

Open Call for Proposals for Medium-sized and Large Grants: Active Citizens Fund of the EEA Grants

*The Active Citizens Fund is a specific programme area within the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The **objective** of the Active Citizens Fund is: “Civil society and active citizenship strengthened, and vulnerable groups empowered”. The Programme will seek to **develop the long-term sustainability and capacity of the civil society sector, strengthening its role in promoting democratic participation, active citizenship and human rights, and empowerment of vulnerable groups.** The Programme is based on the common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.*

The Open Estonia Foundation is announcing an open call for proposals for civil society organisations working in public benefit for initiatives that contribute to the following **Outcomes**:

- 1. Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness**
- 2. Increased support for human rights and equal treatment**
- 3. Vulnerable groups empowered**

Projects focusing on the following five areas are eligible for support*:

- *Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency*
- *Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity*
- *Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups*
- *Gender equality and gender-based violence*
- *Environment and climate change*

* Please see the Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of the ACF Estonia which thematic areas of support are eligible under which Outcomes.

As cross-cutting concerns, the Programme encourages the following across all outcomes:

- Youth inclusion
- Strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the civil society sector
- Outreach to under-served geographic areas and target groups
- Focus on intercultural understanding with special emphasis on national minorities

The programme encourages project applicants to seek to engage the above-mentioned target groups and objectives into project design either by independently reaching out to or by partnering with CSOs that focus on these concerns.

Altogether EUR 1,250,000 is allocated for two types of Strategic Projects:

1. **Medium-size grants** ranging from **30,000 to 60,000** euros in all thematic areas lasting between **18 to 24 months** to allow CSOs to set long-term goals and pursue strategic work in their issue area;
2. **Large grants** ranging from **80,000 to 100,000** euros in all thematic areas lasting between **18 to 24 months** targeted at CSO coalitions¹ allowing the grants to potentially have an impact on a sectoral basis and support sustainability and impact of civil society coalitions.

The following list is non-exhaustive and elaborates on the types of activities that are eligible for support:

- Civic action in shaping public policies and strengthening of democratic practices
- Advocacy, awareness-raising and outreach to citizens
- Watchdog and monitoring, including following up on recommendations of international monitoring bodies
- Citizen activism, volunteering and civic participation
- Participation in policy and decision-making processes, including promoting an enabling environment for civil society
- Support for freedom of expression, investigative journalism and media
- Countering hate speech, including support to networks working with hate crime victims
- Promoting LGBTI rights and anti-discrimination activities
- Capacity building of the civil society sector, including sustainability, networking and accountability of CSOs
- Partnerships between CSOs, public and private sector entities
- Civic education and training
- Research and analysis to inform policy-making
- Social innovation and social enterprise development
- Intercultural dialogue, including platforms for minority/majority interactions
- Inter-generational cooperation
- Awareness-raising and capacity building on environmental issues including climate change and adaptation
- Access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters in accordance with the Aarhus Convention

Partnerships with organisations from donor countries are encouraged and will receive additional scores in the evaluation process.

We specifically welcome projects that increase the engagement of national minority organisations and thus increase **multicultural understanding**; such projects receive additional scores in the evaluation process.

Projects that foster cooperation between CSOs on multiple levels and engage specifically **CSOs working on local level**², receive additional scores in the evaluation process.

To mitigate the effects of restrictions and insecurity caused by COVID-19 pandemic, the grant rate in this particular call is up to 95% of eligible expenditures of the project.

For the same reason, the projects' in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work may constitute up to 100% of the co-financing. The co-financing may be financial, but it is not required.

¹ To qualify for a large grant, the project must be proposed and implemented by at least 3 NGOs.

² In the context of the current call local level CSOs are defined as those working in a certain region.

Co-financing in the form of voluntary work may be provided only by the project promoter and/or any NGO acting as a project partner(s). In the framework of the current call the cost of voluntary work shall be between 4,66 and 11,24 euro depending on the nature of work.

Altogether EUR 1 250 000 is available under the current call for proposals which will be divided between Outcome areas as follows:

Outcome	Amount
Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness	600 000 EUR
Increased support for human rights and equal treatment	410 000 EUR
Vulnerable groups empowered	240 000 EUR

Eligible organisations can submit **one application as (lead) applicant within the call**. There is no limitation as to the number of partnerships any organisation may be involved in as a project partner.

Deadline for submitting proposals is **December 7, 2020**. The application form, along with all required annexes, should be submitted in the Estonian language electronically via e-mail sent to acf@oef.org.ee by 23:59 Estonian time on the date of the deadline of the call.

Detailed information on eligibility criteria and application requirements, application forms the dates and locations of upcoming information days and training opportunities are available at the website of the Active Citizens Fund Estonia at www.acf.ee.

Q&A

Questions should be sent to the OEF no later than five working days before the deadline for the submission of applications. The questions must be sent by email to acf@oef.org.ee indicating in the subject line the organisation's name.

Questions and answers will be published on the Active Citizens Fund Estonia website. No reference will be made to the name of the organisation who submitted the concrete question. It is therefore advisable to consult the website regularly.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the OEF cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants, an action or specific activities.

Additional information:

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*Support to civil society is a key priority for **the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021**, funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway in 15 EU Member States in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics. Ten per cent of the total country allocations is set aside for a programme for civil society in each beneficiary state. The Active Citizens Fund is established under the priority sector 'Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance and Fundamental Rights and Freedoms', one of five priority sectors agreed between the donors and the European Union. The fund shall contribute to the overall objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants, to reduce economic and social disparities, and to strengthen bilateral relations between the beneficiary and donor states.*

The Open Estonia Foundation in consortium with the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations have been appointed as the managing partner of the Active Citizens Fund in Estonia by the Financial Mechanism Office through an open and competitive tender process. Between 2019 and 2023 a total of 3,3 million will be available for the Estonian CSOs through open calls for proposals and other support activities.



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