



Active Citizens Fund – National

Call for sectoral projects

6 May 2020

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A consortium of the Stefan Batory Foundation, the "Shipyard" Centre for Social Innovation and Research Foundation, and the Academy of Civic Organisations Foundation issues a call for sectoral projects in the Active Citizens Fund – National, financed from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.

The expected results of the Programme are listed on the Programme website: https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Rezultaty_EN.pdf. Sectoral projects will contribute to the achievement of Programme's Outcome 4: Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society (organizations and sector). The amount designated for grants in the call for sectoral projects is EUR 5 000 000.

Grants can be applied for in the call according to the following conditions:

- minimum grant: EUR 25 000,
- maximum grant EUR 125 000,
- implementation period: between 12 and 36 months,
- optional co-financing.

Applications can be submitted via the Online Application System available at:

<https://wnioski.aktywniobywatele.org.pl>.

Application timeline:

- project outlines: between 6 May 2020 (from midday) and 30 June 2020 (up until midday),
- detailed projects: between 27 August 2020 (from midday) until 26 October 2020 (up until midday).

ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND – NATIONAL

The Active Citizens Fund – National is one of eleven programmes conducted in Poland from the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (so called the Norwegian Grants and the EEA Grants) and one of two designated to fund activities of civic organisations¹. The Fund aims to strengthen the civic society and active citizenship, and empower vulnerable groups.

In all of the calls for proposals, grants will be made for activities of Polish CSOs – acting individually or in partnership with other organisations from Poland, Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), Beneficiary States that make use of EEA Grants (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary) and countries neighbouring Poland but not belonging to the EEA (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia). In projects

¹ The second program – Active Citizens Fund – Regional is run by a consortium consisting of Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (FSLD), Information Society Development Foundation (ISDF) and Education for Democracy Foundation (EDF). More information: www.aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl.

implemented in partnership with organisations from Donor States, it is possible to apply for an additional amount of grant for the cost of participation of the partner in the project.

The Active Citizens Fund – National will provide support for activities conducted by organisations throughout Poland, but will focus in particular on supporting activities of less experienced organisations, based outside large cities and in areas where access to aid programmes and infrastructure support is limited, and organisations whose activities are directed towards vulnerable and underserved groups. In all programme activities, young people will be a major target group.

In its activities, the Fund subscribes to the universal values specified in the Treaty of EU: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED IN THE CALL FOR SECTORAL PROJECTS

Grants will be awarded for projects aimed to develop the CSO sector and civic movements at nationwide level and in particular regions or subsectors (“branches”). Activities are not eligible if they focus on improving the standing of individual organisations or narrowly defined interest groups, and the benefits and results of the projects must be available for the broadest possible range of groups in the civic sector.

Types of activities supported:

- a) **Provision of services and organising other activities that support capacity building of CSOs and civic movements**, such as providing information, raising awareness, providing consultations and advice, organising internships and sharing know-how, publishing educational materials, and creating and making available infrastructure enabling access to those services (such as websites, platforms, forums, various kinds of shared resources). These activities are intended to improve management of organisations and/or make CSOs more capable of conducting monitoring and advocacy activities. Particular emphasis will be placed on providing support for capacity building in the following areas: raising management standards, communication, finding funding, transparency and accountability of an organisation, monitoring and evaluation, and entering into cooperation and forging partnerships with other organisations and communities. **Priority will be given to funding intended for organisations with a low level of know-how, located in areas where there is limited access to services of this kind or where there is a lower level of civic activeness than in other regions, and to organisations that provide support for people who are disadvantaged and face social and economic hardship.**
- b) **Monitoring of the law**, law enforcement, and public policies established at central, regional, and local level, and at European level as well, that might affect how CSOs and civic movements function (such as tax, personal data protection, right to congregate, accounting, philanthropy, etc.). Monitoring can also be performed for legislative policy and processes, and law enforcement, with respect to particular industries or areas of an organisation's activity.

- c) **Advocating for rights and interests** conducted at central, regional, and local level, and at European level as well, in the form of campaigns and action (including intervention in response to unpredictable, adverse events) or continuous activity that improves the legal, political, economic, and social conditions in which CSOs and civic movements operate (the entire sector or industries in the sector).
- d) **Increasing public awareness of the role and importance of the civic sector and the need to become involved in supporting it** through campaigns, action, and other information-related activities, and awareness-raising and promotional activities aimed at building a positive image of the civic sector, increasing the level of public knowledge of CSOs and how they operate, and promoting philanthropy, voluntary work, or other forms of public support for an organisation's activities. Grants are available for activities at nationwide, regional, or local level, or with respect to industries.
- e) **Research, analyses, opinions, and expert analyses** essential for the proper planning and implementation of the activities described in points a-d, so that they are based on fact, scientific knowledge, and expert know-how. The application must state specific recipients/clients/participants and how the provided information, ideas, and content will be put to use. The research and analyses conducted are intended to address identified needs of CSOs or the expectations they have expressed.

Priority will be given to ventures pursued in the form of a partnership, coalition, network and other forms of cooperation between civic organisations and between organisations and business and/or the public sector. The principle that partnerships and cooperation take priority applies to all of the types of activity mentioned above for which funding is available. Regardless of the particular forms that applicants adopt for cooperation, cooperation of that kind is expected to be based on the principles of reciprocity, solidarity, equality, and participatory management.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Any Applicant seeking a grant for a sectoral project can apply for an additional amount of grant for capacity building, i.e. strengthening and development of an organisation, building stable foundations for further operation, forward-looking plans for activity and financing, and raising working standards and organisation management standards. These activities should contribute to increasing a number of CSO's with improved organizational capacities at least in one of the following areas: management standards and procedures, communication, fundraising, transparency and accountability, monitoring and evaluation.

Activities concerning capacity building should be planned on the basis of needs diagnosis and focus on selected solutions and specific problems that are a major obstacle limiting an organisation's capacity for development. They can also provide support for the process of launching new activities/services, and expanding them to cover new recipients /clients /participants or a new geographical area. Justifying the choice of activities aimed to help in organisation's capacity building, an Applicant should demonstrate how they will help to increase the organisation's capacity for successful and effective implementation of its mission. Capacity building activities can be employed individually by an Applicant or with a help from external specialists.

A list of activities relating to capacity building funded by the Programme can be found in the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual (Chapter 8.).

APPLICANTS

Grants are available for Polish CSOs: associations, including so called ordinary associations, foundations, social cooperatives, non-profit companies, country housewives' associations and faith-based organizations, which:

- have been active for a minimum of 12 months (as at the day the application is submitted);
- can submit financial statements (or a summary of revenue and costs) drawn up for the previous year before signing grant contract;
- are independent of local, regional, and central authorities, public entities, political parties and commercial entities;
- do not operate for profit;
- act for public good;
- are guided in their activities by public interest and democratic values, respect human rights;
- are not the subject to a petition for declaration of bankruptcy, are not in a state of liquidation, are not in receivership, do not have suspended operations, or are not the subject to proceedings of a similar nature;
- are not in arrears with public levies due to a tax office or the Social Security Institution;
- do not have a governing body whose members have been convicted for a premeditated offence ex officio or fiscal offence.

The activities described in the application must be consistent with their statute, by-laws, or other document stating the Applicant's mission, goals, and the manner in which it operates. The activities cannot be religious practice or worship (and this includes proclaiming and spreading faith), political party activities, or election campaigning. Also, grants cannot be designated for running a business or conducting paid activity.

For more information on institutions eligible to apply for grants and the related requirements, please see subchapters 4.1 and 4.2 of the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual.

PARTNERS

Projects can be implemented acting individually or in cooperation with partners. Partners are required to share common goals in the project being implemented, play an active part in preparing for and implementing the project, and contribute knowledge and know-how. The part they play should contribute to the envisaged results being attained with greater success.

The following are eligible to be partners:

- NGOs, public or private entities, commercial or non-commercial in Poland and the other Beneficiary States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary), in Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), or countries neighbouring Poland but not in the EEA (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia)
- International organisations or bodies or agencies thereof
- Informal groups in Poland that act for the public good, are voluntary and non-discriminatory, independent of local, regional, and national government and other public authorities, and are independent of political parties, religious institutions, and commercial organisations.

More information about partnership can be found in subchapters 4.3 and 4.4 of the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual.

GRANT RATE AND CO-FINANCING

In the Active Citizens Fund – National call for projects issued here, it is possible to apply for grants for sectoral projects and additional funding for capacity building and for cooperation with Donor State organisations.

Grant rate

Under the call, grants are available of between EUR 25 000 and EUR 125 000 to finance the project implementation expenses, plus:

- for projects implemented in partnership with an entity/entities from Donor States up to an additional EUR 12 500 for expenses relating to cooperation in the partnership,
- up to an additional EUR 12 500 for capacity building expenses, but no more than 20% of the total sectoral project expenses (including expenses related to the partnership with entities from Donor States, if applicable). The total sectoral project expenses are expenses covered using the grant and co-financing.

Co-financing may be contributed, but is not obligatory. If the planned total costs of the project exceed the amount of the grant, the Applicant must add a co-financing.

Grants will be disbursed in instalments based on the evaluation of the Applicant's financial standing and organisational capacity. The last instalment, of a minimum of 10% of the project, will be disbursed upon approval by the Operator of the final report on implementation of the project.

Grants under the Active Citizens Fund – National are awarded and settled in EUR.

Grants can be used to cover:

- direct expenses – related to implementation of a project and capacity building activities
- indirect expenses – a maximum of 15% of the costs of remuneration of personnel designated to implement the project and capacity building activities.

Information on policies regarding eligibility of expenses, including categories of eligible and ineligible expenses, and the procedure for calculation of indirect expenses, can be found in chapter 13 of the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual.

PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTORAL PROJECTS

Projects can be implemented for between 12 and 36 months. Implementation of projects can commence on 15 January 2021 at the earliest, and conclude on 29 February 2024 at the latest.

LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

An Applicant may only submit one application in the call for sectoral projects, and at the same time can only be a Partner in one project of another applicant.

If a particular entity does not apply for a grant (is not an Applicant), it can be a Partner in two projects submitted in a call for sectoral projects by other entities.

If a particular entity has submitted one application in a call for thematic projects in the Programme, and is not a partner in applications submitted in a call for thematic projects by other entities, it can be an Applicant in a call for sectoral projects or a Partner to another Applicant in that call.

If a particular entity is an Applicant and a Partner in a call for thematic projects, it cannot be an Applicant or a Partner in a call for sectoral projects.

More information regarding limits on the number of applications that can be submitted and the number of grants that can be obtained under the Programme can be found in subchapter 4.5 of the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applications are evaluated and selected in two stages:

1. submission and evaluation of project outlines
2. submission and evaluation of detailed projects

Project outline and detailed project applications can **only** be submitted via the **Online Application System**, which can be accessed at: <https://wnioski.aktywniobywatele.org.pl>.

Important! Applications sent by conventional post or e-mail will be disregarded.

The project outline and detailed project forms, with notes on how to fill them in, can be found on the Programme website at <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/konkurs-na-projekty-sektorowe/>.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Project outlines

- Project outlines can be submitted from 6 May 2020 (from midday) to 30 June 2020 (up until midday).
- A decision will be made accepting a project for the detailed project submission stage by 25 August 2020.

Detailed projects

- Detailed projects can be submitted from 27 August 2020 (from midday) to 26 October 2020 (up until midday).
- A decision concerning awarding of grants will be made by 5 January 2021.

APPLICATION EVALUATION PROCEDURE

In sectoral projects, there is a dual-stage application evaluation procedure. In stage I, Applicants submit **project outlines**. Applicants whose projects are approved for stage II submit **detailed projects**.

During both stages, applications are examined on the basis of fulfilling formal and administrative criteria and content-related criteria.

Administrative and eligibility assessment

In stage I (project outlines) it is determined whether:

- the Applicant is eligible for a grant under the Active Citizens Fund – National,
- the Applicant has filled in all boxes in the application form correctly,
- the Applicant has submitted more than one application or are partners in more applications than permitted in the Programme.
- Project partner/s have declared participation in more projects than is permitted in the Programme.

During phase II (detailed projects) it is determined whether:

- the Applicant is eligible for a grant under the Active Citizens Fund – National,
- the Applicant filled in all boxes on the form correctly,
- the Applicant has submitted a number of applications or are a partner in a number of applications exceeding the number permitted in the Programme
- the Applicant has submitted Communication Plan
- a partner declaration specifying their role and duties in implementation of the project has been attached

- Project partner/s have declared participation in more projects than permitted in the Programme
- the Applicant has increased the amount of the grant being sought.

In both stages of the evaluation, an Applicant's eligibility will be verified on the basis of the declarations made in the application.

Templates for the project outline and detailed project administrative and eligibility assessment sheet can be found on the Programme website at <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/konkurs-na-projekty-sektorowe/>.

If a minor technical error is made unintentionally on the form, an Applicant has three business days from the date on which the Operator sends notification by e-mail to correct the error. Failure to correct the error within this time limit will result in the application being rejected on administrative grounds.

Procedure for complaints regarding administrative and eligibility assessment

Applicants whose applications are rejected on formal grounds in phase I or II have five business days from the date on which notification of rejection is sent by e-mail to contest the decision (via e-mail skargi@aktywniobywatele.org.pl). Complaints received after this time will be disregarded. Complaints are reviewed by the Operator within ten business days of the date of receipt.

Acceptance or rejection of a complaint regarding administrative and eligibility assessment is decided by the Fund Director.

A list of all applications (whether referred for content-related assessment or rejected on formal grounds) will be posted on the Programme webpage at www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl.

Content-related evaluation

The content-related evaluation process consists of:

- evaluation of each application by independent experts, and – during the detailed project evaluation stage – a discussion at a meeting of experts evaluating applications,
- discussion within the Selection Committee of the rankings drawn up on the basis of evaluations by independent experts, and formulation of a list of grant recommendations for the Executive Board,
- discussion of the Selection Committee recommendations and approval by the Executive Board of the grant list.

The experts evaluate applications, give reasons for the scores they give, and record their scores and reasons in the Online Application System. An Applicant will be able to review the scores and reasons for the score given to their application once the rankings have been published.

All projects will be evaluated by three independent experts. The rankings are formulated according to the average scores awarded by the experts.

During the detailed project evaluation stage, the **Selection Committee** analyses the ranking established on grounds of the expert evaluations, and decides which projects are recommended and not recommended for grants.

The **Executive Board** verifies the project evaluation and selection process in terms of compliance with the applicable rules, goals and procedures under the Programme. The Board makes the final decision regarding awarding of grants. The Board makes decisions based on the list of projects recommended for grants by the Selection Committee.

Templates for the project outline and detailed project content-related evaluation sheet can be found on the Programme website at <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/konkurs-na-projekty-sektorowe/>.

Comments:

- The projects given the highest scores, for which the total grants sought do not exceed 150% of the amount envisaged for allocation in a call, are approved for the detailed project submission stage;
- Capacity building plans are evaluated in the detailed project evaluation stage;
- Grants may be awarded only for projects in which the average expert score is no less than 50% of the total score attainable;
- No complaint procedure is envisaged for content-related evaluation and Executive Board decisions.
- Applicant declarations will be evaluated to ensure they are correct once a grant has been awarded on the basis of the required documents. A list of documents required prior to signing a grant contract can be found in subchapter 11.1 of the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual.

Applicants will be notified of the results of each stage of the call by e-mail, and the rankings and lists of applications for which grants have been awarded and those for which grants have not been awarded will be published on the Programme website at <https://www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl>.

In case of the infringement of the project evaluation procedure, an Applicant is entitled to submit a complaint to the Operator. The procedure for submitting complaints and reporting irregularities in the management of the programme and implementation of projects financed in the programme can be found at <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/o-funduszu/procedura-skargowa/>.

SUPPORT FOR APPLICANTS

The Operator envisages additional support for Applicants during the submission of project outlines as well as submission of detailed projects.

During the project outline preparation stage:

- a webinar will be held about the call for sectoral projects under the Active Citizens Fund – National,
- a webinar on partnership projects will be delivered to applicants,

- a workshop for applicants (how to prepare a project outline) will be organized.

During the detailed project submission stage:

- a webinar will be held about how to draw up a detailed project application,
- a workshop for Applicants will be held in Warsaw,
- an instructional film will be made on how to submit a detailed project,
- two webinars will be held on capacity building,
- useful material for planning capacity building activities will be posted on the Kursodrom e-learning platform,
- a recording will be available of a webinar on preparing a budget and managing finances in projects financed from the Fund.

Support by telephone and e-mail provided by the Programme team will also be available for Applicants. This support will concern procedural and technical issues relating to submitting applications. In addition, there will be a regularly updated 'frequently asked questions' page on the Programme website at <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/faq>.

The *Active Citizens Fund – National Applicant and Project Promoter Manual. Call for Sectoral Projects* and other documents that will be useful when submitting applications: the Online Application System user manual, application forms, and document instructions and templates, can be found at www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl.

CONTACT

If you have any questions or concerns about applying for a grant, please contact the Programme Operator team.

With regard to questions or concerns regarding:

- sectoral projects, national partnerships, or extra funding for capacity building – please contact the team at the Academy of Civic Organisations Foundation by e-mail (aktywniobywatele@faoo.pl) or call the team (+48 507 200 210),
- partnerships with entities from Donor States – please contact the Batory Foundation team (aktywniobywatele@batory.org.pl) or call the team (+48 22 536 02 41).