

Programme Management Authority: Central Project Management Agency (Lithuania)

Implementing Authority: Belarusian National Youth Council "RADA" on behalf of the Clearing House

EU4BELARUS:

SUPPORT FOR ADVANCED LEARNING AND TRAINING (SALT III)

Training and retraining support for released Belarusian political prisoners and repressed persons

Guidelines for applicants

Reference: NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/444-419/PC-26461



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The European Union (hereafter – EU) assistance programme *EU4Belarus*: Solidary with the people of Belarus was adopted in Dec 2020 for demonstration EU's solidarity with and support for the people of Belarus. In December 2021 the European Commission adopted the EU financed Programme/special measure *EU4Belarus*: Reinforcing Resilience and Democratisation with the overall objective to reinforce the resilience and capacity among the Belarusian people affected by the political crisis to achieve democratic changes in Belarus.

As part of this special measure, *EU4Belarus: Support for Advanced Learning and Training* (hereinafter – SALT III) concerns the implementation of one of the special measure's components targeting education sector. SALT III programme is specifically designed to establish support schemes for Belarusian students, lecturers, scientists, and young professionals who have faced repression and persecution.

In the framework of SALT III, a scheme has been foreseen to provide education and employment-related support to the people of Belarus (both adults and students) who have suffered from political imprisonment or persecution and lost a source of income due to political repression (hereafter – the support scheme). The support scheme is intended to enable Belarusian people to pursue their own careers and professional development.

The support scheme is implemented by the Belarusian National Youth Council "RADA" on behalf of the Clearing House upon the grant contract NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/444-419-0006 (hereafter – Implementing Authority), signed with the Central Project Management Agency (CPVA) (hereafter – Programme Management Authority). Clearing House (hereafter – CH) is a consortium of Belarusian civil society organisations supporting CPVA in implementing SALT III, including this support scheme.

1.2. Situation analysis

The crackdown on civil society in Belarus in 2020 initiated a huge wave of relocation of Belarusian citizens abroad. People fled Belarus due to fear of being prosecuted for public activity and participation in public gatherings or political protests. According to the Human Rights Centre "Viasna" analysis of human rights situation in Belarus in 2024 there were 1262 political prisoners in Belarus by the end of December 2024 and 3697 individuals who were identified as political prisoners since the summer of 2020.

Many of Belarusian citizens faced politically motivated repressions in the country; for many of them it was de facto work ban – their contracts were terminated, and they were refused on getting other jobs even low paid ones. For these people it is a matter of survival to get a new job and outside of Belarus.

According to the European Network for Belarus <u>research conducted in 2023</u> around 260-305 thousands Belarusians reside in 5 countries: Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Latvia and Estonia, where the number includes all Belarusian (previous generations of migrants and new ones) of which 180 thousands are newly relocated. Eurostat data shows that in 2023 281,000 of Belarusians received their first residence permit in EU countries.

Among various initiatives and organisations that work specifically with social integration of relocated victims of political repressions, the most common types of support are financial support for newly relocated persons, psychological and medical services, legalisation guidance, local language education; with only few providing education for job (VET).

At the same time relocated victims of political repressions have difficulties with confirmation of their education and qualification in new countries, sometimes they flee without documents at all. This problem is due to Belarusian education and documents are not acknowledged and extra actions are necessary to confirm level of education or qualification such as expert examinations, nostrification of documents of gained education and working experience.

In EU4Belarus SALT II frames of support of ex-political prisoners' scheme CPVA and Clearing House organisations observed that some type of needed support could not be provided and needed expansion to meet actual demand from repressed Belarusian activists in EU4Belarus SALT III. Some requests exceeded spectrum of supported activities; some exceed the limits of the costs set in the programme.

2. GUIDELINES OF THE SUPPORT SCHEME

2.1. General information

Main objective	To provide education and employment related support to the released Belarusian political prisoners and persons (both adults and students) who have suffered			
	from political persecution and lost a source of income due to political repressions related with the presidential elections in Belarus in August 2020.			
Specific objective	To support activities related to training and retraining, including distance learning, in pursuing individual learning and professional development in all sectors of economy.			
Application deadlines	Round 1: 1st April 2025 – 30th Sept 2025 at 17:00 EET/UTC+ 21 / 6 months			
	Round 2: 1st Oct 2025 – 31st March 2026 at 17:00 EET/UTC+ 2 / 6 months			
	Round 3: 1st April 2026 – 30th Sept 2026 at 17:00 EET/UTC+ 2 / 6 months			
	Round 4: 1st Oct 2026 – 31st March 2027 at 17:00 EET/UTC+ 2 / 6 months			
	The Programme Management Authority reserves the right to review and update the guidelines for applicants before each round.			
Indicative budget of the calls	Round 1: EUR 150.000			
	Round 2: EUR 150.000			
	Round 3: EUR 150.000			
	Round 4: EUR 50.000			
	The Programme Management Authority reserves the right to redistribute the budget of calls between the rounds upon the requested amount in the selection round.			
Indicative number of	Up to 30 for the Rounds 1-3 and up to 10 for the Round 4.			
supported applications	The Programme Management Authority reserves the right to set a different number of the supported applications for each round.			
Announcement of calls	The calls are to be published on the website of:			
	- the Implementing Authority https://rada.fm/ ,			
	- the Programme Management Authority https://cpva.lt/en/calls-for-proposals ,			
	- the EU4Belarus website https://eu4belarus.info/ .			
Questions regarding the support scheme	For questions and consultations related to the guidelines for applicants and the implementation of the support scheme, please contact: support@eu4belarus.info .			
Career guidance and consultations	For career consultations and guidance regarding training and retraining opportunities, contact the HelpDesk on the EU4Belarus website by the link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSep4GEy1LqCQiGQlunjNddiwPDdVDrh4IVESjGeSGObh9R89A/viewform .			
Complaints	Any complaints can be submitted to the Implementing Authority during the submission period by the link the complaints: complaints@eu4belarus.info .			

¹ Eastern European Time (EET): Vilnius/Riga/Tallinn/Helsinki time.

implementation, management and monitoring the support scheme.	Transfer and processing of personal data (GDPR) ²	Any personal data related to this support scheme, including its implementation, provided by the applicant shall be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725. Such data shall be processed solely for the purposes of the implementation, management and monitoring the support scheme.
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2.2. Eligibility criteria

Eligible applicants	To be eligible for a grant, the applicant must:	
	- be a natural person aged 18 and over, and	
	- be a citizen ³ of the Republic of Belarus, and	
	- at the time of submitting of application reside in an EU member state, EEA countries, or one of the Eastern partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine). In case of residence outside Belarus, it should not start before August 2020 ⁴ , and	
	- to demonstrate that the applicant has been under threats by Belarusian regime and suffered from actual persecution/repression, or risks of threatening, persecution, repressions on political grounds/civil position/peaceful protests (based on official protocols or other documents, such as reference letters issued by independent human rights organisations, news articles, etc.) and lose opportunity to continue their studies or work, and	
	- having no signed support agreement under this support scheme,	
	Note: In case of awarding a support, the beneficiary must reside in the EU from the moment of signing a support agreement with Implementing Authority regardless a form of the activities (remote mode or in-person). The Implementing Authority cannot guarantee or provide legalisation support such as Visa or Residence Permit, and it should be sole responsibility of the applicant.	
	The applicants cannot apply for the same activity that have already received support by the scheme "Support to ex-political prisoners" under the framework of EU4Belarus SALT II.	
Eligible activities	The activities that can be included into application:	
	- Vocational education (up to 12 months),	
	- Training and retraining courses,	
	- Certified language courses and exams,	
	- Nostrification of diploma, academic degree or education certificates,	
	- Driving licence courses (all categories starting with C and above ⁵),	

² General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – Legal Text

³ Applicants, who lost or renounced their Belarusian citizenship after August 2020, or do not have valid Belarusian passport at the time of Application submission, should present documental evidence of valid Belarusian citizenship at the time of August 2020.

⁴ An exception may apply to the applicants who can prove that they left Belarus earlier than August 2020 because of the repressions and persecutions related to the presidential elections in 2020.

⁵ Categories C1, C1E, C, CE, D1, D1E, D, DE, and all categories for driving trams, trolleybuses and tractors.

	- Qualification certificates and exams.
	All education and training activities include all type of modes: in person, online and blended.
	All the activities must be targeted to the career and professional development pursuit and take place in the EU.
Eligible costs	The following costs may be financed for implementation of training and retraining activities:
	 Tuition and fees (for vocational education, training and retraining courses, language courses, driving courses, certification, nostrification, and exams),
	- Documents translation costs,
	- Public transport costs (for in person trainings not less than 1 month duration),
	 Subscriptions to software and digital platforms necessary for training and retraining,
	- Living costs (in a dormitory for vocational education up to 12 months).
	Note: Only costs incurred (procured and paid) by the Implementing Authority are considered eligible. The Implementing Authority will not pay or compensate for the costs incurred by the beneficiary (applicant).
Documentation of learning outputs	The beneficiary must keep a copy of the issued recognitions of the achieved learnings outcomes as proof of having completed the supported activities:
	 Certificates of the completed trainings, courses, programmes or exams, Qualification documents, License documents, Certificates of attendance Other.

2.3. Application

Where to apply	Filled in application form (Annex 1) must be submitted online via Google form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdSViXXau9H3FZg7k8SjnTsBr9g4AROzTQNElHnbio_490S0Q/viewform?usp=header
Maximum amount	EUR 10.000
Share of the support	100% of total eligible costs of the application
Duration of activities	Up to 12 months for vocational education. Up to 6 months for all other activities.
Location of activities	Activities must take place in the EU.
Number of applications	The applicant may apply once per selection round. The applicant may not be awarded a support more than once per support scheme.
Language of application	Application form may be filled in Belarussian or English.
Content of the application	Application must provide:

	- a description of the personal story of experienced repressions,
	 a description of the applicant's needs related to education and employment in explaining how the application will help the applicant to secure a source of income,
	 a description of the activity plan, including detail specification and indicative costs of the training and retraining activities and supporting services,
	- a description of the training and retraining results (a diploma, certificate, licences, etc.).
Supporting documents	The following documents must be submitted together with the application form:
	- documents confirming citizenship of Belarus ⁶ ,
	 documents confirming that the applicant experienced political imprisonment or other political repressions connected to presidential elections in Belarus in August 2020, or public expression of civil position/peaceful protests and lose opportunity to continue their studies or work. In absence of such documents the applicant can provide a description of the situation and a reference letter from Belarusian or International human rights defenders organisation confirming the facts of political persecution.
	 documents confirming dismissal of study at a Belarusian educational institution or termination of employment after August 2020 for political reasons⁷,
	 a valid EU visa or a valid EU residence permit (can be acquired after the approval of the support but not later than before signing the support agreement)⁸,
	- CV (optional).
	Documents must be supplied in digital format (photocopies, scanned, pdf) (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) in Belarusian, Russian or English. In cases when documents are in other languages, the applicant may be asked to provide a translation.
	If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided with the application form, the application may be rejected.
Preparation of the activity plan	The activity plan is composed of the activities necessary for improvement of the professional career of the applicant and that can be supported by this application. The applicant is requested to describe the need for training and retraining and how the application will help to improve the competencies and qualification required for current or future job or studies.
	The list of activities in the activity plan should be based on the eligible activities specified in the Section 2.2. "Eligible activities" of the guidelines.

⁶ Applicants, who lost or renounced their Belarusian citizenship after August 2020, or do not have valid Belarusian passport at the time of Application submission, should present documental evidence of valid Belarusian citizenship at the time of August 2020.

⁷ An exception may apply to the applicants who can prove that they left Belarus earlier than August 2020 because of the repressions and persecutions related to the presidential elections in 2020.

⁸ Applies to non-EU citizens.

Preparation of the detail specification and indicative	Activity number for which the detail specification is provided must correspond to the activity number in the Activity Plan.
budget of the activities	Applicants are requested to provide a detail description of the activities and their costs: format (online, in-person, blended), duration (academical hours/days/months), preferable time (from - to), preferable type of supplier (e.g., vocational school, private business, public entity), preferable language of trainings, outputs expected (diploma, certificate, etc.), type of exams required to get the qualification, preferable location of trainings (city/ town, country), type of costs required (tuition fees, transport, software, translation), travelling required (from-to, type of transport), technical requirements of IT software, requirements for translation, requirements for a dormitory at a vocational school, indicative costs of each activity (in EUR), etc. Note: the names or links of the service providers should NOT be specified in the description of the detail specification of the activities.
Personal data	By submitting the application, the applicant agrees to give to the Implementing Authority a permission to process and transfer personal data for personal data verification.
Declaration of Honor	The Applicant must declare that the information in the application is full, reliable and true.

2.4. Evaluation of applications

General rules	Applications shall be evaluated on a rolling basis during all rounds of the call. Applications shall be checked by the Implementing Authority and evaluated by the Evaluation Committee formed of 3 members of the Clearing House, where 1 member shall be appointed by the Implementing Authority and 2 by the Clearing House. The Evaluation Committee operates in accordance with the working procedures established by the Implementing Authority.
	External experts may be addressed for evaluation of the activity plan. The Evaluation Committee appoints external experts from a list of experts proposed by the Clearing House.
	Implementing Authority fills in evaluation form for each application, ranks the scored applications, prepares the results of the assessment and presents to the Evaluation Committee.
	The Evaluation Committee meets once a quarter or more often if necessary. Observing members (e.g., CPVA) may participate in the Evaluation Committee meetings without voting right.
	The members of the Evaluation Committee, external experts and observers shall sign a Declaration of Honor and Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality ⁹ .
	Based on administration and vulnerability check results consolidated by the Implementing Authority, the Evaluation Committee decides to pass the application to the next step <i>or</i> to ask for additional documents and information <i>or</i> to reject the application.
	After completion of the 2nd evaluation step the Evaluation Committee awards <i>or</i> places into a reserve list <i>or</i> rejects the application. The applicant of the awarded application becomes a beneficiary.

⁹ To be completed by all persons involved in an evaluation process including members of the Evaluation committee, whether voting (i.e. the evaluators) or non-voting, external experts and any observers.
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	The I	mpler	nenting Authority shall inform the ap	plicants	of the	decision of the	
	I	•	Committee within 10 days of the decis	•			
STEP 1: Administrative and vulnerability checks.	The administrative and vulnerability check of application evaluation: Step 1.1 Administrative check, and Step 1.2						
	missi	The Implementing Authority may request the applicant to submit by email missing or additional documents necessary for carrying out an administrative and vulnerability check.					
STEP 1.1: Administrative check.	_	Implementing Authority makes formal document check on rolling basis v 5 days after submission of the application by the following criteria:					
	-	deta	lication form: personal data (name ils), experienced repressions and ex-pertivities and indicative costs, personal	olitical	prisone		
	-	pers	porting documents: copy of passport/II onal identity, residence permit/visar(s) from the supplier, costs of sertional).	/asylum	ı seeke	ers documents,	
	Chec	k grid	d of Step 1.1.				
	No	Cı	riteria of the administrative check	Yes	No	Comments	
	1		e a citizen of the Republic of Belarus				
			ed 18 and over				
	2		eside in an EU member state or one				
			the Eastern partnership countries armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus,				
		,	eorgia, Moldova, Ukraine). In case of				
			sidence outside Belarus, it should not				
			ceed 5 years by the time of				
			plication				
	3		oof of documents confirming				
		po	olitical repressions experienced by				
		the	e applicant.				
	4		case of ex-students – proof that the				
		_	plicant has been studying at a				
			elarusian higher education institution				
			school at the time of the arrest or has				
			en expelled after August 2020 on				
	5		ditical grounds.				
			RSM, Belarussian Red Cross, Alexey				
			lay Foundation, other.				
STEP 1.2: Vulnerability check.			Committee shall make background can ghts Defending organisations to committee shall make background can be shall make background can				
	impri	sonme	ent or repressions of an applicant (with	nin 7 wo	orking d	ays to reply).	
	Evalu	ıatior	grid of Step 1.2.				
		No	Vulnerability check	Yes	No	Comments	
		1	Application number				
i							

	If the examination of the application reveals that the application does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.2 of the guidelines for applicants, the application may be rejected on this sole basis.					
STEP 2: Assessment of quality of application.	The quality of applications involves a two-step evaluation: Step 2.1 quality of content of the application and Step 2.2 an interview with the applicant, if required.					
STEP 2.1: Assessment of quality of content of application	Each application is assessed and scored by two more Committee according to 5 criteria set in the evaluate score must be commented and justified. The Implemental the list of the scored applications ranked by the average and presents it to the nearest Evaluation Committee management.	ion grid on nenting Arge total sco	of Step 2.1. Each authority prepares ore of two experts			
	Maximum application evaluation score: 25. Minimur	n passing	score: 15.			
	An external expert may be addressed for evaluation specification of the activities upon criteria 2 and 3 at					
	The Evaluation Committee may request the appli documents or information necessary for evaluation of					
	The applications receiving total score 15 and lower a Authority informs by email the applicants of the provides comments for improvement of the application	rejected				
	If the difference between the total score of two e Evaluation Committee shall conduct an interview wit in Step 2.2 to consolidate the overall final score. The shall invite the applicant for an online interview.	h the appli	icant as specified			
	Evaluation grid of Step 2.1.					
	Each 5 criteria will be given a score between 0 and 5 as 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 =		•			
	No Quality assessment criteria	Score (0-5)	Comments			
	1 Compliance and correctness of information provided in the applications.					
	2 Correspondence of the activity plan to the situation and needs of the applicant: description of support required, the activities planned, and outputs expected.					
	3 Clear and detailed specification of the					
	activities. 4 Sustainability of the outcomes of the activities.					
	5 Personal motivation.					
	Total (max 25)					
STEP 2.2: Interview with an applicant.	Two members of the Evaluation Committee conduct a applicant.	an online i	nterview with an			

	The purpose of an interview is to clarify the information described in the application and to receive additional information that would assist the Selection Committee to consolidate the final overall score of the application. Interview to be held not later than in 1 month after Step 2.1. evaluation. If the interview is not taken because of the applicant's fault the application may be rejected. Upon completion of Step 2.2. the Implementing Authority shall include the consolidated overall final score in the list of the ranked applications submitted for the nearest meeting of the Evaluation Committee.
STEP 3: Final decision.	The Evaluation Committee makes a final decision on awarding or putting into reserve or rejection of the ranked applications not exceeding the available budget or number of the awarded applications set in the Section 2.1 of the guidelines for each round of the call. The Implementing Authority shall draw up minutes of each Evaluation
	Committee meeting and a list of approved, placed into reserve and rejected applications. The Implementing Authority informs the candidates awarded within 5 working days of the Evaluation Committee's decision.
	The Implementing Authority shall invite the awarded applicants (beneficiaries) to sign a Support Agreement for the implementation of training and retraining activities in accordance with the application.
	Where necessary, the Implementing Authority shall consult with the awarded applicants to clarify the activities, their detail specifications and indicative costs and total budget set out in the application before drawing up a Support Agreement.

2.5. Implementation of the activities

Support agreement	All the activities must be implemented in line with the Support Agreement. The Support Agreement shall establish rights and obligations, confidentiality, liability, termination conditions, and other essential provisions regarding the implementation of training and retraining activities.
	Support Agreement is implemented in line with the national legislation of the Republic of Lithuania and is concluded in two languages: English and Belarussian.
Procurement of services	The Implementing Authority is in charge for procurement and contracting of the service providers in accordance with the internal procedures of the Implementing Authority and national legislation of the Republic of Lithuania.
Payments	The Implementing Authority makes payments to the selected and contracted, if necessary, service providers upon the contracts or invoices. NO grant payments (including reimbursement) are made directly to the beneficiaries.
Completion of the support agreement	For the completion of the support agreement the beneficiary must provide to the Implementing Authority the results of the education and training activities (e.g., certificates, diplomas, nostrification documents, certificates of attendance, etc.).