their own contribution to the workplan.
- Funding applications submitted to ETUC for evaluation **will not be “ranked”** against one another. Instead, the co-financing rate will be adapted so that all workplans which meet the criteria can be funded. If ETUC receives more valid funding requests than the total budget available, national beneficiaries may receive cascading grants covering 92% or 90% of the total budget of their workplans.
- If ETUC receives a lower amount of funding requests than the total budget available, **the maximum co-financing rate (95%) will be applied to all beneficiaries** of cascading grants, and another call may be published by ETUC, allowing for more capacity-building workplans to be funded.
- If an applicant submits an eligible application but of which the budget contains an error, the **ETUC helpdesk will contact the national organisation to seek a clarification** and correct the error, so that a positive solution can be found.

#### **Evaluation and award process:**

**An evaluation committee** will be established and coordinated by ETUC who, upon submission, will assess cascading grant applications. Applications will be evaluated against the following criteria, to assess whether the workplan is eligible for funding or not:

- Overall relevance of the capacity-building workplan in relation to the objectives outlined above. Activities planned must match the priority objectives and expected results of the call
- Measures should be in place for disseminating the outcomes of the capacity building workplan, and for ensuring a lasting impact (sustainability of results after EU funding ends)



- Measures should be in place for monitoring and evaluating workplan outcomes

In addition, applicants must be able to demonstrate sufficient operational and financial capacity to be eligible for funding:

In terms of **financial capacity**, applicants must demonstrate that they have the sufficient accessible funds needed to maintain activities for the duration of the project and to co-finance as necessary. The financial capacity of each applicant will be evaluated upon:

- Their balance sheet & profit and loss account (please find templated to be filled-in), approved by applicant's executive committee or by an auditor
- The ratio between 'total assets', as stated clearly in the balance sheet, and the amount of cascading grant requested will be evaluated. Applicants are considered to have a strong financial capacity if the ratio is greater than or equal to 0.70

As for **operational capacity**, national beneficiaries must demonstrate sufficient professional competencies to implement and complete their workplan activities. The operational capacity of each applicant will be demonstrated by:

- A description of the organisation and structure, e.g., permanent staff, secretariat, staff dedicated to the project
- CV of the person in charge of the implementation of the workplan
- Organisations without a legal personality may still apply, but must provide a declaration on honour from a designated legal representative certifying that she/he can take on legal responsibility on behalf of the organisation

Once the evaluation phase is completed, a **validation committee**, composed of the ETUC vice-presidents will be established. This will be convened to approve the final list of proposed beneficiaries.

**Cascading grants will therefore be awarded to those organisations who:**

- Fulfil the eligibility criteria
- Fulfil the organisational and financial capacity criteria
- Submit an application ("capacity building workplan" and corresponding budget and annexes) which meets the evaluation criteria



The amount of the cascading grant will be determined by the budget estimate submitted (calculated according to the workplan foreseen). The final co-financing rate (up to 95%) will be dependent upon volume of applications received.

## V. Cascading grant agreements: monitoring, evaluation, and reporting

Once the final list of beneficiaries and awards are established, the successful grant beneficiaries will be invited to sign a cascading grant agreement which will set-out the terms and conditions of the financial support. A pre-financing instalment (40% of the grant) will be transferred to the beneficiaries upon signature of the cascading grant agreement. A second pre-financing instalment (30% of the grant) will be transferred upon validation of a mid-term progress report, and the payment of the balance will be done upon validation of the final activity report and financial statement.

ETUC will host a **kick-off event** gathering all national beneficiaries, whereby national workplans can be launched and final details can be finetuned so to ensure the necessary reporting, monitoring and evaluation tools are in place.

Each national beneficiary will be given a contact person at ETUC, and the **permanent Helpdesk** will be running to provide beneficiaries with support throughout the duration of the project. A **periodic monitoring process**, via regular bilateral “monitoring meetings”, will be held (virtually) with beneficiaries at all stages of their workplan to ensure a smooth running of their operations and offer support.

Upon completion, a **final report dossier** must be submitted by national beneficiaries, providing a technical activity report, an evaluation of the capacity-building outcomes, and a financial statement of the costs actually incurred. The balance will be paid to beneficiaries once this final report has been received and approved by ETUC. A **final conference** and exchange event will be organised to take stock of key outcomes, promote an exchange of experiences among beneficiaries and showcase interesting practices.

## VI. Timetable

Month	Description of activity
<b>29 September 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publication of call for proposals by ETUC and establishment of a Helpdesk to support national applicants</li> <li>- Establish steering and evaluation committee</li> </ul>
<b>29 October 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deadline for national beneficiaries to submit applications for their capacity-building workplans</li> </ul>

<b>November 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Applications to be processed by steering and evaluation committee</li> <li>- Steering and evaluation committee to submit proposed list of beneficiaries to validation panel</li> <li>- Formal validation of list of beneficiaries</li> </ul>
<b>December 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sign off cascading grant agreements with national beneficiaries</li> </ul>
<b>January 2022 – April 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kick-off event with national beneficiaries</li> <li>- Implementation of 12–15-month national capacity-building workplans and monitoring of the outcomes</li> <li>- Helpdesk within ETUC to continue supporting national beneficiaries</li> </ul>
<b>April-June 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General outcome evaluation by national beneficiaries, with final report dossier to be sent to ETUC</li> <li>- ETUC to compile information into a final activity and financial report (to be submitted to European Commission)</li> <li>- Final conference and overall dissemination of results expected to take place</li> </ul>

## VII. Next steps for applicants

ETUC invites national trade union confederations to submit cascading grant application by completing the templates annexed to this call: description of capacity-building workplan (see Annex 1) and budget form (see Annex 2), and balance sheet / profit and loss account (see Annex 3).

Applicants are not expected to produce an entirely new project, but rather design their workplan around their existing COVID-19 recovery plans at national level. Eligible applicants are invited to submit their application to ETUC by the **29 October 2021**. Applications must be sent to the following e-mail address: [cascadingfunds-helpdesk@etuc.org](mailto:cascadingfunds-helpdesk@etuc.org)

**Applicants must use the templates provided. Please ensure that all the documents listed in the checklist below are attached (in English) to the application to be considered for funding:**

- Completed capacity-building workplan template
- Completed template for the Budget estimate of the capacity-building workplan
- Completed template for the Balance sheet & Profit and Loss account (financial capacity)
- Applicant description: organisational structure, secretariat, permanent staff (operational capacity)
- CV of the person in charge of the implementation
- Declaration on honour by the legal representative (for applicants without legal personality)

