

EU Second Roma Integration Award for the Western Balkans and Turkey



Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,
Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey

APPLICATION FORM

(ANNEX 1 OF THE CONTEST RULES)

Did you know?

It is estimated that about 1 million Roma¹ live in the Western Balkans, 2.8 million in Turkey and 6.2 million in the EU. Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority. They face continued exclusion, segregation and discrimination.

The EU's policy on Roma inclusion, integration and empowerment is placed within an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 adopted by the European Commission in 2011. Within that framework, all 28 EU Member States and all 7 candidate countries and potential candidates for EU membership adopted their National Roma Integration Strategies which they now put in practice.

In June 2016, the Commission adopted its annual report on Roma integration that stresses the following as regards the candidate countries and potential candidates:

- Roma integration continues to be a priority in the enlargement process.
- Enough funding must be ensured to carry out integration measures.
- Attention should focus on implementation by local authorities.
- Roma community should be involved in planning, implementation and monitoring.
- Focus on results on the ground to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma.

Find out more: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm

Watch a film about Roma: <http://romahomeland.org/>

Watch a short video "A Better Future for Roma" in candidate countries and potential candidates: <https://vimeo.com/143848472>

¹ As it is most commonly used in EU policy documents and discussions, the term "Roma" refers to a variety of different groups of people who describe themselves as Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Manouches and other, and also includes Travellers, without denying the specificities and varieties of lifestyles and situations of these groups.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Before filling out this Application Form, please read carefully the Contest Rules. You also have to fill out, date and sign the Declaration of Honour.

Please fill out this Application Form and send it, together with the Declaration of Honour (Annex 2 of the Contest Rules), by e-mail to

NEAR-ROMA-INTEGRATION-AWARD@ec.europa.eu

by 31 October 2016 23:59:59 of Brussels time (the time of registration in the European Commission's IT system is decisive).

("NEAR" is the abbreviation for the European Commission department responsible for the Second Roma Integration Award: the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.)

Please make sure that where the Contest Rules require quantified data, e.g. a specific duration or number of staff or beneficiaries, this Application Form contains this data.

Where this Application Form requires a limit on the number of words, any words in excess of that limit will be disregarded in the evaluation. Adjust the size of the table cells where necessary to fit the text.

1. THE PARTICIPANT

Full official name of the participant	Tirana Legal Aid Society
Official legal form of the participant. This legal form must be suitable for an NGO.	Non-governmental organization

<p>Participant's history, aim and main activities (no more than 300 words). Demonstrate in particular the eligibility criteria under Section 3 points 2. and 3. of the Contest Rules</p>	<p>Tirana Legal Aid Society, (TLAS) started its activity in 1999 and has been one of the programs of Cafod Albania till December 18, 2006, date when TLAS was registered as an local, independent, National NGO with a well-defined Mission, and Vision:</p> <p>TLAS Mission: "Fulfilment of the legal and social needs of the people in need, education and raising of the awareness of the Albanian society on the rule of law and human rights; initiatives on the improvement of the legal system, development of the community and strengthening of the democracy in Albania."</p> <p>TLAS Vision: to see an Albania where income and education play no part in how you are treated by the law and how much access you have to justice; to see a legal system that has been refined to the point that it does not discriminate either in intention or practice; society to work as a partnership between state, business, civil society and individuals to protect all and to ensure that none is excluded or obstructed in having access to the services and protections that are their right.²</p> <p>Overall objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offering a continuum and qualitative legal services to the vulnerable groups, especially focused to poor families and their children; 2. Increasing awareness, produce and deliver informative documents on important legal, social and human rights issues; 3. Building Capacities of grassroots organizations members and civil servants 4. Undertaking law improvement initiatives for a better solution of legal and social problems of people in need. <p>TLAS work is concentrated in the main districts of Albania and not only. Actually TLAS is covering with its legal services, capacity buildings and street law activities all Roma communities in Tirana, Durres, Fier, Berat, Elbasan, Pogradec, Korca, Lezha, Shkodra and Gjirokastra</p>
<p>Staff count: approximate number of people, voluntary or paid, full-time or part-time, directly carrying out <u>all</u> the activities of the participant,</p>	<p>There are 11 people working full-time, carrying out all the activities of the centre and 4 volunteers, part of the Internship Programme, responsible for organizing Street Law Activities.</p>

² TLAS Vision and Values are recently seen during drafting the Strategic Plan for 2015-2017

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Full official address, notably street/post box, postal code, city, country	Bulevardi "Bajram Curri", Pallatet "Agimi", Shkalla 18, Ap. 322
E-mail address	tlas@tlas.org.al
Website	Tlas.org.al
Statutory registration number, VAT registration number (whichever available)	VAT Number : K71319008D
CONTACT PERSON:	
Name (Ms, Mr)	Ms. Borana Resulaj
Telephone number	0035569 36 60 372
E-mail address	bresulaj@tlas.org.al

2. THE PROJECT

Title of the project	Ensuring Roma children access and inclusion to basic services through birth registration.
Period covered by the project (Section 4 point 3. of the Contest Rules)	From: _____ To: _____ OR Ongoing since: <u>November 2015</u>
Geographical location of the project (Section 4 point 2. of the Contest Rules)	<i>Identify a precise location of the project, including the candidate country or potential candidate for EU membership</i> <u>Albania</u>
Source of financing of the project	<i>It can be internal (participant's own funds) or external (one or more donors). Please specify.</i> <u>UNICEF</u>
<p>Objectives, design, planning and activities of the project (Section 4 point 1., Section 5, criterion 1 of the Contest Rules):</p> <p><i>Please explain in no more than 500 words how the objectives, design, planning and activities (completed by the date of submission of this application) of the project can directly positively affect the Roma children and youth (below 18 years) and/or young adults (18-30 years) in terms of inclusion, integration and/or empowerment, with expected long-term effects on their lives. If the beneficiaries of the project belong to various age groups, please explain and confirm that Roma children and youth and/or young adults are a majority of the beneficiaries.</i></p>	

The issue of respect for children rights and proper implementation of anti-discrimination policies constitutes one of the key recommendations of the EC Opinion in Albania. In particular, the embryonic stage at which the implementation of the Law on Legal Aid and the functioning of the appointed Legal Aid Commission have been boldly evidenced year after year by the EU, as factors hampering access to justice and social benefits for vulnerable groups, such as children and women, victims of domestic violence and discrimination, minorities, in particular the Roma.⁴ More than six years from the adoption of the Law in Albania, little to no impact can be traced and the activity of the Legal Aid Commission remains virtually invisible. Moreover, even the judiciary and administration fees alongside with notary fees are high to be covered by vulnerable families. The child birth registration, namely the legislative and policy frameworks has been significantly improved during recent years, but the implementation of such laws and policies has resulted in an unfinished job and has not lead to the full right of every child being registered and having a name and nationality, especially for Roma children and youth. During two last years, the trend of the vulnerable unregistered children is on the rise. The influence of the economic crises in Greece, and not only, is one of the main factors of Albanians returning back to their country with many returning children who are not registered. Currently, there are more than 450 children who are not registered at birth and who as a result have encountered difficulties in being enrolled in school (based on the data base of TLAS).

In this context, the attendance of kindergartens and schools or other basic services has become more difficult with unregistered children being one of the important categories of Out of School Children⁵. The need for advocating with MOES in developing or updating the provisions for attendance of children who are not registered has come up as a need for aggressive evidence based policy improvement in order to ensure that category of children attends school.

The interventions foreseen under this proposal will work towards filling the gap in ensuring that all children are registered at birth through provision of increased capacity of service providers dealing with child registration, with increasing the awareness and knowledge of the population at risk such as Roma on the benefits and entitlements for registration as well as through ensuring that children identified as unregistered are enrolled in preschool and school.

The activities of this project will be closely linked to the Every Roma in preschool initiative of MOES and UNICEF which aims at ensuring an increased accountability for service providers for the enrolment of Roma children in preschools and later on in school. Identified children who are not registered in preschool and who lack birth registration will be fed to TLAS for ensuring their birth registration and preschool/ school enrolment.

⁴ European Commission, Albania 2013, 2014 Progress Report, Brussels is stating that legal aid system in Albania “does not work effectively” for poor families, such as the Roma. Furthermore, based on the State Legal Aid Commission statistics for 2014, only 169 applications for free legal assistance were received by this Commission, and of these only 140 were accepted as eligible. Of the 140 eligible cases only 29 completed their judicial process and received their final court decision. None of them was a child rights case.

⁵ Based on the age of 420 unregistered children recorded in TLAS data base, 192 children have encountered difficulties to enroll in school

Results achieved of the project (Section 5, criterion 2 of the Contest Rules):

Please explain in no more than 500 words the results (achieved by the date of submission of this application): how the project was able to directly positively affect the Roma children and youth (below 18 years) and/or young adults (18-30 years) in terms of inclusion, integration and/or empowerment, with expected long-term effects on their lives. Explain how you have measured these results and how these findings have been or will be used to adjust the objectives, design, planning or activities of the project.

The main aim of the project is to ensure access to social services through birth registration. An unregistered child may be easily victim of labour exploitation, trafficking, discrimination and neglecting, especially when this child belongs to Roma community. When a child is registered other intermediary services such as social programs, welfare, schools, kindergartens, and healthcare are easily accessible. Unregistered children are still an issue to be seriously considered firstly by parents, and secondly from civil office and all child protection units and professionals working with them. The trend of the flux of unregistered children cases is showing that the biggest number is coming from the poor Albanian emigrants or refugees, who live temporarily abroad the country, especially Roma families who frequently travel from one location to another. The target to be achieved in the time frame of 15 months is 260 birth registration cases. Until August 2016 there are open 233 and finished 161. All these Roma children have had the opportunity to access education system, entering schools, kindergarten and benefiting from free healthcare system. TLAS pays all the judicial expenses for all the administrative cases, making us the only NGO in Albania of this type. All Roma Community people have found to us the reliable partner for solving their entire legal problems, especially that of birth registration.

The second result of the project is to improve the knowledge of service providers and Roma community itself to increase awareness on the importance of child registration and all benefits it brings for vulnerable children. Therefore, TLAS has conducted 7 different reach out meetings with different service providers in Albania, civil office workers, social workers, grass-roots organizations workers, in 7 districts, to ensure a large coverage. There are trained 182 service providers in the period of 5 months, improving their knowledge on treating, informing, referring and following up the cases they face in daily work. These persons are now part of the big network TLAS works with, sharing information, referring cases and receiving directly advice or assistance for the unregistered children in a quick way and with low costs.

Street Law Activities are another project which intends to reach the communities face-to-face, to explain to them the importance of child birth registration and to find new cases during these meetings. There were planned 16 activities and until the end of August there are finished 9 of them. **360** Individuals and students are informed during 9 street law activities by TLAS working groups of law students and paralegals for importance of child identity and

other discriminatory forms related to unregistered children.

Direct and indirect activities held by TLAS are always in function of achieving the main goal of the project; Increasing inclusion of Roma children and youth by ensuring first their birth registration, as the main and the most important right of every citizen of any country. By this, we are strongly committed to reduce discrimination and to achieve long-life results.

Share of Roma staff carrying out (implementing) the project (Section 5, criterion 3 of the Contest Rules):

Please describe, in no more than 300 words, how many people – paid or volunteer, full-time or part-time – are directly carrying out (implementing) the project. What is the share in % of Roma among these people?

Do not confuse the people who carry out (implement) the project and the people who benefit from the project! For example, teachers and social assistants carry out a project while children benefit from it. However, sometimes it may be difficult to distinguish: for example, unemployed people may receive training as beneficiaries of the project and at the same time they can be employed by the project or do volunteer work to carry out the project. Therefore, describe clearly the people who carry out (implement) the project.

There are approximately 16 persons engaged to carry out the project. The working group is composed of 9 full-time employees; Four lawyers, Two paralegals, One psychologist, One project Coordinator and One finance officer. Lawyers are responsible of representing the cases in the court, since many of the unregistered children may be register only through court routes.

Paralegals are responsible of solving the cases through administrative procedures. These procedures take less time and it is highly supported by some state structures, with which TLAS has strong cooperation, such as Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commissioner for Anti-Discrimination etc.

There are three Intern volunteers, students of Faculty of Law in Tirana, responsible for organizing all Street Law Activities and achieving direct and face-to-face communication with Roma Communities.

Another very important asset of the project is 4 field coordinators. They are young, belonging to Roma Community and a great help, who assist us to refer cases and directly contact the community, discover the children cases and collecting the biggest part of the documentation, bridging TLAS' relations with Roma families, frequently advocating for the importance of child and birth registration, conveying our mission and vision to their peers and all interested parties.

This big group has made possible to handle the large influx of the Roma families, who need our specialized help to register their children, to make them citizen with full rights of our country and to fully benefit from all free social and health services.

Share of women and men (girls and boys) among beneficiaries of the project (Section 5, criterion 4 of the Contest Rules):

Please state, in no more than 300 words, what the share of women and men (girls and boys) is among the beneficiaries of the project. If there are gender imbalances, please explain them and explain how these findings have been or will be used to adjust the objectives, design, planning or activities of the project. If the project is intended to benefit one gender only, please justify why that is appropriate to achieve the objectives of the project.

The project is intended to benefit both genders. TLAS is serving girls and boys equally in quality and quantity. Thus, in the list of the beneficiaries until the end of August 2016 is easily noticed the balance of boys and girls, 51% females and 49% males. TLAS is assisting all the beneficiaries cautiously considering the gender balance. However, we are lead up by the principle that every person in need should be helped in order to effectively ensure their inclusion in every community. We provide a crucial and safe place for both women and men to come in our premises and ask for our legal aid, listening to their needs despite their gender. This is a main characteristic of our every day job that makes us distinguishable of other NGOs, which may be specialized only in women or in men.

3. COOPERATING ENTITIES (fill out only if applicable – Section 3, point 4. of the Contest Rules)

Describe in no more than 300 words the share of implementation of the project by the participant, i.e. without the cooperating entities. This share must be meaningful and substantial.	
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List the cooperating entities.
For each entity, provide its
full official name, its legal
form, its official address and
its statutory and/or VAT
registration number.

4. SUPPORTING VISUAL MATERIAL

In compliance with the Contest Rules (Section 6), visual material supporting this application (e.g. photos, videos, brochures) is only accepted if it is openly available on the internet in electronic format (a website, YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook etc.). Provide links below and explain the material, in particular how it shows various aspects of the project. The supporting visual material itself may be in any language.

Provide the link and a short (maximum 30 words) explanation for each item of visual material. Do not provide more than 10 items; any items beyond this limit will be disregarded during the evaluation.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efEAAq4ZHv0>
This is a short video documentary showing the struggles of Roma people to get registered and all the obstacles they have faced because of this fact.
2. <http://tlas.org.al/sq/fletepalosje>
This link directs to the TLAS' website dedicated to publications on birth registration and the solutions TLAS always has offered. There you can find 15 kind of leaflets printed during TLAS' life.
3. <http://tlas.org.al/sq/studime>
This link directs to the TLAS' website dedicated to studies on birth registration. Among the others, the most important one is "Ending Childhood Statelessness in Europe" (Study for Albania). It ensures a comprehensive overview of lack of adequate birth registration mechanisms which brings the phenomena of statelessness in every country.
4. <http://tlas.org.al/en/mock-trials>
These are two Mock Trials, which intend to raise awareness of offenses that may be committed by and against minors over the Internet, how they are judged and punished.

We wish you good luck!