



Active Citizens Fund-National

Call for organisational grants

21st of February 2022

Consortium of the Stefan Batory Foundation, the "Shipyard" Foundation and the Academia of Civic Organisations Foundation launches the call for proposals for organisational grants in the Active Citizens Fund – National funded from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.

The grant budget of the call is **2 226 000 EUR**

The planned results of the Programme as well as the results of particular areas of support are listed on the Programme website <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/en/results/> .

Grants sizes:

- Minimum grant: **50 000 EUR**,
- Maximum grant: **100 000 EUR**,

Grant implementation period: between **16 and 20 months**,

Co-financing - facultative

Applications can be submitted via the Online Application System available at www.wnioski.aktywniobywatele.org.pl.

Applications can be submitted between **1 March 2022** (from 12.00 pm midday CET) and **21 April 2022** (up until 12.00 pm midday CEST).

Deadline for announcing the results: **July 2022**

Grants may be used no earlier than **1 September 2022** and must be used by **30 April 2024** at the latest.

The application form with instructions is available on the Programme website <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-na-dotacje-instytucjonalne/>.

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 aim of the Fund is to strengthen the civil society and active citizenship, and empower vulnerable groups.

¹ The second program dedicated to CSOs is - 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 on ACF-R: www.aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl

The Active Citizens Fund – National provides support for activities conducted by organisations throughout Poland.

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

Important! Each Applicant may apply to only one competition: either organized by the Active Citizens Fund - National Fund program or the Active Citizens Fund-Regional.

Organisational grants

Organisational grants will be awarded to CSOs that conduct activity that is important to the entire third sector, its branch or a field in which they operate.

The grants should be used to strengthen organisations in a manner enabling them to fulfil their mission more effectively, on a larger scale and in a longer perspective.

Thanks to the grants organisations should be able to invest in capacity building, strengthen the foundations of their activities, gain financial stability, enhance the scope of their programmes. A single organisation may submit only one application in the call. No partnership projects are accepted. Organisations can apply for an organisational grant even if they have already received grants in previous calls (for thematic or sectoral projects) organised by the Active Citizens Fund-National. Grants may be used for the following:

- a) activities to strengthen and develop an organisation in line with the long-term strategy/action plan adopted by the organisation
- b) ongoing activities consistent with the organisation's mission and with the long-term strategy/action plan adopted by the organisation.

Settlements regarding grants will be based solely on achievement of the planned results (not on the basis of a detailed budget and accounting documentation).

The Project Promoter receives the grant as a lump sum, and therefore there is no requirement to provide evidence of documentation of costs, draw up notes on financial documents, and provide financial reports on the specific expenditures made under the grant. Payments do not depend on the costs actually incurred by the Project Promoter. The costs are considered as incurred within the grant once paid to the Project Promoter.

Grants are disbursed in three instalments:

- advance payment: a maximum of 50% of the amount of the grant when the contract is signed,
- an interim payment once the interim report has been approved,
- a final payment of a minimum of 10% of the amount of the grant once the final report has been approved.

The provisions on eligibility of expenditures stipulated in Manuals for Applicants for Project Promoters of thematic and sectoral projects under the Active Citizens Fund - National shall not apply. There is also no list of eligible, ineligible, and excluded costs. Funds may be used in any way that helps to achieve the expected results. However Project Promoter is obliged to work on the basis of sound financial management that might be verified by Fund Operator through administrative and on-the-spot verification and monitoring.

The Project Promoter must provide an annual statutory audit report by an external auditor at the end of the grant implementation. The report must concern the latest year of the project implementation as well as cover and specifically mention the EEA and Norway Grants contribution.

In case the information provided by the Project Promoter proves evident non-satisfactory performance, or the workplan/strategy is not implemented in line with the principles set in the grant contract, the grant paid to the Project Promoter may be cancelled or reduced proportionately.

The FO and the FMO have the right to commission audits of the entire organisational accounts.

APPLICANTS

Grants are available for Polish CSOs: associations, foundations, unions of associations that meet the following requirements:

- they are a member of a minimum of one of the following groups:
 - 1. infrastructural organisations active on a nationwide level**, i.e. a nationwide organisations acting for the benefit of other CSOs in Poland supporting them with respect to content and technically (for example providing information, knowledge, and opinions on civic activity in Poland, building their capacity to act and capability to act, representing the civic organisation community in watchdog or advocacy activities);
 - 2. nationwide sectoral or cross-sectoral unions of associations** (such as a federation) operating in at least one of the areas for which funding is provided under the Active Citizens Fund – National (citizens' participation in public matters and community activities, protection of human rights and

equal treatment, empowerment of vulnerable groups, supporting development of the civic sector), conducting activities to support their member organisations and influencing national public policy on the issues they deal with;

3. national organisations active in the area of protection of human and civil rights and the rule of law, of which the activities are crucial for the functioning of a democratic country governed by the rule of law and which monitor the legislative process in Poland, the standard of making and enforcing the law, participate in the process of creating nationwide public policy or influence public awareness and attitudes regarding the protection of human rights and the rule of law (for example CSOs that monitor the observance of human rights by public institutions, support groups whose rights are particularly threatened, conduct proceedings before Polish and European courts).

- they are **supported by other organisations and/or informal groups**², and this support is expressed in the form of a minimum of seven letters of recommendation from seven different entities/organisations (including a maximum of two letters of recommendation from informal groups) accompanied by a statement of reasons (indicating the recommended organisation's work product that was beneficial to them, and describing how they view the role of the recommended organisation for the third sector/branch of sector/field in which it operates (a template is provided on the Programme website <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-na-dotacje-instytucjonalne/>),
- their **average income (turnover)** from the last three full fiscal years (2019-2021) is **no less than PLN 300 000**;
- they submit a multi-annual strategy or action plan for development of the entire organisation or one of the key areas of its activity;
- they have been registered for a minimum of five years at the moment they submit the application,
- they have enclosed financial statements and reports on their activity (or a public benefit organisation report) for 2019 and 2020 and a preliminary balance sheet, with a profit and loss statement, for 2021.
- they are able to submit approved financial statements for 2021 before signing a grant agreement,
- are independent of local, regional, and central authorities, public entities, political parties and commercial entities;

² Informal, ad hoc and self-help organisations (including grassroots organisations) that are not registered legal entities in the beneficiary state

- do not operate for profit;
- act for public good, and not only for their members;
- 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 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 entities eligible to apply for grants and the related requirements, please see chapter 4 of the Organisational Grants' 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 require seven letters of recommendation, financial statements, and a report on Applicant's activity (or a public benefit organisation report) for 2019 and 2020 and a preliminary balance sheet, with a profit and loss statement, for 2021.

The applications will be assessed on the basis of 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.

In March 2022 a similar call will be launched for organisations active at a regional level by the Active Citizens Fund - Regional.

Grant

In a call for operational grants organisations can apply for grants of between **EUR 50,000 and 100 000**. Grants under the Active Citizens Fund – National are **awarded and settled in EUR**.

Grants will be awarded in at least three instalments based on the assessment of the financial condition of the Applicant. The last instalment in the amount of 10% of the grant, will be disbursed upon approval of the final report on implementation of the grant.

Project assessment and selection procedure

Applications can only be submitted via the Online Application System, which can be accessed at <https://wnioski.aktywniobywatele.org.pl>.

The applications are to be submitted from midday on **1 March 2022** until midday on **21 April 2022**.

Applications will be assessed in terms of formal requirements and content.

The formal assessment concerns whether:

- the Applicant is eligible to apply (it is a foundation, registered association, or union of associations),
- the Applicant has filled in all the boxes on the form correctly,
- the Applicant was registered in the National Court Register a minimum of five years prior to applying,
- the Applicant has only submitted one application in the call concerning organisational grants,
- the Applicant has submitted seven letters of recommendation (opinions) from the organisations and informal groups with which it collaborates, using the template provided by the Fund Operator (maximum of two letters of recommendation from informal groups);
- the Applicant has enclosed approved financial statements and a report on its activity (or a public benefit organisation report) for 2019 and 2020 and a preliminary balance sheet, with a profit and loss statement, for 2021 (preliminary balance sheet and profit and loss statement means working versions of those documents, to which amendments might still be made, and which do not have to be drawn up or approved as required under the organisation's statute. The working versions are necessary to determine the organisation's income (turnover) for 2021),
- the average income (turnover) of the Applicant in the last three years (2019-2021) is no less than PLN 300 000,

- the Applicant has enclosed a strategy/action plan for the next two years (2022-2023) with the application.
- the Applicant has enclosed the organisation's budget for the next two years (2022-2023),
- the grant being sought does not exceed the stipulated limit.

An Applicant's eligibility will be verified on the basis of the declaration made in the application and enclosed documents.

The template for the administrative and eligibility assessment sheet can be found on the Programme website <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-na-dotacje-instytucjonalne/>.

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 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 of applications

The content-related assessment procedure is as follows:

- each application is assessed by **three independent Experts**,
- **Applicants have individual meetings with all Experts** who assess applications,

- **the Experts meet** to discuss the rankings produced on the basis of the scores given by the independent Experts, and a list is drawn up of recommended grants for the Selection Committee,
- the **Selection Committee** analyses the rankings established on grounds of the experts' assessment and makes a final decision regarding application recommended and not recommended for grants,
- the **Executive Board** verifies the application assessment 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 applications recommended for funding by the Selection Committee.

The template for the application content-related assessment sheet can be found on the Programme website <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-na-dotacje-instytucjonalne/>

Comments:

- The Applicants whose application receive the highest scores (for which the total amount of grants sought does not exceed **125% of the funds allocated** for the call) will qualify for interviews with the Experts.
- Grants may be awarded only for applications in which an average of experts' scores will be **no less than 70%** of the total score attainable.
- No complaint procedure is envisaged for content-related assessment and Executive Board decisions.
- Applicant's declarations will be reviewed 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 the Organisational Grants' Applicant and Project Promoter Manual.

Applicants will be notified of the results of the selection 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 selection 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 grants financed in the programme can be found at www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl

Support for Applicants and Project Promoters

The Fund Operator provides support for Applicants and Project Promoters in the form of:

- Organisational Grants' Applicant and Project Promoter Manual,
- two online or face-to-face meetings (depending on the epidemic situation) for Applicants: on general issues concerning the call and devising and implementing a development strategy, involving people with practical experience in managing an organisation and who have led the process of building and implementing development strategy.

Moreover, the Fund Operator ensures additional support in the form of:

- support of facilitators who will help Applicants update, revise or refine the organisation's development strategy/plan of action,
- support of consultants who will assist Project Promoters in the implementation of the strategy/action plan, for example with respect to evaluation, communicating impact/change, fundraising.

Support will be available to Applicants by telephone and e-mail on an ongoing basis. This support may relate to procedural and technical issues related to the submission of applications. 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 Organisational Grants' Applicant and Project Promoter Manual. The webpage also has all supporting documents for preparing an application, such as an application form with the guidelines, assessment sheets, and document templates as well as instructional videos and recordings of webinars for Applicants.

CONTACT

If you have any questions or concerns regarding application for a grant, please contact the Operator team by writing an e-mail to (ijanikowska@batory.org.pl), or calling (+48 22 536 02 75 or mobile: +48 730 009 820).