

Call for Proposals (Deadline for Concept notes: July 31st, 2022) Transforming narratives¹ and perceptions about migrants² in Europe

Migration continues to be one of European citizens' top concerns³.

This increased concern with refugees and migrants crossing Europe's borders goes back a decade, manifesting itself within the dominant narrative through the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015 and sustained by a never-ending cycle of news coverage, including from the fallout from the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, last winter's desperate humanitarian situation at the Poland – Lithuania – Belarus border, and the current human tragedy resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Across Europe, migration, asylum, and inclusion remain both salient and polarising topics in the public domain. And how people migrating to Europe and those *perceived* as such are spoken and written about, continues to significantly influence overall political discourse, individual perception, voting behaviour, and ultimately public policy decisions.

What is most telling however, is that few in Europe are well informed about migration and most citizens have little personal contact with migrants.⁴ And while one would think that some solidarity and a feeling of shared humanity may have developed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants continue to remain on the fringes of European society, suffering some of the worst impacts of the pandemic, with little change in how Europeans perceive migrants or people with a migrant background⁵.

Regretfully, they continue for the large part to be portrayed either in a limited way or downright negatively, with little nuance, or acknowledgement of their contribution to European societies. In that light, migrants and those perceived as migrants are seen as a threat to European security⁶, a source of job loss and

¹ In academic literature, '(a) narrative consists of a collection of stories which together convey a common worldview or meaning – it is a shared interpretation of the world and how it works'. (McBeth et al., 2015; Fisher 1984)

² EPIM is aware of the different use and meanings of the terms 'migrants' and 'refugees', depending on both perceptions as well as status. EPIM however wants to acknowledge the fluidity of these categories and the racialisation of these categories, including of people who are perceived as migrants without being migrants.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_6839 ; Standard Eurobarometer 96 - Winter 2021-2022 <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2021-05/eb_s_469_en.pdf

⁵ More in Common "A 7-country comparative study on the impacts of COVID-19 on trust, social cohesion, democracy and expectations for an uncertain future", October 2020, with the largest percentages balanced between both those generally in favour and opposed to migration:

<https://www.moreincommon.com/media/bfwlsrxu/more-in-common-the-new-normal-comparative-7-country-en.pdf>

⁶ Such security narratives suggest that infringements on democracy and human rights, huge resource expenditure on militarisation, and expanding violence against marginalised groups like refugees, are necessary planks of public safety. This paradigm has shaped a number of contemporary issues from vaccine apartheid in the coronavirus response to escalating border violence in response to migration including climate-linked migration.

competition, as a physical danger to citizens' safety, dependent on the state, a threat to national identity, culture or religion⁷, or even as a hybrid threat instrumentalised by Europe's enemies⁸.

In a seeming contrast to this, Europe and Europeans have responded with much solidarity and hospitality towards those fleeing Ukraine. Today, close to 90% of Europeans support the EU's welcoming of Ukrainians, not least because Ukraine is perceived as being part of the European family⁹.

Europe's outpouring of solidarity has also exposed the deeper tenets of societal and structural discrimination in the context of its migration system¹⁰ and counters Europe's right-based global normative legacy, necessitating a reset and rethink of how migrants are perceived and treated.

Europe is at a crossroads. Not since the aftermath of the Second World War has there been such a scale of displacement and such a large majority of the continent's population actively supporting millions of displaced people. Yet simultaneously, this very population remains susceptible to hostile narratives and perpetuates racialised myths and discourses about others with a different skin colour, religion, and ethnicity.

This is a unique duality: an opportunity to capitalise upon this hitherto unseen welcoming and to challenge some of the most harmful perceptions of migrants and refugees in Europe, aware of the risk of an otherwise further entrenched asylum apartheid in the long-term.

While certain broader migration discourses are pan-European, their building blocks are often national narratives. How migrants and refugees are framed and perceived is contextualised by national, regional and local milieus and their resulting stories. These contexts are equally influenced by the existence, size and make-up of migrant communities and demographic diversity as well as their migration and colonial histories, their economies, levels of urbanisation and the governing structures and political establishment in place.

And it is with these thoughts in mind, that this Call for Proposals is framed: to address and shift local and national perceptions on migrants. Through the catalysation of contextualised national coalitions of actors, EPIM seeks to build on the duality of this moment, leveraging this mass European support for displaced people, to address national narratives on migrants and refugees – to nuance, challenge or transform them, as befits the situation¹¹.

⁷ Five components of perceived danger 'labour market threat, welfare threat, crime threat, cultural threat and religious threat' mentioned by FES in its fear index p7: <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/article/3014/messing-sagvari-fes-study-march-2018.pdf>; <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/161/63/PDF/G2016163.pdf?OpenElement>; 'threat to Christian values': <https://www.politico.eu/article/orban-migrants-threaten-christian-europe-identity-refugees-asylum-crisis/>

⁸ "How migration became a weapon in a 'hybrid war'" <https://www.ft.com/content/83ece7e4-cc71-45b5-8db7-766066215612>; European Commission proposing a Regulation addressing situations of instrumentalization in the field of migration and asylum in December 2021 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A890%3AFIN&qid=1639757068345>

⁹ Eurobarometer, EU's response to the war in Ukraine, April 2022 <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2772>

¹⁰ The October 2021 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/299/71/PDF/N2129971.pdf?OpenElement>; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/mar/10/europe-compassion-refugees-white-european> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114282> <https://euobserver.com/opinion/154760>

¹¹ Stanford Social Innovation Review, What Makes Narrative Change So Hard? https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what_makes_narrative_change_so_hard?utm_source=Enews&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=SSIR_Now

If perceptions of all migrants and refugees can become less polarising, no matter their skin colour, origin, religion or status - if being a migrant or having a migrant background can ultimately be perceived as “normal”, then Europe may be able to live up to its values,¹² again, and everyone living in Europe can benefit from living in more inclusive societies.

1. Guidelines

Through this Call for Proposals, EPIM intends to support the creation of **coalitions** and **alliances** of organisations and movements **(co-)driven by people with lived migration experience**¹³, to **challenge and transform existing narratives about migrants** within different **national contexts in Europe**.¹⁴

Grants awarded under this call will support the **exploration and testing of tactics**,¹⁵ aimed at transforming narratives on topics that directly or indirectly affect perceptions of migrants, within a given national context.

Objectives:

- To **challenge and transform existing narratives** about migrants within different national contexts in Europe
- To **place migrant voices and reflect the personal experiences** of those with a migration background at the **forefront of this process**
- To support **long-term coalitions that have a measurable impact** on migration narratives after EPIM’s funding comes to an end
- To **strengthen overall cooperation and partnerships** between and with civil-society organisations (CSOs) and other grassroots actors and civic movements

Coalitions:

Recognising that true systems change takes place in a participatory, bottom-up manner, in which power imbalances are engaged with and addressed, EPIM invites **coalitions of stakeholders** to define their most pressing narrative challenge(s), and why, how and for whom they intend to address them within their national contexts and apply to this call.

Coalitions should reflect the **personal experiences of those with a migration background**, thus resulting in a vision for change that is rooted in this **authenticity**, whilst **not being disconnected from current mainstream policies, voices and actors**.

EPIM invites actors from a **wide range of sectors** to **ally** with other CSOs, non-formal groups, public authorities and institutions, the private sector, religious bodies and the media, and form **interdisciplinary and trans-sectoral coalitions**.

¹² The EU Values <https://ec.europa.eu/component-library/eu/about/eu-values/>

¹³ **EPIM defines “lived migration experience” as broadly as possible:** anyone who has lived through the process of leaving their country of birth, for whichever reason, and has moved to another country, thereby experiencing the impact of migration, asylum, border, or integration policies. Furthermore, EPIM also includes in this category, anyone who is *perceived* as a migrant or foreigner, even if they were born and raised in the country concerned. The notion “lived experience” is therefore very much self-identified. For additional context, see the EPIM-funded report, “Migrant-led advocacy across Europe”, 2019:

<https://www.epim.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Migrant-led-advocacy-across-Europe-Report.pdf>

¹⁴ EPIM takes a systemic lens in its work (i.e. the larger political and societal ecosystem in which different stakeholders working on migration and inclusion issues operate) and is not prescriptive as to what issues of interest may need to be engaged within a specific national context and what tactics to employ

¹⁵ These can be both to-be piloted tactics and innovations or evidence-based approaches that have proven successful, worth repeating, strengthening, or scaling.

EPIM strongly encourages **partnerships** between **smaller, grassroots organisations and movements**, driven by people with lived migration experience, including those actively working on the intersectionality of race, gender, displacement and climate change, and **larger, more established CSOs**¹⁶.

Approaches:

Successful applications will have clear, innovative, and systemic approaches towards transforming narratives that:

- Clearly define their most pressing narrative challenge(s), and why, how and for whom they intend to address them within their national contexts.
- Promote systemic change through participatory, bottom-up approaches, in which power imbalances are engaged with and addressed.
- Facilitate a collective sensemaking process, in which coalition members develop a shared understanding of the narratives they wish to transform and shared vision of the systemic changes they wish to see
- Explore and test innovative tactics to transform narratives on topics that directly or indirectly affect perceptions of migrants, within a given national context. These interventions can be a combination of specific short-term action/result-driven communication goals and long-term discourse and framework change campaigns that the coalitions will continue into the future.
- Develop strategic communications, tools and skill sets in the areas of communication or other areas like audience and focus group research, visual content production, message and messenger testing, and amplification strategies at local, regional or national levels, amongst others).
- Develop sustainable coalition-building processes that ensure that the coalitions remain viable and continue to have an impact on narratives and perceptions of migrants, after EPIM's funding has ended.

European Dimension:

While the context for the grants may be national, EPIM will provide a comparative and connecting **European dimension** to frame the projects. The aim is to parallelly test different strategic communication approaches across Europe, each tailored to national contexts to increase the potential for impact, while EPIM will simultaneously offer transnational, European-level opportunities for exchange and peer learning across these different national coalitions.

Applicants are encouraged to engage with these guidelines in the coalition creation process.

2. Applicants

Lead applicants must be **registered non-profit and non-governmental organisations**, active within **national, regional and/or local contexts**. Partners could include non-formal movements, national/regional/local public authorities, private sector players, religious bodies, and media organisations.

Applicants may submit or partner **in more than one proposal** under this call

3. Eligibility Criteria

- Applications must address the **objectives outlined in this Call for Proposals** (see **section 1**) and explain how they aim to implement these.

¹⁶ Here, EPIM aims to strengthen overall cooperation and partnerships between and with CSOs and movements in an overall shrinking civic space, within which actors face structural and financial challenges to their long-term existence and resultantly become each other's competitors instead of natural allies.

- Projects are to be implemented **within a national context in Europe** (not just the EU).
- Applicants must apply as a **national coalition** involving at **least TWO member organisations**
- **Applications for standalone trainings, individual academic study/research/travel, advocacy, data and evidence gathering are not eligible.**
- **Funds cannot be provided for physical capital projects.** Instead, funds may support direct costs, including content creation and research costs, staff time, travels, meetings, consultancies, communications costs etc., as well as indirect costs in the form of overheads.
- **Only applications in English** (EPIM's working language) will be accepted. Successful applicants are expected to communicate with the EPIM team and participate in EPIM capacity and network development programmes work in English.

4. Selection Criteria across the two-step process

Participatory and wide-ranging coalitions: EPIM is not prescriptive regarding the type of activities under this Call. That said, projects should aim to develop, strengthen, or sustain coalitions of organisations and multi-stakeholder alliances within a national context, including but not limited to public authorities, media, private sector and other related groups that are interested in changing narratives about migrants and refugees in Europe.

Clear identification of change: Projects should clearly indicate which narratives they intend to transform and the resulting impact of this. This can include changes of policies, practices, behaviours, relationships etc, as well as offering a rationale or insight into the process of change.

Innovative approaches: Projects should be innovative and experiment with new tactics or reinforce successful ones to change the narrative on specific migration-related issues within a national context. This approach should clearly fit within the project's overall scope and be related to the process of change identified.

Systems change lens: Projects should clearly display a systemic awareness of issues and explore how coalitions can address root causes as well as the more symptomatic manifestations of the narratives they intend to challenge.

Centring lived migration experience: EPIM will pay particular attention to coalitions (co-)driven by people with lived migration experience or those who identify or are perceived as migrants. Members of coalitions of shortlisted applicants will be asked to provide data on the presence and role of people with a lived migration experience or migration background in their organisations.

Timeliness: Applicants should explain why the proposal is timely given the current context (e.g., specific narratives that need to be addressed within a given time and context).

Value/need for EPIM funding: All projects should demonstrably explain the value and need for EPIM funding. EPIM is not looking for applicants who seek to enter an entirely new space with the help of this grant or to purely increase staff capacity within a given organisation. Instead, successful applications will be able to draw on existing work and experience of the members of the coalition and build upon that (i.e., *a coalition that is greater than only the sum of its parts*).

Durability and Impact: Successful applications will have in mind the long-term sustainability and scalability of projects after EPIM's initial funding has ended. They will also have a clear idea of how and where to measure impact.

5. Duration of Projects

Projects should be planned according to needs and for a **minimum duration of 18 months**.

6. Budget

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a detailed budget proposal with a **maximum budget of 190,000 EUR**. EPIM's total budget for this call is **580,000 EUR** and it expects to fund 3 to 4 projects.

Initial concept notes should indicate the overall budget but do not need to be accompanied by a budget proposal. Only shortlisted applications will be invited to submit a detailed budget proposal.

7. How to Apply

Applications consist of a **two-step process**:

STEP 1: Applicants are invited to submit a **short concept note** (6000 characters), **by 23:59 (CEST) July 31, 2022**, through the Network of European Foundations' (NEF) online application system. To access the application form, please visit:

<https://nef-europe.optimytool.com/en/project/new/private/?form=21547db5-9a5c-5f7b-b12c-f708d2a73d64&key=a1cdf829f6113c2e2ff3adb2e799cdd90681440e> and click on Submit.

STEP 2: Following a rigorous evaluation process that may include site-visits and online interviews, shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application and detailed budget.

8. Review and Decision-making

- 1. Eligibility check:** All submitted applications will be reviewed by EPIM for compliance with NEF eligibility criteria. If an application does not include all required information or supporting documents, EPIM may require the applicant to submit additional documentation by the deadline.
- 2. Selection process:** Each eligible concept note will be reviewed by EPIM and a committee of independent and impartial experts that are part of EPIM's consultative group for this grant. Experts will separately and independently evaluate each project according to the selection criteria. Shortlisted projects can expect to hear from EPIM by the end of October 2022.

Following this review, EPIM will conduct follow-up online interviews or site visits with shortlisted applicants. As a result of these conversations, shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application and budget.

- 3. Decision:** Final funding decisions are the exclusive discretionary competence of the EPIM Selection Committee, which consists of members of the Foundations that participate in EPIM's Thematic Fund on Strategic Communications. Decisions will be based on the recommendations of independent experts of the consultative group and outputs of the conversations with EPIM. Projects are expected to commence in early 2023.

9. Further Information

To make this Call for Proposals more accessible, EPIM will organise **two one-hour information sessions** on the call for proposals and application process on June 29th (1500 CEST) and July 7th (1100 CEST).

These sessions will be an opportunity for prospective applicants to ask clarification questions on the content and process of the call for proposals. Please click [here](#) to register for one of these sessions and share your questions in advance in writing, by June 26th.

Exceptional queries, not answered at these sessions may be referred to EPIM Senior Programme Manager, Hrishabh Sandilya: hrishabh.sandilya@epim.info.