

Support to projects of civil society organizations (CSOs) in WB within the project
Together For LGBTQI+ Equality

GUIDELINES FOR GRANT APPLICANTS

Deadline for submission of applications:

17 April 2025 until 14h00



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1. BACKGROUND

The project **Together For LGBTQI+ Equality**, within which framework this 1st Call for Proposals of CSOs was published, is implemented by the Centre for Civic Education (CCE/CGO), in partnership ERA – LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, Queer Montenegro, Queer Center Skopje, Tuzla Open Center, Open Mind Spectrum Albania, and Center for Social Group Development from Kosovo.

The project is financed by the European Union, through the *NDICI-Global Europe Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy - 2023 Global Call for Proposals*.

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to an improvement in the lives of LGBTQI+ persons in the Western Balkans (WB) and foster their inclusion in all spheres of public and private life.

The target groups of the project are LGBTQI+ CSOs, LGBTQI+ persons in all six Western Balkans countries – Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, staff members of LGBTQI+ organizations, judicial officials and lawyers. The final beneficiaries are LGBTQI+ communities in 6 WB countries, gaining improved legislation, increased support and heightened awareness within the general population about their position.

The LGBTQI+ community in the Western Balkans faces significant challenges, with international bodies highlighting ongoing discrimination and systemic neglect. ILGA-Europe's 2023 report underscores the lack of public services, forcing NGOs to step in, especially in Albania. Anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric, often framed around child protection, has fuelled discrimination in Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia. Transgender minors face increasing healthcare barriers, while violence at Pride events and hate crimes, including murders, have risen. Far-right groups manipulate sex education topics to incite hostility, exacerbating social divisions. LGBTQI+ individuals, particularly trans people, face housing insecurity, economic hardship, and healthcare discrimination. Regional rankings on LGBTI rights remain low, with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia all struggling with acceptance and legal protections. European Commission reports continue to express serious concerns on this.

Activists and human rights defenders face mounting threats, restrictive laws and shrinking civil society space. LGBTQI+ organizations are prime targets, highlighting the urgent need for action. This initiative aims to address immediate needs while fostering long-term inclusion through education, advocacy and community empowerment. A collaborative regional approach is essential to securing equal rights and dignity for LGBTQI+ individuals across the Western Balkans.

Having regard to the foregoing, the project **Together For LGBTQI+ Equality** will implement two calls for proposals providing financial support to third parties, strengthening their capacity to successfully implement activities in accordance with EU rules and continuous mentoring throughout projects.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The **overall objective** is to promote equality of LGBTIQ persons and their inclusion in all spheres of public and private life, in line with related EU guidelines.

The **specific objectives** of this Call for Proposals are:

- strengthen capacities of civil society, including through advocacy, public awareness raising, alliance building, and strategic litigation to contribute to repealing discriminatory laws, policies, measures and practices against LGBTIQ persons; and to contributing to policy-making in the area of non-discrimination.

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 LGBTIQ+ sector in WB countries. Namely, stand-alone projects addressing issues of discrimination of LGBTIQ+ persons will be funded.

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

- *Legal assistance, policy monitoring and advocacy* – providing legal aid, monitoring policy implementation and advocating for legislative reforms to strengthen protections for LGBTIQ+ persons;
- *Capacity building for LGBTIQ+ CSOs and human rights defenders* – organizing training programmes and strengthening watchdog functions to enhance the effectiveness of LGBTIQ+ organizations in promoting and protecting human rights.
- *Public awareness, education and cultural initiatives* – conducting awareness campaigns, producing educational materials and organizing innovative cultural events to foster societal acceptance and counter misinformation;
- *Healthcare, social inclusion and service evaluation* – monitoring and evaluating public sector services, advocating for improved access to healthcare and social support, and addressing discrimination in key areas like housing and employment;
- *Regional collaboration, networking and knowledge exchange* – establishing cross-border partnerships, facilitating the exchange of best practices, and organizing regional forums to enhance cooperation among stakeholders;
- *Research, monitoring and advocacy for systemic change* – conducting research, publishing policy recommendations and monitoring hate crimes and discrimination to drive evidence-based advocacy and institutional accountability.

Note: Mainstreaming of gender dimension within the projects is strongly recommended.

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

- Participation in monitoring of policy implementation;
- Monitoring and evaluation of services delivered by the public sector;
- Networking and partnership building;
- Gathering and exchange of information, know-how and experience;



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- Organisation of training events and implementation of training programmes;
- Develop or strengthen watchdog functions;
- Organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops, round tables, etc.;
- Research and analysis;
- Education activities;
- Monitoring activities;
- Publications;
- Drafting policy or legislation recommendations;
- Advocacy for the revision of the existing legislation and adoption of the new ones;
- Organising innovative cultural events;
- Production of print and video materials.

Note: 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.

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 sub-granting 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 300,000** 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 15,000** to a maximum of **EUR 30,000**.

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 Call¹.

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;
- be registered in one of the WB countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) at least 12 months before the deadline for submission of project proposals;
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project.

CSOs which have been supported within the NDICI-Global Europe Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy, 2023 Global Call for Proposals, Budget line: 14.020211, Reference: EuropeAid/177407/DH/ACT/Multi 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**:

- be a legal person;
- be non-profit-making;
- be a civil society organisation;
- be registered in one of the WB countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) at least 12 months before the deadline for submission of project proposals;
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project;

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

¹ 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.)

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 one of the WB countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

CSOs are encouraged to cover less developed areas of the respective countries.

5.5. Number of applications per project applicant

Each CSO can participate in this Vall 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 **5** and a maximum of **10 months**.

5.7. How to apply?

Project proposals should be written in English.

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

1. Application form
2. Logical framework matrix
3. Budget proposal

and **documentation** (scanned):

1. Registration of the organization;
2. Statute of the organization;

3. Financial report for 2024 submitted to the relevant tax or related authority of the respective country in which applicant/s are registered;
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 electronic version shall be sent exclusively to the email grants.1@cgo-cce.org with a subject - "CfP for CSOs in WB - Together For LGBTQI+ Equality".

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

5.8. Deadline for submission of applications

The deadline for submitting applications is 17 April 2025 until 14h00.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The time of sending the email with application will be used as confirmation of the date of submission of project proposals.

All applicants will receive a confirmation from the CCE/CGO 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 grants.1@cgo-cce.org, no later than 1 April 2025, with email subject reference: "Call for support to projects of CSOs - LGBTQI+ question". Answers to individual questions will be sent exclusively by e-mail.

Note: To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the CCE/CGO 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/CGO website www.cgo-cce.org, as well as website of the project partners, 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

Section	Maximum points
1. Relevance of the action	12
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the Call? Are the objectives and results of the project aligned with 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, country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)??	5
1.3 Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements?	2
2. Design of the action	8
2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the action? Are the objectives and results of the project clearly defined? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results?	4
2.2. Is the project based on a robust assessment and analysis of the problem it addresses?	2
2.3 Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)?	2
3. Feasibility of the action and involvement of partners	10
3.1 Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results? Are results realistic?	4
3.2 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic?	2
3.3 Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system/Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)?	2
3.4 Are the roles of the project partners and associates clearly defined in terms of responsibility for implementation of activities? Are CSOs outside capitals involved?	2



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4. Technical and operational capacities of the organization	5
4.1 Does the organization have the capacity for technical and financial project management?	3
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?	2
5.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing?	3
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 CfP is reached, with the respect that all countries covered by the project are included.

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	24 March 2025	Online, 12h00
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications about the call	1 April 2025	-
3. Deadline for publication of clarifications	7 April 2025	-
4. Deadline for submission of project proposals	17 April 2025	14h00
5. Information to organizations that have passed the administrative check	18 April 2025	-
6. Information to organizations whose projects have been selected for funding	28 April 2025	
7. Contract signature	5 May 2025	
8. Mandatory capacity building programme for subgrantees	5 – 8 May 2025	

Note: This is a provisional timetable of activities, except for the dates indicated in items 1, 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.