



# Active Citizens Fund - National

## The „Stronger Voice“ call for proposals

8 January 2024

The Stefan Batory Foundation, the Academia of Civic Organisations Foundation and the Shipyard Foundation launches the „Stronger voice” call for proposals in the Active Citizens Fund - National funded from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (EEA Grants).

The grant budget of the call is **EUR 200,000**.

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:**

- minimum grant: EUR 5 000,
- maximum grant: EUR 10 000,
- grant implementation period: max from 10 February 2024 to 30 April 2024,
- co-financing: facultative.

The application form with instructions is available on the Programme website for [Applicants/Stronger Voice](#).

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

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

**Applications can be submitted between: 8 January 2024** (from 12.00 pm midday CET) **and 22 January 2024** (up until 12.00 pm midday CEST)

**Deadline for the announcing the results: 13 February 2024.**

The implementation of the project, and therefore the period of use of the grant, can start at the earliest on **13 February 2024** and must end by **30 April 2024 at the latest**.

#### **ABOUT THE 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 (the Norwegian Grants and the EEA 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The second is the Active Citizens Fund - Regional (<https://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.

**The „Stronger voice” call for proposals will reinforce the following outcomes:**

**Outcome 1 Increased citizen participation in civic activities**

**Outcome 2: Increased support for human rights and anti-discriminatory practice**

**Outcome 3: Increased empowerment of vulnerable groups**

**Outcome 4: Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society**

## **TYPES OF ACTIVITIES IN THE „STRONGER VOICE” CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

The grants awarded in the „Stronger voice” call will be used to disseminate in Poland the products developed under the projects financed in the previous calls organised under the Programme - the 1st and 2nd calls for thematic projects and the two calls for sectoral projects.

With the current call for proposal we want to support:

- effective dissemination of information about products (e.g. website resources, handbooks, workshop scenarios, working methods);
- and/or activities to increase the chances of them also being used in other places and by other organisations/institutions.

Grants can be used for:

- a) **individual or group dissemination meetings** (online and face-to-face) to present the products, how to use them and exchange experiences;
- b) **support in the implementation of products** in further contexts/sites (through staff preparation);
- c) **information campaigns** (e.g. on social media) on selected products;
- d) **articles** in the professional media;
- e) **reprints of** publications;
- f) distribution of **profiled mailing, both electronic and traditional**;
- g) **other activities** to disseminate the products and reinforce the results of the projects.

The grant cannot be used for:

- direct application of products (e.g. subsequent activities for beneficiaries or recipients);
- activities not directly aimed at disseminating products and results;
- projects with debates and conferences as their sole element.

The grant can be obtained mainly for dissemination activities of the Project Promoter's "own" products, i.e. those developed under an earlier project carried out by the Project Promoter within the Active Citizens Fund - National. If justified in terms of content, it is also possible to disseminate - in addition to the products of one's own project - the products of other Project Promoters, but this requires their consent at the stage before signing the grant agreement.

## **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:

- are or have been a Project Promoter in one or more of the following competitions carried out under the Active Citizens Fund - National:
  - 1st call for thematic projects;
  - 2nd call for thematic projects;
  - call for sectoral projects;
  - call for sectoral monitoring and advocacy projects.
- their projects selected in the above-mentioned calls are still ongoing or have ended no earlier than 31 December 2022;
- continue to meet the following criteria:
  - are independent of local, regional and central authorities, public entities, political parties and commercial entities,
  - do not operate for profit,
  - act for the public good and not just for their member(s),
  - act in the public interest, respect human rights and are guided in their actions by democratic values, in particular by the universal values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of

law and the protection of human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities,

- 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.
- will be able to submit approved financial statements for 2022 before the grant agreement is signed.

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 entities eligible to apply for a grant and the requirements they must meet, please refer to the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual in subsections 4.1 and 4.2.

**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.

If in any doubt, the Programme team is available to provide advice and assistance.

## **PARTNERS**

Projects may be implemented acting individually or in cooperation with Partner/Partners. Partner(s) are required to share common goals in the project being implemented, play an active part in preparing for and implementing the project,

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<sup>2</sup> Any instalment arrangement will be deemed by the Operator to be in default.

contribute knowledge and know-how and their participation should help to achieve the planned results more effectively.

Partners can be:

- non-governmental organisations, public and private, commercial and non-commercial entities with legal personality from Poland,
- international organisations, their bodies or agencies,
- informal groups from Poland that work for the public good, are voluntary and non-discriminatory, independent of local, regional and national authorities and other public authorities, independent of political parties, religious institutions and commercial entities.

For more information on the entities that can be Partner(s) and the requirements that partnerships must meet, please refer to the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual in subsections 4.3 and 4.4.

## **GRANT AND POSSIBLE CO-FINANCING**

In the „Stronger voice” call for proposals, a project grant of between **EUR 5,000 and EUR 10,000** can be applied for (regardless of whether the project will be implemented by the Applicant alone or in partnership).

The own contribution is not mandatory. It is only required if the planned total costs of the project exceed the grant. The own contribution can be financial and/or non-financial (in the form of work of volunteer(s)).

Grants in the Active Citizens Fund - National **will be awarded and accounted for in euros.**

Grants will be awarded in two instalments determined on the basis of the Applicant's financial standing. The second (final) instalment of at least 5% of the project will be disbursed after the acceptance by the Operator of the final report on project implementation.

The grant can be used to cover:

- direct expenditure - related to the implementation of the project,
- indirect expenses - up to a maximum of 15% of the salary costs of the staff assigned to the project.

Rules on the eligibility of expenditure, including the categories of eligible and ineligible costs and the calculation of indirect costs can be found in the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual in Chapter 13.

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

Projects can last between 2 and 3 months. It can start at the earliest on 1 February 2024 and must be completed by 30 April 2024.

## LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF PROJECTS CARRIED OUT

Under the „Stronger voice“ call for proposals, each eligible entity **can** submit only one application - regardless of whether it is acting as Applicant (leader) or Partner.

For more information on the limits on the **number of applications submitted**, **please refer** to the Applicant and Project Promoter Manual in subsection 4.5.

## DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

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

**Please note that** applications sent by regular mail or email will not be considered.

Applications can be submitted **from 5 January 2024** (from 12.00 pm midday CET) **to 19 January 2024** (up until 12.00 pm midday CET)

A decision on the grant award will be made **by 10 February 2024**.

The application form, together with guidance on how to complete it, can be found on the Programme's website [under Applicants/Stronger Voice](#).

## APPLICATION EVALUATION PROCEDURE

Submitted applications are subject to formal and content-related evaluation.

### Formal assessment of applications

At this stage it is checked whether:

- the applicant is eligible to apply for a grant from the „Stronger voice“ call for proposals in the Active Citizens Fund - National (is registered association, ordinary association, foundation, social cooperative, non-profit company, rural housewives circle, or church legal person and is or has been Project Promoter in either the 1st or 2nd thematic call for thematic projects, the call for sectoral projects or the call for sectoral monitoring and advocacy projects.
- the applicant has correctly completed all fields on the form,
- the applicant has not submitted more than one application,

- the project partner(s) did not declare participation in more projects than allowed by the competition,
- the total grant requested does not exceed the limit set,
- the grant requested for the project does not exceed the limit set,
- the applicant has sent a detailed budget,
- the applicant has sent the Partner(s) declaration(s) specifying his/her role(s) and tasks in the project implementation, if the project is carried out in partnership,
- the distribution of the grant between the Applicant and Partner(s) (if applicable) does not imply that any Partner will receive a higher amount of grant funds than the Applicant.

The Applicant's eligibility will be verified on the basis of the statements made in the application and the documents attached to the application.

A specimen of the formal application evaluation sheet can be found on the Programme website [under the tab for Applicants/Stronger Voice](#).

If a minor error of a technical nature happens during the filling in of the form, Applicants may correct it within 3 working days from the date of the Operator's e-mail notification of the error. Failure to correct the error within this period will result in the rejection of the application for formal reasons.

### **Appeal procedure against formal assessment**

Applicants whose applications have been rejected for formal reasons may, within 5 working days from the date of the Operator's e-mail notification of rejection, appeal against the decision by e-mail. Appeals sent after this deadline will not be considered. Appeals will be considered by the Operator within 10 working days of receipt.

The decision to accept or reject an appeal against the formal assessment is taken by the Programme Director.

Lists of all applications (both those submitted for substantive assessment and those rejected on formal grounds) will be posted on the Programme website [www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl](http://www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl).

### **Content-related assessment of applications**

The content-related assessment process consists of:

- evaluation of each proposal by **two experts**,

- assessment by the third/third expert(s), if one/one of the experts considers the application not to comply with the goals of the Programme and the objectives of the call for proposal, and the other expert(s) considers it to be compliant, or if the difference in the assessments of the experts exceeds 30% of the higher assessment and at the same time at least one of the assessments exceeds 50% of the possible points,
- discussion at the **experts' meeting** on the ranking list drawn up on the basis of the experts' evaluations and the formulation of lists of recommended grants for the Selection Committee,

The expert(s) will assess the applications and justify their assessments by entering them in the Online Application System. The applicant will be able to see the assessment and justification of the assessment of their application after the publication of the ranking lists.

The average of the marks awarded by the expert(s) is taken into account when creating the ranking lists.

**The Selection Committee** reviews the ranking lists established on the basis of the evaluations of the expert(s) and decides on the applications recommended and not recommended for grant award.

**The Programme Committee** verifies the process of evaluation and selection of proposals for compliance with the applicable rules, objectives and procedures of the Programme. The Commission takes the final decision on awarding grants. The basis for the Commission's decision is a list of applications recommended for grants by the Competition Commission.

A template of the application assessment sheet can be found on the Programme website [in the tab for Applicants/Stronger Voice](#).

**Comments:**

- Grants can only be awarded to projects with an average score of no less than 50% of the possible points awarded by the expert(s);
- 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 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](http://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](http://www.aktywniobywatele.org.pl)

## **SUPPORT FOR APPLICANTS**

At the application stage, the Operator provides additional support to Applicants.

An information webinar for Applicants will be held at the application preparation stage.

Support will be available to Applicants by telephone and e-mail on a continual basis. This support can address 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, document templates, and instructional videos.

## **CONTACT**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding application for a grant, please contact the team at the Shipyard Foundation, which is responsible for organising the call. This can be done by email ([aktywniobywatele@stocznia.org.pl](mailto:aktywniobywatele@stocznia.org.pl)) or telephone (+48 500 142 994).