Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway

Civil Society Fund

OPEN CALL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs) IN ROMANIA

Call #1 - Strengthening Democracy and Rule of Law through Civil Society Initiatives

LARGE GRANTS

Guidelines for Applicants

AVAILABLE FUNDING: € 3,718,664

DEADLINE: 08 OCTOBER – 16:00 ROMANIA TIME

Civil Society Development Foundation

environmental partnership foundation

Resource Center for Roma Communities Foundation

Frivillighet Norge

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

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

The EEA Civil Society Fund in **Romania** (hereinafter referred to as the CSF Romania or the "Programme") has a total allocation of **€ 53,811,718.** A consortium of Civil Society Development Foundation, Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation, Resource Center for Roma Communities and Civil Society Norway (Frivillighet Norge), operates the EEA Civil Society Fund in **Romania** on behalf of the Donor States.

This call targets **experienced Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), networks, coalition or platforms developing advocacy and watchdog initiatives and has a total allocation of € 3,718,664.**

SUMMARY OF THE CALL	
Title of the call	Call #1 – Strengthening democracy and rule of law through civil society initiatives
Purpose of the call	See section 3.3 of this Call
Outcome(s)	Outcome 1. Democratic values and rule of law strengthened
Output(s)	Output 1.1: CSO participation in democratic processes increased
Relevant project activities	Recommended activities - See section 3.5 of this Call
Eligible project Applicants	See section 5 of this Call
Project duration	Between 36 and 48 months
Final date of eligibility of expenditures	No later than 30 April 2031
Project grant amount	Between € 200,001 and € 350,000
Co-financing	No co-financing required
Partnerships	Partnership is encouraged but not mandatory
Call available in the following language(s)	Romanian, English
Questions deadline	No later than 7 working days before closing date of the Call
Application deadline	08 October 2026 16:00 (Romania time)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS 3
1. BACKGROUND FOR THE EEA CIVIL SOCIETY FUND IN ROMANIA 4
2. OUTCOME 1. Democratic values and rule of law strengthened 5
3. FOCUS OF THIS CALL 6
3.1. Financial allocation, types of grants and deadline 6
3.2. Current social context and rationale 6
3.3. Purpose of this call 8
3.4. Expected project approach 8
3.5. Project activities and Programme indicators 10
3.6. Organisational development allocation 12
3.7. Monitoring and rapid response mechanism 13
3.8. Information and communication activities 14
4. PROJECT BUDGETING RULES 15
4.1. Principles of project budgeting 15
4.2. Eligible expenditure 16
4.3. Excluded costs 18
5. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS AND PARTNERS 18
5.1. Eligible Applicants 19
5.2. Eligible Project Partners 22
5.3. Limitations 23
6. HOW TO APPLY: PREPARATION, SUBMISSION AND REGISTRATION 24
7. ADMINISTRATIVE, ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA 25
7.1. Evaluation and project selection process 25
7.2. Verification of administrative compliance and eligibility 26
7.3. Technical and financial evaluation 27
7.4. Selection Committee 29
7.5. Steering Committee 29
7.6. Announcing the results 29
7.7. Complaints Committee 30
8. CONTRACTING 30
9. RULES APPLICABLE FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION 32
9.1. Reporting 32
9.2. Payment's procedures 33
9.3. Proof of expenditure and audit 34
10. CONTACT DETAILS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION 35
Annexes 35

1. BACKGROUND FOR THE EEA CIVIL SOCIETY FUND IN ROMANIA

Support to civil society is a key priority for the EEA and Norway Grants, funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The overall objectives of EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2021-2028 is to contribute to the reduction of social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area (EEA) and to strengthen bilateral relations between the Donor States and the Beneficiary States.

The EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2021-2028 are based on the **common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities**. All organisations and activities funded by the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2021-2028 shall be consistent with respect for these values and principles and abstain from supporting operations that may fail to do so. Their implementation shall comply with the fundamental rights and obligations enshrined in relevant instruments and standards.

10% of the overall funding of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 has been set aside for support to civil society through the EEA Civil Society Fund.

The allocation for the EEA Civil Society Fund in **Romania** is € 53,811,718.

Through an open tender process, the secretariat of the Donor States – the Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) has selected a consortium composed of Civil Society Development Foundation, Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation, Resource Center for Roma Communities and Civil Society Norway (Frivillighet Norge) as Fund Operator of the EEA Civil Society Fund in **Romania**. The Fund Operator manages the EEA Civil Society Fund in **Romania** on behalf of the Donor States. This includes the selection, contracting and follow-up of projects.

The objective of the EEA Civil Society Fund is to contribute to **a vibrant and resilient civil society protecting and promoting democracy, the rule of law, and human rights**.

The EEA Civil Society Fund in **Romania** will include **ten** open calls, contributing to the following outcomes[1]:

- Outcome 1: Democratic values and rule of law strengthened
- Outcome 2: Human rights strengthened
- Outcome 3: CSOs that promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, strengthened
- Bilateral Outcome: Strengthened bilateral cooperation in the civil society sector
- Regional Outcome: Strengthened regional cooperation in the civil society sector

The bilateral outcome of strengthened bilateral cooperation is about cooperation between civil society in **Romania** and in the three Donor States Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

The Programme uses a results-based management approach[2]. This means it is designed and managed with a focus on achieving results. The Programme has a results framework that guides what can be supported. To be eligible for support, all projects must contribute to the expected results outlined in this results framework.

An overview of all open calls as well as other activities supported by the Programme can be found on the website of the EEA Civil Society Fund in **Romania**: www.eeacivilsocietyfund.ro

[1] Outcomes are the higher-level changes that occur through the achievement of various outputs. Their effects on the target group should continue in the future. Projects are expected to make a measurable contribution to the applicable outcome.

[2] See more information about Results based management in Programme Indicators Guidance, document available at www.eeacivilsocietyfund.ro

2. OUTCOME 1. DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND RULE OF LAW STRENGTHENED

Outcome 1: Democratic values and rule of law strengthened covers two support areas in the Civil Society Fund in Romania: (1) Democratic values, civic engagement, information integrity and media literacy; and (2) Civil society participation in democratic processes. **Call #1 – Strengthening democracy and rule of law through civil society initiatives** is implemented under Outcome 1: Democratic values and rule of law strengthened, contributing directly to its achievement.

Aims	• To support CSOs in building advocacy capacity, fostering citizen engagement and empowerment, and tackling information integrity. • On a long term, CSOs and citizens will become more involved in the community life and in the decision-making processes, having the power to ensure accountability. Therefore, the general interaction between public authorities, civil society, and citizens will improve significantly, especially in underserved communities experiencing persistent rights violations rooted in historical exclusion and socio-economic disparities. • To promote democratic values and citizen participation particularly in underserved areas, empowering people to become active and contribute to democratic culture • To promote information integrity and counter disinformation by equipping citizens, particularly youth, with media literacy and critical thinking skills, supporting fact-checking mechanisms and by strengthening community engagement and cross-sector partnerships.
Approach	• Supporting CSO's advocacy initiatives, enhancing civil society's role in participatory governance • Community development and civic engagement in underserved communities, by providing citizens with participation tools and equipping them with knowledge and skills in how to use the tools, supporting them in getting involved in community life and public decision-making processes in order to contribute to improvement of law enforcement, public services, environment protection, community development and social inclusion. • Building on civic education to enhance civic participation, promote non-discrimination and solidarity. • Integrating critical thinking, enabling citizens to identify and counter misinformation/disinformation, fake news, and extremist propaganda, including information related to the invasion in Ukraine. • Enabling access to safe digital spaces and empower citizens, particularly youth, to engage critically with media and social media content • Civic engagement in addressing exceptional social circumstances.
Special focus & allocations	• In addition to the Programme support areas, Outcome 1 includes a country-specific focus area, for which a dedicated financial allocation is provided within the total Outcome 1 allocation: • **Addressing challenges arising from the invasion of Ukraine** – € 2,500,000
Financial allocation	• The total allocation available for open calls under Outcome 1 is **€ 12,218,664.**

3. FOCUS OF THIS CALL

3.1. Financial allocation, types of grants and deadline

Under this Call, funding is available to support civil society initiatives contributing to **Output 1.1: CSO participation in democratic processes increased.**

Available allocation / Grants / Deadline	
Type of grants	**Large grants**
Total Financial Allocation	€ 3,718,664
Publication date of the Call	08 July 2026
Application opening date (online platform only)	08 July 2026
Application deadline	08 October 2026; 16:00 (Romania time)
Project duration (minimum and maximum)	36 - 48 months
Grant amount (minimum and maximum)	€ 200,001 - 350,000
Co-financing	The grant rate of the project is 100%.
Organisational development allocation	Possibility to allocate **up to 20%** of the total project budget to organisational development activities
Monitoring and Rapid Response Mechanism	Possibility to allocate **3-5%** of the total project budget to rapid response activities

! Important	**The final form of the project proposal is considered the one uploaded on the online platform (https://finantaripublice.fdsc.ro) and validated until the deadline.** The deadline for completing and validating the online Application form and attaching the required documents is **08 October 2026; 16:00 (Romania time).** After this date, it will no longer be possible to fill in a new project Application and modify / fill in the project Application already submitted for the **Call #1 – Strengthening democracy and rule of law through civil society initiatives**. Access will be automatically limited by the online platform server. We recommend submitting the Application(s) earlier than on the deadline set in the Guidelines. Postponing the Application(s) submission for the last day may cause problems due to the system overloading that would not enable to complete and validate the Application on time.

3.2. Current social context and rationale

Although Romania recorded a stronger economic performance compared to the previous decade and has a better alignment with the European Union (EU) according to The World Bank, a set of structural, social and political challenges constrain the promotion of democratic values, the rule of law and human rights. Despite economic progress, civic space is shrinking, and extremist ideologies and behaviours are on the rise, a trend that we can see not only at national, but also at regional and global levels. The current social

context is marked by a state of social anomie reflected in deep political polarization, ambiguous social values, and growing inclination towards illiberalism.

Persistent challenges, including low civic and political participation, underdeveloped political culture, governance weaknesses, and the controversial annulment of presidential election, are reflected by the downgrade of Romania from "flawed democracy" to a "hybrid regime" in the 2024 Democracy Index (ranked 72th, marking 5.99 out of 10). The 2024 Rule of Law Report highlighted shortcomings in access to justice, whistle-blower protection, citizen consultation in legislation, judicial independence, and anti-corruption efforts, as well as concerns regarding the governance of public media, ongoing threats to journalists and significant challenges in media literacy. However, the latest Report on the 2025 Rule of Law acknowledges the progress Romania has made in some areas, like implementing the recommendation of Venice Commission on the Justice Laws or ensuring adequate human resources for the justice system, but it underlines, at the same time, that certain areas are still in deep need for improvement. The report recommends Romania, among others, to address the frequent use of government emergency ordinances and ensure effective public consultations on legislative proposals, and to safeguard the independent governance and editorial policy of public service media.

At the same time, the latest Civic Space Monitoring report shows Romania entered 2025 with a formally adequate legal framework for the protection of fundamental rights, freedom of expression, and civic space, aligned with European standards, but with persistent and deepening implementation gaps. Ineffective implementation, insufficient institutional safeguards, and the increasing use of legal, administrative, and disciplinary tools have a chilling effect on public participation and contribute to a growing institutional fragility, political polarization, and intensified pressure on critical voices.

Multiple international and domestic monitoring sources confirm a deterioration in practice, marked by weak institutional responses, intimidation of critical voices, and the absence of effective protection mechanisms for journalists, human rights defenders (HRDs) and CSOs. At the EU level, the EU Civil Society Strategy recognizes the need to support and protect civil society actors and human right defenders (HRDs), but it does not impose binding obligations on Member States.

In terms of citizens' perception, according to 2024 Eurobarometer only 47% of Romanians, compared to the EU average of 66%, believed that fundamental rights, democracy, and the rule of law were well protected in the country (Special Eurobarometer 552, 2024). 75% of citizens believed corruption to be widespread (Special Eurobarometer 548, 2024) eroding trust in institutions and reducing citizens' participation in democratic processes. About 60% of young people did not trust state institutions and 70% believed that Romania fails to be an equitable country (IRES, 2024). However, young people in Romania are among the most confident in the EU – 34% see democracy, rule of law, and justice as the EU's core values, the same level as some of the bloc's most established democracies. This presents an opportunity to engage them in strengthening democratic resilience, despite persistent domestic challenges like job security (31%), which remains their top concern.

The level of trust in political parties is also very low. According to the latest 2025 Barometer of Opinions on the Civil Society, CSOs (referred as non-governmental organizations in the Barometer) enjoy a significantly higher level of trust than other forms of association or public representation. **CSOs are credited with a level of trust of 49%**, compared to trade unions (36%) and political parties (19%). Beyond the level of trust, an even higher percentage of respondents believe CSOs play a key role in the functioning of a democratic society. 63% agree that CSOs get involved where the state fails to bring about change. A similar percentage, **62% believe that a democratic society cannot function without non-governmental organizations.**

CSOs are indispensable in achieving a more participatory governance. In the current context, strengthening democracy through structural reforms and inter-institutional collaboration requires an enhanced CSOs participation, enabling them as key players to enhance transparency, accountability, and

citizen engagement. There is a constant need for civil society, both organized and informal, to engage in consultations and watchdog activities and respond to current challenges that might as well affect the overall environment for CSOs and the civic space.

3.3. Purpose of this call

Objectives of the Call	• To enhance CSOs' capacity to promote participatory governance, engage citizens, and ensure institutional accountability; • To support CSOs in safeguarding democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law, while enabling them to shape policies and strengthen long-term democratic processes.
Programme Areas of support targeted	• Democratic values, civic engagement, information integrity and media literacy • Civil society participation in democratic processes
Target groups	• **End beneficiaries:** civil society sector, general public, underrepresented groups, public authorities and institutions etc. • **Intermediate groups:** CSO professionals and experts, human right defenders, social movements/ informal/civic groups , community leaders, local elected and administrative staff, public authorities and their staff, volunteers, journalists, businessmen etc.
Social service provision	• **Social service provision shall not be eligible as a stand-alone activity/project.** It can only be supported if they are necessary for enhancing advocacy, community participation, and/or civic engagement
Partnerships	• Under this Call partnerships with CSOs that possess complementary expertise, small CSOs from underserved areas, CSOs with specific expertise on a thematic area that needs monitoring/legislative improvements, informal groups and other eligible public entities are **encouraged to ensure an integrated approach and a sustainable intervention**.

3.4. Expected project approach

The following section defines the framework and the relevant types of projects supported under this Call. Proposals are not required to address all the elements listed below. Each project should be designed and adapted to the identified needs, target groups, and specific objectives etc.

All the projects should integrate gender equality as a mandatory principle across all project activities, design, and implementation. Applicants are also encouraged to address **intersectionality** where beneficiaries face multiple, overlapping barriers and adapt project activities to meet these specific needs.

Large grants	**Projects approach: systemic change**, **policy influence**, **institutional strengthening**, **and development of sustainable and scalable models**. Projects should adopt a systemic and participatory approach aimed at strengthening the role of civil society in promoting democratic governance, transparency, and accountability in Romania. Interventions should go beyond short-term advocacy actions and contribute to sustainable institutional and policy changes at regional/ national level.

	Projects are expected to strengthen CSOs' capacity to act as credible watchdogs, policy actors, and facilitators of civic participation. This may include monitoring public policies and regulations, identifying legislative and implementation gaps, generating evidence-based policy recommendations, and facilitating structured dialogue between civil society, citizens and public authorities. A strong emphasis should be placed on improving participatory governance mechanisms and increasing citizens' involvement in decision-making processes, including through public consultations, civic engagement campaigns, community mobilization, participatory oversight initiatives etc. Projects should promote transparency, integrity, and accountability in public institutions and electoral processes, while safeguarding democratic values, fundamental rights, and civic freedoms. Projects should promote inclusive participation by actively engaging underrepresented and marginalized groups, including people experiencing intersecting vulnerabilities. Projects may also address challenges affecting civic space and the enabling environment for civil society, including limited public participation, lack of institutional transparency, disinformation, or weak cooperation between stakeholders. Cooperation and coalition-building among CSOs, public institutions, media, academia, and citizens are encouraged to strengthen coordination, amplify impact & results, and avoid duplication of efforts. To increase outreach and accessibility, projects are encouraged to use innovative and digital tools for civic participation, public monitoring, data collection, awareness-raising, and policy engagement. **Expected changes** • Strengthened capacity of CSOs, civic networks, and civic platforms to participate effectively in public consultations and decision-making processes • Increased transparency and accountability through improved policy monitoring, civic oversight, and watchdog mechanisms • Improved legislative and policy frameworks at regional/ national level through evidence-based advocacy and civic participation • Stronger and more institutionalized dialogue and cooperation mechanisms between CSOs, citizens, and public authorities • Increased citizen participation in democratic and civic processes, including through innovative and inclusive participation models • Enhanced capacity of CSOs to develop and use evidence-based research, data, and policy recommendations in advocacy initiatives • Increased public awareness and civic engagement regarding democratic values, human rights, transparency, and rule of law • Increased participation and representation of underrepresented and marginalized groups, including those with intersecting vulnerabilities • More coordinated and sustainable cooperation among CSOs and relevant stakeholders working on public governance and accountability issues

Under the **Call #1** the following **types of projects** are **not supported for funding:**
• projects that involve obtaining / awarding individual scholarships;

• refinancing activities (e.g. re-granting or loans given to other organizations or individuals/ legal entities);
• projects that focus on construction or purchase of buildings or offices;
• projects that consist primarily of equipment purchase.

3.5. Project activities and Programme indicators

To achieve the expected results, please see the **below non-exhaustive list of possible project activities** that can be supported under this call. Please note that the activities described below are examples and must be part of a broader project addressing a specific need/ problem, implemented in a logical sequence to achieve predefined targets with available resources.

Type of possible activities:

- Policy monitoring and advocacy initiatives through participatory approaches
  - Analysis of policies/specific regulation and dialogue between CSOs and decision makers;
  - Monitoring specific legislation, identifying implementation gaps and investigating solutions;
  - Developing proposals to improve legislation and/ or its implementation with the direct involvement of citizens;
  - Awareness raising in order to engage citizens;
  - Improving access to objective and reliable information for the community members/constituency/general public;
- Developing and using effective and innovative tools for public participation
- Watchdog activities
  - Identifying and addressing threats to the civic space;
  - Developing monitoring mechanisms keeping institutions accountable;
- Support active citizens' participation in civic activities
  - Initiate, facilitate and/or participate in effective public consultations and participatory public decision-making processes;
  - Mobilize citizens to hold public institutions / authorities or local elected members accountable and transparent through petitions campaigns, public debates, other online /offline instruments, etc.
  - Mobilizing citizens, groups, local authorities and the local business to work together and coordinate efforts in order to solve concrete social problems with local resources;
  - Engaging citizens, in citizen driven-data initiatives, for a more accurate information that could feed into better policies;
- Develop and/or strengthen collaboration structures (platforms, networks, coalitions) between stakeholders addressing social challenges
- Map and promote interventions, good practices and lessons learned related to the dialogue with public authorities and citizen engagement

! Important	**Analytical activities**, such as research studies, reports, or data collection are eligible when used to support advocacy, inform policy proposals, or guide public decision-making. **Communication campaigns** are coordinated series of activities with a defined goal, target group, and timeframe, conveying a clear central message. A project may include multiple campaigns, each with distinct objectives, while individual activities

	(e.g., a single event or social media post) are considered part of a campaign, not separate campaigns. **Training activities** are eligible when included in comprehensive projects that engage beneficiaries in community life or public consultation and decision-making, complemented by follow-up support such as mentoring or coaching to ensure tangible changes in the targeted groups. According to the State aid compliance principles of the Civil Society Fund, the EEA CSF **does not provide any economic advantage** to undertakings. The supported activities are of non-economic nature.

To track progress, projects should also contribute to Programme-level indicators from the selected Outcome and Output(s).[3] Indicators are a means to quantifiably measure progress. Alongside narrative reports and other sources of information, indicators are used to help *indicate* the extent to which an outcome or output has been achieved. **The indicators listed in the table below are used to monitor progress and measure results at the Programme level for this call. All projects funded under the Call #1 shall contribute to the achievement of:**

Expected Programme results	Indicators	Programme level targets*	Requirements for Applicants
Outcome 1. Democratic values and rule of law strengthened	1. Number of national laws or policies developed or revised with civil society participation	12	All projects must select and report against **at least one Outcome 1 indicator** [1] and/or [2].
	2. Number of public institutions adopting recommendations from CSO monitoring reports (e.g., transparency measures, integrity standards).	5	
Output 1.1. CSO participation in democratic processes increased	5. Number of CSOs participating in consultations with a public institution	20	All projects must select and report against **at least two corresponding Output level indicators.**
	6. Number of people who participated in consultations with a public institution facilitated by CSOs	2500	
	7. Number of policy analyses, legislative proposals, position papers, or research reports produced by supported CSOs.	15	

! Important	* The target values to be reached at Programme level are presented for informative purposes only. Within the project proposals, Applicants will establish the target values proportionally with the project objectives and project budget.

[3] By achieving results under the selected outcome and related output(s), projects will contribute indirectly to the Programme's high-level objective to contribute to a vibrant and resilient civil society protecting and promoting democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. However, project Applicants are not required to measure results at this higher objective level, neither with narrative reporting nor with indicator reporting.

	For detailed information on the indicators (definitions, measurement, etc.), please consult the *Programme Indicators Guidance,* document available at www.eeacivilsocietyfund.ro.

3.6. Organisational development allocation

In recognition of the need to strengthen CSOs promoting democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, the Programme envisages an organisational development component for projects based on medium or large grants, contributing to Outcomes 1 and 2.

Up to 20% of the total project budget can be allocated for activities that contribute to the organizational development of the Applicant and, if the case, of the CSO Partner/s from Romania**. Organizational development activities do not need to have a direct connection with the project activities.** They should be planned according to the needs of the Applicant and, if the case, of the Romanian Partner/s, and must be correlated with **an organizational development objective.** The organizational development will focus on building specific skills and investing in the organization's long-term strategies (planning, internal systems development, human resources, fundraising, etc.).

Type of eligible organizational development activities (non-exhaustive list):

- **Developing and implementing transparent and accountable governance procedures**, such as participatory processes for strategic planning, development of internal regulation documents; establishment/development of an independent governing body; strengthening and professionalizing boards of directors, systems for prevention of conflict of interest; regulations/ codes of conducts;
- **Defining and implementing policies for human resources management** including combating high staff turnover, volunteer management, and anti-burnout/well-being strategies;
- **Developing and diversifying the funding sources**, through fundraising strategies, actions, campaigns;
- **Developing and implementing effective management procedures**, such as financial rules, management system of organization's knowledge and documents;
- **Designing and implementing digital-related policies,** such as data protection, cybersecurity, online engagement, digital advocacy, ethical use of technology etc.);
- **Increasing the capacity to communicate with external audiences** through new or improved communication strategies or plans; diversifying communication channels; increasing media presence; and ensuring continuous transparency through the publication of annual reports or updated webpages;
- **Creating new partnerships or broadening the constituency base**, including through working with informal groups as part of constituency;
- **Designing and implementing policies to integrate human rights principles** into the organization's work;
- **Developing ang implementing an organizational monitoring and evaluation framework**;
- **Increasing the capacity to contribute to policymaking and to implement advocacy initiatives** through training and coaching;
- **Increasing the capacity to monitor** institutional performance, to monitor human rights violations, **conduct watchdog activities** and hold institutions accountable;
- **Increasing the capacity to foster citizen participation** in consultation processes, contributing to more transparent and accountable governance;
- **Developing new tools** for strengthening human rights, democratic values and the rule of law.

Thus, the project will additionally contribute to the following Programme indicators:

Indicators	Programme level targets*	Requirements for Applicants
3. Number of supported CSOs with a new or improved organisational policy on fundraising	10	All projects must select and report against **at least one indicator.**
4. Number of CSO staff who have completed a training course	300	

Important!	For **detailed information on the indicators** (definitions, measurement, etc.), please consult the *Programme Indicators Guidance,* document available at www.eeacivilsocietyfund.ro An **Organizational Development Matrix** (self-assessment tool) is available at https://app.crestem.ong/. Applicants are encouraged to use it to assess their organisational capacity and, where relevant, include tailored capacity-building objective and activities in their applications. **Costs for equipment under organisational development** are eligible only if they directly support the organisational development objective and results described in the project application and comply with the eligibility rules set out in Section 4.2: Eligible expenditure. In case the projects contributed also to diversifying funding sources, the amount raised through fundraising activities during the project duration must be spent for the cause it was raised and in accordance with CSF principles and values. At the end of the project, it will have to be submitted by the respective organisation a declaration in which it will be specified the size of the raised amount, the aim for which it is going to be spent and the acknowledgement that the funds will be spent according to this aim.

3.7. Monitoring and rapid response mechanism

The Monitoring and Rapid Response Mechanism is a Programme level instrument designed as an exceptional and adaptive tool to respond to unforeseen developments arising during project implementation that could not reasonably have been anticipated at the application stage. This approach aims to strengthen the ability of supported CSOs to protect civic space effectively, transparently and in a timely manner. **Thus, between 3% and 5% of the total project budget may be allocated to monitoring and rapid response actions** (addressing developments that affect civic space and the Programme's areas of intervention in Romania, in particular democracy, rule of law, human rights, inclusion, organisational resilience, including actions to advance climate action and a just green transition).

Rapid Response actions do not need to be defined in detail at the application stage. They may be implemented only when an unforeseen situation arises during project implementation that requires immediate action and falls within the Programme's objectives. Such actions do not have to be directly linked to pre-planned project activities but must respond to emerging developments, risks, restrictions or

decisions occurring in the public, policy or civic space that require timely intervention within the Programme's areas of intervention.

Type of possible rapid response activities (non-exhaustive list):

- targeted, time-limited support to activists, communities or vulnerable groups facing risks linked to their civic engagement (e.g. emergency counselling, temporary relocation, security or protection measures etc.
- urgent legal, advocacy or communication measures related to the protection of civic space, fundamental rights, environmental justice, participation, democracy or rule of law;
- rapid monitoring, data collection, documentation, or reporting on legislative, policy, administrative, or social developments that emerge during project implementation and could not have been anticipated;
- short-term mobilisation, coalition-building or watchdog actions triggered by sudden developments affecting target groups, climate and environmental protection, public discourse etc.

Use of the mechanism is subject to the FO's approval. The request for approval shall describe the triggering situation, the urgency, the proposed actions, and the expected results. The FO will carry out a fast-track assessment to verify the proposed actions' alignment with the Programme objectives, the eligibility of the actions and associated costs, and compliance with the Programme rules. **If no rapid-response action has been triggered and no such need has emerged by the midpoint/ late stage of project implementation, the corresponding resources may be reallocated to other eligible project activities** to bring added value, to strengthen project results or sustainability (also subject to FO approval).

3.8. Information and communication activities

When developing project proposals, the Applicants should describe information and communication actions aiming to create awareness of the project and its objectives, any bilateral cooperation with entities in Iceland, Liechtenstein and/or Norway, as well as of the implementation, results and the impact of support from the Donors to the project. Applicants should consider the following minimal obligatory requirements that have to be planned, developed, budgeted, implemented and reported to the FO:

- to provide information to relevant audiences and stakeholders on the existence of the project, its objectives, progress and results, as well as the support from the Programme and Donor support;
- to clearly highlight the contributions from Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants, and emphasize the EEA Civil Society Fund as an integral part of the EEA and Norway Grants;
- to emphasize any bilateral cooperation with entities from the Donor States (DS);
- to ensure that those taking part in the project have been informed of the funding from the Programme and the Donor States;
- **to make information about the project available on the web and/or on social media**, in accordance with the web requirements established the EEA Civil Society Fund **Communication and Design Manual**;
- to ensure that partnership agreements between the Project Promoter and any Donor project Partners contain an obligation of the Partner to provide information on their involvement and the results of the project to relevant audiences and stakeholders in the Donor State. Information about the project shall be available on the website and/or the social media channels of the Partner;
- **for projects with a budget larger than € 100,000 and whose project finances a physical object, infrastructure or construction:** to put up a billboard at the site during implementation and replace

it with a permanent commemorative plaque no later than six months after completion, ensuring both comply with the requirements and designs set out in the EEA Civil Society Fund **Communication and Design Manual**;

- to provide the FO with at least **one video** and a **selection of at least 10 representative photos** from project activities, all with a minimum resolution of **1920x1080p** (Full HD), optimized for web and digital platforms.

! Important	Applicants should describe how they will fulfil all these minimal requirements in the Application form (Annex 1), under A2 Information and Communication, and budget them accordingly, if the case. The proposed information and communication actions should be closely connected and adapted to the project activities. All information and communication materials related to projects carried out with CSF support must be in line with the EEA Civil Society Fund Communication and Design Manual, available at www.eeacivilsocietyfund.ro. Please note that, if the Application is selected for funding, Applicants shall develop a Communication Plan in a format to be provided by the FO. During project implementation, the Fund Operator may, in well justified exceptional cases, waive the requirement for information and communication activities if these could jeopardise the project or put stakeholders at risk.

4. PROJECT BUDGETING RULES

4.1. Principles of project budgeting

Financial management is not just about keeping accounting records. It is an important part of project management and must not be seen as a separate activity. This chapter is supplemented by the provisions of Annex 2b – Guidelines for budgeting, which forms an integral part of the Guidelines for Applicants. In the event of discrepancies between this Guidelines and Annex 2b – Guidelines for budgeting, the provisions of Annex 2b shall prevail. Depending on the type of grant, expenditure will be reimbursed as follows:

Large Grants		
Category of cost	**Budgeting/reporting method**	**Required documents**
Project personnel	Unit cost	Timesheets, activity report
Other costs than personnel costs	Real costs	Supporting documents (contracts, invoices, proof of payment, deliverables, etc.)
Indirect costs	Flat rate (15% of personnel costs)	No specific supporting documents required

Thus, for the personnel involved in the project, unit costs established at the beginning of the project will be used. The unit cost for each individual will be determined by dividing the most recently documented annual gross cost (from the employment contract / addendum) by **1,720 hours for full-time employees**, or by a corresponding proportion of 1,720 hours for part-time employees.

This figure of 1,720 is based on the European Commission's average weekly working hours multiplied by 52 weeks, minus annual paid leave and the average number of public holidays per year. This figure may be used for all full-time employees and is based on a 40-hour working week.

"Most recent" annual gross cost means that the latest available data must be used. However, these do not need to correspond to a calendar or financial year. The important requirement is that the data cover a 12-month period (i.e. the 12 months preceding the submission of the funding application). Annual gross costs may be based on the actual costs of the individual concerned. They may also be based on the average costs of a larger group of employees, for example those performing similar work, in order to determine a unit cost for new staff members.

At the reporting stage, it will not be necessary to demonstrate the actual cost through payslips/ bank statements for each cost item, but rather to prove the implementation of the activity (e.g. timesheets confirming the number of units worked).

Indirect costs are budgeted and reported based on salary costs as the calculation base. Therefore, **a percentage of 15% of reported salary costs will be applied.** No supporting documents will be required at the reporting stage.

The remaining budget categories shall be budgeted taking into account that they will be reported as actually incurred costs, supported by supporting documents (contracts, invoices, bank statements, etc.).

4.2. Eligible expenditure

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred by the Project Promoter and/or the project Partner, as well as the expenses covered by simplified cost options (unit costs and flat rates) which meet the following criteria:

• they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the Grant Contract;
• they are incurred no later than the final date of eligibility of costs at the Programme level, which is 30 April 2031;
• they relate to the subject of the Grant Contract, and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
• they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
• they are used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its expected outcome/s, in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
• they are identifiable and verifiable, through being recorded in the accounting records of the Project Promoter and determined according to the applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles;
• they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social security legislation.

! Important	• Where reimbursement of expenditures takes place on the basis of **unit costs** the actions constituting the basis for reimbursements are to be carried out between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the Grant Contract.

	• Where reimbursement of expenditures takes place on the basis of **flat rate**, the basis costs must be incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the Grant Contract. • Please note that the inclusion of a cost in the project budget approved by the Fund Operator cannot be considered as confirmation of eligibility of that expenditure item.

Expenditures are considered to be incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid, and the goods delivered or the services and works performed. By way of exception, costs for which an invoice was issued in the last month of the project's eligibility period are considered incurred within the eligibility period if they are paid by the end of the next month after the final date of eligibility. Overheads and the depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred at the time they are recorded in the accounting records of the Project Promoter and/or Partner(s).

The internal accounting and auditing procedures of the Project Promoter and Partner(s) must allow for the direct reconciliation of expenditures and revenues recorded in the project's analytical accounting/ cost centers with the amounts reported in the project's financial statements on the project and supporting documents.

Direct costs. The eligible direct costs for a project are those costs identified by the Project Promoter and/or its Partner(s), in accordance with general accounting principles and standard internal rules, as specific costs directly linked to the implementation of the project and which can therefore be directly recorded in the project's analytical accounting/cost center.

The following direct costs are eligible only if they comply with the eligibility principles set out above:

• personnel costs allocated to the project;
• travel and subsistence allowances for personnel and volunteers taking part in the project, if they are in line with the Project Promoter's and project Partner's usual practices on travel costs;
• costs related to new or second-hand equipment, provided that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the project objectives;
• costs of consumables and supplies, if they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
• costs entailed by other contracts awarded by the Project Promoter and/or project Partner for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement;
• costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Grant Contract.

! Important	Costs related to reconstruction, renovation, or refurbishment of real estate **shall not exceed 50%** of the eligible direct cost of the project. If these costs exceed € 50,000, the PP must take all reasonable measures to ensure that the relevant immovable property is used for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for at least three years after the completion of the project.

As a general rule, for procurement and contract award procedures under grant agreements, national and European Union legislation shall be observed. For purchases with **a value of € 15,000 or higher**, the Project Promoter/Partner shall invite at least three suppliers/service providers to submit offers. The

contract should be awarded to the bid offering the best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate). The entire selection procedure should be documented.

Indirect costs are all eligible costs that cannot be directly attributed to the project. They may not include any eligible direct costs.

On a case-by-case basis, in case of Partners that are international organisations, or bodies or agencies thereof, indirect costs may be identified in accordance with the relevant rules established by such organisations.

4.3. Excluded costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

• interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges (e.g. costs for loans taken in connection with the project, penalties / taxes related to late payment of invoices, penalties and interest for late payment of contributions and taxes to the state budget, etc.);
• charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs related to the special accounts of the project requested by the Fund Operator, provided they are mentioned in the Grant Contract and the costs of the financial services imposed by the Grant Contract;
• costs related to purchase of land or real estate: **ONLY** the costs related to reconstruction, renovation, or refurbishment of real estate can be considered eligible, but shall not exceed 50% of the eligible direct cost of the project;
• provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
• losses due to exchange rate differences;
• recoverable VAT, according to the legal regulations in force;
• costs that are covered by other sources; double financing must be avoided (e.g. if the full value of a previously purchased equipment was financed from another grant, the depreciation of this equipment cannot be the eligible expenditure within the project);
• fines, penalties (ex. fines imposed by public bodies due to the lack of security measures on the site of a building, parking fines, fines for late payment) and costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project;
• excessive or reckless expenditure (these must be taken in relation to the principle of eligibility of expenses according to which they must be "proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project" - (e.g. business travel class, purchasing state of the art equipment where cheaper options would cover the same need).

5. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS AND PARTNERS

Territorial scope: the Programme aims to support **Romanian CSO projects in Romania**, without prejudice to actions that are carried out in Donor or Beneficiary States or Border States with Romania under partnerships created to implement the selected projects.

In exceptional and well justified cases, there could be allowed initiatives to participate/ organize organisational development activities in other EU countries than the one already mentioned above.

5.1. Eligible Applicants

A. Eligible Applicants are **non-governmental and non-profit organizations**, legally established in Romania, organized and operated in accordance with the relevant Romanian laws, respectively:

- Associations, foundations or federations legally established in Romania, having acquired either Romanian legal personality or the status of foreign legal entities recognized in Romania, and operating under the Government Ordinance 26/2000 and/or the Law 21/1924 on associations and foundations (with subsequent amendments and completions), or
- National Red Cross Society in Romania, established under the Law 139/1995 (amended and by the Law 524/2004) and its structures with legal personality.

Voluntary[4], non-profit organisations, established as legal entities in Romania, with a non-commercial purpose falling outside the above categories may be considered eligible on a case-by-case basis if they are, and fulfil the requirements described below at sections B and C and if they are not in the situations described in sections D and E.

B. Additionally, Applicants shall meet the following requirements:
(a) abide by the principles of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights for all, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and
(b) have the capacity, according to their statutes, to act in the field addressed by the project, and
(c) are independent of the local, regional and national government and other public entities[5], and
(d) are independent of political parties, and
(e) are independent of profit-making entities (commercial entities)[6], and

[4] i.e. have a voluntary nature, namely it should the result of an initiative of association arising from the will of the founding members, and that the capacity of associate should not be based on a legal obligation but on the member's own will.

[5] To verify if an organisation fulfils this conditions, the FO's assessment will mainly include the following aspects:
- public institutions and/or public authorities do not represent more than half of the members with voting rights within the organization;
- public institutions and/or public authorities, or their representatives acting as natural persons on behalf of such entities, do not hold more than half of the voting power within the Board of Directors or the General Assembly;
- the purpose and objectives set out in the statues are established autonomously by the organization, without being subordinated to or limited to supporting a public institution and/or public authorities;
- the organisational operational structures and their strategic decisions, the planning and implementation of its activities are neither influenced by public institutions / public authorities nor conditioned by the administrative priorities of public institutions and/or public authorities.

[6] To verify if an organisation fulfils this conditions, the FO's assessment will mainly include the following aspects:
- profit making entities do not represent more than half of the members with voting rights within the organization;
- profit making entities, or their representatives acting as natural persons (such as owners, directors, or employees acting on behalf of these companies), do not hold more than half of the voting power within the Board of Directors or the General Assembly;
- the purpose and objectives set out in the statues are established autonomously by the organization, without being subordinated to or limited to supporting the commercial interests, market positions, profitability or promotion of any profit-making entity.

(f)	do not promote a religious doctrine, mission or proselytism related to the beliefs of a particular faith (beyond basic religious/cultural awareness raising), and
(g)	have transparent structures and governing bodies which are accountable to their members and donors, and
(h)	are directly responsible for designing and managing the project and do not act as an intermediary.

C. Additionally, Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria, applicable to the past 5 years:	
(a)	have not promoted or engaged in documents or actions that contravene PSEAH (prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment) standards;
(b)	have not promoted or engaged in documents or actions of sexual harassment, moral harassment in the workplace, or any form of harassment, sexual assault, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation, discrimination, as well as any other form of abuse or attempted abuse against a person in a position of vulnerability, in a relationship of power or trust, or any form of physical, psychological, or coercive aggression or violence;
(c)	have not promoted or engaged in documents or actions that have violated or aimed to restrict fundamental human rights, as defined by the Romanian Constitution and the jurisprudence of the Romanian Constitutional Court, national legislation, and other international treaties to which Romania is a party in the field of fundamental human rights, at the level of the European Union and the Council of Europe, including through the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights;
(d)	have not promoted or engaged in acts or actions of discrimination, including by supporting a cause or making public statements that have discriminated against a person, a group of persons, or a community based on race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social category, beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, chronic disease, HIV infection, or belonging to any other disadvantaged category;
(e)	have not promoted or engaged in public behaviour that fosters nationalist-chauvinist propaganda, incitement to hatred, violence, and discrimination, or behaviour aimed at or resulting in the violation of dignity or the creation of an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive atmosphere against a person, a group of persons, or a community, directly or indirectly related to their belonging to a certain race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social category, beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, chronic disease, HIV infection, or any other disadvantaged category;
(f)	have not used, promoted, or displayed in their activities or in public spaces symbols, messages, or ideologies associated with organizations, movements, or extremist groups prohibited by the national legislation.

The eligibility criteria will be verified by the FO, in accordance with the following available sources:

1. the existence of a decision or judgment by an authority, public institution, or court that establishes and/or sanctions the Applicant for violating the documents or actions mentioned in section C letters a)-f);

- the organisational operational structures and their strategic decisions, the planning and implementation of its activities are neither influenced by profit-making entity nor conditioned by the administrative priorities of profit-making entity;

2. the existence of a complaint from other CSOs indicating that the Applicant engaged in documents or actions mentioned in section C letters a)-f);
3. the existence of activities or projects through which the Applicant carried out documents or actions mentioned in section C letters a)-f);
4. the initiation, support, or signing of position papers, endorsements, petitions, or requests addressed to authorities, public institutions, or other natural or legal persons through which the organization engages in documents or actions mentioned in section C letters a)-f);
5. the existence of statements made by the Applicant and/or its representatives in the public space, including on social media or in mass media, through which they engage in documents or actions mentioned in section C letters a)-f) – for this criterion to be considered, the statements must be confirmed by at least three verifiable public sources, such as online press, social media platforms or other recognized publications;
6. any other verifiable and credible public source, including social media, demonstrating the violation of the documents and actions mentioned in section C letters a)-f) – for example, but not limited to, reports from national, European or international CSOs, independent journalistic investigations, etc.

The FO is not limited in its compliance analysis solely to the existence of a decision or judgment by an authority, public institution, or court that establishes and/or sanctions the Applicant. The FO has the right to base its decision on the verification sources mentioned above.

The eligibility criteria mentioned in section C, will be verified only for those proposals that are recommended for funding after the technical and financial evaluation, and before the decision is taken by the Selection Committee. In case an Applicant does not meet the additional eligibility criteria, the project will not be proposed for financing.

D. Not eligible Applicants
(a) any legal entities who do not meet all criteria mentioned in sections A, B & C;
(b) political parties;
(c) religious institutions (religious cults, religious associations established under the Law 489/2006 on freedom of religion and general regime of cults);
(d) professional associations (the associations which makes conditional the exercise of a certain profession with the membership in the association, and the purpose and objectives of the association are to further the specific interests of its members only);
(e) social partners (trade unions and employers' organizations);
(f) profit-distributing cooperatives.

E. Applicants will be considered non-eligible and will not be awarded grants if they fall under one of the supplementary situations below:
(a) are bankrupt, are in the administration of a judicial authority or are being winding up, have suspended the activity, are subject of proceedings concerning these issues or are in a similar situation following the application of a similar procedure provided for in the national legislation or regulations in force;
(b) are guilty of serious professional misconduct proven by any means the FO can justify;
(c) have not fulfilled obligations related to the payment of social security contributions or taxes to the state budget in accordance with the national legislation;

	(d) have been the subject of a final decision *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization or any other illegal activity to the detriment of financial interests, without the evidence that corrective action has been taken in this respect in recent years;
	(e) organisations from which the amount due was not recovered, following a final court decision in connection with the NGO Fund Programme 2009-2014.

! Important	Each Applicant is required to submit a Declaration of eligibility (Annex 3) stating that the Applicant meets all the eligibility criteria outlined above. The Declaration of eligibility shall be completed, signed with a wet or qualified electronic signature by the legal representative of the Applicant, dated, scanned (if needed) and uploaded as a digital document within the Application form. For projects selected for funding, Applicants will be required to submit an updated Declaration of eligibility. The FO reserves the right to request any supporting documentation to verify the information provided in the Declaration. The eligibility of each Applicant or Partner will be assessed on an individual basis, considering the specific documents presented. The FO reserves the right to evaluate each situation *in concreto* and to make a final decision on eligibility based on its own assessment. If the FO determines that the eligibility criteria are not fulfilled, the Applicant and/or Partner will be informed of the rationale behind the decision.

5.2. Eligible Project Partners

Projects may be implemented in partnership with project **Partners.** Project Partners shall share a common social goal with the Applicant, which is to be realised through the implementation of the project. Partners shall be actively involved in and effectively contribute to the implementation of the project.

Partnerships are not mandatory, but highly encouraged, especially with Partners from the Donor States. The following legally established entities are eligible to be project Partners: **any non-governmental organisations, public entities** (such as local and central public authorities, public institutions / agencies, decentralized governmental public services, territorial administrative units, universities, etc.) as well as **private entities** (commercial or non-commercial), **established as a legal person** either in: **Romania, Donor States** (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein), **Beneficiary States** (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia) and/or **Countries outside the European Economic Area that have a common border with Romania** (Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia), any **international intergovernmental organisation** or body or agency thereof. **Informal groups** are considered eligible project Partners provided they meet the following requirements:

(a) their members are legal residents or based in Donor States, Beneficiary States or a country outside the European Economic Area that has a common border with the Beneficiary State;

(b) they are not established or operating with the purpose of personal profit;

(c) membership in the group is voluntary and non-discriminatory;

(d) their purpose aligns with the objective of the EEA CSF;

(e) they are independent of local, regional and national government and other public authorities, as well as of political parties, religious institutions and commercial organisations; and

(f) they are represented by one single person, with legal residency in the Beneficiary State, who signs the partnership agreement on behalf of the group.

Only the following entities are eligible to receive funding as project Partners under the Programme:

- **non-commercial private entities, including CSOs**, that meet the eligibility requirements set for the Applicants under section B & C and are not in the situations specified under section E a)-e);
- **international intergovernmental organisations** or agencies or bodies there of;
- **public entities;**
- **informal groups** that meet the requirements above; in this case, the Project Promoter shall be the formal recipient of the project grant covering the activities of the informal group. The project Grant Contract and partnership agreement shall in these cases contain provisions to this effect.

Commercial entities may participate as Partners in the project; however, **they are not eligible to receive funding** from the grant, though they may contribute to the project activities.

The **Declaration of eligibility** submitted by the Applicant with the project proposal will also certify the fulfilment by the Partners of the eligibility conditions specified in this section.

In case of projects implemented in partnership with one or several entities, it is mandatory for the Applicants to submit with the Application form a **Partnership Declaration** (Annex 4) signed with the Partner/s (including Partners from Donor States, Beneficiary States, Countries outside the European Economic Area that have a common border with Romania). The Partnership Declaration shall be in English in the case of projects implemented in partnerships with entities from countries other than Romania and Republic of Moldova.

The Applicant coordinates the implementation of the project and, in case it is selected for funding, will represent the Partners and will sign the Grant Contract. Eligibility of costs generated by the Partners must respect the same rules that apply to the costs generated by the Applicant.

! Important	**A project partnership shall not be mistaken for sub-contracting.** Project Partners always share a common economic or social goal throughout the implementation of the project and cooperate throughout the entire project realisation. Sub-contracting is aimed at one or several specific deliverables, e.g. services or equipment to implement a specific activity within the project. Sub-contracting shall always be carried out based on an appropriate service or purchase contract, according to the applicable public procurement rules as defined in section 4. Project budgeting rules

5.3. Limitations

An Applicant shall submit **maximum one project proposal for the Call #1**. There are no restrictions regarding the number of project proposals submitted in which an organization participates as Partner.

In case an Applicant submits more than one project proposal under the Call #1, the FO will request the Applicant to indicate the application that will enter the administrative and eligibility verification to comply with the limitation established. If the Applicant does not respond in 5 working days from the receipt of the FO request, all its applications will be rejected and none of them will enter the administrative and eligibility verification.

6. HOW TO APPLY: PREPARATION, SUBMISSION AND REGISTRATION

Only applications submitted before the deadline in the prescribed format with all the annexes and in an electronic version via platform https://finantaripublice.fdsc.ro/ will be evaluated. To apply it is necessary to follow the next steps:

(1) Download from the Programme website	**Guidelines for Applicants and all Annexes:** Annex 1 – Application form Annex 2a – Project budget Annex 2b – Guidelines for budgeting Annex 3 – Declaration of eligibility Annex 4 – Partnership Declaration (if the case) **Supporting documents:** Programme Indicators Guidance EEA Civil Society Fund Communication and Design Manual Guidelines for using the online platform Organizational Development Matrix (https://app.crestem.ong/) Toolkit for integrating intersectionality in project design
(2) Develop the Application	The project must be formulated clearly and concisely, based on a coherent intervention logic that addresses the identified problem through precisely defined and quantified beneficiaries. The detailed project implementation plan, including the timeline, detailed budget, communication plan and capacity of organizations and sustainability of the project are part of the Application. Applicants should carefully select the relevant Outcome and Output indicators from the tables provided at section 3.5. In drafting the application, the working version (Word format) of the Application form it can be used. Please read **Annex 2b – Guidelines for Budgeting** carefully before completing your financial proposal, as the full project budget must be uploaded as an annex including **all worksheets**. In the main Application form, you should only enter the **requested grant amount** expressed in **Euro**.
(3) Submit the Application	Create/ log in into your account on the application platform. Take note that the Romanian CSO Partner must also have an account on the online platform. Fill in the Application on the online platform. Make sure that all compulsory annexes (2a, 3 and 4 – if the case) are uploaded in the accepted formats. **For Annex 4 – Partnership Declaration**, in case of multiple declarations, they must be uploaded as a **single PDF document combining all of them** or as a single **compressed archive**. **Validate the final form of the Application before the deadline, 08 October 2026, 16:00 (Romania time).** Before validation, please ensure that all compulsory annexes have been included. Once validated, you will be able to view the entire application and

	the uploaded annexes, but **no further changes or edits can be made**. If you identify any issues after validation, but before the deadline, please contact the FO immediately.

! Important	The final version of the Application submitted for evaluation must be completed, have the mandatory annexes uploaded, and be validated on the application platform before the deadline. Not uploading the mandatory annexes leads to the exclusion of the application during the administrative compliance and eligibility assessment. **Only** the information included in the **Application and in the compulsory annexes** will be considered for evaluation.

A detailed procedure for online application is described in the *Guidelines for using the online platform* available on the Programme website.

The Application will be filled in Romanian (the only exceptions are the sections indicating otherwise and the Partnership Declaration in case of a foreign Partner). The Application is complete only when it contains all following documents:

Document	Submission through https://finantaripublice.fdsc.ro/
Application form	Filled in the platform
Project budget (Annex 2a)	Uploaded as annex in EXCEL format
Declaration of eligibility (Annex 3)	Uploaded as PDF or JPEG format
Partnership Declaration (if the case) (Annex 4)	Uploaded as PDF or JPEG format or as a compressed archive (ZIP, RAR) in case of multiple declarations

A registration number will automatically be generated once the first information of the Application is saved to the platform. This number will further be used in the correspondence between the FO and the Applicant.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE, ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

7.1. Evaluation and project selection process

All applications received under this Call for project proposals will enter the evaluation and selection procedure as follows:

1. Verification of administrative compliance and eligibility	• Verification of administrative compliance and eligibility. • Requests for clarifications (if the case). • Informing the Applicants on the results of the administrative and eligibility verification.
2. Technical and financial evaluation	• Applications that are compliant with the criteria in Step 1 are randomly assigned to two impartial evaluators. • Applications are scored based on the evaluation criteria. • According to the total average scores, a ranking list is prepared.

3. Selection Committee	• The Selection Committee approves a list of projects to be financed, conditions (if existing), reserve list and/or rejected applications. • The Selection Committee provides the Steering Committee with its recommendation.
4. Steering Committee	• The Steering Committee confirms the decisions of the Selection Committee and justifies any changes (if the case). • The Steering Committee makes the final decision on the list of projects to be financed, reserve list and/or rejected applications.
5. Announcing the results	• Applicants are informed about the final decision of the Steering Committee.

To ensure transparency, the FO publishes the lists with the applications received, as well as the list of applications entering each evaluation stage.

7.2. Verification of administrative compliance and eligibility

All Applications submitted within the deadline will be assessed according to the administrative compliance and eligibility criteria, based on a Yes/No grid. Below is the grid that shall be used for the verification of administrative compliance and eligibility:

1. ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLIANCE	**Yes**	**No**
The project application includes all the annexes required for the current Call for proposals:		
1.1. The online Application Form (Annex 1) is filled in Romanian, including the summary in English and is complete (all compulsory fields are filled in)		
1.2. The project Budget is filled in, respects the format from Annex 2a, is provided in Euro and is uploaded (in Excel format)		
1.3. The Declaration of eligibility (Annex 3) is filled in Romanian, signed with a wet or qualified electronic signature by the legal representative of the Applicant, dated, scanned (if needed) and is uploaded		
1.4. If applicable, the Partnership Declaration/s (Annex 4) is/are filled in, signed with a wet or qualified electronic signature by the legal representatives of the Applicant and Partner/s, dated, scanned (if needed) and is/are uploaded		
The assessment of eligibility will be conducted only for the applications that are compliant with the administrative criteria.		
2. ELIGIBILITY	**Yes**	**No**
2.1. The Applicant is eligible		
2.2. The Partner/s is/are eligible		
2.3. The project falls into the types of grants (amount, duration) that can be awarded within the current Call for proposals		

The FO may request clarifications when the information provided is not clear enough and sufficient to allow an objective assessment of the administrative compliance and eligibility of the application. The clarification shall be submitted by the Applicant in no more than 2 working days from the FO's notification. The

information exchange will take place on the application platform. Please note that Annex 2a, Annex 3 and Annex 4 (if the case) cannot be requested in case they are missing from the submitted application.

! Important	In case of inconsistencies between the amounts mentioned in the Application form and those included in the Project budget (Annex 2a), those from the Project budget will be taken into consideration. Should any Application be submitted with sections containing unintelligible sequences of letters and/or numbers, the FO reserves the right to consider them invalid applications and exclude them from the evaluation process.

The Applicants will be notified via e-mail once the result of the administrative compliance and eligibility assessment is available in their organization's account.

Applicants may **appeal the decision over compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria** within **10 calendar days** from the notification date of the results, to apel1csf@fdsc.ro as follows:

- the appeal will be formulated in writing and will include the reason for which such a request is well justified;
- no new documents may be submitted in support of the case, and the content of the initial submitted application cannot be modified.

The FO will take into consideration only the appeals submitted by the legal representative of the Applicant or by the person empowered on his behalf. The FO's decision after appeal is final and will be communicated to the Applicant within **15 working days** from the receipt of the appeal. No further appeal on the same application could be formulated afterwards.

7.3. Technical and financial evaluation

Applications that meet the administrative compliance and eligibility criteria will enter the technical and financial evaluation and be scored on a scale from 0 to 100, by two impartial evaluators. The evaluation process is conducted against specific criteria, each being assigned a score. The final score of each application is calculated as the arithmetic average of the points given by both evaluators. The grid for technical and financial evaluation is outlined below:

Dimensions and criteria of evaluation	Maximum score
1. The project relevance and coherence	**35**
1.1. The project demonstrates a clear contribution to the Programme and Call objectives and to the predefined Outcome and Outputs, by effectively integrating the project approach and expected changes described in the Guidelines for Applicants	12
1.2. The problem/ need addressed is clearly justified /documented with data, and strictly aligned with the Call objectives	7
1.3. The project addresses the problem through a clear and coherent intervention logic between objectives, activities and results, while demonstrating synergies with other initiatives	8
1.4. The beneficiaries and the other target groups are clearly identified, quantified, and relevant for the Call objectives	8

2. Project design, methodology and feasibility of the project	**30**
2.1. The project objectives are specific, measurable and realistic/achievable through the proposed activities	4
2.2. The activities are sufficiently described, effective and suitable for the beneficiaries and other target groups; the proposed methods are the most appropriate to achieve the expected results/change and the schedule is realistic	9
2.3. The project demonstrates a multi-layered approach (integrating direct intervention with organisational development), includes a monitoring and rapid response mechanism, and mainstreams gender equality, while addressing intersectionality where relevant	6
2.4. The target values for the Programme indicators are realistic and selected accordingly in relation to the proposed activities	4
2.5. Implementation risks are identified, and the proposed mitigation/operational response measures are appropriate.	3
2.6. The project proposes an efficient and innovative communication approach that ensures the visibility of results and follows the Programme's visual identity rules	4
3. Multiplication effect & Sustainability	**10**
3.1. The project demonstrates the potential to generate systemic change at the sector or beneficiary/ target groups level and a multiplication effect beyond the project duration	6
3.2. The identified conditions and proposed activities are directed towards the achievement of the project outcome/s (including by identifying and generating/ attracting the necessary sources of funding)	4
4. The budget of the project	**10**
4.1. The budget is well-justified, economical, and correlated with the proposed activities	8
4.2. The budget is correctly filled in and complies with the Program's budgeting and cost eligibility rules	2
5. Applicant and Partners	**15**
5.1. The role of the Partner/s within the proposed intervention, the necessity and the added value of the partnership are well-justified	3
5.2. Through the proposed partnership, the project contributes to the consolidation of Bilateral Relations (projects with Partners from Donor States)	2
5.3. Applicant and Partners (if the case) and the proposed project team have the experience*, expertise, motivation and capacity for implementing the project **For newly established organizations or those with no prior experience it will be taken into consideration the motivation and the experience of the proposed project team*	5
5.4. The project team structure is adequate for the implementation of the project (number of people involved, roles and responsibilities, management)	5
Total	**100**

! Important	In case a project receives **less than 25 points in the "Relevance and coherence" evaluation dimension, it will be excluded from further evaluation.** **65 out of 100 points is the minimum score** for each Application to be selected and recommended for funding. In case **the difference between the scores given by the two experts is more than 30%** of the higher score, the Application will be scored by a third impartial and independent evaluator. The average total score of the two closest scores shall be used for the ranking of the projects. If the score given by a third expert would not in any way result in recommending the application for financing, a third expert will not be appointed. In case two applications have the same average score, the one with the higher score in the "Relevance and coherence" evaluation dimension will be ranked higher. If this criterion does not allow for differentiation, the following criteria will be applied in order: "Project design, methodology and feasibility of the project"; "The budget of the project"; and "Applicant and Partners".

7.4. Selection Committee

Following the technical and financial evaluation, a ranking list will result based on the average scores awarded by the impartial evaluators.

The ranking list will be submitted by the FO to a **Selection Committee** consisting of independent experts and representatives of the FO Consortium with relevant expertise and experience. At this stage, representatives of FMO and the Embassies of the Donor States to Romania are invited as observers. Also, representatives from relevant institutions (ministries, governmental agencies etc.) may be invited as observers.

The **Selection Committee** will review the ranking lists and the recommendations made by the evaluators and will recommend to the FO the applications to receive grants, within the amount available for the Call for project proposals. The **Selection Committee** may amend and modify the ranking of the project applications in justified cases.

The conclusions of the **Selection Committee** may include conditions, clarifications and a reserve list with the project applications that are recommended to receive grants but cannot be supported at the time of the decision due to lack of funding.

7.5. Steering Committee

A **Steering Committee** of the Programme is responsible for taking the final decision concerning the selection of applications. The Steering Committee may modify the decision of the Selection Committee in justified cases. If such a modification results in a rejection of a project that otherwise would have been approved, the affected Applicant will be informed in writing about the justification for the modification.

The decision of the Steering Committee is definitive and is not subject to appeal.

7.6. Announcing the results

Once the final decision is taken, the result of the selection process for both successful and unsuccessful Applicants will be accessible, in the organisation's online platform account (the average score obtained for each evaluation criterion and the total average score of their application). Applicants will be informed via e-mail on the fact that the selection results are available in the organisation's account.

Upon request, unsuccessful Applicants and Applicants whose applications are on the reserve list will be provided with more detailed feedback on the assessment of their application. Applicants who have projects proposed for funding will be informed via an award letter, on the conditions they have to fulfil to sign Grant Contracts.

The final list of selected projects will be uploaded on the Programme's website only upon the signature of all Grant Contracts for the Call.

7.7. Complaints Committee

A **Complaints Committee** is established at the level of the Programme and is composed of three members. The objective of the Complaints Committee is to provide an accessible, transparent and consistent mechanism for complainants to express concerns regarding a supposed occurrence of mismanagement at the level of the Programme.

The decisions related to the administrative compliance and eligibility verification as well as the decisions related to the selection process are not subject to verification by the Complaints Committee.

8. CONTRACTING

All Applicants whose projects are selected for funding will receive an award letter outlining the next steps required for contracting. The FO will also ask for specific documents to be submitted prior to the signature of the Grant Contract.

! Important	**All the Grant Contracts and further documents elaborated during implementation shall be signed with a qualified electronic signature.** The Applicant must ensure that, upon signing the Grant Contract, the mandates of the Board of Directors are valid, updated and officially registered in the Register of Associations and Foundations/ or Register of Federations at the competent court. The FO will refrain from signing any contract with organisations whose mandates have expired or lack proper registration. These requirements apply equally to Partners (where applicable depending on their legal status) at the time of signing partnership agreements. Four further details regarding the validity and procedure registration of mandates in the Registers, please consult Legixplore.ONG on the platform: https://crestem.ong/ro/legixplore.

Please find below the list of the **documents necessary** for the Contract signature:

Applicant	• The certified true copy of the latest updated statute of the organization and of the corresponding final Court decision. If a consolidated version of the statute is not available, certified true copies of the initial statue and of all subsequent amendments, accompanied by the corresponding final Court decision, must be summited; • The excerpt from the Register of Associations and Foundations, in original, issued no more than 90 days before the date of its submission to the FO; • Valid tax certificate, in original, issued by the National Agency for Fiscal Administration;

	• Valid organization criminal record certificate, in original, issued by the competent authorities; • A bank statement or a formal letter confirming that both the EUR and RON accounts allocated for the project are owned by the Applicant, and indicating the initial balance (a 0 initial balance for both accounts is recommended); • Declaration of eligibility (according to the format from Annex 3), in original; The FO reserves the right to request the Applicant any kind of documents in support of the Declaration; • A copy of the Partnership Agreement signed by the Applicant with the Partner/s, in case of projects implemented in partnership; • The Communication Plan (according to the format provided by the FO); • CVs of all team members
For Romanian non-commercial private entities including **CSO Partner/s (if the case**)	• A document issued by the competent authority evidencing the legal personality, registration and legal status of the entity. In case of CSO Partners, the certified true copy of the latest updated statute of the organization and of the corresponding final Court decision. If a consolidated version of the statute is not available, certified true copies of the initial statue and of all subsequent amendments, accompanied by the corresponding final Court decision, must be summited; • The excerpt from the Register of Associations and Foundations, in original, issued no more than 90 days before the date of its submission to the FO; • Valid tax certificate, in original, issued by the National Agency for Fiscal Administration; • Valid organization criminal record certificate, in original, issued by the competent authorities; • A bank statement or a formal letter confirming that both the EUR and RON accounts allocated for the project are owned by the Partner/s, and indicating the initial balance (a 0 initial balance for both accounts is recommended); • CVs of all team members
For Romanian informal groups	• Informal Group eligibility declaration, signed by the designated representative of the group, confirming that the group meets the eligibility criteria set out in Section 5.2 of the Call; • Copy of a valid ID card of the designated representative demonstrating legal residency in the Beneficiary State; • A document confirming the appointment of the designated representative of the informal group for the purposes of the project.
For Romanian public entities (if the case)	• Documents/mentions that prove the entity's legal personality (as the case may be, the version updated at the date of submission of the law/operating regulation/decree/decision, etc.) or indicating the number, date and name of the legislative acts published in the Romanian Official Monitor; • CVs of all team members
For DS/ Beneficiary	• Documents translated into Romanian or English (copy or original) attesting that they are legal entities,

States/ Countries have a common border with Romania Partner(s)/ (if the case)	• CVs of all team members

In the case of projects that include costs related to construction, reconstruction, renovation or refurbishment of real estate, the following documents will be requested: an updated land register excerpt (issued no more than 90 days prior to submission) attesting the right of ownership or use of the building for the entire duration of the project and at least 5 years after its completion; if the property is not registered in the land register, the Applicant must provide official documents proving the ownership or use of the building (e.g. deed of ownership, administrative act, tax record certificate, etc) accompanied by a cadastral plan or a technical description of the property. In addition, a declaration may be required regarding the maintenance of the purpose for which the building is being rehabilitated and any other documents to support the declaration, an estimate of quantities elaborated and approved according to the legislation in force, building authorization.

For all projects: to prove the eligibility conditions, additional documents may be required, if the case, during the pre-contracting period. If the Applicant fulfils all the requirements included in the letter, the FO will sign a Grant Contract with the Applicant, who will then become Project Promoter (PP) and will take the administrative lead during implementation.

9. RULES APPLICABLE FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

9.1. Reporting

Each Project Promoter must submit to the FO the following types of reports:

Project Duration	Interim 1 (At Month 12)	Interim 2 (At Month 24)	Interim 3 (At Month 36)	Final Report (At Project End)
36 – 48 Months	**Within 30 calendar days** from the end of month 12 (covers months 1–12)	**Within 30 calendar days** from the end of month 24 (covers months 13–24)	**Within 30 calendar days** from the end of month 36 (covers months 25–36)	**Within 45 calendar days** from the end of implementation (covers months 37 to end)

Interim Technical reports will contain information on the implemented activities and achieved results and, progress towards achieving indicators target values, sustainability etc.

Interim Financial reports will contain information on the expenditures made by PPs and Partners during the reported period of project implementation.

Interim payments are conditioned by the submission of interim technical and financial reports by the Project Promoter. Together with the final technical and financial reports, they will serve as the basis on which the final project balance will be calculated.

Final Report Requirements:

- **Technical Report:** must be **cumulative**, covering the entire project implementation period. However, it must specifically **detail and highlight the activities carried out during the final unreported period**, while summarizing the overall project achievements.
- **Financial Report:** must cover **only the remaining period** not previously included in the interim reports.

9.2. Payment's procedures

The payment system ensures a **positive financial flow** for the projects, while minimising as much as possible the risks related to difficulties/ impossibility to recover the unspent amounts from the PPs. Payments to Project Promoters will be made in Euro (to the project dedicated Euro bank accounts indicated by themselves and mentioned in the Grant Contract) and reporting will be made at the InforEuro rate[7] corresponding to the month when the expense was committed/invoiced (e.g. date of the invoice not the date of the actual payment).

Every Project Promoter has the obligation to open two dedicated bank accounts for the Grant Contract it signs with the FO, as follows: an Euro account in which it will receive the Grant Contract related payments in Euro from the FO and a national currency (RON) account in which they will transfer the equivalent in national currency of the funds received in the Euro account. Both accounts will be indicated in the Grant Contract.

In case of projects implemented in partnership, each Romanian project Partner that manages any amount of the grant has the obligation to open a dedicated Euro account where they will receive the grant from the Project Promoter and a dedicated national currency account (RON) for the project.

The PPs and the Romanian project Partners have to use the RON dedicated bank account for all payments related to the project implementation. As an exception, the payment of salaries related to the personnel that is not 100% allocated to the project and the payment of the indirect costs can be made from the general account of the organization, with the obligation to reconcile the transfers between accounts by the end of the month following the one in which the payments were made.

In case of projects implemented in partnership with entities whose primary location is outside Romania, it is recommended for those Partners to have two dedicated accounts for the project: one in Euro and the other in the national currency (if different from Euro). These Partners may decide not to open dedicated accounts. In both cases the Partnership Agreement should specify the Partner account/s used for the project.

Payments of the project grant to Project Promoters may take the form of advance payments, interim payments and payments of the final balance. The maximum amount of the advance payment as well as the number and value of the interim payments will be differentiated according to the duration of the project and will be clearly stated in the Grant Contract.

The table below summarises the payment method applicable for projects based on large grants under Call #1 within CSF Romania:

Project duration	Advance payment	No. of interim payments	Interim payment percentage	Maximum percentage of the balance
Between 36-48 months (including)	Up to 30%	3 (three)	20%	At least 10%

[7] InforEuro rate is published on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/index_en.cfm

In cases of projects that have been assessed as posing a high risk for the Programme[8], the FO may make a justified decision to change the payments scheme (reducing pre-financing or exceptionally, applying a scheme without pre-financing under which the FO reimburses Project Promoters only the amount of grant expenses verified by the FO).

The payment method shall not change in case of extension of project Grant Contracts based on addendum, unless otherwise specified in the respective addendum. As a rule:

Payments general rule		
Advance payments	**Interim payments**	**Final payment / Reimbursement by the PP**
Payments shall be made by the FO within **10 working days** from the date of the Grant Contract signature, unless a later date has been set in the project contract.	**Payments** shall be made by the FO within **30 working days** from the date of receipt of the interim reports and payment claims.	**Payments** shall be made by the FO within **10 working days** from the date of FO acceptance of the final report and payment claim. **The reimbursement shall** be paid by the PP (in case of a negative balance) within **10 working days** from the date of receiving the notification from the FO regarding the amount to be reimbursed.

9.3. Proof of expenditure and audit

For Project Promoters and Romanian Partners an audit report will not be accepted by FO as sufficient evidence of the expenditures involved. Costs incurred by Project Promoters and project Partners shall be supported by receipted invoices, or alternatively by accounting documents of equivalent probative value. Indirect costs identified according to section 4.2 and other flat rates do not need to be supported by proof of expenditure.

A report by an independent auditor, qualified to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents, certifying that the reported costs are incurred in accordance with the Programme rules, the national law and relevant national accounting practices shall be accepted as sufficient proof of expenditure incurred for project Partners whose primary location is in one of the Donor States or project Partners that are international organisations or bodies or agencies thereof.

The FMO could organise audits and on-the-spot verification for Programme and projects and EFTA Board of Auditors/Office of Auditor General of Norway may conduct audits of the Programme and projects.

[8] This shall be based on a risk assessment prepared and documented by the FO, considering, inter alia, the Project Promoter's previous experience and/or its administrative and financial capacity.

10. CONTACT DETAILS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

While the Call for proposals is open, the FO will provide support to potential Applicants through info sessions, workshops and helpdesk (via email, phone or meetings) and the publication of the most relevant FAQs. Questions related to this Call for proposals may be addressed by potential Applicants by e-mail and/ or phone by at least **7 working days prior to closing date to:**

For the Call #1
Civil Society Development Foundation / Fundația pentru Dezvoltarea Societății Civile
Tel: 0040 757 579 184
E-mail: apel1csf@fdsc.ro
Contact person: Raluca Teodor, Grants Specialist
Technical support for the online application platform: support@fdsc.ro
Programme website: www.eeacivilsocietyfund.ro

The FO will submit the answers in **5 working days** from the reception of the questions and with at least two days before the deadline.

Questions that may be relevant to other Applicants, together with the corresponding answers, will be published regularly on the Programme website.

Please check regularly the Programme website for updated information on this Call for proposals or for upcoming calls and events.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Application form **/** Annex 2a – Project budget **/** Annex 2b – Guidelines for budgeting **/** Annex 3 – Declaration of eligibility **/** Annex 4 – Partnership Declaration