



Annual Activity Report

HEKS/EPER Romania

2025



About HEKS/EPER Romania

Ever since its foundation in December 2015, the HEKS/EPER Romania Foundation has had as its mission to provide support to individuals and communities experiencing economic and social challenges. Founded by Swiss Church Aid HEKS/EPER (Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz), HEKS/EPER Romania caters to marginalized and vulnerable groups both within Romanian society and in the international community.

HEKS/EPER Romania's projects have reached **5,1** million people in Romania, Ukraine, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to date.

Background

HEKS/EPER Switzerland has been present in Romania since 1977, when it undertook a series of humanitarian actions in support of the earthquake victims. Since 1989, HEKS/EPER has maintained its operational presence by providing ongoing support to communities within Romania. In its early stages, the HEKS/EPER program in Romania focused on humanitarian aid (1990-1991), then rural development (1992-2007), and later on the development of social services (1990-present), including the inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups. The opening of a Country Office in Romania, Cluj-Napoca, marked a new stage and confirmed the commitment of HEKS/EPER in Romania.

Milestones

HEKS/EPER Romania has been operational in the field of **Development Cooperation** since **2016**. In **2018**, the organization was accredited as a **provider of employment services, including information, counseling, and job mediation**, and in 2019, implemented its first project funded by the European Union. Between 2020 and 2021, HEKS/EPER Romania further expanded its Development Cooperation activities through two projects funded by Norway Grants and one by EU funds for Romania, leading to an increase in team capacity.

From 2021 to 2022, it expanded its operations to include the **Humanitarian Aid (HA)** field, which marked the establishment of the HA department. A key milestone in the development of the Humanitarian Aid Department was the establishment of the **Ukraine Response** sub-department in 2022, following the large-scale invasion of Ukraine. This allowed HEKS/EPER Romania to support both refugees in Romania and internally displaced persons in Ukraine, marking a strategic expansion of its humanitarian operations and cross-border response capacity.

In 2024, the organization was accredited as a training provider for career counseling, further strengthening its support services for vulnerable groups.

Aiming to expand and enhance its potential as a humanitarian actor, HEKS/EPER Romania obtained the **DG ECHO** (Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) **certification** and became the **first Romanian NGO accredited in the 2021-2027 FPA** (Framework Partnership Agreement). This partnership certifies that the organization based in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, is in line with EU and international standards for implementing humanitarian aid projects. It also confirms that the organization is eligible to apply for and receive funding during the 2021-2027 programming period.

Vision

Our guiding vision is that of a just and peaceful world, where every individual's dignity, as well as the natural resources from which people earn their livelihoods, are respected.

Values

Universal human rights and Christian values are central to our activities.

- **Respect:** We respect both people and the environment and we take responsibility for our actions, so that future generations can also live with dignity.
- **Love your neighbor:** We work closely with people and are committed to helping those in need, regardless of their background, their religion or gender.
- **Inclusion:** We are committed to ensuring that people are aware of their rights, can assert them, and can actively take part in decisions that affect them and their implementation.
- **Transparency:** We communicate sincerely, transparently, and clearly about our activities and how we use the funds made available to us.
- **Impact:** We help to improve individual living conditions and carefully monitor the impact of our work.

These values form the basis of, and justify, our commitment.

Areas of Activity

HEKS/EPER Romania implements development cooperation projects that aim to reduce poverty and social exclusion while promoting **equal access to education and employment opportunities**. The foundation's initiatives have so far focused on supporting the transition from education to decent work, strengthening vocational education pathways, enhancing career counselling services, promoting local economic initiatives, and fostering civic engagement through participatory environmental and soil-testing activities.

Through its **advocacy work**, HEKS/EPER Romania contributes to improving education and employment policies by developing targeted studies and facilitating dialogue with **local, regional, and national stakeholders**. In 2025, advocacy efforts focused on strengthening the **career counselling and orientation system** and improving **professional and technological education** in Romania, with particular attention to **vulnerable youth and disadvantaged communities**.

In parallel, HEKS/EPER Romania provides **humanitarian assistance to populations affected by armed conflict**. Interventions focus on **improving humanitarian access in hard-to-reach areas** and supporting vulnerable households through **multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA)**. In **eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo**, activities include infrastructure interventions that facilitate humanitarian access and rapid response mechanisms providing emergency cash assistance to displaced populations. In **Romania**, integration activities support **Ukrainian refugees** through employment, financial resilience, and community engagement.

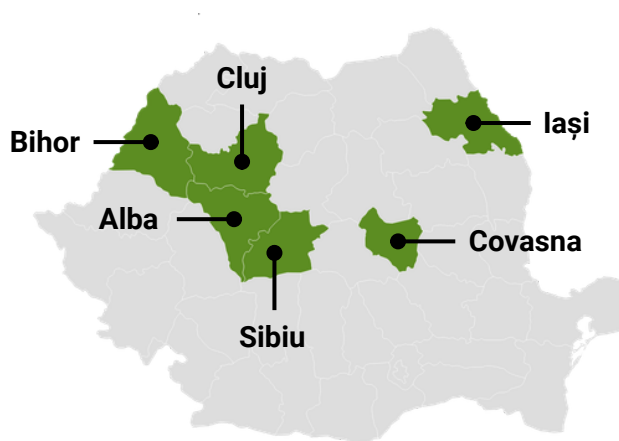
HEKS/EPER Romania Summary for 2025:

- **Six projects** implemented by HEKS/EPER Romania: **3** in development cooperation and **3** in humanitarian aid (1 – Ukraine Response; 2 – Democratic Republic of the Congo).
- **Total number of participants reached: 910,533**
- **Participants by sector:** **472,287** (support to operations, enabling humanitarian access to hard-to-reach areas), **429,549** (multipurpose cash assistance), **3,715** (career counselling), **1,042** (family counselling), **977** (tutoring/remedial education), **974** (company visits), **418** (career counselling day camps), **240** (teachers, school staff and companies' representatives trainings), **401** (integration for Ukrainians activities), **78** (capacity-building activities for farmers).
- **Five position papers** published on career counselling and vocational education reform, contributing to national policy dialogue.
- **Six local working group** meetings organized with education authorities, employers, and civil society representatives to address challenges in vocational education.
- Launch of an **Online Library with resources for career counselling and job mediation** to support future initiatives and knowledge sharing.

Project Region: Countries



Project Region: Counties in Romania



HEKS/EPER Romania Projects in 2025

1. Project 942.403 – Labor-Market Inclusion for Disadvantaged Young Adults in Romania (Phase 2)

Project Period: 01.01.2023 - 31.12.2025

Budget: CHF 1,019,413

Donor: HEKS/EPER Switzerland, Medicor Foundation

Partners: Diakonia Christian Foundation - St. Gheorghe Branch, Alba Iulia Orthodox Philanthropy Association

Location: Covasna and Alba counties, Romania

Launched in January 2023, the second phase of “Labour-market inclusion for disadvantaged young adults in Romania” concluded in 2025, continuing to **improve access to vocational education and employment opportunities for socially disadvantaged youth**, especially from Roma communities. The project focused on supporting the transition from 8th grade to vocational education and strengthening collaboration between employers, schools, and vocational authorities by promoting best practices in **career counselling and job mediation**.

Its **successful completion** was celebrated in December 2025 at the final dissemination event, which also launched an **Online Library** of career counselling and job mediation resources for partner schools to support future projects.

By the end of phase 2, the project had achieved impressive results. The percentage of students continuing education rose from **77% in phase 1** to a high of **96% at the end of phase 2**, showing steady progress each year. **More than 200 school staff** received training in inclusive education. Students who got jobs through the project stayed in their positions longer than those who found work on their own, highlighting the effectiveness of the project’s integrated support approach.

Looking at the **2025 results**, **739 secondary school students** received career counselling and orientation support. Students rated the counselling services highly, with an average satisfaction score of **9.6 out of 10**. In addition, **190 parents** received counselling to support their children’s educational path. To complement these efforts, **510 eighth-grade students** took part in company visits to explore career choices, **282** attended **career counselling day camps**, and **588** received **tutoring in Romanian, Mathematics, and Hungarian** to prepare for national exams.



94 vulnerable girls, including Roma students in grades 5–7, received career counselling, and 68 of their families also got guidance to support their children’s education. As a result, 99% of the girls stayed in school.

At the vocational education level, **570 students from professional schools** participated in counselling and information sessions.

In terms of employment, **18 additional companies** signed collaboration agreements, and **66 students** were employed. The **three-month retention rate** among those employed was **78.91%**, demonstrating a positive level of integration into the workforce. **41 company representatives** received training and **136 professional school students** took part in a day camp.

At the policy level, advocacy efforts conducted in partnership with the Romanian Center for European Policies (CRPE) led to the publication of **five position papers** and participation in a debate at the **Education Committee of the Romanian Parliament**. The initiative also included an **open letter** to the Ministry of Education—**signed by 20 public and private entities**—containing recommendations on technological dual education, as well as **contributions to public consultations** on the **standard per-student funding**.

2. Project 942.424 – From Education to Decent Work – Sibiu County (Phase 2)

Project Period: 01.08.2024 – 31.07.2027

Budget: CHF 1,545,288

Donors: HEKS/EPER Switzerland, Ursula Zindel-Hilti Foundation

Partners: Open Fields Foundation, Sibiu Orthodox Philanthropy Association

Location: Sibiu County, Romania

In August 2024, the second phase of the “From Education to Decent Work” project was launched in Sibiu County, Romania. The phase continues efforts to improve access to decent work for young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, including those from Roma communities. Building on the foundations of the first phase (2021–2024), the new phase has two main objectives: facilitating the transition from 8th grade to vocational education, and strengthening collaboration between employers, job seekers, the County School Inspectorate, and vocational schools to improve the quality of training and increase the employment perspectives for young professional school graduates.

In 2025, the project provided **career counselling and orientation to 812 students** from 13 secondary schools across Sibiu County through group sessions. Additionally, **565 students** received **individual counselling**, while the **families of 401 students** were also counselled. A total of **464 students** participated in **company visits**, exposing them to different career paths and professional environments. In parallel, **389 8th-grade students** participated in **remedial activities** in Romanian and Mathematics.

The project continued to provide targeted support for younger students from vulnerable groups. A total of **360 girls and 353 boys in grades from 4 to 6** benefited from **counselling and educational activities**. The **families of 180 girls and 179 boys** received **counseling as well**.

In professional education, **786 students** from 13 vocational schools received career orientation and counselling services.



25 of them secured employment until December 2025. Capacity-building efforts extended to the teaching personnel as well: **141 school staff members**, including teachers, directors, and counsellors, participated in online and in-person **workshops** covering topics such as student motivation, personal development, and strategies for engaging and supporting vulnerable learners.

In 2025, **two local working groups** meetings were organized, bringing together representatives from the School Inspectorate, partner schools, employers, and the implementing NGOs. Discussions focused on professional **education challenges** — high dropout rates, negative perceptions, and weak student-employer links — and practical solutions, including early career counselling, stronger parental involvement, and better coordination among institutions. All other advocacy activities described under project 942.403 were also implemented within this project, with the two initiatives jointly supporting these efforts.

3. Project 942.425 – Competitive Farmers in GAL Crișul Negru Territory

Project Period: 20.11.2024 – 20.06.2025

Budget: EUR 28,887

Donor: Agency for Financing Rural Investments (AFIR)

Location: Bihor County, Romania



Launched at the end of 2024 and implemented through mid-2025, HEKS/EPER Romania carried out the “Competitive Farmers in GAL Crișul Negru Territory” project in Bihor County, supporting local farmers to strengthen their market position through agricultural cooperation, quality certification, and improved access to financing opportunities. The project addressed structural challenges in the local agri-food sector, with a focus on sustainable integration into local and regional value chains.

The project engaged **78 farmers** from five communes through targeted information and capacity-building activities. A Competitive Farmer Guide was developed and disseminated in **100 copies**, providing practical guidance on cooperative formation, national and European certification schemes, and relevant funding mechanisms. In addition, **three thematic dissemination sessions** were organized, bringing together farmers and

experts for discussions based on concrete local needs.

Learning was further strengthened through a **study visit involving 12 farmers** to two functional agricultural cooperatives and a certified producer, offering direct exposure to successful organizational and market models. In parallel, data on local agricultural and gastronomic heritage was collected through **over 100 responses**, forming the basis for a joint reflection workshop with **19 participants** on future certification and associative initiatives.

By the end of the project, concrete interest had emerged for traditional product certification and the establishment of an agricultural cooperative, laying the groundwork for continued collaboration and follow-up initiatives beyond the project period.

4. Project 942.427– IMMERSED - Ensuring employment sustainability and financial resilience through a multi-layered model of well-being and immersion for Ukrainian Refugees in local communities

Project Period: 16.04.2025– 16.08.2026

Budget: CHF 180.561
(total budget – CHF 796.565)

Donor: European Union (Social Innovation + Initiative)

Partners: Fundacja Innowacja i Wiedza (Poland), People in Peril (Slovakia), CESIE ETS (Italy)

Location: Romania (Cluj, Iași), Poland (Warsaw, Katowice), Slovakia (Žilina, Prešov)

Launched in April 2025, the **IMMERSED** project supports the sustainable employment and financial resilience of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, Poland, and Slovakia. The initiative responds to ongoing challenges related to job stability, financial insecurity, emotional well-being, and social integration in host communities.

Built on a multi-layered model of support, the project combines employment assistance, financial literacy, mental well-being services, and community immersion activities. A key aspect of the project is the transnational partnership and the collaboration with local stakeholders, reflecting the Quadruple Helix model, which includes public institutions, private sector, academia, and civil society organizations.

In 2025, implementation focused primarily on the development of the project's methodologies and learning resources. Experts from all partner countries contributed to the creation of key tools, including the **Employment Sustainability Toolkit**, **Financial Resilience Toolkit**, **Training of Trainers' Manual**, **Self-Educational Toolkit for Mental Well-being**, and the **Employer Booklet**. Following the finalization of these materials, a



dedicated **Training of Trainers** session was delivered to project teams of all partners, ensuring a common understanding of the tools and their future implementation.

In Romania, local engagement activities were piloted in Cluj-Napoca and Iași through **16 events**, reaching a total of **401 participants in 2025**. These interventions aimed to introduce the project's integrated support model, strengthen local stakeholder involvement, and create safe spaces for refugee participation and peer exchange. Activities included **6 dissemination sessions** of project intervention concept and toolkits for Quadruple Helix (**194 participants**), **3 discussion clubs** facilitating community dialogue (**107 participants**), **3 mental well-being activities** for refugees (**44 participants**), **2 stakeholder capacity-building events** (**31 participants**), and **2 mapping of initiatives workshops** designed to identify local opportunities for collaboration and support (**25 participants**).

These activities confirmed the continued need for support among Ukrainian refugees and the importance of coordinated responses. In 2026, the focus will shift toward deeper collaboration between actors to maximize impact with fewer resources.



5. Project 788.411 – Multi-Sectoral Emergency Assistance for the Most Vulnerable Conflict-affected Populations in Hard-to-Reach Regions in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

Project Period: 01.06.2024 – 31.07.2025

Donors: DG ECHO, HEKS/EPER Switzerland

Budget: EUR 10,383,531

Location: North Kivu, South Kivu, and Maniema Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

The project provided emergency assistance to conflict-affected populations in **eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo**, focusing on **hard-to-reach areas** where humanitarian access remains limited. Implementation took place in a volatile context marked by ongoing armed conflict and the **escalation of the M23 crisis in early 2025**, including the capture of the provincial capitals Goma and Bukavu. The closure of airports, banking services, and movement restrictions further complicated humanitarian operations across North Kivu, South Kivu, and Maniema.

Despite these challenges, the project exceeded its operational targets. Through 10 emergency interventions, including clearing muddy sections, deep road depressions, and landslides on routes such as Bwalanda–Somikivu, Busumba–Katuna, and Busumba–Kalengera, HEKS/EPER restored access for **17 humanitarian organizations** and local health authorities, enabling assistance to reach approximately **416,402** vulnerable people (212,365 women and 204,037 men)."



Under the **Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM)** component, the project delivered **multipurpose cash assistance to 60,030 households**, enabling families to cover immediate needs such as food, shelter, and basic supplies, reaching **310,430 individuals** (158,646 women and 151,784 men). The extension of the project allowed HEKS/EPER to expand assistance to additional displaced households, responding to new needs driven by the deteriorating security situation.

Implementation highlighted the importance of **operational flexibility** in a rapidly changing context. Standardized reporting tools and technical evaluation templates were introduced to improve data quality and coordination. Partnerships with local NGOs and community organizations became essential for maintaining access in areas where public institutions had limited operational presence. In parallel, **HEKS/EPER** began strengthening the environmental component of access interventions through reforestation and erosion-control measures linked to road rehabilitation activities.



6. Project 788.421 – Multi-sectoral Humanitarian Assistance for Vulnerable Populations Affected by Armed Conflict in Hard-to-Reach Areas of Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

Project Period: 01.08.2025 – 30.04.2026

Budget: EUR 4,792,585

Donors: European Commission (DG ECHO), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Location: North Kivu, South Kivu, and Maniema Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Continuing HEKS/EPER's humanitarian intervention in eastern **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and building on the operational model and partnerships developed under the previous action, this project supports internally displaced persons, returnees, and vulnerable host communities affected by armed conflict, focusing on improving humanitarian access to hard-to-reach areas while enabling vulnerable households to meet their basic needs.

The project has two main components. The first facilitates the delivery of humanitarian assistance by **restoring access** to isolated areas. The second provides rapid response through **unconditional multipurpose cash assistance** to newly displaced and vulnerable households.

During the first months of implementation (August–December 2025), three infrastructure interventions were completed, including the rehabilitation of the **Mutiri footbridge** in Masisi, repairs to the **Akyabe bridge** in Fizi, and works addressing critical access points along the **Bwiza axis** in Rutshuru, benefiting **55,885 people**.



Through the **Rapid Response Mechanism**, the project provided **multipurpose cash assistance to 22,607 households**, transferring **USD 2,283,482** and reaching **119.119 people**. Assistance focused on areas heavily affected by displacement, including remote zones with limited humanitarian presence.

Early implementation confirmed the relevance of the operational model developed in the previous phase. **Improved alert verification, standardized technical assessments, and revised operating procedures** helped accelerate decision-making and reduce response timelines. In areas affected by shifting governance structures, **partnerships with local NGOs** and community-based organizations proved essential to maintain access and operational continuity.

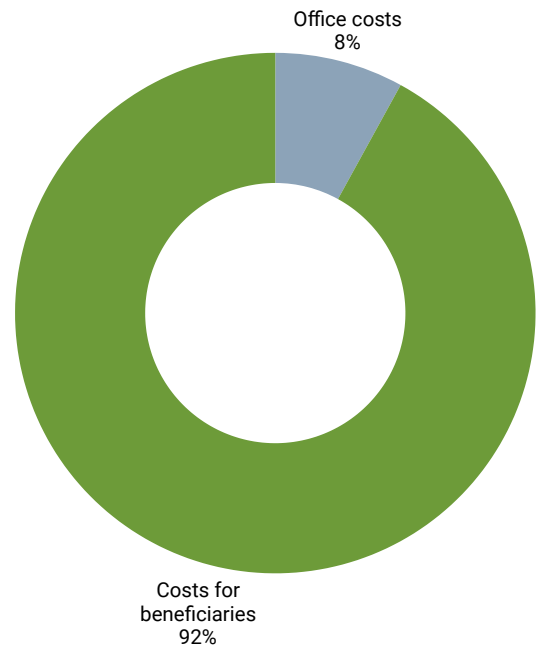
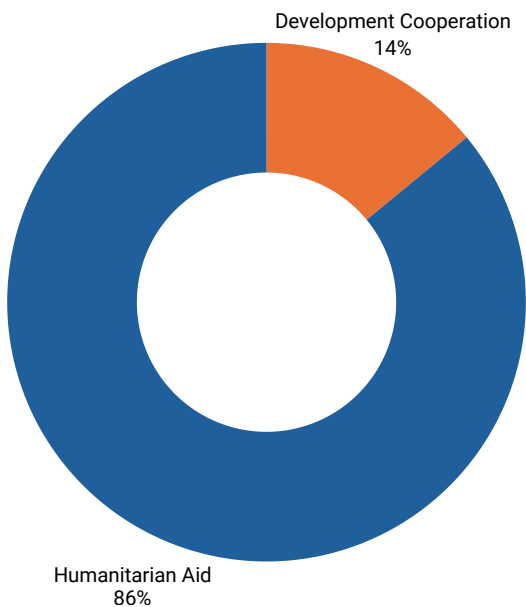
The project also strengthened **logistical and security measures**, including the use of financial service providers for cash transportation and diversification of supply routes. These adjustments improved operational safety and ensured the continuity of assistance in a highly volatile environment.



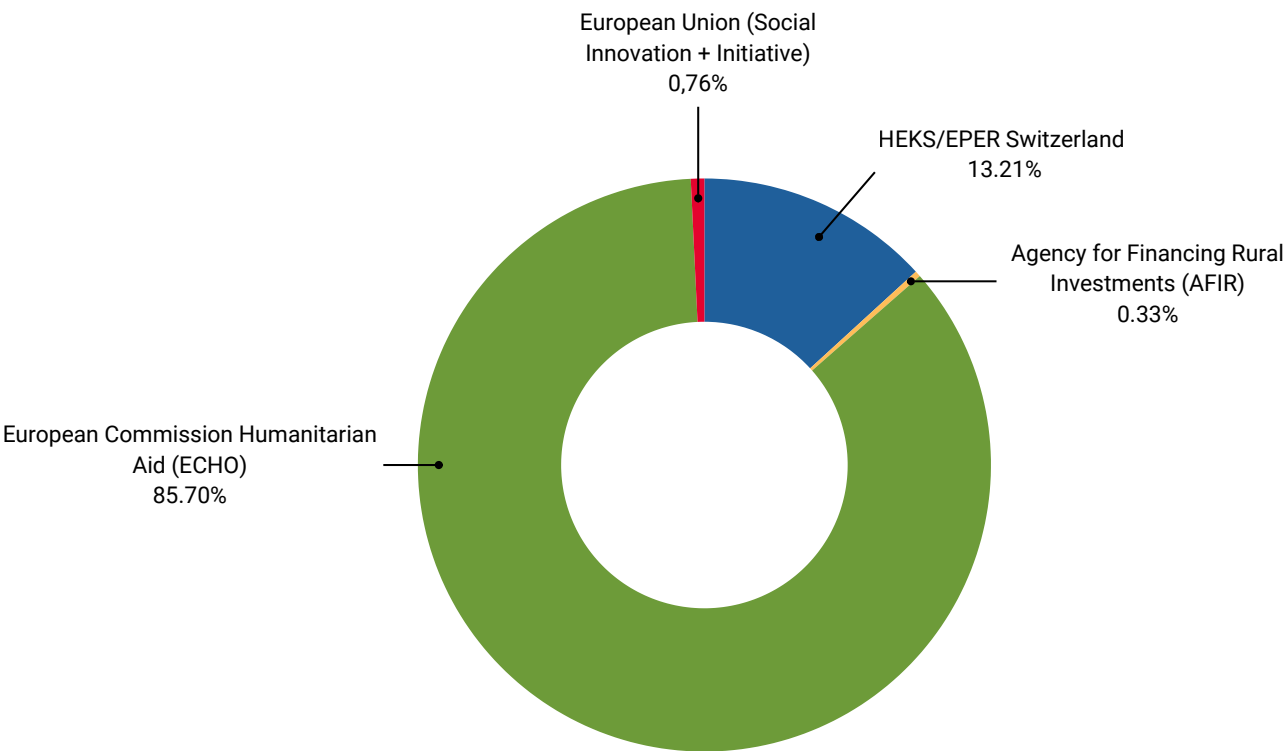
Income and Expense 2025

Total Income: CHF 8,167,901

Total Expenditure: CHF 7,454,651



Donor Overview for 2025



2025

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Thank you!

We warmly thank all of our donors, whether they have given large or small contributions, for their involvement and their trust. We use donations conscientiously and effectively to create a more just and a more humane world.



How You Can Help

You can support our work in Romania and abroad by donating to one of the accounts below, or by redirecting part of your income tax through Form **230** (individuals) or Form **177** (companies).

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Get in Touch

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