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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: **7 February 2024 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 research<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://media.cgo-cce.org/2020/07/ENG\\_CGO-FES-FF.pdf](http://media.cgo-cce.org/2020/07/ENG_CGO-FES-FF.pdf)



Having regard to the foregoing, the project M'BASE implements five calls for proposals, and this is the concluding one. 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 related to subgranting to other parties;
- 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 185,000** 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 30,000.

The allocation of funds will be done through two categories:

	Minimum	Maximum
<b>1st Category</b>	10,000 EUR	15,000 EUR
<b>2nd Category</b>	15, 000 EUR	30, 000 EUR

Within the first category it is planned to allocate 55, 000 EUR, and within the second 130, 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 EU.



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 call<sup>2</sup>.

## 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 organisation<sup>3</sup>;
- be registered in Montenegro<sup>4</sup> 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 previous CfPs 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.

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**:

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<sup>2</sup> 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.)

<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> 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.



- be a legal person;
- be non-profit-making;
- be a civil society organisation;
- be registered in Montenegro<sup>5</sup> 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 **2** and a maximum of **4 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:

1. application form
2. budget proposal

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.

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<sup>5</sup> 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.



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 2022 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](mailto: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 7 February 2024 until 16h00.**

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](mailto:MBASE@cgo-cce.org), no later than 25 January 2024, 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](http://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

Section	Maximum points
<b>1. Relevance of the action</b>	<b>12</b>
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
<b>2. Objectives and results</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Are the objectives and results of the project clearly defined and aligned with the objectives of the call?	5
<b>3. Feasibility of the project and involvement of partners</b>	<b>14</b>
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
<b>4. Technical and operational capacities of the organization</b>	<b>4</b>
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
<b>5. Sustainability of the project</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1 Does the project have financial, institutional and political sustainability?	5
<b>6. Budget</b>	<b>10</b>
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	4
6.2 Is the ratio between estimated costs and estimated results satisfactory?	6
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>50</b>

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](http://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	24 January 2024 (Podgorica) 25 January 2024 (Kotor)	11h00- 13h00 11h00- 13h00
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications about the call	25 January 2024	-
3. Deadline for publication of clarifications	26 January 2024	16h00
4. Deadline for submission of project proposals	7 February 2024	16h00
5. Information to organizations that have passed the administrative check	9 February 2024	-
6. Information to organizations whose projects have been selected for funding	16 February 2024	-
7. Contract signature	20 February 2024	-
8. Mandatory capacity building programme for subgrantees	Between 21 and 29 February 2024	

**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](http://www.cgo-cce.org).