

Main action beneficiary: The Secretariat of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (Le Secrétariat du Comité de Pilotage du forum de la Société Civile du Partenariat Oriental AISBL)

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Guidelines
for re-granting applicants
in call for proposals under the grant agreement
NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/447-885
Support to the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum for enhanced policy
dialogue with civil society

Reference: EAPCSF/SEC006/2025/NP1

Deadline for submission of application: **11 November 2024, 23:59 CET**



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Since its setup in 2009, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) has asserted itself as a key stakeholder in the implementation of the EaP policy, reflecting a unique model of self-organisation of civil society at the regional level. The EaP CSF brings together CSOs from the six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and EU-based CSOs active in the EaP region, providing a platform for experience-sharing and partnership building. The EaP CSF works to make the Eastern Neighbourhood a democratic, prosperous and peaceful region committed to European values and standards, where civil society is an integral part of democratic governance, an active participant in democratic reforms and a source of learning on democratic transition in the wider region. The EaP CSF ensures effective participation of the civil society of the Eastern Partnership and the EU in the process of planning, monitoring and implementing the Eastern Partnership policy in constructive dialogue with the EU and EaP decision-makers, in the direction of the democratic transformation and European integration of the partner states.

The EaP CSF National Platforms are internal stakeholders for the Forum and represent key links to the Forum's constituencies in EaP countries. Following the evaluation of the 2018 – 2020 cycle of funding, the Secretariat of the Forum provided operating grants to its National Platforms for the first time and supported its National Platforms during 2021-2023. For 2024, the EaP CSF National Platforms have been implementing a direct award.

As for 2025-2026, competitive awarding to the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform, EaP CSF Moldovan National Platform, and EaP CSF Ukrainian National Platform is envisaged, and the Action will contribute to further streamlining the work of the National Platforms in the six EaP countries, across the key thematic areas of EU's EaP Work Plan.

1.2. Objectives of the call for proposals

FSTP will be awarded according to the following parameters:

The overall objective is to further build capacities of EaP CSF member CSOs. These include the EaP CSF National Platforms, CSOs working on the five EaP thematic sectors or on other cross-cutting issues and emerging political issues that may have an impact on the EaP.

The specific objectives are:

- To contribute to advancing reforms in the EaP countries, in line with the Eastern Partnership policy framework;



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- To support the effective participation of civil society in policy-making, and enhanced mechanisms of accountability and dialogue between civil society and local, national and regional decision-makers;
- To support projects with regional added value, that facilitate exchanges of experience and best practices, peer-to-peer learning, and coalition- and confidence-building;
- To develop quality, evidence-based policy and advocacy products in support of the EaP CSF's objectives;
- To contribute to closing the feedback loop between the citizens and governments in the EaP countries;
- To promote the relevance of the EaP policy.

1.3. Financial allocation

The overall indicative amount made available under this award decision is 216,600.00 EUR. The beneficiary reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Size of re-grants

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following maximum amounts:

- maximum amount: EUR 38,000 per one year, EUR 76,000 per 2 years (including co-funding).

A minimum 5% of co-financing of the total costs will be requested. Co-financing means that the grant beneficiary has to co-finance part of the cost of the action.

Example: In a project where the estimated total budget is 38,000 EUR, the EaP CSF contribution would be 36,100 EUR and the grantee's contribution would be 1,900 EUR.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call for proposals, in conformity with the applicable rules of the European Commission.

2.1. Eligibility criteria

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

1. the actors:
 - The '**applicant**', i.e. the entity or person submitting the application form (2.1.1);
2. the activities:
 - Type of activities for which the re-grant may be awarded (2.1.2);
3. the costs:
 - Forms of financing and types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (2.1.3).



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2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants

Applicant

(1) In order to be eligible for a grant, the applicant must:

Indicate the relevant criteria with due regard for the objectives of this competitive procedure:

- be a legal person **and**
- member of the EaP CSF and/or national platform **and**
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action, not acting as an intermediary (unless special conditions must be applied due to national requirements) **and**
- for each of the EaP CSF National Platforms of Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine: to have endorsement of the project by the members organisations of the EaP CSF from the respective country – at least ten, in a letter signed by the EaP CSF member organisations. The letter of endorsement must include the following information for each signatory: Name of the organisation - member of the EaP CSF, contact person's name and surname, email address and phone number.

(2) The applicants and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the applicant entities are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of exclusion according¹, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system of the European Commission or the sanctions list, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

In the declaration on honour (see Annex E of these guidelines) included in the re-grant application form, the applicant must declare that himself is not in any of these situations.

If awarded the grant contract, the applicant will become the recipient of the re-grant (grantee).

2.1.2. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Definition

An action is composed of a set of coherent activities built to achieve the results and objectives of the action, as defined in the logical framework (logframe).



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Duration

The initial planned duration of an action may not exceed 24 (twenty-four) months.

Sectors or themes

The Action must relate to the EaP CSF general mission and Strategy for 2022-2030, considering each country context.

Location

Actions must take place in: Eastern Partnership states and EU Member States.

Types of action

Support to the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum for enhanced policy dialogue with civil society.

Types of activity

The project can cover:

- personnel and office costs (rent, maintenance, telephones, internet, photocopies, office supplies, equipment etc) of the Secretariats of the EaP CSF NPs
- costs for carrying out key statutory meetings of the EaP CSF NPs, as well as costs for registration of the changes for the Statutes
- the development of necessary internal regulations, annual plans and strategies (Advocacy Strategy, Communication Strategy, Fundraising Strategy etc) contributing to the goals of the EaP CSF
- the development of EaP CSF NPs' communication channels, website, newsletter, expanding their membership and actively engaging it
- the production of policy and research papers on EaP policies, including monitoring reform implementation
- conducting advocacy meetings and advocacy visits to Brussels
- ensuring gender mainstreaming in the EaP CSF NPs
- carrying out awareness-raising public campaigns, workshops, seminars, roundtables, conferences
- conducting Working Group meetings and covering the activities initiated by Working Groups
- conducting activities jointly with other EaP CSF NPs
- Improvement of self-assessment processes and tools that measure compliance with the Code of Ethical Conduct
- Participation of the representatives of the Secretariats of the EaP CSF National Platforms in the EaP CSF Summits
- other activities that are in line with the mission and strategy of the EaP CSF, considering the country context.

The activities should take into consideration the specific objectives and priorities of the respective EaP CSF National Platforms. These specific objectives include, but are not limited to:



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Georgian National Platform (GNP):

- Activities to support democratisation, civil society, and EU enlargement: focus on electoral reforms, election observation, voter education, democratic backsliding, shrinking civic space, and tackling disinformation.
- Support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and integrate gender as a cross-cutting priority.
- Green energy and environmental policies: prioritise sustainable climate and energy policies, cooperation on projects like the Black Sea cable, and capacity building on energy security.
- Tackling disinformation (particularly through youth-focused webinars) and promote youth engagement.
- Labour and social rights: align with the EU accession process, focusing on labour rights, social protection, unemployment benefits, and gender equality.

Moldovan National Platform (MNP):

- Increased capacity of MNP members across all thematic areas through trainings, study visits, and conferences, both in-person and online.
- Supporting civil society's participation in Moldova's EU integration process.
- Civic space: focus on social cohesion, human security, and European integration.
- Economic and European integration: emphasise the EU single market and regulatory understanding through cross-WG collaboration
- Education, youth, and social entrepreneurship.

Ukrainian National Platform (UNP):

- Considering the UNP strategic documents <http://eap-csf.org.ua/en/about/unp-documents/>:
 - Supporting civil society's participation in:
 - Ukraine - EU enlargement as a critical objective.
 - Post-war green recovery.
- Increased capacity of UNP members across all thematic areas of the WGs.
- Increased joint initiatives for research and advocacy.
- Enhanced internal and external communication to promote UNP members and their work.

Visibility

The applicant must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. As far as possible, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must incorporate information and communication activities designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

The applicant must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing.



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2.1.3. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

The re-grant shall take the forms of reimbursement of costs.

Only eligible costs can be covered by the re-grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for eligible costs.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of the re-grant contract.

The applicants agree that the expenditure verification(s) referred to in the re-grant contract will be carried out by the auditor contracted by the main action beneficiary.

Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed 5% of the estimated total eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the re-grant contract. The applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the re-grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed, no supporting documents need to be provided.

Example of indirect costs may be costs connected with infrastructure and the general operation of the beneficiary and costs such as administrative and financial management, training, legal advice, documentation, IT, maintenance of buildings, water, gas, electricity, insurance, office supplies, communications, human resources, accounting fees, depreciation, telephone bills, travel and other utilities costs, etc.

If any of the applicants is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU, it may not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the action.

Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to the recipients free of charge by a third party. As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for the recipients, they are not eligible costs and cannot be included in the budget.

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the applicants and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union grant;
- purchases of land or buildings;
- currency exchange losses;



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- duties, taxes and charges, including VAT, except when non-recoverable under the relevant national tax legislation
- loans to third parties,
- fines, penalties and expenses of litigation
- contributions in kind,

The evaluation committee and the main action beneficiary shall decide whether to accept the proposed amounts or rates on the basis of the provisional budget submitted by the applicants, by analysing factual data of grants carried out by the applicants or of similar actions.

2.1.4. Ethic clauses and Code of Conduct

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the project beneficiary during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties.

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and sexual abuse:

The European Commission and the EaP CSF apply a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The main action beneficiary and the European Commission reserve the right to suspend or cancel the action financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the



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execution of a re-grant contract. For the purposes of this provision, ‘corrupt practices’ are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded.

d) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The main action beneficiary and the European Commission reserve the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the project beneficiary may refrain from concluding the contract.

e) Whistle-blowing policy

Whistleblowing serves the purpose of shining the light on corruption, as it is a tool to make visibility to that kind of unethical behaviour. Whistle-blowers are acting in the public interest when reporting an activity observed of serious matter and shall be protected face retaliation in the form of harassment, firing, blacklisting, threats and their disclosures are routinely ignored. Confidentiality is therefore crucial and the Secretariat of the EaP CSF ensures them that their identity will be protected, in compliance with the data protection obligations as set out in General Data Protection Regulation (EC) No 2016/679 and Directive (EU) 2019/1937 on the protection of persons who report breaches of the Union law.

For that purpose, any suspicion of fraud or corruption may be notified to the headquarters in Brussels – Pascal Willaumez, Membership and Governance Manager at: pascal.willaumez@eap-csf.eu.

How to apply and the procedures to follow

2.1.5. Applications

The applicants are invited to submit an application by the re-grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A). They should then keep strictly to the format of the re-grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order. Applicants must apply in English.

Please complete the full application form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly. Any error related to the points listed in the checklist of the re-grant application form or any major inconsistency may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is unclear and thus prevents the contracting authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.



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Please note that only the application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework, experience and declaration on honour) will be transmitted to the evaluators. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

The applicant must also submit:

- The statutes or articles of association of the applicant;
- Legal entity sheet (see Annex F of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by the applicants, accompanied by the justifying documents requested there;
- A financial identification form of the applicant conforming to the model attached as Annex G of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be in the country where the lead applicant is established;
- A letter of endorsement in a free form signed by the EaP CSF member organisations (at least ten of the EaP CSF members from the respective country). The letter of endorsement must include the following information for each signatory: Name of the organisation - member of the EaP CSF, contact person's name and surname, email address and phone number.

No additional annexes should be sent.

2.1.6. Where and how to send applications

Electronic submission via email

The full application form must be submitted in electronic format to the following e-mail address at grants@eap-csf.eu. All the files must be included in a compressed file (e.g. *zip* or *rar*).

Applicants must verify that their application is complete, as incomplete applications may be rejected.

2.1.7. Deadline for submission of full applications

The deadline for submission is: **11 November 2024, 23:59, CET.**

2.1.8. Further information about applications

Questions may be sent by e-mail to the following e-mail address grants@eap-csf.eu, clearly indicating the reference of the call for proposals.

2.2. Selection of applications

Applications will be examined by an evaluation committee of the main action beneficiary with the possible assistance of external assessors.



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If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

STEP 1: OPENING AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS

During the administrative check, the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in the re-grant application form. This also includes an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.
- The eligibility of applicants will be verified according to the criteria set out in Section 2.1.

STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION

The applications that pass the opening and administrative checks will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants. They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

The selection criteria help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s operational capacity and the lead applicant's financial capacity and are used to verify that they:

- have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding;
- have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This applies to all applicants.

The award criteria help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives set forth in the guidelines, and to award sub-grants to sub-projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the project beneficiary can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.



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Scoring:

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation grid

Section	Maximum Score
1. Financial and operational capacity	20
1.1 Do the applicants have sufficient in-house experience of project management?	5
1.2 Do the applicants have sufficient in-house management capacity? (Including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.3 Does the applicant have endorsement of their proposal by at least 10 EaP CSF members?	10
2. Relevance	20
2.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives of the call for proposals and the project? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants?	5
2.2 How relevant is the proposal to the particular common needs and constraints of the target region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5
2.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5
2.4 Does the proposal have a real cross-border added value? Does it contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, good practices)?	5
3. Design of the action	15
3.1 How coherent is the design of the action? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)?	5
3.2 Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification? Are the outputs consistent with the needs of the target groups?	5
3.3 Are the outputs likely to contribute to the expected results?	5
4. Implementation approach	15
4.1 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible?	5
4.2 Is the timeline realistic?	5
4.3 Is the co-applicant(s)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	5



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5. Sustainability of the action	15
5.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5
5.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing?	5
5.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable? - Financially (<i>e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs</i>) - Institutionally (<i>will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?</i>) - At policy level (where applicable) (<i>what will be the structural impact of the action – e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods</i>) - Environmentally (if applicable) (<i>will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?</i>)	5
6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	15
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	5
6.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory?	10
Maximum total score	100

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the project beneficiary. It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

- The declaration by the lead applicant will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of applicants will be verified according to the criteria set out in Section 2.1.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals.



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2.3. Submission of supporting documents for provisionally selected applications

An applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the main action beneficiary. The applicant may be requested to supply additional documents. If the additional documents are not provided before the deadline indicated in the request for supporting documents sent to the applicant by the EaP CSF Secretariat, the application may be rejected.

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting unit within the main action beneficiary, which will decide on the award of grants.

2.4. Notification of the decision

2.4.1. Content of the decision

The applicants will be informed in writing of the decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint by sending an email to: Tania Marocchi, Director, at email: tania.marocchi@eap-csf.eu. If amicable resolution is not possible, the applicant may lodge a complaint to the EaP CSF Compliance Committee at complaints@eap-csf.eu.

2.4.2. Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME
1. Launch of the Call for Proposals	23 October 2024	
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the main action beneficiary	30 October 2024	23:59 CET
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the project beneficiary	05 November 2024	
4. Deadline for submission of applications	11 November 2024	23:59 CET
5. Information to applicants on administrative checks and request of submission of documents (Step 1)	By 14 November 2024	
6. Information to applicants on the evaluation of applications (Step 2) and request of supporting documents	By 30 November 2024	
7. Notification of award (after eligibility check) Step 3)	As of 01 December 2024	
8. Contract signature	As of 01 December 2024	



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This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates and may be updated by the main action beneficiary during the procedure. In such cases, the applicants will receive via email the updated timetable.

2.5. Conditions for implementation after the decision to award a grant

Following the decision to award a re-grant, the recipient will be offered a contract based on the standard re-grant contract. By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a re-grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard re-grant contract.

If a Grantee misuses the re-grant in violation of the re-grant contract, the EaP CSF Secretariat reserves the right to withhold the final payment and may demand reimbursement of all or part of the instalments. If the Grantee is unable to deliver project activities or outputs as agreed, they must promptly notify the Secretariat, which will review the expenses and potentially require reimbursement. In cases of negligence, misinformation, or serious misconduct, the Grantee may face sanctions, including ineligibility for future funding cycles or participation in the Financial Support to Third Parties scheme, and exclusion from any activities of the EaP CSF.

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

Documents to be completed

- Annex A: Identification and experience
- Annex B: Description of the Action
- Annex C: Logical Framework
- Annex D: Budget (*Excel format*)
- Annex E: Declaration on honour
- Annex F: Self-evaluation questionnaire on sexual abuse and harassment
- Annex G: Legal entity sheet
- Annex H: Financial identification form



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