Iceland Liechtenstein Norway **Civil Society** Fund

CIVIL SOCIETY FUND

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS #01 – LARGE PROJECTS

DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND RULE OF LAW STRENGTHENED

The EEA Civil Society Fund is part of Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway's contribution to the 15 European Union (EU) Member States under the European Economic Area (EEA) Grants. The aims of the EEA Grants are to reduce social and economic disparities in the EEA and to strengthen bilateral relations between the Donor States and Beneficiary States.

The Civil Society Fund aims to support a vibrant and resilient civil society protecting and promoting democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF), in consortium with the Bissaya Barreto Foundation (BBF), has been selected as the Fund Operator of the EEA Civil Society Fund in Portugal, following an open and public tender procedure launched for that purpose.

This call targets Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) who wish to contribute to the Civil Society Fund *Outcome 1: "Democratic values and rule of law strengthened",* by implementing initiatives that strengthen civic participation, democratic culture, and information integrity in Portugal.

In the current social and political context, strengthening democratic values and the rule of law has become increasingly relevant in Portugal and across Europe. Declining levels of trust in institutions and between citizens, growing social and political polarisation, low participation in democratic processes, and the persistence of weak participatory mechanisms pose significant challenges to the quality of democratic governance. In Portugal, these challenges are compounded by structural constraints within civil society, including limited capacity for participation and advocacy, low levels of civic engagement, and barriers affecting marginalised groups. At the same time, the rapid spread of disinformation further undermines informed public debate and civic engagement.

In addressing these challenges, the Civil Society Fund deliberately adopts a learning-oriented and risk-tolerant approach, while strictly adhering to the do-no-harm principle. The Fund recognises that meaningful democratic innovation and systemic change often involve uncertainty and experimentation. However, such experimentation is supported only to the extent that it does not cause harm to the communities or end beneficiaries the Fund seeks to serve. The Fund is therefore open to supporting initiatives that may not fully achieve their intended results, provided that they are grounded in robust analysis, thoughtful design, and the best efforts of the organisations involved, and that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect beneficiaries. Failure, when responsibly managed and without adverse impacts on communities, is understood as a potential source of learning rather than a reason for exclusion.

The Fund also acknowledges that lasting democratic change is typically the result of long-term and cumulative efforts. For this reason, the Fund is open to financing projects in continuity, even when they are not new or innovative, as long as they are clearly embedded in a broader, coherent, and strategic process of systemic change. In many cases, maintaining and scaling approaches that have already demonstrated relevance is essential to reaching a point where change becomes self-sustaining and widely adopted. Sustained action, consolidation of previous work, and

incremental progress are therefore valued when they help build the momentum necessary for reforms to become embedded and to contribute to deeper, more durable transformations.

Finally, the Fund expresses a clear preference for upstream approaches that anticipate, prevent, and strengthen democratic capacities before problems become entrenched. While acknowledging the importance of addressing existing challenges, the Fund particularly encourages initiatives that seek to prevent democratic erosion, build resilience, and address root causes rather than primarily remediate consequences.

Applications shall be submitted online through the website: eeagrants.org/pt/eea-civil-society-fund-portugal and shall follow the evaluation and selection procedures detailed in this notice.

Without prejudice to the specifications contained in this notice, the provisions of the Fund Rules shall apply to this call for applications and should therefore be consulted by applicants, especially regarding the rules on eligibility of applicants and the selection procedures. The Fund Rules, the manual and other useful information can be found on the Fund's website.

Iceland Liechtenstein Norway **Civil Society** Fund

Table of contents

1. Objective 5

2. Eligible Applicants 7

3. Size and duration of projects 7

4. Submission of applications 8

5. Administrative and eligibility criteria 8

6. Support to Applicants 9

7. Methodology of analysis, evaluation and scoring of applications 9

8. Selection process and reserve list 11

9. Grant contracting 11

10. Eligible costs and budget, grant form, and payment system 11

11. Budget Allocation 12

12. Publicity and additional information 12

13. Contacts 12

Annex – Tables of indicators by Output 14

SUMMARY OF THE CALL	
Title of the call	CALL FOR APPLICATIONS #01 – LARGE PROJECTS
Purpose of the call	Support initiatives that foster civic participation, reinforce democratic culture, promote information integrity, and empower citizens and civil society organisations to actively contribute to more resilient, inclusive, and participatory democratic processes
Outcome(s)	Outcome 1: "Democratic values and rule of law strengthened"
Output(s)	Output 1.1: CSO participation in democratic processes increased Output 1.2: Civic engagement increased Output 1.3: Information integrity and media literacy increased
Relevant project activities	See number 1.5 of the call notice below for examples
Eligible project applicants	Civil Society organisations in compliance with number 2 of the call notice
Project duration	Between 12 and 24 months
Project grant amount	Above € 37,500 and up to € 62,500
Co-financing	No co-financing required. Project funded at a rate of 100%.
Capacity building	€ 2,500 of the project budget is allocated to organisational capacity building
Partnerships	Applications may be submitted in partnership with any entity established in Portugal, the Beneficiary States or the Donor States, as well as international organisations (see number 2 of the call notice) Partnerships with entities from the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) are encouraged
Application deadline	29 September 2026, at 12:00 (GMT/Lisbon time).

1. Objective

1.1 Projects to be selected under this call shall aim primarily at strengthening democratic values and rule of law and shall consider the overall objective of the Fund as set forth in Article 3 of the Fund Rules.

1.2 The Output Areas for this call are:

a) Output 1.1: CSO participation in democratic processes increased

b) Output 1.2: Civic engagement increased

c) Output 1.3: Information integrity and media literacy increased

1.3 This call seeks to support initiatives that foster civic participation, reinforce democratic culture, promote information integrity, and empower citizens and civil society organisations to actively contribute to more resilient, inclusive, and participatory democratic processes.

1.4 Projects under this call shall be implemented in the territories referred to in Article 6 of the Fund Rules.

1.5 The above-mentioned projects contribute to *Outcome 1 - "Democratic values and rule of law strengthened"* and can encompass, namely, the following activities:

a) Advocacy and public policy initiatives aimed at influencing national legislation and regulatory frameworks, including the monitoring and revising of local, national, or international recommendations;

b) Activities promoting citizens' engagement and active participation in decision-making processes and other democratic mechanisms, including engagement with local decision-makers and influencing public, or private, policies or strategies;

c) Activities promoting the use of digital technologies to enhance civic participation, including digital inclusion and equitable access to opportunities for civic engagement, with particular attention to vulnerable and underserved populations;

d) Activities promoting democratic literacy, citizenship education, and informed participation through training, non-formal education, and public debates, targeting young people as well as older persons, rural populations, and marginalised groups, among others;

e) Promotion of volunteering and solidarity, including the development of local volunteering opportunities;

f) Activities promoting social cohesion, diversity, and mutual understanding, through community-based cultural, artistic, sports, and environmental programmes in order to strengthen the social bonds among diverse groups, minorities, CSOs, and the wider public;

g) Media literacy and information integrity training programmes and sessions for different audiences, including educators, civil society actors, other relevant professional groups, and citizens in general, with a focus on combating disinformation, and hate speech;

h) Activities aimed at strengthening CSOs' capacity to respond to disinformation, demagogy, and extremist or populist narratives, including mechanisms and training for civil society staff in countering misinformation.

1.6 Each supported project shall contribute to Outcome 1 and deliver at least one output to be selected from the list of indicators set by the Fund for this Outcome: "Democratic values and rule of law strengthened". Each supported project shall also, for each of the selected indicators, identify quantified, project-level target values according to its nature, objectives and expected results. Each project shall contribute to at least one output indicator and one outcome indicator, in addition to indicators related to capacity-building. The indicators become a reporting tool during implementation.

1.7 The output indicators established for this call are:

a) Number of policy advocacy outputs delivered by supported CSOs;

b) Number of consultation processes with a public institution facilitated by CSOs;

c) Number of advocacy/awareness-raising campaigns carried out;

d) Number of people who attended public gatherings led by CSOs;

e) Number of participants in community-building activities organised by supported CSOs;

f) Number of people newly engaged in CSO or community activities as volunteers;

g) Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course on democratic values and rule of law;

h) Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course on media literacy;

i) Number of materials developed and used or disseminated by supported CSOs.

1.8 The outcome indicators established for this call are:

a) Number of national and local laws or policies developed or revised with civil society participation;

b) Number of decisions implemented by public institutions resulting in tangible changes at the local or organisational level that were influenced by civil society;

c) Number of people bonded to CSOs or their communities following their participation in the project;

d) Number of people who donated time, goods or money following their participation in the project;

e) Number of people self-reporting changed attitudes and/or behaviours;

f) Number of people self-reporting improved knowledge/understanding of democratic values and rule of law;

g) Number of people self-reporting improved knowledge/understanding of media literacy;

h) Number of CSOs with a new or improved strategy/resources to address disinformation and attacks.

1.9 Counting towards the capacity-building allocation are the following indicators:

a) Number of CSO staff who have completed a capacity-building programme (output indicator);

b) Number of CSOs that completed a capacity-building programme (output indicator);

c) Number of employees with improved skills (outcome indicator).

1.10 The indicator definitions, results-counting procedure and causal links are pre-established and defined in the manual, and aggregated by Output Area, facilitating their comprehension and usability.

1.11 For the first phase of applications, projects shall only be required to indicate to which outcome indicators, from number 1.8, it will contribute to, quantifying the respective targets. It shall contribute to at least one outcome indicator.

1.12 For the second phase of applications, projects must then be assigned to one of the Outputs referred to in number 1.2. For guidance, the tables presenting the indicators organised by Output are attached to this call notice. These tables are structured to display first the Outcome-level indicators, followed by the corresponding Output-level indicators.

1.13 Indicators are organised by Output, with some indicators being specific to a single Output and others designed as cross-cutting across all Outputs within the same Outcome. As a general rule, each project should be assigned to only one Output and use the indicators associated with that Output, contributing to at least one output indicator and one outcome indicator, in addition to those related to capacity-building. However, project logic shall take precedence over the reporting framework; where duly justified, a project may therefore be linked to more than one Output if it requires the use of indicators from multiple Outputs.

2. Eligible Applicants

2.1 Project promoters must comply with the general conditions of eligibility of the Fund established in Article 7 of the Fund Rules. The limitation established in the number 5 of Article 7 applies to this call.

2.2 Project partners must comply with Article 8 of the Fund Rules.

2.3 Each entity, either as promoter or as partner, must comply with the limits on accessing support stated in Article 15 of the Fund Rules.

3. Size and duration of projects

3.1 Projects under this call shall be supported by a total grant above 37,500 euros and up to 62,500 euros, with the eligible costs of the project funded at a rate of 100%.

3.2 Projects under this call include a capacity-building component, representing 2,500 euros of the total project cost. The threshold and ceiling indicated in the previous number already encompass this cost.

3.3 The duration of projects to be selected under this call for applications shall be between 12 and 24 months, with an expected start date between January and March 2027.

3.4 Regardless of the duration referred to in the previous number, the project's final date of eligibility shall be no later than 30 April 2031.

4. Submission of applications

4.1 The applications shall be submitted, electronically, through the MyGulbenkian application form, available through eeagrants.org/pt/eea-civil-society-fund-portugal.

4.2 Applications must be prepared and submitted exclusively by the project promoter and its partners. External consultants are prohibited from designing or submitting applications on behalf of others. Any consultant found advertising or providing such services will be disqualified from participating in or delivering services for supported projects.

4.3 Applications will be submitted through a two-phase process, designed to increase accessibility for smaller and less experienced CSOs. This structure aims to reduce entry barriers.

4.4 The first phase shall consist of the submission of a short, well-structured concept proposal, which includes the project's total estimated budget.

4.5 Applications to the first phase must be submitted from 3 July 2026 until 29 September 2026, at 12:00 (GMT/Lisbon time).

4.6 Applicants who advance to the second phase shall be invited to submit a detailed project structure, detailing the components that integrate the respective budget, targets, indicators and schedule.

4.7 For the second phase, only complete applications, including the attachments foreseen in number 6 of Article 16 of the Fund Rules, shall be considered for evaluation and selection purposes.

4.8 Clerical errors made during the online submission of documents may still be corrected within two working days, as mentioned in number 4 of Article 18 of the Fund Rules, following the procedure indicated in the manual.

4.9 Applicants are responsible for the truthfulness and authenticity of all submitted documents and are expressly informed that they may be required to present additional and/or original documents to the Fund Operator at any stage of the application process.

5. Administrative and eligibility criteria

5.1 In the first phase, applicants will be required to declare that the entity complies with the eligibility requirements stipulated in Articles 7 and 8 of the Fund Rules. At this stage, the Fund will conduct limited verifications of compliance with the formal and administrative eligibility requirements, in accordance with number 2 of Article 18 of the Fund Rules. In the second phase of applications, the Fund will conduct a comprehensive compliance verification of the formal and administrative eligibility requirements, in accordance with number 3 of Article 18 of the Fund Rules.

5.2 Applicants whose applications are rejected due to noncompliance with the requirements referred to in the previous number shall be informed and have a period of 10 days to appeal, counted from the day after the notification. Appeals shall follow the procedure established in number 7 of Article 18 of the Fund Rules.

6. Support to Applicants

6.1 In order to support the submission of applications aligned with the objective of the Fund, ensure equal opportunities to all applicants and to improve chances of success, the Fund makes available the following support to applicants:

a) A manual containing all relevant information and required documentation;

b) A set of dissemination workshops across the country to mobilise local organisations and stakeholders, explain the calls and support the preparation of projects and applications, clarify available support and capacity-building facilities;

c) A helpline, via e-mail and phone, for the clarification of queries;

d) Online information, namely, through FAQ published on the Fund's website;

e) A specific mechanism with individual support on project preparation, provided by external experts, made available to applicants selected to proceed to the second phase of the application process. This mechanism will consist of two different facilities:

i. Revision of the application form draft, providing advice on what should be improved, which can be requested up to 12 days before the deadline for the second phase of applications;

ii. Consultancy to support applicants in turning their idea into a project, which can be requested in the 10 days following the notification of approval to second phase of applications.

6.2 The eligible applicants for the specific mechanism mentioned in paragraph e) of number 6.1 are limited to CSOs with an annual turnover of up to 250,000 euros for the i. Revision of applications and up to 150,000 euros for the ii. Consultancy to support applicants.

6.3 In addition to the condition mentioned in 6.2, applicant CSOs can only receive this specific support if one of the following conditions is met:

a) They are located in underserved geographic areas (outside the Great Lisbon and Porto Metropolitan Areas);

b) They have been created and/or are composed of refugees, migrants, Roma or victims of gender-based violence, regardless of where they are headquartered.

7. Methodology of analysis, evaluation and scoring of applications

7.1 As defined in Article 20 of the Fund Rules, for each phase of applications, the scores are assigned by five experts on a scale between 0 and 100 points. Each application receives five scores. For the final score, the highest and lowest scores for each application are excluded, and the final score is calculated from the average of the remaining three scores.

7.2 For the first phase of applications, the evaluation and scoring of the applications shall be performed according to the selection criteria and the weights set in this notice as follows:

Criteria	Weight
1. **Relevance of the project in relation to the Fund's objective**: alignment of the identified problems with the Fund's objective and expected results; justification of the identified needs and target groups; and understanding of the underlying causes, structural factors, systems, or prevailing mindsets	35
2. **Clarity and coherence of the proposed concept**: clarity of the proposal, with a clear change logic, connecting the identified problems and the expected change; and approaches that act upstream, in proactive, anticipatory, or preventative ways;	30
3. **Concept potential for systemic change**: expected results; and/or contribution beyond immediate symptoms/challenges, to strategic leverage points for broader and more sustainable change; and/or any differentiating factor, including the participation of donor country entities	35
Total	**100**

7.3 For the second phase of applications, the evaluation and scoring of the applications shall be performed according to the selection criteria and the weights set in this notice as follows:

Criteria	Weight
1. **Project feasibility**: quality of project design, including its internal coherence, adequate planning, reasonable and appropriate goals and expected results, temporal and financial feasibility, adequacy of allocated human and physical resources, and the inclusion of the necessary partners, including the participation of donor country entities; and the organisation's suitability to implement the project, including technical and managerial capabilities	30
2. **Suitability of the proposed intervention strategies**: reasoning, relevance and quality of proposed methodologies, including synergy and articulation between resources, partners and diverse sectors and the adoption of participatory methodologies	35
3. **Sustainability of the project's results**: scale of results; and/or impact on beneficiaries' lives; and/or the potential for lasting impact beyond its direct implementation, namely for replicability, scalability, continuity, or adoption by others; and/or contribution to structural, cultural, or systemic change (root causes, influencing systems, practices, incentives, norms, narratives or power relations); and/or potential for knowledge creation	35
Total	**100**

7.4 Although the evaluation is split into two phases, which classify the application based on different criteria, the evaluation must focus on the same object, i.e., the application should not change its objective and main characteristics between phases, under penalty of exclusion.

8. Selection process and reserve list

8.1 The selection follows the process established in Article 23 of the Fund Rules.

8.2 Only applications with a final score equal to or above 60 points may be selected to advance to a subsequent phase and to receive a grant. Evaluators may request clarifications and make recommendations for improvement for the applications advancing to the second phase, which shall be addressed in the second application form.

8.3 The Fund Operator ensures alignment of the applications moving on to phase 2 with the Fund's objective.

8.4 To ensure competition in the second phase, applications corresponding to up to 200% of this call's allocation may advance to the second phase.

8.5 Whenever appropriate, the Selection Committee establishes a reserve list from the list of applications selected for approval, to be used in case of withdrawals or savings, composed of the highest-scoring not-selected applications for lack of available budget. The reserve list is ranked according to the score of each application up to a limit of 10% of the budget available for this call.

8.6 The Programme Director may draw applications from the reserve list to be supported, should funding become available due to savings or unused funds in previously approved projects. The reserve list is valid for up to 4 months following the notification decision, meaning that applications that are not selected to receive a grant by that date are automatically considered not selected.

9. Grant contracting

9.1 Promoters of selected projects shall be notified individually of the Steering Committee's decisions as foreseen in Article 24 of the Fund Rules.

9.2 The contracting of selected projects shall follow the process established in Article 25 of the Fund Rules.

9.3 Grant contracts will necessarily include the elements established in Article 27 of the Fund Rules.

10. Eligible costs and budget, grant form, and payment system

10.1 Eligible costs are those actually incurred by the project promoter or the eligible partners, as well as expenditure covered by simplified cost options, according to the criteria laid down in Article 41 of the Fund Rules.

10.2 Applicants should estimate, as a basis, 24 hours for reporting to the Fund, which would be advisable to budget for in the application. This estimate is based on three reports, defined in Articles 32 and 34 of the Fund Rules, taking an estimated 2,5 hours to complete, as well as one payment claim, taking an estimated 2,5 hours to complete, and seven two-hour meetings with the Fund, defined in Articles 25 and 37 of the Fund Rules, for a two-year project.

10.3 Projects shall be broken down into two to four components, as defined in Article 26 of the Fund Rules.

10.4 Projects shall establish a draft budget to be converted into lump sums, based on the project's components. The amounts for the lump sums shall be established ex ante, through a draft budget developed on a case-by-case basis and agreed by the Fund Operator before the signature of the grant contract, as defined in Article 40 of the Fund Rules.

10.5 The costs associated with service provision, i.e., those foreseen in paragraphs e) and f) of number 5 and on number 6 of Article 41 of the Fund Rules, shall be excluded from the lump sum and considered as real costs, established in paragraph a) of number 1 of Article 40 of the Fund Rules.

10.6 Capacity-building allocations, as defined in Article 12 of the Fund Rules, are limited to service provision costs.

10.7 The inclusion of an expenditure item in a project budget approved by the FO cannot be considered as confirmation of the eligibility of that expenditure item.

10.8 The approved grant is disbursed according to the payment system set in Article 43 of the Fund Rules.

11. Budget Allocation

11.1 The total budget allocated to this call is 1,562,500 euros.

11.2 Whenever part of the budget allocated to this call isn't fully used to fund the applications selected and the applications on the reserve list, the remainder budget is transferred to future calls of the same Outcome.

12. Publicity and additional information

12.1 This notice and other relevant information, including the Fund Rules, the application forms and the Manual, are available on the Fund's website: eeagrants.org/pt/eea-civil-society-fund-portugal.

12.2 Any amendments to the terms and conditions set forth in this notice shall also be publicised in the above-mentioned website, with a minimum of three working days prior to the date of its entry into force.

13. Contacts

13.1 The consortium partners are available to answer questions via telephone every workday between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

13.2 Inquiries may also be submitted via email, which shall be answered within three working days. Responses are regularly integrated into a FAQ subpage on the Fund's website.

13.3 Contact information is listed below:

Iceland Liechtenstein Norway **Civil Society** Fund

Website: eeagrants.org/pt/eea-civil-society-fund-portugal | https://civilsocietyfund.pt

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation:

Tel.: +351 217 823 360

E-mail: fsc@gulbenkian.pt

Bissaya Barreto Foundation:

Tel.: +351 239 800 437

E-mail: fsc@fbb.pt

Lisbon, 3 July 2026

Annex – Tables of indicators by Output

Output 1.1 **CSO participation in democratic processes increased**	
Indicators	**Availability**
Number of national and local laws or policies developed or revised with civil society participation	Specific to 1.1
Number of decisions implemented by public institutions resulting in tangible changes at the local or organisational level that were influenced by civil society	Specific to 1.1
Number of people self-reporting improved knowledge/understanding of democratic values and rule of law	Cross-cutting
Number of people self-reporting changed attitudes and/or behaviours	Cross-cutting
Number of employees with improved skills	Cross-cutting capacity building
Number of policy advocacy outputs delivered by supported CSOs	Specific to 1.1
Number of consultation processes with a public institution facilitated by CSOs	Specific to 1.1
Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course on democratic values and rule of law	Cross-cutting
Number of materials developed and used or disseminated by supported CSOs	Cross-cutting
Number of advocacy/awareness-raising campaigns carried out	Cross-cutting
Number of people who attended public gatherings led by CSOs	Cross-cutting
Number of CSO staff who have completed a capacity-building programme	Cross-cutting capacity building
Number of CSOs that completed a capacity-building programme	Cross-cutting capacity building

Output 1.2 **Civic engagement increased**	
Indicators	**Availability**
Number of people bonded to CSOs or their communities following their participation in the project	Specific to 1.2
Number of people who donated time, goods or money following their participation in the project	Specific to 1.2
Number of people self-reporting improved knowledge/understanding of democratic values and rule of law	Cross-cutting
Number of people self-reporting changed attitudes and/or behaviours	Cross-cutting
Number of employees with improved skills	Cross-cutting capacity building
Number of participants in community-building activities organised by supported CSOs	Specific to 1.2
Number of people newly engaged in CSO or community activities as volunteers	Specific to 1.2
Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course on democratic values and rule of law	Cross-cutting
Number of materials developed and used or disseminated by supported CSOs	Cross-cutting
Number of advocacy/awareness-raising campaigns carried out	Cross-cutting
Number of people who attended public gatherings led by CSOs	Cross-cutting
Number of CSO staff who have completed a capacity-building programme	Cross-cutting capacity building
Number of CSOs that completed a capacity-building programme	Cross-cutting capacity building

Output 1.3 **Information integrity and media literacy increased**	
Indicators	**Availability**
Number of CSOs with a new or improved strategy/resources to address disinformation and attacks	Specific to 1.3
Number of people self-reporting improved knowledge/understanding of media literacy	Specific to 1.3
Number of people self-reporting improved knowledge/understanding of democratic values and rule of law	Cross-cutting
Number of people self-reporting changed attitudes and/or behaviours	Cross-cutting
Number of employees with improved skills	Cross-cutting capacity building
Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course on media literacy	Specific to 1.3
Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course on democratic values and rule of law	Cross-cutting
Number of materials developed and used or disseminated by supported CSOs	Cross-cutting
Number of advocacy/awareness-raising campaigns carried out	Cross-cutting
Number of people who attended public gatherings led by CSOs	Cross-cutting
Number of CSO staff who have completed a capacity-building programme	Cross-cutting capacity building
Number of CSOs that completed a capacity-building programme	Cross-cutting capacity building