



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE ACADEMY FOR CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND GRANT SUPPORT SCHEME FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARNO - Organisation for Social Innovation ARNO

CE – Circular Economy

CET - Central European Time

CFRM - Community Feedback and Response Mechanism

CSOs - Civil society organisations

EC – European Commission

EU – European Union

FSTP – Financial Support to Third Parties

IPA - Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

LEAD - Leaders for Education, Activism, and Development

MEAL - Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning

PIN - People in Need





INTRODUCTION

The project “Civil Society and Youth for Inclusive and Sustainable Development through Circular Economy in North Macedonia” is funded by the European Union through the EU Support to Civil Society and Media Organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia-IPA Civil Society Facility Programme 2022-2023.

The project is implemented by **People in Need (PIN) from the Czech Republic**, in partnership with **ARNO, Leaders for Education, Activism, and Development (LEAD)**, and **Ekovita** from the Republic of North Macedonia.

The project aims to support the transition toward a green and sustainable economy and resource-efficient growth in North Macedonia by strengthening the role, capacities, and resilience of civil society and empowering youth to engage in circular economy and waste education and reduction.

A. ACADEMY FOR CIRCULAR ECONOMY¹

1. ABOUT THE ACADEMY FOR CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The **Academy for Circular Economy** (hereinafter: Academy) is one of the key activities of the project “Civil Society and Youth for Inclusive and Sustainable Development through Circular Economy in North Macedonia” financed by the European Union.

The **overall objective** of the Academy is to strengthen the role, capacities, and active engagement of civil society organisations toward a circular economy and green transition in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The **specific objective** of the Academy is to support civil society organisations to develop innovative circular economy ideas and circular business models or scale up their economic activities through training, mentoring, expert support, networking, and grant support scheme.

The overall duration of the Academy is **seven months**.

2. WHAT DOES THE ACADEMY OFFER

The Academy offers a blended learning experience using theoretical and practical approaches. Under this Call, **12 civil society organisations** that want to develop new ideas and circular business models or scale up their economic activities and increase their knowledge and capacities in the circular economy will be selected.

¹ The **circular economy** is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended, reducing waste to a minimum – EU Parliament Definition





The civil society organisations will receive professional support from experienced entrepreneurs, academics, experts, and mentors in the circular, green, and social economy.

2.1. ACADEMY CURRICULUM

The Academy curriculum is structured in 1) educational modules; 2) mentoring sessions; 3) thematic expert sessions; 4) networking and experience-sharing activities; and 5) a grant support scheme.

1) Educational modules – the civil society organisations will attend 10 online and offline group modules (3 hours each, total allocation of 30 hours) to familiarise themselves with the concept of circular economy and circular businesses and develop their circular business models. Modules:² Introduction to circular economy; Beyond circular economy: Doughnut Economics; Circular Business Models; Policy for circular economy in North Macedonia; Circular Design Principles and the 8R concept; Waste Management and Recycling; Eco-marketing and Consumer-centric strategies; Brand Innovation and Communication in the circular economy; Sales and Circular Business Budgeting; The Art of Pitching.

2) Mentoring program – the civil society organisations will go through a mentoring program (3 hours per month, a total of 18 hours of mentoring) with experienced business, circular, and social economy experts. The mentors will be assigned based on the identified capacities and needs of the civil society organisations to successfully develop or scale up their circular business models.

3) Thematic expert sessions–the civil society organisations will work with thematic experts (3 hours of thematic consultations) that will assist in assessing the feasibility and viability of their idea and circular business model. The civil society organisations will be paired with thematic experts based on their needs and capacities and the sector/industry of their ideas (textile, food, agriculture, services, construction, digitalization, waste management, etc.).

4) Networking and experience sharing–three of the educational modules will be organised in person in Skopje where the civil society organisations will have the opportunity to network and promote their ideas and circular business models with donors, mentors, experts, and project partners. The civil society organisations will also attend 8 online “Human Library Sessions” where successful circular economy businesses from North Macedonia, the Western Balkans, and the European Union will be presented.

5) Grant Scheme - eight (8) out of twelve (12) civil society organisations selected for the Academy will be awarded grants of up to 8.000 euros to implement their ideas and circular economy business models. The duration of the grant support must be between 8 and 12 months. To receive grants, the participants will present their ideas in front of an expert jury on the final competition (*Demo Day*). The final competition (*Demo Day*) is expected to be held in the first half of 2025 in Skopje. The expert jury will decide on the best ideas that will receive financial support.

² Please note that upon agreement with the trainers, mentors, and thematic experts the content and dates of the modules can vary. The content of the modules will also be adapted after the final selection of the participants.





The project consortium reserves the right to modify the number and amount of the grants.

The **tentative timeline** of the Academy can be found at the following link: <https://shorturl.at/rgUmP>. More information on the procedure, criteria, and funding rules can be found in the second part of this Call for applications.

2.2. ACADEMY REQUIREMENTS

It is expected **two (2) senior staff members** of each civil society organisation to attend the Academy, dedicating an average of 12-14 hours per month to the whole Academy.

To present their idea on the final competition (*Demo Day*) and receive a certificate for completion of the Academy the civil society organisations must attend a minimum of 80 % of the courses, complete and undergo their mentoring and expert hours, and participate in the networking and experience-sharing activities.

Please note that some of the Academy activities and the educational material will be in **Macedonian and English language**. Therefore, it is expected that at least one staff member of the civil society organisations has a good command of the English language.

The civil society organisations should interactively engage in activities, and respect deadlines and responsibilities. They will sign a separate agreement with ARNO to specify and regulate the terms and conditions for their participation.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligible applicants for this call are:

- **Civil society organisations** established in North Macedonia at least 12 months before the official opening date of the call for applications.³

Additional criteria

Additionally, the applications should:

- Have previous experience and capacity to participate in the Academy within this call's requirements
- Have an innovative idea for a circular business model or scaling of the economic activities
- Aim to achieve circular business model sustainability with the primary use of local resources

³ **Civil society organisation** - is any association, foundation, union, as well as any organisational form of a foreign organisation, or any other form of association, registered in accordance with the Law on Citizen Associations and Foundations.





The civil society organisations can participate in this call with a maximum of two applications. However, only one application can be selected for participation in the Academy and further funded within the follow-up grant scheme.

Civil society organisations who have not been part of similar programs or received similar support in the past are encouraged to apply. The project consortium will aim to maintain a gender balance and fair geographical representation of applicants.

3.1. PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are not mandatory, but they are allowed. The lead applicant can have a maximum of one partner. The partners must apply with only one idea. The partners must specify the lead applicant as the assigned signatory party.

The partners must meet the same criteria as the lead applicant and can use the financial resources under the same conditions as the lead applicant.

3.2. ASSOCIATE PARTNERS

Other legal entities besides the lead applicant and partners can be involved in the Academy as “associate partners”. **Associate partners are strongly encouraged.**

The associate partners should have a clear role and be an integral part of the circular economy business model. Associate partners do not have to meet the eligibility criteria of lead applicants and partners. They can be public institutions, local governments (municipalities), and other legal entities or informal groups.

Associate partners can participate in the Academy under the same conditions as the lead applicant and partners. However, associate partners cannot receive funding from the grant support scheme under this project, if not otherwise specified.

4. HOW TO APPLY

To apply, the applicants should:

- **Fill out the application** form available at the following [LINK](#).

4.1. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

In addition to the application form, the applicants are required to submit all the following **supporting documentation**:

1. Current State of the civil society organisation issued by the Central Registry of N. Macedonia no older than 6 months
2. Statute or Founding act of the applicant (latest version)
3. Profit and Loss Account for 2023
4. Partnership statement or support letter for associate partners (if applicable)
5. Eligibility sworn statement - available at: <https://shorturl.at/j12ZR>



In a partnership project, it is necessary to submit the same supporting documentation for each partner.

If selected for funding under the grant support scheme, both lead applicants and partners will be requested additional documentation to prove their eligibility to receive funding under the European Union rules.

Submission of supporting documentation

All supporting documents need to be in **electronic version**. Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax, by post/courier express, etc.) or directly delivered will be automatically rejected. The application and supporting documentation must be in PDF format and should not be larger than 10 MB.

Before submission, applicants are advised to consult the application package checklist, available at the following link: <https://shorturl.at/BscVg>

4.2. DEADLINE

The deadline for application is ~~27 October 2024, 23.59h.~~

The deadline for application is extended until **03 November 2024, 23.59h.**

The application form and supporting documentation should be sent to arno.mkd@gmail.com with the subject: Application for Circular Economy Academy.

All applicants will receive confirmation on the receipt of the application. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

4.3. FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE CALL

ARNO and PIN will organise a **hybrid info session** in Skopje and on ZOOM. The date and place of the info session will be additionally announced.

All interested applicants can send their questions to marjan@arno.org.mk by October 20, 2024. Answers to the individual questions will be provided exclusively by email.

5. EVALUATION AND SELECTION

5.1. EVALUATION PROCEDURE

The evaluation and selection of the academy participants will be done in two phases:

Phase 1 – Administrative check – will be performed by an evaluation committee of representatives of PIN, ARNO, LEAD, and Ekovita. The committee will assess whether the applicants: fulfil the eligibility criteria; have fully completed the application form; have submitted all supporting documentation and have respected the deadline for application. The project partners reserve the right to ask for additional information (e.g. portfolio of previous activities and similar).

Phase 2 – Evaluation and selection – will be performed by an expert jury. The pre-selected applicants will be invited to present their application in front of the expert jury online.

5.2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The jury will evaluate the applicants based on the **evaluation grid** presented below.

The jury scores each of the criteria on a scale from 1 (one) to 5 (five), 1 (one) being the lowest and 5 (highest) score.

The maximum score is 80 points.

EVALUATION GRID		
EVALUATION CRITERIA – DESCRIPTION		POINTS
EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Does the applicant have previous economic activities, and/or attended trainings, and/or is part of partnerships in the circular, social, and/or green economy -Has the applicant nominated at least two members of the management for participation in the Academy -Does the applicant have a sufficient number of employees (employed/contracted/volunteers) with knowledge and experience in the circular, social, and/or green economy to implement the idea -Does the applicant have prior experience in managing/participating in projects and programs and financial operations in the civil or business sector 	Maximum 20
CIRCULAR ECONOMY BUSINESS MODEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Is the circular business model based on local resources and principles of the circular economy (e.g., waste prevention, responsible consumption, etc.) and a "green" eco-supply chain? -Is the business model feasible or adaptable to the applicable regulations in the Republic of North Macedonia? -Does the business model involve stakeholders and other partners from the local community as an integral part? -Are the products and services, as well as the production process, clearly defined? -Is the target audience clearly defined, and is the value proposition of the business model aligned with their needs and preferences? -Is there a clear and feasible business logic that leads to profitability and long-term growth? 	Maximum 35

	-Is economic sustainability and the main sources of revenue based on market analysis and market competition?	
SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	-Does the idea improve environmental protection and/or mitigate the negative impact on the environment? -Does the idea address environmental and/or social issues in the local community through knowledge sharing, fair employment, supply and distribution channels, and partnerships? -Does the idea have a positive impact on the local economy by creating jobs and generating demand for new services and products?	Maximum 15
INNOVATION	Is the circular business model innovative in the context of the Macedonian ecosystem Does the idea promote new approaches and business models for solving environmental and social problems	Maximum 10
TOTAL		Maximum 80

The jury will select the best 12 applications for the Academy.

The selected applicants will be timely informed and asked to confirm their participation. The jury will create a reserve list of applicants who will be called upon if an applicant cancels or is interrupted from participating in the Academy.

The project consortium reserves the right to choose less, or more than 12 applicants based on the number and quality of applications.

6. KEY DATES AND TIMELINE⁴

ACTIVITY	DATE AND TIME	FORMAT
1. Opening of the Call for applications	27 September 2024	Online
2. Info Session	mid-October 2024	Hybrid (in Skopje and Zoom)
3. Deadline for questions	20 October 2024	Online

⁴ **Note:** This is a provisional timetable of activities, except for the dates indicated in items 1, 3, and 4. The partner consortium reserves the right to modify the timetable.

		(via email)
4. Closing the Call for Applications	27 October 2024, 23.59h Extended deadline 03 November 2024, 23.59h.	Online
5. Presentation of pre-selected applicants	Beginning of November 2024	Online
6. Decision for selection	Mid-November 2024	Online
7. Start of the Academy	End of November 2024	In Skopje
8. End of the Academy and start of the grant support scheme	May/June 2025	In Skopje

B. GRANT SUPPORT SCHEME⁵

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE GRANT SCHEME

The objective of this grant scheme is to provide funding for innovative ideas and circular business models in the circular economy.

Following completion of the Academy, **8 (eight) civil society organisations will receive grants of up to 8.000 EUR** aiming to implement their circular business models and start an economic activity or scale up their economic activities, including joint initiatives with authorities and/or the business community.

The basic requirements for grant support are listed below. The specified guidelines for grant support will be announced no later than 1st February 2025.

2. ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS

Civil society organisations **that will complete the Academy** (attend a minimum of 80 % of the courses), **complete and undergo mentoring and expert hours.**

3. TYPE OF POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

The expected potential activities in the supported actions include (and will be aligned after the participants for Academy are selected and further specified in the guidelines) business development activities following circular economy principles: recycling, upcycling, repurposing waste or discarded products, delivery of services, reducing consumption (including from the food and refreshment industry, textile, furniture, household items, etc.).

⁵ All information and conditions listed under the Grant Support Scheme are only indicative and will be subject to specification/tailored to the CE academy participants. Guidelines will be announced not later than 1st February, 2025.

Proposed actions should promote a transition toward a circular economy and be accessible to a wide range of citizens including youth and elderly people, women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups. The actions are expected to improve waste management and the use of waste through different kinds of activities, resulting in bringing people and businesses together around shared interests and concerns for the environment.

Examples of potential activities and initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Start or upscale innovative circular economy ideas or economic activities
- Design, develop and open circular businesses and promote circular economy concepts.
- Launch/upscale innovative circular economy models, including initiatives between the civil society organisations and authorities and/or business community.
- Create citizen-centric approaches to delivering public services and developing community-based integrated services.
- Pilot income-generating activities to ensure continuity beyond the end of the contract.
- Testing innovative approaches and pilots in the circular and green economy sector.
- Testing and implementing business plans and sustainability strategies.
- Conducting education, public awareness, and communication campaigns to promote eco-innovation, green, and circular businesses (community clean-ups, community advocacy, awareness-raising campaigns, etc.).
- Establish cooperation among businesses, educational institutions and decision-makers with informal and formal groups.
- Creative and entrepreneurial events, meetups, and workshops advocacy and/or civic action(s) components.
- Other specific activities relevant to the call objectives.

4. EXPENDITURES

4.1. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Eligible costs are actual costs incurred by the selected grantee that are:

- Directly related to the objectives of the grant scheme
- Prototyping products and services in the circular economy
- Staff costs directly related to the implementation of the project (salaries) not more than 20% of the total budget
- Indicated in the submitted Budget
- Incurred only during the implementation period of the project
- Identifiable and verifiable (supported by all accounting and other support documents)
- Comply with the requirements of applicable tax and law regulations
- Reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management.

4.2. INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

The following costs **are not eligible**:

- Debts and debt service charges (interest);
- Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- Costs declared by the applicant and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union grant (including through European Development Fund);
- Purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred in accordance with Article
- 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;
- Currency exchange losses;
- In kind contributions (except for volunteers' work);
- Bonuses included in the staff costs;
- Negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
- Credit to third parties;
- Salary costs or remuneration of the personnel of national administrations.

The full list of ineligible costs will be additionally provided.

5. DURATION AND SIZE OF THE GRANTS

The projects supported via the grant scheme must be implemented in a **period from 8 to a maximum of 12 months**.

The total amount allocated funds under this grant scheme is EUR 64.000 for a total of 8 grants. Each selected civil society organisation will receive a grant of up to EUR 8.000.

6. CO-FUNDING

Co-funding or in-kind contributions by the grantees (direct financing by own funds or providing additional donor funds) **are not required but are encouraged** because a financial contribution could indicate greater commitment, and fundraising skills and sustainability of the applicants.

7. LOCATIONS

The activities should be implemented on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia with primary use of local resources by the national legislation.

8. EVALUATION AND SELECTION

The grantees will be selected through a competitive selection process out of the Academy graduates. **Selection will be conducted on the final competition (Demo Day) by an independent expert jury.**

8.1. EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The recipients of awards will be selected based on the **following criteria** for which maximum scores additionally will be set:

- Circular business model
- Quality of action and monitoring plan, feasibility plan and budget
- Social and environmental impact
- Innovation
- Potential for scaling and replication
- Added value aspects such as inclusion of vulnerable groups, gender equality, work with youth or schools, cooperation with public authorities, business community, etc.

8.2. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The academy participants that will not present their idea on the final competition (*Demo Day*) and submit the required documents for grant application will not be considered for grant support.

Graduated academy participants that will not be willing to participate in the networking and experience-sharing activities will be excluded.

The applicants must follow and respect the EU Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct, such as absence of conflict of interest, respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards, zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H), anti-corruption and anti-bribery, unusual commercial expenses (commissions), breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. On the contrary, the Applications will be rejected or grant contracts terminated.

9. PAYMENT AND REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

Payment will be provided based on the required supporting documents in line with the contract between the recipient and PIN including:

- Narrative report with the description of actions performed
- Financial report with all the costs linked to the actions described in the narrative report
- Supporting documents providing the accounting and programmatic evidence for each cost and money request.

General payment of grant funds will be made in 3 (three) tranches upon fulfilment of the conditions defined in the contract, and in accordance with the specified schedule:

- **Initial Payment:** 50% of the total approved grant funds
Time frame: after signing the contract on the allocation of grant funds
- **Interim Payment:** 40% of the total approved grant funds
Time frame: payment after spending a minimum 75% of the first payment and after reports approved by PIN and successful completion of the audit and/or monitoring conducted by PIN

- **Final Payment:** 10% of the total approved grant funds
Time frame/procedure: payment after approved reports by PIN and successful completion of audit and/or monitoring conducted by PIN, but no later than 30 days after final narrative, technical and financial reports have been submitted to PIN.

In case of specific circumstances, other adjustments are possible (depending on the nature of the proposed idea).

The overall mechanism of the funds' distribution to the grantees will be fixed in the contract and will have adequate provisions to mitigate the risk of possible recovery of amounts, such as suspension of payments in certain circumstances, set of pre-conditions for the final payment, not big advances, etc.

The grant recipient will be obliged to register the project for VAT release.

10. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

PIN will organise information sessions for all grantees to ensure that grantees are familiar with grant conditions, project management, including financial and operational aspects, and visibility of EU-funded actions. The grantees will be provided with ongoing and tailored support including but not limited to guidelines and procedures, reporting, MEAL, visibility and communications and PIN's Code of Conduct for grantees.

Online and in-person follow-up consultations and progress reviews will ensure that business ideas are implemented according to the planned schedule, in the intended scope and quality, and that challenges are addressed in time.

The recipients of the grants will have to present their ideas/circular business models in several high schools and youth centres to inspire and engage young people in the circular economy. In 2025, the recipients will attend two events: one during the Global Entrepreneurship Week and one circular economy ecosystem meet-up in Skopje.

11. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND RESPONSE MECHANISM (CFRM)

We value your feedback, concerns, and suggestions about our project, including grant procedures and accountability measures. To ensure we hear and address your concerns so we can improve our processes and maintain transparency we have set the Community Feedback and Response Mechanism (CFRM) in place. If you have concerns about the selection of Academy's participants or grantees, or feel you have been unfairly treated, please contact us via phone at +389 2 3109 905 or email at feedback.balkans@peopleinneed.net.