



# Active Citizens Fund-National

**The Media for Democracy call for proposals.**

July 6<sup>th</sup> 2022

Consortium of the Shipyard Foundation, Stefan Batory Foundation and the Academia of Civic Organisations Foundation launches the call for proposals Media for democracy, which is a part of the Active Citizens Fund – National. The grants which will be distributed under this call will be funded from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.

The grant budget of the call is: **750 000 EUR**, increased by unused funds from the call for organisational grants.

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: 70 000 EUR,
- Maximum grant: 137 500 EUR,
- Maximum grant for capacity building: 12 500 EUR,
- Grant implementation period: between 10 and 18 months,
- Co-financing: facultative.

The application form with instructions is available on the Programme website

<https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-media-dla-demokracji/>

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

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

**Applications can be submitted: between 14 July 2022** (from 12.00 pm midday CET) **and 5 September 2022** (up until 12.00 pm midday CET)

**Deadline for announcing the results: 31 October 2022**

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

## ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND – NATIONAL

The Active Citizens Fund – National is one of 13 programmes conducted in Poland from the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (EEA and Norway Grants) and one of two designated to fund activities of civic organisations<sup>1</sup>. The aim of the Fund is to strengthen the civil society and active citizenship and empower vulnerable groups.

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.

## SUPPORT AREAS IN THE MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Grants can be used to implement activities aiming at strengthening the media in Poland – particularly local and civic ones – so that they can more comprehensively and more effectively pursue functions that are essential from the perspective of contemporary democracy and protection of the democratic order, namely:

- controlling the government, public institutions, business and other public debate participants;
- creating space for informed exchange of opinions and outlooks on public affairs and institutions representing different viewpoints;
- providing credible and proven information

Grants will be awarded to projects that benefit at least 5 editorials or publishers and/or journalists associated with at least 5 editorials or publishers. This rule applies to each of the projects, so each of the granted projects must reach at least such target group.

Grants can be allocated to:

- a) **activities aiming at strengthening investigative journalism on both local and supralocal level**, including but not limited to forming the assumptions

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<sup>1</sup> 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-Regional: [www.aktywniobywateleregionalny.org.pl](http://www.aktywniobywateleregionalny.org.pl)

behind mechanisms financing investigative journalism across editorial teams and implementing them; developing and functioning of cooperative investigative teams that are to examine jointly selected topics; activating a mentoring programme for young journalists held by experienced investigative journalism experts;

- b) **activities aiming at establishing and strengthening relations (networking) and exchange of experience between journalists, editors and editorial teams**, including but not limited to joint initiatives concerning both content submitted to recipients and solutions optimising the functioning of editorial teams; tool and resource sharing practises;
- c) **educational and developmental activities targeted at the journalist community**, including but not limited to activation of an intern programme for young local and civic media journalists by other editorial teams (also on the central level); training and developmental programmes for young local and civic journalists; training and individual consultancy in the field of media digitalisation and the use of new technologies or legal aspects of journalism,
- d) **advocacy initiatives** aiming at adopting or modifying legal regulations or national public policies on media functioning;
- e) **watchdog and interventional activities**: monitoring activities and decisions made by public institutions that affect media functioning,
- f) **other activities** targeted at a broader circle of local and/or civic media representatives, fostering the above functions essential from the point of view of modern democracy and protection of the democratic order

Projects aiming at creating or supporting relatively sustainable mechanisms fostering cooperation between editorial teams will be treated with priority.

Grants cannot be allocated to:

- ongoing activities of the editorial staff/editors (excepts costs of cooperation between different editorial teams),
- projects made exclusively of debates and conferences.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

Any Applicant seeking a grant for a 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 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**

Foundations, registered associations, or unions of associations registered in Poland that meet the following conditions may apply for the grant:

- they are **supported by other organisations and/or editorial teams** and this support is expressed in the form of a minimum of 3 letters of recommendation from 3 different entities/organisations. Recommendations must feature a justification along with the information on how the outcomes of work provided by the recommended organisations have been utilised by them or how they see the significance of the recommended organisation in the context of strengthening the journalist and the media community (a template is provided on the Programme website)
- they have been registered for a minimum of 12 months at the moment they submit the application,
- 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,
- 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<sup>2</sup>,
- 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. Generally, when submitting the application, there is no need to provide documentation to confirm the legal status and above-mentioned requirements. The letters of recommendation are the only exception. In all other cases 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.

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<sup>2</sup> The possible fact of concluding an instalment arrangement will be recognized by the Operator as no arrears.

The following are eligible to be partners:

- NGOs, public or private entities, commercial or non-commercial, established as a legal entity in either Poland, the other Beneficiary States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) or Ukraine
- NGOs, public or private entities, commercial or non-commercial, established as a legal entity in Norway
- 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 OPTIONAL CO-FINANCING

Applicants can apply for grants ranging from **70 000 to 137 500 EUR** (regardless of whether the project is to be implemented solely by the Applicant or in partnership). **Furthermore, the Applicant** can obtain up to EUR 12 500 for capacity building.

The project grant rate may be up to 100% of eligible expenditure of the project. However, optional co-financing can be provided in the form of cash or as in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work.

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 10% of the project 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 up to 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

**Implementation of projects:** between 10 and 18 months. Start date: 1 November 2022. End date: 30 April 2024.

## LIMIT FOR THE NUMBER OF IMPLEMENTED PROJECTS

Within the 'Media for Democracy' call for proposals, each entitled entity:

- may be a Project Promoter (leader) in one project, and additionally may be a Partner in another project,

or

- may be a Partner in two projects.

An Applicant may apply for a grant in the 'Media for Democracy' call for proposals even if they have already obtained a grant in previous calls (for thematic and sector projects) organised by the Active Citizens Fund – National programme. Participation in an ongoing call for organisational grants also does not exclude Applicants from applying for a grant in the 'Media for Democracy' call.

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

## APPLICATION DEADLINE

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 projects can be submitted between **14 July 2022** (from 12.00 pm midday CET) and **5 September 2022** (up until 12.00 pm midday CET).

A decision concerning awarding of a project will be made **by 31 October 2022**.

The application form with instructions is available at <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-media-dla-demokracji/>



## APPLICATION EVALUATION PROCEDURE

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

### Administrative and eligibility assessment

It is determined 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 has not submitted more applications and / or does not implement and / or is not a partner in a larger number of applications than permitted in the call for proposals
- Project Partner/s have declared participation in more projects than permitted in the call for proposals
- The total grant applied for does not exceed the predefined limit,
- The grant for project implementation does not exceed the predefined limit,
- The grant for capacity building does not exceed the predefined limit,
- the Applicant has submitted Communication Plan
- the Applicant has submitted a Detailed Budget,
- the Application has submitted 3 recommendations (opinions) from entities, prepared according to the Operator's template,
- a Partner declaration specifying their role and duties in implementation of the project has been attached,
- the division of the grant between the Applicant and the Partner (s) (if applicable) does not assume that any Partner will receive a higher amount of funds from the grant than the Applicant.

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

The template for the project administrative and eligibility assessment sheet can be found at <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-media-dla-demokracji/>

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 <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/dla-wnioskodawcow/konkurs-media-dla-demokracji/>

## **CONTENT-RELATED ASSESSMENT**

The content-related assessment procedure is as follows:

- each application is assessed by **three independent Experts**,
- **Applicants** (qualified to that stage) **have individual meetings with all Experts** who assess applications,
- **the Experts meet** to discuss Applicants crucial importance for strengthening civic media and the democratic rule of law in Poland.

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.

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 finals

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-media-dla-demokracji/>

#### Comments:

- Grants may be awarded only for applications 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.
- The Applicants whose application receive the highest scores (for which the total amount of grants sought does not exceed **150% of the funds allocated** for the call) will qualify for interviews with the Experts.
- 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](http://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](http://www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl)

## SUPPORT FOR PROJECT APPLICANTS

The Operator envisages additional support for Applicants during the submission of projects.

During the project preparation stage:

- general information webinar for Applicants about the Program will be organised,
- Applicants will be able to benefit from support in finding a foreign partner and assistance in organizing a meeting initiating cooperation (if they report such a need).

Support will be available to Applicants by telephone and e-mail on a continual basis. This support may relate to procedural and technical issues related to the submission of applications.

On the webpage [www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl](http://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 as well as instructional videos and recording of webinar.

## **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 The Shipyard Foundation team at [aktywniobywatele@stocznia.org.pl](mailto:aktywniobywatele@stocznia.org.pl) or call +48 500 142 994.