



CALL FOR PROPOSALS
EaP CSF RE-GRANTING (FSTP) TO MEMBERS 2023

LOT 3

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Deadline for submission of proposals: *June 12, 2023, 23.59 Brussels time (CET)*

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1. BACKGROUND

In the framework of its project *Support to the activities of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum 2021-2023* funded by the European Commission, the Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (hereafter the EaP CSF Secretariat), as the body responsible for the implementation of the *Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)*, is opening this Call for Proposals under the EaP CSF Re-granting to Members programme for 2021-2023. Projects must have a regional dimension and contribute to achieving the mission and strategic objectives of the Forum. This FSTP program is split into three lots:

- Lot 1 – Monitoring EaP deliverables and related reforms
- Lot 2 – Addressing the Forum's strategic and advocacy priorities
- Lot 3 – Strengthening the linkages between the EaP CSF members

This call for proposals is open for Lot 3.

2. OBJECTIVES AND THEMATIC PRIORITIES OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2.1. Objectives

The overall objective of this Call for Proposals is to support the work of the EaP CSF members to develop and deliver on the strategic policy priorities of the Forum within the regional dimension.

The specific objectives are:

- To contribute to advancing reforms in the EaP countries in line with the Eastern Partnership policy framework and the 2021-2025 EaP deliverables roadmap;
- To contribute to the effective participation of civil society in policy-making and to the EaP governments' accountability via enhanced mechanisms of dialogue between the EU and civil society, between the national governments and EaP civil society, and between the EU, national governments and EaP civil society;
- To strengthen the regional dimension and cooperation (namely by project activities with regional added value) by facilitating exchanges of experiences and best practices, peer-to-peer learning, and coalition and confidence building while acknowledging the different paths and contractual relations of the individual partner countries with the EaP initiative;
- To strengthen the role of civil society and the EaP CSF in particular within EaP policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring and oversight by developing quality evidence-based policy and advocacy products supporting the EaP CSF's objectives;
- To contribute to closing the feedback loop between the citizens and governments in the EaP countries.

2.2. Thematic Priorities

There is one thematic lot open under this call for proposals:

LOT 3 - Strengthening the linkages between the EaP CSF members



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Multi-country projects of the Forum's members falling thematically under the scope of the EaP policy framework will be funded under this lot. More specifically, projects focusing on the following areas will be eligible for funding: accountable institutions, rule of law, judicial reforms, tackling corruption and economic crimes, security, civil protection, fight against organised crime and cybercrime, public administration reform, civic engagement, independent media and fact based information, protection of human rights, gender equality, civil society enabling environment, trade and economic integration, transport, energy connectivity, digital transformation – digital infrastructure, e-governance, digital economy and innovation, cybersecurity, environmental and climate resilience, environmental governance, public health, green jobs and green transition, renewable energy and energy efficiency, energy security and nuclear safety, circular economy, waste management, protection of biodiversity.

2.3. Mainstreaming Gender Equality

Following the [EaP CSF gender mainstreaming strategy](#) and the EU principles of gender equality, women's leadership and participation in projects, as well as the coverage of gender aspects in the themes addressed by the projects, is highly encouraged.

3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS

LOT 3 - Strengthening the linkages between the EaP CSF members

Annual grants to consortiums of CSOs, for an implementation period of 4 months.

- maximum amount allocated per year: EUR 100.000
- minimum size of the grant: **EUR 10.000** annually
- maximum size of the grant: **EUR 30.000** annually
- minimum 5% co-financing** is requested

Co-financing means that the grant beneficiary has to co-finance part of the cost of the action. Contribution in kind is NOT permitted.

The grant contract will include the co-financing by the project beneficiaries. The co-financing will be monitored and included in the project accounting, on expenditure and receipts prepared by the beneficiaries, which will be part of the project budget.

Example: In a project where the estimated total budget is 10.000 EUR, the EaP CSF contribution would be 9.500 EUR and the grantee's contribution would be 500 EUR.

4. ELIGIBILITY

Only project proposals complying with the criteria set in articles 4.1. and 4.2. (Pre-selection eligibility check) will be subject to the full selection process.



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4.1. Regional dimension

Any project funded through this Call for Proposals **must** cover at least **three EaP** countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), represented by CSOs acting as lead applicant and/or partners. The CSOs registered in EU member states can act as lead applicant and/or partner given they apply together with three CSOs from three different EaP countries (i.e. 3+1).

4.2. Eligible applicants

In order to be eligible, the **lead applicant and its partners** must:

LOT 3 - Strengthening the linkage between the EaP CSF members

Criteria	Lead Applicant	Partners
Be a legal person	✓	✓
Be non-profit-making	✓	✓
Be a civil society organisation (CSO)	✓	✓
Be established in an EaP or EU country ¹	✓	✓
Be EaP CSF member ²	✓	✓
Be able to receive the grant (funds) on its bank account, provide account statements and have a financial management system in place to ensure clear, timely and adequate reporting procedures.	✓	✓

- A CSO can submit only **one proposal** as the **lead applicant**. A lead applicant may act as a project partner in other proposal(s) within this call.
- An organisation can only be a **lead applicant** under the EaP CSF Re-granting to Members 2021-2023 **once throughout the three-year duration of the program**. This means that member organisations which were lead applicants during EaP CSF regranting calls in 2021 and 2022 cannot apply as lead applicants, but can still be involved as project partners.
- **Individual experts** in the capacity of a natural person can be involved as a **third party**; their participation is welcome but does not establish/substitute compliance with the regional dimension criterion (art. 4.1.)

¹ EaP CSOs operating in one or several EaP countries but registered in an EU member state can thus also apply both as lead applicant and/or as a project partner.

² For the definition of EaP CSF membership please see here: <https://eap-csf.eu/join-us/>





- **Partners.** In principle, the same organisation can be a partner in more than one project, provided that the organisation proves that it has the necessary resources to implement the activities. The Selection Committee will assess this.
- **Members.** Members of the Forum are organisations who have taken part in at least one Annual Assembly or who are members of one of the six National Platforms. Please note that organisations whose representatives have a formal role in EaP CSF bodies (Steering Committee, Working Group Coordinators, Ethics Committee and National Platform Boards) are not considered eligible.

4.3. Eligible actions

An action is composed by a set of project activities.

Duration and implementation period

LOT 3 – Strengthening the linkages between the EaP CSF members: for annual grants the implementation period is maximum 4 months, more specifically between 4 July 2023 and 30 October 2023.

Activities

LOT 3 - Strengthening the linkages between the EaP CSF members

Actions funded under Lot 3 should result in evidence-based policy input and policy advice and/or targeted capacity building based on the peer-to-peer principle on topics falling under the EaP policy framework. The applicants are encouraged to develop proposals that include (but are not limited to) the following activities:

1. data collection, research, analysis, development of policy recommendations, stakeholder outreach (including workshops, seminars, roundtables and conferences);
2. mutual learning partnerships among the EaP CSF members;
3. encouraging linkages among the EU and EaP members, and activities focusing on confidence building.

Project proposals focusing on the potential for further EaP multilateral cooperation in the sphere of **rule of law, security and interconnectivity** are especially encouraged.

Project activities as well as the final project outputs shall demonstrate clear added value within the regional dimension (i.e., not only a collection of individual country actions without joint, comparative or mutual learning elements).

Project activities as well as the final project outputs shall be linked (presented, discussed, used as an expert input) to the work of the EaP CSF Working Groups, EaP CSF National Platforms and the EaP CSF Annual Assembly as much as possible.

4.4. Eligible costs

To be eligible, all costs must be:



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- Indicated in the estimated Budget proposal;
- Incurred during the implementation period;
- Necessary for the implementation of the project activities;
- Identifiable and verifiable - in particular, recorded in the accounting records and supported by financial documents;
- Reasonable, cost-effective, and comply with the principles of sound financial management and applicable tax and social legislation;
- Institutional (only costs incurred by legal entities are considered eligible);

VAT and taxes that have been paid but are not recoverable by the grantees can also be included among eligible costs. Grantees should show evidence that they cannot reclaim VAT. The evidence can be obtained from the national tax authority. Self-certification can be acceptable if duly substantiated. The EaP CSF Secretariat cannot grant VAT/tax exemption.

The following costs shall **not be considered eligible**: debts, provisions for losses and future liabilities, currency exchange losses, costs financed by other funds/donors that qualify as double-funding). As specified under point 3, in-kind and volunteer contributions are not eligible.

5. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Applicants will be excluded from participating in selection procedure if they:

- Fail the pre-selection eligibility check;
- Their (lead organisation or partner) legal representatives are proven to be guilty of grave professional misconduct;
- They or their legal representatives are subject to a conflict of interests.

6. REPORTING, OBLIGATION OF INFORMATION AND VISIBILITY

Following the decision on the awarding of a grant, the lead applicant will sign a grant agreement with the EaP CSF Secretariat, which will specify in detail the reporting requirements. In general terms, the reporting will consist of regular reports in written form in two parts:

- A narrative part, tracking jointly agreed indicators of project implementation and performance;
- A financial part with a detailed list of expenditures, accompanied by supporting documents for subsequent audit purposes.

By signing the grant agreement, the lead applicant will agree to authorise both the EaP CSF Secretariat and the European Commission to exercise their powers of control over project-related documents and proofs of spending. The lead applicant bears the final responsibility for the results





of the project and producing all financial documents submitted to EaP CSF which will be considered under the organisation's annual audit trail.

The lead applicant and project partners must comply with visibility guidelines and guarantee the visibility of EU funding, as well as funding from other participating donors and the EaP CSF, over the course of the project implementation and within the published project results. A detailed visibility guide will be provided as an annex to the grant agreement.

Failure to meet the agreed reporting deadlines, visibility requirements and sufficient quality of the project outputs and results will be sanctioned in line with the conditions stated in the grant agreement.

Personal data is processed by the EaP CSF Secretariat under a contractual lawful basis. The Data Protection Officer for the EaP CSF is the Administrative and Statutory Processes Manager and can be contacted at admin@eap-csf.eu. Details of the EaP CSF privacy policy can be found at <http://eap-csf.eu/eap-csf-privacy-policy>.

7. HOW TO APPLY

7.1 Project proposals

The proposals shall be submitted in English.

In case the applying organisations are not able to submit a proposal in English, a proposal in Russian will be accepted on the condition that the project outputs are delivered also in English in order to ensure wider dissemination and advocacy.

The proposal must be composed of:

- A narrative proposal detailing the action (mandatory use of template in Annex I)
- A budget proposal in EUR (mandatory use of template in Annex II)
- A declaration of honour on the financial eligibility of the lead applicant (mandatory use of template in Annex III)

7.2 Deadline

Proposals must be submitted to applications@eap-csf.eu by **June 12, 2023, 23.59 Brussels time (CET)**.

Incomplete or late applications will be rejected.

7.3 Window for consultations

A window for consultations with the EaP CSF Secretariat (for example on eligibility, project activities and further assistance) is open between **May 15 and June 08, 2023**. Please send your questions via email to applications@eap-csf.eu.



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8 EVALUATION AND SELECTION

8.1. Evaluation and selection process

The evaluation and selection process are organised in three steps:

Step 1: Eligibility check (Administrative Evaluation)

Project proposals will be checked by the EaP CSF Secretariat for compliance with the eligibility criteria stated in articles 4.1. and 4.2. of these Guidelines.

In case a project proposal does not pass the eligibility check, the lead applicant will be informed via email.

Step 2: Evaluation and scoring of the proposals in line with the evaluation grid (Qualitative Evaluation)

A **Selection Committee** will be established for the project proposals submitted under Lot 3. The Selection Committee will be composed of **three external evaluators** selected by the EaP CSF Secretariat (in consultation with the EaP CSF Steering Committee) from respondents to a call for expression of interest. **Two EaP CSF Steering Committee members and a member of the EaP CSF Secretariat** (Policy and Advocacy Manager) will participate in the Selection Committee in an observer capacity. A representative of the European Commission (DG NEAR) might opt in to take part in the Selection Committee in an observer capacity. The observers will not score the project proposals but will review them and take part in the online discussion of the Selection Committee.

Every voting member of the Selection Committee (i.e. the three external evaluators) will score the project proposals in line with the evaluation grid (see 8.2.). The **minimum quality threshold** stands at **65 points out of 100**. Project proposals scoring lower than 65 points will not be considered for funding.

Guidelines on Conflict of Interest (CoI)

The members of the Selection Committee, including observers, will sign a mandatory Conflict of Interest declaration before reviewing and evaluating the project proposals. EaP CSF delegates and members are excluded from taking part in the evaluation process as external evaluators. EaP CSF Steering Committee members cannot apply for funding under the EaP CSF Re-granting to Members programme, in order to enhance the objectivity of the selection and decision-making process.

Step 3: Selection Committee discussion and decision (Approval)

The Selection Committee will take the final grant award decision during a joint online meeting between June 27-28, 2023. The list of selected project proposals will be finalised as well as a reserve list of proposals after validation by the European Commission.



In case the Selection Committee receives two equally good proposals that are similar in nature and content, the Selection Committee reserves the right to contact on the lead applicants to discuss merging the projects.

The Selection Committee reserves the right to present lead applicants with recommendations for changes to the project proposals and to suggest budget modifications. Recommendations and modifications will be discussed between the EaP CSF Secretariat and the lead applicant over the course of a deliberation period before concluding the grant agreement (July 4 – July 10, 2023).

In case the lead applicant declines the funding after the deliberations, a project proposal from the reserve list will be offered funding.

The Selection Committee has the right to exclude a project proposal on the basis stated in the article 5 of these Guidelines.

The final list of selected proposals will be issued and published on the EaP CSF website and communicated via the EaP CSF communication channels on July 4, 2023.

8.2. Evaluation Grid

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

The overall maximum score stands at 100 points.

Section	Maximum Score
1. OPERATIONAL CAPACITY	20
1.1. Do the lead applicant and its partners have sufficient experience with project management (track record)?	
1.2. Do the lead applicants and its partners have sufficient expertise (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)?	
1.3. Do the lead applicant and its partners have sufficient implementation capacity assigned to the project (staff, financial management, ability to handle the budget for the action)?	
1.4. Does the geographical coverage provided by the lead applicant and its partners correspond to the overall aim of the project (experts from other countries needed, etc.)?	
2. RELEVANCE OF THE ACTION	35





2.1. Is the proposal relevant to the specific objectives and thematic priorities of the Call for Proposals?	2*
2.2. Does the proposal demonstrate a clear added value within the regional dimension and respond to the identified beneficiaries' needs?	2*
2.3. Is the mainstreaming of gender equality well reflected in the project design?	
2.4. Is there a direct link to the work of the EaP CSF's WGs and NPs?	2*
3. DESIGN, EFFECTIVENESS AND FEASIBILITY OF THE ACTION	20
3.1. Is the overall design of the project coherent? In particular, does it reflect the analysis of the problems involved?	
3.2. Does the design take into account external factors (risks)? Are the envisaged project risks likely to be mitigated?	
3.3. Are the activities proposed appropriate, realistic, and consistent with the objectives and expected results/outcomes?	
3.4. Is the timetable clear and feasible?	
4. IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY	10
4.1. Is the project likely to deliver a mid- and long-term impact in the envisaged area and a tangible effect for its target groups?	
4.2. Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable? Is the proposal likely to have a multiplier (replication) effect in other contexts or with other beneficiaries?	
5. BUDGET & COST EFFECTIVENESS	15
5.1. Are the proposed activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	
5.2. Is the ratio between the estimated costs and expected results satisfactory (value for money)?	2*

9. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

Action	Date
Deadline for submission of proposals	June 12, 2023, 23.59 Brussels time



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Eligibility check of all proposals	June 12-14, 2023
List of eligible projects issued	June 14, 2023
Evaluation and selection process	June 14 – July 4, 2023
Communication on the selection of 2023 beneficiaries	July 4, 2023
Communication and deliberations with the beneficiaries, signature of the grant agreement	July 4-July 10, 2023
Implementation period	Indicative starting date - July 4, 2023, but ending not later than 30 October

10. ANNEXES

Annex I: Project proposal template

Annex II: Budget proposal template

Annex III: Declaration of honour on financial eligibility of the lead partner



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