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Support to projects of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Montenegro within the project

CSOs in Montenegro - from basic services to policy shapers - M'BASE project

GUIDELINES FOR GRANT APPLICANTS

Deadline for submission of full applications: **13 October 2022 until 16h00**

1. BACKGROUND

The project *CSOs in Montenegro - from basic services to policy shapers - M'BASE*, within which framework the third call for proposals of CSOs was published, is implemented by the Centre for Civic Education (CCE), in partnership with the German foundation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), NGO Center for the Protection and Research of Birds (CZIP) and NGO Politikon Network (PIN) from Montenegro, in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of European Affairs of the Government of Montenegro. The project is financed by the European Union and co-financed by the Ministry of Public Administration.

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the recognition by state institutions of an empowered civil society that actively shapes the EU integration process in Montenegro.

The target groups are CSOs, particularly those working outside the capital of Montenegro and in less developed areas, local authorities, institutions, journalists and media professionals, young people, women, etc. The final beneficiaries are the citizens and overall civil society in Montenegro.

Although the EU accession process is led by the state through its institutions, the civil sector has a valuable role to play. The inclusion of civil society, which is also encouraged by the EU, represents an important contribution to strengthening participatory democracy, i.e. enabling the advocacy of the citizens' interests in the processes of shaping public policies and strategies, as well as the enactment of laws regulating issues of public interest. Openness to participation and consultations with citizens strengthens the legitimacy of the EU integration process. However, there is plenty of space for content and qualitative advancements in this area.

One of the obstacles to the more active participation of civil society organizations are also their capacities. This particularly refers to organizations operating in smaller communities, thus, only a limited number of CSOs are substantially taking part within working bodies and other forums which influence the creation and implementation of public policies. The authorities generally formally and symbolically recognize the potential and importance of the civil society, thus missing the opportunity to use existing resources and limiting the scope for the development of a functional democracy. Also, deficiencies of systemic mechanisms prevent the activities of the civil society in its full capacity.

Therefore, improvement of the practice of consulting CSOs should be based on better planning and a higher degree of transparency, openness and inclusiveness of institutions to the CSOs' suggestions. On the other hand, more effective participation of CSOs requires capacity building and experience, networking of the organizations, as well as networking and cooperation with institutions. This includes a more stimulating legal and policy framework, reduction of administrative requirements and bureaucratic burdens, but also regulation of financing modalities that would respond to the needs indicated by credible organizations.

The non-governmental sector enjoys a high level of public trust in Montenegro as indicated by the public opinion research¹. At the same time, NGOs are burdened by high expectations from various stakeholders, and often also by a misunderstanding of the framework in which they operate and real possibilities.

¹ http://media.cgo-cce.org/2020/07/ENG_CGO-FES-FF.pdf



Having regard to the foregoing, the project M'BASE will implement five calls for proposals. This call is aimed at encouraging civic activism and direct assistance to the CSOs to participate in the Europeanization and democratization of society through financial support to their projects, strengthening their capacity to successfully implement these activities in accordance with European rules and providing continuous mentoring throughout projects. Therefore, a comprehensive capacity-building programme in project management, strengthening visibility of these project activities and conducting public and advocacy campaigns, as well as monitoring of public institutions at the local and national level, will be provided to supported CSOs.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The overall objective is to strengthen CSOs' capacities to become professional, effective, accountable, independent and visible actors in the country's participatory democracy process.

The specific objectives of this Call for Proposals are:

- Contribution to the advancement of the integration of Montenegro into the EU by empowering the participation of civil society in decision-making processes and implementation of reforms;
- Strengthening partnerships between CSOs, as well as CSOs and local authorities.

3. PRIORITIES, THEMES AND ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The priorities and proposed topics of the projects for this Call for Proposals should be a response to the current challenges in areas important for the democratization and Europeanization of Montenegro.

Within this framework, project proposals should be thematically focused on the following areas:

- Encouraging inclusive and responsible democratic approaches and Europeanization of society;
- Strengthening the rule of law, prevention and fight against corruption;
- Protection and promotion of human rights, especially of the marginalized groups;
- Promotion of gender equality;
- Strengthening support services for the vulnerable groups;
- Environmental protection and advocacy for sustainable development;
- Support to development of civic activism and volunteerism at the local level;
- Improvement of the youth policies and the position of youth;
- Stimulating innovative cultural expressions.

Activities that can be supported by this call within the abovementioned priorities, themes and areas:

- Participation of CSOs in the monitoring of the drafting and implementation of public policies, as well as openness and accountability of institutions;
- Research and analysis with accompanying recommendations and advocacy towards improving public policies and the legislative framework in line with EU standards and best practices;
- Provision of psychosocial, legal and other forms of support, particularly to vulnerable groups;
- Networking and partnerships building within civil society, strengthening existing civil society platforms or coalitions directed towards advocacy for issues related to the content of this call;
- Organization of training events and implementation of training programmes;
- Organization of seminars, conferences, workshops, round tables, etc;

- Publication of reports, leaflets, brochures, manuals, online and other materials;
- Video production;
- Conducting information and public awareness campaigns;
- Development of innovative methodologies and materials in the field of education, digital technologies, etc.;
- Organising cultural events, performances, exhibitions, competitions, etc.
- Initiating discussions on socially important issues in Montenegro through various cultural forms.

Notes: the list of activities is not exhaustive but can serve as a possible guide for interested CSOs in the context of the set objectives, priorities and themes of the call. Mainstreaming of gender dimension within the projects is strongly recommended.

Activities that cannot be supported by this call:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorship for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, etc;
- actions concerning only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or trainings;
- actions concerned only or mainly with study visits or participation in international forums;
- infrastructure projects or projects essentially focused on the purchase of equipment;
- purchase and/or renovation of buildings or offices;
- activities undertaken before signature of the contract;
- actions aimed at making a profit;
- actions related to charitable donations;
- actions discriminating individuals or groups of people on the ground of their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack of them, or ethnic origin;
- actions supporting individual political parties;
- actions already funded by other EU programmes.

4. FINANCIAL ASPECT OF THE CALL

A total of **EUR 550,000** will be allocated through this Call for Proposals.

The amount of funds that can be allocated for an individual project under this call will range from a minimum of EUR 10,000 to a maximum of EUR 60,000.

The allocation of funds will be done through three categories:

	Minimum	Maximum
1st Category	EUR 10,000	EUR 20,000
2nd Category	EUR 20,000	EUR 35,000
3rd Category	EUR 35,000	EUR 60,000

Within the first category it is planned to allocate 100, 000 EUR, within the second 150, 000 EUR and within the second one 300, 000 EUR.

The requested amount of funds within this call can range between a minimum of 70% and a maximum of 100% of eligible costs. The difference between the total cost of the action and the approved amount

within this call, if not 100% supported, must come from funds that are not the budget of the European Union.

The maximum amount of funds provided for staff salaries/fees, office expenses and possible costs of purchasing equipment must not exceed 50% of the total costs of the entire project, whereas the maximum amount for staff salaries/fees is 45%.

Financial reports of the subgrants will be subject of an external audit.

In the case of submission of partnership projects, only one organization - the project lead applicant - will be directly responsible for managing the financial resources of all partner organizations in the project.

This call encourages cooperation with local institutions, but also with other CSOs so that even those organizations that are less developed could get a possibility to be supported through this call².

5. RULES OF THE CALL

5.1. Who can apply?

In order to be eligible for participation in this call, CSOs must meet all criteria as follows:

- be a legal person;
- be non-profit-making;
- be a civil society organisation³;
- be registered in Montenegro⁴ at least 12 months before the deadline for submission of project proposals and that they have their headquarters in Montenegro;
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project.

CSOs which have been supported within the first and second CfP of this programme as lead applicants, and who still did not finalise all contracting obligations linked to the implementation of the project are not eligible to apply for this Call.

5.2. Partnerships / Partners

Partnerships are not mandatory, but they are allowed and advisable.

² The lead applicant and the co-applicants/partners are Beneficiaries of the contract and both have to follow the same eligibility criteria (for instance, a municipality as a co-applicant is not eligible, but it can be an associate, see 5.3.)

³ The EU considers CSOs to include non-State, non-profit making actors operating on an independent and accountable basis which include: non-governmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, organisations representing national and/or ethnic minorities, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations in partner countries, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, women's and youth organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, the media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations, likely to contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the Civil Society Facility (CSF).

⁴ Registered under at least one of the following laws: Law on Non-governmental Organisations, Labour Law, Law on Representation of Trade Unions, Law on the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, Law on Red Cross of Montenegro.

Partners participate in creating project proposals and its implementation. They **use financial resources under the same conditions that apply to the project applicant**. Therefore, partners must meet the **following criteria**:

- be a legal person;
- be non-profit-making;
- be a civil society organisation;
- be registered in Montenegro⁵ at least 12 months prior to the deadline for submission of project proposals and that they have their headquarters in Montenegro;
- have their headquarters in Montenegro.

Information about the project partners should be included in the document 'Partners', which is part of the Application Form.

5.3. Associates

Other organizations, besides the project applicant and the partner, can also be involved in the project implementation. They have the status of "associates". Associates play a role in the project implementation, but they may not receive funding from the grant, except for per diem and travel costs, when applicable. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria that apply to project applicants and partners, i.e. **associates can be public institutions, local governments, representatives of the business community, etc.** Information about the associates should be included in the document 'Associates', which is part of the Application Form.

5.4. Location of the project implementation

Projects have to be implemented in Montenegro.

CSOs are encouraged to cover less developed areas of Montenegro.

5.5. Number of applications per project applicant

Each CSO can participate in this call only once, i.e., either as a project applicant or as a partner.

5.6. Duration of the project implementation

Funds will be allocated for projects implemented within a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 10 months.

5.7. How to apply?

Project proposals should be written in Montenegrin.

Applicants are required to submit a filled **application package**, which consists of:

⁵ Registered under at least one of the following laws: Law on Non-governmental Organisations, Labour Law, Law on Representation of Trade Unions, Law on the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro, Law on Red Cross of Montenegro.

For 1st and 2nd category:

1. application form
2. budget proposal

For 3rd category:

1. application form
2. budget proposal
3. logical framework matrix

in **two** print copies, certified by the seal of the organization and the signature of the authorized person (one original and one copy) and to send an electronic version, which in its content must be identical to the print copy of the application package.

In addition to the application package, project applicants should submit the following supporting **documentation** (one hard copy):

1. copy of the registration of the organization;
2. a copy of the statute of the organization;
3. financial report for 2021 electronically submitted to the Tax Administration.
4. Signed and certified statement that more than half of the members of the governing body of the organization are not members of the political party bodies, public officials, executives, civil servants or state employees.

In the case of a partnership project, it is necessary to submit the same supporting documentation for both the partners and the lead project applicant. For all partners, it is necessary to submit a "Partnership Statement" (*which is part VI of the Application Form*), stamped and signed by an authorized person of the organization with the status of a partner in the project.

The hard copy version of the applications and other documentation required by the call shall be sent exclusively by post, in a sealed envelope, to the address:

Centre for Civic Education (CCE)
Bulevar Svetog Petra Cetinjskog 96 III/6
81 000 Podgorica

with a subject - "Call for support to projects of CSOs in Montenegro - M'BASE".

The electronic version shall be sent exclusively to the email MBASE@cgo-cce.org.

Incomplete project proposals, project proposals submitted in any other way not prescribed by this call, as well as proposals submitted in inappropriate forms shall not be considered.

5.8. Deadline for submission of applications

The deadline for submitting applications (electronic and two print copies) is 13 October 2022 until 4:00 p.m.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

A postmark will be used as confirmation of the date of submission of project proposals for hard copies, as well as the time of sending the email with application.

All applicants will receive a confirmation from the CCE on the receipt of the email with a project proposal.

5.9. Further information about submission of applications

If needed, further information can be obtained by sending questions to MBASE@cgo-cce.org, no later than **25 September 2022**, with email subject reference: **“Call for support to projects of CSOs in Montenegro - M'BASE – question”**. Answers to individual questions will be sent exclusively by e-mail.

Note: To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the CCE cannot give an opinion on the objectives, expected results and activities of the proposed projects, as well as on other elements of the application.

Questions that may be relevant to other project applicants, together with answers and important notes for project applicants, will be published on the CCE website www.cgo-cce.org after the deadline for their submission and the latest seven days before the deadline for sending applications to the Call for Proposal.

6. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

The evaluation of applications will be conducted in **two phases**.

The first phase will include an administrative check of the received documentation and the eligibility criteria.

Projects that pass administration phase will go to the second phase. The second phase involves the evaluation of the applications by the Evaluation Committee, according to the Evaluation Grid presented in the Guidelines for grant applicants.

The proposals that pass this administrative check will be evaluated according to the Evaluation Grid presented below.

Evaluation Grid for Category 1 and 2

Section	Maximum points
1. Relevance of the action	12
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the priorities and objectives defined by the call?	5
1.2 How clearly are the target groups and final beneficiaries defined? To what extent is the project in line with the needs of the target groups?	5
1.3. Is the project based on a robust assessment and analysis of the problem it addresses?	2
2. Objectives and results	5

2.1 Are the objectives and results of the project clearly defined and aligned with the objectives of the call?	5
3. Feasibility of the project and involvement of partners	14
3.1 Are the proposed activities adequate, feasible and in line with the objectives and estimated outputs of the project?	6
3.2 Is the action plan clear and realistic/feasible?	4
3.3 Are the roles of the project partners and associates clearly defined in terms of responsibility for implementation of activities?	2
3.4 Are CSOs outside Podgorica involved as lead applicant or partners?	2
4. Technical and operational capacities of the organization	4
4.1 Does the organization have the capacity for technical and financial project management?	2
4.2 Does the organization have relevant previous experience in the field addressed by the proposed project?	2
5. Sustainability of the project	5
5.1 Does the project have financial, institutional and political sustainability?	5
6. Budget	10
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	4
6.2 Is the ratio between estimated costs and estimated results satisfactory?	6
Maximum total score	50

Evaluation Grid for Category 3

Section	Maximum points
1. Relevance of the action	12
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the priorities and objectives defined by the call?	5
1.2 How clearly are the target groups and final beneficiaries defined? To what extent is the project in line with the needs of the target groups?	5
1.3 Is the project based on a right assessment and analysis of the problem it addresses?	2
2. Objectives and results	4
2.1 2.1 Are the objectives and results of the project clearly defined and aligned with the objectives of the call?	4
3. The feasibility of the project and involvement of partners	15
3.1 Are the proposed activities adequate, feasible and in line with the objectives and estimated outputs of the project?	5
3.2 Is the action plan clear and realistic/feasible?	4

3.3 Does the project proposal include measurable indicators of results?	2
3.4 Are the roles of the project partners and associates clearly defined in terms of responsibility for implementation of activities?	2
3.5 Are CSOs outside Podgorica involved as lead applicant or partners?	2
4. Technical and operational capacities of the organization	4
4.1 Does the organization have the capacity for technical and financial project management?	2
4.2 Does the organization have relevant previous experience in the field addressed by the proposed project?	2
5. Sustainability of the project	5
5.1 Does the project have financial, institutional and political sustainability?	5
6. Budget	10
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	4
6.2 Is the ratio between estimated costs and estimated results satisfactory?	6
Maximum total score	50

Once all the proposals have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached.

The list of supported projects will be published on the website www.cgo-cce.org, as well as on the websites of partner organizations.

7. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CALL

	Date	Time
1. Information sessions	16 September 2022 (Rožaje) 22 September 2022 (Cetinje)	11h00- 13h00 12h00- 14h00
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications about the call	25 September 2022	-
3. Deadline for publication of clarifications	28 September 2022	16h00
4. Deadline for submission of project proposals	13 October 2022	16h00
5. Information to organizations that have passed the administrative check	18 October 2022	-
6. Information to organizations whose projects have been selected for funding	26 October 2022	-
7. Contract signature	31 October 2022	-

Note: This is a provisional timetable of activities, except for the dates indicated in items 2, 3 and 4.

CCE reserves the right to modify the timetable, and the modified timetable will be published on the official website www.cgo-cce.org.