



Active Citizens Fund – National

First call for thematic projects

10th of February 2020

document update of June 10th, 2020

First call for thematic projects

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

The amount designated for grants for the first call is EUR 10 455 000.

The amounts allocated to particular support areas are:

- Area 1: civic participation in public affairs and social activities: EUR 4 500 000
- Area 2: protection of human rights and equal treatment: EUR 2 985 000
- Area 3: empowerment of vulnerable groups: EUR 2 970 000.

The envisaged results of the Programme and particular areas for which support is provided are listed on the Programme website:

<http://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/en/about-the-fund/results/>

There are two types of grants available in the call for proposals:

Small grants:

- Minimum grant: EUR 5 000
- Maximum grant: EUR 25 000
- Project implementation period: between 8 and 24 months
- **Optional** co-financing

Large grants:

- Minimum grant: EUR 25 000
- Maximum grant: 62 500 euro
- Project implementation period: od 8 do 24 months
- **Optional** co-financing

Applications can be submitted via the Online Application System available at

wnioski.aktywniobywatele.org.pl

Deadlines for applications:

- Project outlines can be submitted between 10 February 2020 (from 15.00 pm CET) and 15 April 2020 (up until 12.00 pm midday CEST).

- Detailed projects can be submitted between 15 June 2020 (from 12.00 pm midday CEST) and 10 August 2020 (until 12.00 pm midday CEST).

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) and countries neighbouring Poland but not belonging to the EEA (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia). In projects 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.

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

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED

Area 1: Civic participation in public affairs and social activities – activities aimed at involving citizens in public life and social activeness, increasing their role in decision-making and formulation of public policies at local, regional, national, or European level, and also raising the quality of public debate.

- a) **Awareness-raising** concerning civic competences and various forms of social activeness and democratic practices, such as civic participation, participation in public debate, voluntary work, work for the community or environment (such as protection of the climate, nature, air, species, soil) social self-organisation, communication that overcomes differences, and a critical approach to use of media,
- b) **Measures that activate** citizens to become involved in neighbourhood, youth and intergenerational initiatives, and other joint activities for the benefit of community or environment,
- c) **Action and campaigns** that encourage involvement in public affairs and social activeness, such as voluntary work, voting, taking part in public debate, and environmental protection,
- d) **Civic participation**: initiating, conducting, and increasing the quality of participation processes; taking action to make public and social institutions more open to citizens; advocacy activities aimed at passing or amending a law, and local, regional, and national public policies concerning active citizenship and citizen awareness and environmental protection,
- e) **Watchdog activities**: monitoring the activities and decisions of public institutions that affect the environment or affect active citizenship, monitoring activities of public officials or persons running for public office; conducting fact-checking to increase the quality of public debate.

Comments:

- Grants cannot be awarded for projects that consist solely of training, debate, or conferences.
- With respect to projects concerning watchdog activities, it is not sufficient to present the effects of monitoring; citizens need to be involved in implementing the resulting recommendations.

Priority will be given to:

- Activities that involve both citizens/residents with the broadest possible range of viewpoints and authorities in collaboration, and lead to development and implementation of joint solutions,
- Activities that lead to communication of citizens in public affairs while overcoming differences between them.

Area 2: Protection of human rights and equal treatment – activities aimed at defending human rights, in particular women's rights, and countering xenophobia, homophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, and any forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, belief, ethnic/national origin, gender or sexual orientation, disability, age, economic status, family situation, or other grounds.

- Awareness-raising** on human rights and equal treatment issues, including training and workshops combined with networking of various professional groups that encounter discriminated groups in their work; equality and anti-discrimination education leading to engagement in specific activities to further human rights and equal rights of men and women; initiatives to counter hate speech, hate-motivated acts and hate-based violence, in particular gender-based violence,
- Social action and campaigns** (including elements of artistic activity) to influence public opinion, encourage a response to manifestations of xenophobia, homophobia, racism, antisemitism, discrimination, and violence (in particular gender-based violence) and promoting attitudes of tolerance and respect for others; awareness-raising (including civic media, for example portals) to disseminate information about discriminated groups and counter prejudice against them,
- Watchdog activities** concerning respect for human rights and the rule of law: monitoring, documenting, and exposing cases of violation of human rights, infringement of the rule of law as well as manifestations of intolerance (xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, racism, antisemitism, etc.) and discrimination in the public sphere and in daily life (hate speech, acts of physical aggression),
- Advocacy** to improve the law and law enforcement: creating partnerships with public institutions at local or central level including all stakeholders to develop and modify a system of protection and support for vulnerable groups; drafting proposals for regulations to provide legal protection for all vulnerable groups; networking of organisations representing minorities and vulnerable groups to collectively influence public policies,

- e) **Intervention** in cases relating to violation of human rights, discrimination, and violence: providing legal and psychological support for persons who experience discrimination and persons who experience violence (including gender-based violence); measures to prosecute perpetrators of hate crimes and of gender-based and domestic violence.

Remarks: Projects that consist solely of training, debate, or conferences will not qualify for grants.

Priority will be given to activities in which the effects of monitoring are used to advocate for changes to the law, practice of law enforcement, intervention, and activities influencing social awareness.

Area 3: Empowerment of vulnerable groups – activities to empower and enable vulnerable groups to become independent, creating a social support network and including vulnerable groups in that network, increasing the scope and form of support for vulnerable groups.

- a) **Community work**, including working with the local community to create a support network for vulnerable groups; measures for inclusion and integration in local communities, schools, etc.,
- b) **Enabling independence and empowerment** of vulnerable persons: organising and promoting various forms of self-help, self-organisation and self-advocacy (support for 'self-advocates'); networking and working with vulnerable persons and their carers to work together towards better access to services and make necessary changes to the system for providing them; promoting the rights of vulnerable persons among and / or by vulnerable persons; inclusion of users of services in their development and audit and in the testing of new solutions; providing support for participation of vulnerable persons in work of a social organisation,
- c) **Promoting voluntary work** with regard to social aid, training voluntary workers to provide aid to the needy (for example the elderly, people with disabilities, the sick); promoting voluntary work among vulnerable persons and giving them the opportunity to do voluntary work and/or an internship,
- d) **Providing consultations and support** for vulnerable persons to enable them to become independent and empower them, aimed in particular at groups that have not benefited from aid of this kind in the past (for example assistance, psychological aid, legal aid, educational activities to improve soft skills),
- e) **Improving the quality of services** for vulnerable groups and raising the

qualifications and skills of people working with them; introducing new working methods and standards for providing services (in public organisations and services).

Comments:

- We do not provide a finite list of vulnerable groups – when an application is submitted, it must be demonstrated in the statement of reasons that the group being the subject of the envisaged activity is vulnerable, i.e. is unable to participate in important aspects of community life for reasons beyond their control.
- We do not provide support for activities that provide material aid.
- Services provision shall only be supported only as part of wider actions addressing awareness-raising, advocacy, empowerment and reform initiatives. The service provided should lead directly to empowerment and strengthening of vulnerable persons.
- Grants cannot be awarded for projects that consist solely of training, debate, or conferences.

Priority will be given to activities that provide training and prepare vulnerable persons to act as “self-advocates” in the community, and to their advocacy activities in defence of rights and interests of vulnerable persons.

Capacity building

Any Applicant seeking a grant for a thematic 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.

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, rural housewives circles, and church legal persons, 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.

Important! Please check whether the Applicant does indeed fulfil the stipulated criteria and requirements. When submitting the application, there is no need to provide documentation to confirm the legal status and abovementioned requirements. We will evaluate applications according to a declaration made by the Applicant. If a Grant is awarded, documentation will be required prior to signing of the agreement. If a declaration made by an Applicant in the application proves to be false, the grant agreement will not be signed. **The Programme team is available to advise and assist in the event of concerns of any kind.**

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:

- a) 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), in Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), or countries neighbouring Poland but not in the EEA (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia)
- b) International organisations or bodies or agencies thereof
- c) 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

Under the Active Citizens Fund – National it is possible to apply for small or large grants for thematic projects. Whether the grant is small or large, we envisage additional funding for capacity building of an organisation and for bilateral cooperation with Donor State organisations.

Small grants: between EUR 5000 and 25 000 for implementation of a project. Additional funding:

- up to EUR 5000 for the costs related to partnership (in case of partnership projects with Donor State organisations)
- up to EUR 5000 for capacity building.

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

Large grants: between EUR 25 001 and 62 500 for implementation of a project. Additional funding:

- up to EUR 12 500 for the costs of partner's participation in the project (in case of partnership projects with Donor State organisations)
- up to EUR 12 500 for capacity building (but no more than 20% of the cost of implementation of the project including co-financing).

Co-financing may be added, but it 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 under the Active Citizens Fund – National **are awarded and settled in EUR.**

Grants will be awarded in instalments based on the assessment of the financial condition of the Applicant. The last instalment in the amount of 5% of the project (small grants) and 10% of the project (large grants), will be disbursed upon approval of the final report on implementation of the project.

Grants can be used to cover:

- direct expenses – related to implementation of a thematic project and capacity building activities
- indirect expenses – a maximum of 15% of the costs of remuneration of personnel hired 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 the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual in chapter 13.

Implementation of projects: between 8 and 24 months. Start date: November 6, 2020. End date: October 31, 2022.

Important!

An organisation may only submit one application in one call for thematic projects, and also may be a partner in one project submitted by a different organisation. If an organisation is not applying for a grant, it may be a partner in two projects submitted by other organisations.

More information can be found in subchapter 4.5 of the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Applications shall be assessed in two stages.

Stage 1: submission and selection of project outlines

Stage 2: submission and selection of detailed project applications.

Project outlines 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.

Project outlines

Project outlines can be submitted between 10 February 2020 (from 3.00 pm CET) and 15 April 2020 (up until 12.00 pm midday CET).

A decision will be made accepting a project for the detailed project submission stage by 15 June 2020.

Detailed projects

Detailed projects can be submitted between 15 June 2020 (from 12.00 pm midday CEST) and 10 August 2020 (until 12.00 pm midday CEST).

A decision concerning awarding of a project will be made by 6 November 2020.

The application form with instructions are available at

<http://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-na-projekty-tematyczne/>

APPLICATION EVALUATION PROCEDURE

In thematic 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 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 changed the thematic area
- 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 declaration made in the application.

The template for the project outline and detailed project administrative and eligibility assessment sheet can be found at aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-na-projekty-tematyczne/

If a minor error is made on the form, an Applicant has three business days from the date on which the Operator sends the 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 formal 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). 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 Assessment

Content-related assessment 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 in each area for which funding is provided,
- discussion within the Selection Committee of the rankings drawn up on the basis of evaluations by independent experts, and formulation of lists of grant recommendations for the Executive Board,
- discussion of the Selection Committee recommendations and approval by the Executive Board of the grant lists.

Applications will be evaluated separately for each area in which funding is provided, divided into large and small grants pools. The experts evaluate applications, justify the scores they give and record their scores and justifications in the Online Application System. An Applicant will be able to review the scores and justifications for the score given to their application once the ranking has been published.

Small grants will be evaluated by two independent experts. If the scores given by the two experts differ by more than 30% of the higher score, and at least one of the scores is more than 50% of the total score attainable, the application is evaluated by a third expert. The ranking is formulated according to the average of the two closest scores, or – if the differences between the scores are the same – the average of the two highest scores.

Large grants will be evaluated by three independent experts. The ranking is formulated according to the average of all three scores awarded by the experts.

Two ranking lists – separately for large and small grants – are formulated according to scores given by experts in each of the support areas.

During the detailed project evaluation phase, the **Selection Committee** analyses the rankings established on grounds of the experts' assessment and makes a final decision regarding projects recommended and not recommended for grants.

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

The template for the project outline and the detailed project content-related assessment sheet can be found at aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-na-projekty-tematyczne/

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 particular call (separately for large and small grants), are approved for the detailed project submission stage.
- Plans concerning capacity building are evaluated in the detailed project evaluation stage.
- Grants may be awarded only for projects in which an average of experts' scores will be no less than 50% of the total score attainable.
- No complaint procedure is envisaged for content-related assessment 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 grant contract can be found in the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual available in subchapter 11.1.

Applicants will be notified of the results of each stage of the assessment process by e-mail, and the rankings and a list of applications for which grants have been awarded and those for which grants have not been awarded will be published on the Fund's webpage at 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 or to the Financial Mechanism Office in Brussels. 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 www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl

SUPPORT FOR PROJECT 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:

- Eight (8) general workshops will be held for Applicants in the following towns and cities: Opole, Koszalin, Białystok, Zielona Góra, Rzeszów, Ełk, Olsztyn, Kielce
- An instruction film will be made showing how a project outline can be submitted
- A webinar on the programme will be organized

During the detailed project submission stage:

- Five (5) inspirational workshops will be held for Applicants (in Warsaw)
- An instruction film will be made showing how a detailed project can be submitted
- Two (2) webinars will be held regarding planning of capacity building in an organisation
- One (1) workshop will be held for Applicants regarding capacity building
- A webinar will be held regarding preparing a budget and managing finances in projects financed from the programme.

Support will be available to Applicants by telephone and e-mail on a continual basis, and Q&A will be posted on the programme webpage www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl.

On the webpage www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl Applicants can review information and guidelines on developing and submitting applications, including the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual, and the instruction for using the Online Application System. The webpage also has all supporting documents for preparing a project, such as a guide on how to submit applications, evaluation sheets, and document templates.

CONTACT

If you have any questions or concerns regarding application for a grant please contact the Operator team.

If the question or concern relates to:

- Area 1: Civic participation in public affairs and social activities – please contact **The “Shipyard” Centre for Social Innovation and Research Foundation** team at aktywniobywatele@stocznia.org.pl or call +48 22 100 55 94
- Area 2: Protection of human rights and equal treatment – please contact **The Stefan Batory Foundation** team at aktywniobywatele@batory.org.pl or call +48 22 536 02 75, +48 22 536 02 46
- Area 3: Empowerment of vulnerable groups – please contact **The Stefan Batory Foundation** team at aktywniobywatele@batory.org.pl or call +48 22 536 02 51, +48 22 536 02 42
- Partnership with Donor State organisations – please contact **The Stefan Batory Foundation** team at aktywniobywatele@batory.org.pl or call +48 22 536 02 41