Iceland Liechtenstein Norway Civil Society Fund

OPEN CALL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs)

IN ESTONIA

FIRST CALL FOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS UNDER OUTCOMES 1 AND 2

AVAILABLE FUNDING: EUR 1 405 000

DEADLINE: September 28, 2026, 23:59 Tallinn time

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 **Estonia.** 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 allocation for the EEA Civil Society Fund in **Estonia** is **€ 6,4 million.**

The consortium of Open Estonia Foundation and Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations as Fund Operator manages the EEA Civil Society Fund in Estonia on behalf of the Donor States.

This call targets Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in the area of **democratic values, civic participation, information integrity, human rights and social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, rights of minorities, including LGBTIQ+, gender equality, climate action and environmental protection**, and has a total allocation of **EUR 1 405 000.**

The call text shall be read together with the **Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of EEA Civil Society Fund Estonia.**

SUMMARY OF THE CALL	
Title of the call	First Call for Strategic Projects
Purpose of the call	To support strategic projects that contribute to a more vibrant and resilient civil society protecting and promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights, in line with the below listed focus areas For detailed description see section 2.1 of this call.
Outcome(s)	Outcome 1: Democratic values and rule of law strengthened Outcome 2: Human Rights strengthened
Output(s)	Output 1.1: CSO participation in democratic processes increased Output 1.2: Civic engagement increased Output 1.3: Information integrity and media literacy increased Output 2.1: Human rights, including anti-discrimination, and social justice supported Output 2.2: Gender equality, including SRHR, and LGBTIQ+ rights supported Output 2.3: Climate action, environmental protection, and a just green transition supported
Relevant project activities	For detailed description see section 2.3 of this call.
Eligible project applicants	Non-profit associations and foundations that are established in Estonia under Non-profit Associations Act or Foundations Act and that are considered non-governmental organisations. For details see section 3.1 of this call.
Project duration	Between 12 and 24 months

Project grant amount	Between EUR 50 001 and 120 000
Co-financing	Grant rate is 100%
Partnerships	Applications may be submitted in partnership. In case of large projects, partnerships with other CSOs are required, for details see section 4 of this call. Partnerships with entities from the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) are encouraged.
Call available in the following language(s)	Estonian, English, Russian
Questions deadline	September 21, 2026, 15:00 Tallinn time
Application deadline	September 28, 2026, 23:59 Tallinn time

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1. BACKGROUND FOR THE EEA CIVIL SOCIETY FUND IN ESTONIA

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 **Estonia** is **€ 6,4 million.**

Through an open tender process, the secretariat of the Donor States – the Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) – has selected a consortium of Open Estonia Foundation and Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations as Fund Operator of the EEA Civil Society Fund in Estonia. The Fund Operator manages the EEA Civil Society Fund in Estonia 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 Estonia will include 7 open calls, contributing to the following outcomes:

- 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 aims to strengthen cooperation between civil society organisations in **Estonia** and civil society organisations in the Donor States **Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway**.

In addition, the programme has two country-specific focus areas: addressing challenges arising from the invasion of Ukraine, and intercultural, interethnic, and/or interreligious understanding or dialogue and inclusion.

The programme uses a results-based management approach. 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 the 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 in Estonia: www.eea-csf.ee.

2. FOCUS OF THIS CALL

2.1 Purpose of this call

The call responds to a complex and evolving context marked by political polarisation, populism, socio-economic inequalities, disinformation, geopolitical pressure, and declining trust in democratic institutions. At the same time, persistent discrimination, conservative backlash against human rights issues, and uneven implementation of equality and inclusion policies continue to affect vulnerable and marginalized groups. Environmental and climate-related policies also risk increasing inequalities if not implemented in an inclusive and socially just manner. Civil society is being sidelined in policy consultation processes by way of inconsistent engagement practices, and their input is often ignored.

The call supports strategic civil society initiatives that strengthen the capacity and influence of civil society organisations (CSOs) to **safeguard democratic values**, reinforce **the rule of law**, promote **human rights and equal treatment**, influence **policymaking**, strengthen **government accountability**, and **engage people** more meaningfully in democratic and community life. Projects that address persistent challenges such as **discrimination**, **unequal treatment**, weak implementation of **human rights commitments, gender stereotypes**, conservative backlash against **sexual and reproductive health and rights** (SRHR), exclusion of **vulnerable groups**, and the unequal impacts of **environmental and climate policies** are also welcomed.

The call particularly encourages strategic and long-term approaches that combine advocacy, watchdog activities, public awareness-raising, civic education, coalition-building, policy engagement, community mobilisation, media literacy, and grassroots participation. Initiatives that strengthen resilience to disinformation, foster dialogue and social cohesion across communities, and support meaningful participation of young people, minorities, vulnerable groups, and Ukrainian refugees are encouraged.

Special attention is given to addressing the **consequences of Russia's war in Ukraine**, including strengthening inclusion, participation, rights protection, and social inclusion of Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Estonia, while countering divisive narratives and discrimination. Such projects are expected to contribute to outputs 1.2 and/or 1.3 under Outcome 1, or to outputs 2.1 and/or 2.2 under Outcome 2, depending on the outcome area addressed.

Across all outcomes, contributing to the country-specific concern of **intercultural, interethnic, and/or interreligious understanding or dialogue and inclusion** is encouraged.

Similarly, across all outcomes, **bilateral cooperation** between civil society in Estonia and the donor states of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway is encouraged.

All projects selected under this call must contribute to a single outcome [1]and, within that outcome, to one or more outputs[2]. When applying, please **select the outcome that is most relevant to your project.**

[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. See more information in Annex 2.

[2] Outputs are the products, goods and services directly delivered by projects to the target group. They should be directly observable and measurable and able to be directly attributed to the activities of a project or programme.

The focus of the call is described below, organised by outcome.

2.2 Outcomes

2.2.1 OUTCOME 1: Democratic values and rule of law strengthened

Civil society organisations (CSOs) in Estonia face a complex and evolving environment where political polarisation, populism, and socio-economic inequalities undermine inclusive democratic participation and social cohesion. CSOs struggle to consistently influence policymaking, represent diverse constituencies, and ensure government accountability to democratic norms and rule of law principles.

At the same time, ethnic divides, particularly between Estonian and Russian-speaking communities, alongside external threats such as disinformation and geopolitical pressure, weaken public trust in democratic institutions.

Under Outcome 1, initiatives that strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations to safeguard democratic values, increase their influence on policymaking, reinforce the rule of law, and contribute to building a resilient and cohesive society are supported. Initiatives that promote civic education and democratic literacy, foster good governance and a culture of participation, and increase people's engagement in civic and community life, including the participation of young people, minorities, including Ukrainian refugees are also encouraged. Focus will also be placed on initiatives that enhance media literacy and critical thinking and strengthen resilience against disinformation.

Each project must be assigned to a single outcome and, within that outcome, to one or more of the outputs below.

Output 1.1. CSO participation in democratic processes increased

- Increased CSO engagement in policy development and monitoring
- Strengthened CSO advocacy and watchdog role
- Strengthened CSO networks and coalition-building

The dialogue between public authorities and civil society organisations is uneven, and cooperation remains fragmented, which in turn limits the overall influence of the civil society sector on societal processes. Although formal participation mechanisms are in place, the involvement of civil society organisations in policymaking is often procedural rather than substantive, constraining their ability to influence decisions and reducing government accountability.

The programme supports initiatives aimed at strengthening CSOs as effective partners in the design, implementation, and monitoring of public policies. It also supports the enhancement of civil society advocacy capacities, the promotion of meaningful and consistent engagement with decision-makers, and the development of cooperation and networks within the civil society sector to foster more open and transparent governance.

Output 1.2. Civic engagement increased

- Strengthened civic participation and engagement of citizens, including vulnerable groups
- Increased civic literacy, including vulnerable groups

Civic engagement in Estonia is hindered by insufficient civic education and limited opportunities for meaningful participation, particularly among youth and marginalized groups. Many citizens lack the knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage constructively in democratic processes, which contributes to political disengagement and societal polarization.

The programme supports investments in civic education and inclusive participation mechanisms, thus providing opportunities for direct experiences of democracy, collaboration, and civic participation. In addition, it supports initiatives that enable people of different ages and backgrounds to participate

more actively and effectively in decision-making processes and community engagement, thereby strengthening social cohesion and reinforcing democracy.

Special focus on country-specific concern of addressing the consequences of the war in Ukraine

Estonian society faces ongoing challenges related to the consequences of Russia's war in Ukraine. While many Ukrainian refugees have integrated relatively well, gaps remain in social inclusion, community engagement, and long-term integration that can be effectively addressed by civil society. In addition, there are attempts to undermine public support for Ukrainian refugees and diminish social cohesion in society.

Under this country-specific focus, the programme supports projects that engage and empower Ukrainian refugees and strengthen connections between refugees and host communities. This includes activities that promote participation, build mutual understanding, and foster inclusive communities. Initiatives that counter disinformation and negative narratives, and that strengthen trust and solidarity within society, are also encouraged.

Output 1.3. Information integrity and media literacy increased

- Enhanced media literacy and resilience to disinformation
- CSO capacity and preparedness to disinformation strengthened

The growing spread of misinformation and disinformation, including externally driven narratives, poses a significant threat to public trust, social cohesion, and the functioning of democratic institutions in Estonia. Limited media literacy skills across different segments of society reduce the ability of citizens to critically assess information and make informed decisions. At the same time, CSOs often lack the capacity for consistent, strategic, and credible communication needed to effectively counter false narratives.

The programme supports strengthening media literacy, critical thinking, and CSO communication capacities and other initiatives that contribute to better informed audiences and public debate, including non-Estonian audiences. Also strengthening CSO capacities to emerge as trusted sources of information, contributing to stronger information integrity and increased trust in democratic processes.

2.2.1.1 Expected results

Each project is expected to align with the main expected results, and report on them narratively and quantitatively.

To track progress, projects should 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. Indeed, during implementation, indicators become reporting tools. **The indicators listed in the table below are used to monitor progress and measure results at the programme level for this call.**

[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.

Each project under Outcome 1 is strongly encouraged to use at least one of the programme-level indicators from the selected outcome and output(s).[4] During implementation, the agreed indicator(s) will become a reporting tool. Project Promoters will be responsible for collecting and analysing data to report on the indicators and with narrative against the output and outcome.

Outcome 1: Democratic values and rule of law strengthened	
CIV-041	*Number of national, regional or local laws, policies or regulations proposed by or commented on by CSOs*
CIV-008	*Number of training participants self-reporting improved knowledge/understanding after the training (disaggregated by gender)*
ALL-013	*Estimated number of people who engaged and took an action in response to advocacy / awareness campaigns*
Output 1.1: CSO participation in democratic processes increased	
CIV-004	*Number of CSOs participating in consultations with a public institution*
CIV-015	*Number of public advocacy outputs delivered by supported CSOs*
CIV-030	*Number of new or continued partnerships established between supported CSOs and other entities within the Beneficiary Country*
Output 1.2: Civic engagement increased	
CIV-006	*Number of people who participated in consultations with a public institution facilitated by CSOs*
CIV-007	*Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course (disaggregated by gender)*
CIV-010	*Number of people engaged in CSO activities as volunteers*
ALL-012	*Number of advocacy/awareness-raising campaigns carried out*
EE-CIV-003	*Number of CSO-implemented initiatives promoting interethnic and intercultural understanding, dialogue or inclusion (including Ukraine)*
Output 1.3: Information integrity and media literacy increased	
CIV-007	*Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course (disaggregated by gender)*
ALL-004	*Number of assessments, studies or mappings completed*
CIV-030	*Number of new or continued partnerships established between supported CSOs and other entities within the Beneficiary Country (including non-Estonian-speaking groups and media entities)*
CIV-015	*Number of public advocacy outputs delivered by supported CSOs*

2.2.2 OUTCOME 2: Human rights strengthened

In Estonia, the advancement of human rights continues to be influenced by political tensions and conservative attitudes, particularly in areas such as gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights. Discrimination persists, and the reality does not always correspond to the protections guaranteed by legislation or to formally assumed state commitments. Broader societal attitudes, shaped by traditional norms and historical legacies, continue to hinder inclusive policymaking and reduce public support for change.

The programme supports CSO advocacy aimed at promoting human rights, equal treatment, and gender equality, as well as raising public awareness on these issues. The programme also strengthens the capacity of CSOs to influence policies, counter regressive narratives, and promote a just approach to climate and environmental action. Without strengthened advocacy, partnerships, and grassroots

[4] Project applicants can design and use their own additional outcome-level and output-level indicators to help track their specific results. These project-level indicators are not part of the programme's overall results framework. For more information, see Annex 2.

engagement, the potential of civil society to advance human rights, promote social justice, and support a just green transition cannot be fully realised.

Output 2.1. Human rights, including anti-discrimination, and social justice supported

- Increased awareness of human rights principles and anti-discriminatory practices
- Strengthened CSO advocacy and watchdog role

Despite existing legal frameworks, discrimination against vulnerable and marginalized groups persists, and the implementation of human rights commitments remains inconsistent. Civil society efforts are often constrained by limited advocacy capacity, insufficient public awareness, and weak enforcement of anti-discrimination measures.

The programme supports the strengthening of advocacy, promoting public awareness, on human rights and principles of equal treatment and building strategic partnerships. As a result, stronger legal frameworks and improved policy implementation will better protect marginalized groups, government accountability will increase, and public attitudes will shift towards greater inclusion and respect for human rights, particularly in underserved communities.

Special focus on country-specific concern of addressing the consequences of the war in Ukraine

Ukrainian war refugees in Estonia, especially women and other vulnerable groups, continue to face discrimination, gender stereotypes, and unequal treatment in access to services and the labour market. These challenges highlight the need for stronger protection of rights, equal opportunities, and gender-sensitive approaches. CSOs play a key role in advocating for the interests of Ukraine war refugees and providing them with targeted support.

The programme supports projects that address these issues through advocacy, awareness-raising, and policy engagement. This includes efforts to combat discrimination, promote gender equality, and improve access to fair employment and services. Projects that contribute to more inclusive policies and strengthen the protection of human rights in the context of refugee integration are also encouraged.

Output 2.2. Gender equality, including SRHR, and LGBTIQ+ rights supported

- Increased awareness of gender equality
- Strengthened protections of vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ+
- Increased engagement of vulnerable groups

Progress in gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights remains uneven, hindered by persistent gender stereotypes, conservative backlash against sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and ongoing discrimination and gender-based violence. Civil society faces the challenge of countering regressive narratives while providing essential support services to affected individuals.

The programme addresses these issues by supporting sustained advocacy, monitoring of government commitments, public education, and engagement of diverse audiences and target groups. As a result, gender stereotypes will gradually diminish, stronger protections and support will be available for women, LGBTIQ+ individuals and other vulnerable groups, and these issues will be more effectively integrated into national policies, aligning Estonia more closely with international and European human rights standards.

Output 2.3. Climate action, environmental protection, and a just green transition supported

- Increased CSO influence in environmental issues
- Increased civic participation and engagement of citizens in environmental issues

Environmental organisations face increasing pressure to compromise on sustainability goals, while climate policies risk disproportionately affecting marginalized communities if not designed inclusively. At the same time, there is a need to balance economic development with long-term ecological sustainability and social justice.

The programme supports strengthening CSO advocacy and actions, including at the grassroots level, to climate justice. As a result, environmental policies will better reflect principles of equity and sustainability, marginalized communities will be more actively involved in decision-making, and civil society will play a stronger role in ensuring a just and inclusive green transition.

2.2.2.1 Expected results

Each project is expected to align with the main expected results, and report on them narratively and quantitatively.

To track progress, projects should also contribute to programme-level indicators from the selected outcome and output(s).[5] 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. Indeed, during implementation, indicators become reporting tools. **The indicators listed in the table below are used to monitor progress and measure results at the programme level for this call.**

Each project under Outcome 2 is strongly encouraged to use at least one of the programme-level indicators from the selected outcome and output(s).[6] During implementation, the agreed indicator(s) will become a reporting tool. Project Promoters will be responsible for collecting and analysing data to report on the indicators and with narrative against the output and outcome.

Outcome 2: Human rights strengthened	
CIV-041	*Number of national, regional or local laws, policies or regulations proposed by or commented on by CSOs*
ALL-015	*Number of people self-reporting a change in their knowledge from advocacy / awareness campaigns (disaggregated by gender)*
Output 2.1: Human rights, including anti-discrimination, and social justice supported	
CIV-016	*Number of policy advocacy outputs delivered by supported CSOs*
ALL-012	*Number of advocacy/awareness-raising campaigns carried out*
CIV-007	*Number of people who have completed a CSO-led training course (disaggregated by gender)*
CIV-027	*Number of supported CSOs working on migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers' rights (including Ukrainians)*
Output 2.2: Gender equality, including SRHR, and LGBTIQ+ rights supported	
CIV-006	*Number of people who participated in consultations with a public institution facilitated by CSOs*
CIV-015	*Number of public advocacy outputs delivered by supported CSOs*
CIV-023	*Number of supported CSOs working on gender equality or women's/girls' rights*
CIV-026	*Number of supported CSOs working on LGBTIQ+ rights*
Output 2.3: Climate action, environmental protection, and a just green transition supported	

[5] 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.

[6] Project applicants can design and use their own additional outcome-level and output-level indicators to help track their specific results. These project-level indicators are not part of the programme's overall results framework. For more information, see Annex 2.

CIV-006	*Number of people who participated in consultations with a public institution facilitated by CSOs*
CIV-018	*Number of climate and environmental strategic litigation cases filed in court by the supported CSOs*
CIV-014	*Number of people who participated in public gatherings led by CSOs on climate justice and environmental issues*

2.3 Possible activities

To achieve the expected results, please see the below a non-exhaustive list of possible project activities that can be supported under this call:

- Advocacy to support a cause or policy
- Awareness-raising activities
- Capacity-building activities of CSOs
- Civic education and training
- Cultural activities for promoting social change
- Intercultural dialogue, including platforms to encourage dialogue between majority and minority groups
- Measures for increasing information integrity, media pluralism and media literacy, and countering misinformation and disinformation
- Legal aid, psychological assistance, and other forms of support for human rights defenders
- Networking of the civil society sector and with public and private sectors
- Outreach and community organising to encourage citizen activism, volunteering, and civic participation
- Outreach to and interest representation of target groups that are marginalised
- Participation in policy and decision-making processes
- Partnerships between CSOs and public and private sector entities
- Strategic litigation
- Research, advocacy and other activities to support good governance, anti-corruption and transparency
- Research and analysis to inform advocacy work and policy
- Watchdog activities and monitoring of policy development and implementation

Provision of social or similar services can only be supported if these services are necessary for enhancing advocacy, community participation, and/or civic engagement.

The EEA Civil Society Fund provides support for CSOs throughout Estonia. Applications from CSOs based in under-served geographic areas and led by target groups that are marginalised are encouraged.

3. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS AND PARTNERS

3.1 Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants are non-profit associations and foundations that are established in Estonia under Non-profit Associations Act or Foundations Act and that are considered non-governmental organisations falling within the following definition:

> *A non-profit voluntary organisation with a non-commercial purpose, independent of local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organisations.*

Religious institutions and political parties, social partners, trade- and professional associations or profit-distributing cooperatives are not eligible applicants. Faith-based organisations are eligible if they meet the principles identified above and if the funded activities do not directly or indirectly promote a religious doctrine, mission or proselytism related to the beliefs of a particular faith (beyond basic religious/cultural awareness raising).

All eligible applicants must abide by 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, and comply with the fundamental rights and obligations enshrined in relevant instruments and standards.

Eligible organisations can submit **one application as (lead) applicant within this call**. There is no limitation as to the number of partnerships any organisation may be involved in as a project partner.

3.2 Eligible project partners

The following entities are eligible to be project partners:

- Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as CSOs, established as a legal person either in the Donor States[7], or Beneficiary States[8];
- An international organisation or body or agency thereof;
- Informal organisations that are not registered legal entities (hereinafter referred to as "informal groups"). Informal groups are considered eligible project partners provided that:
    - their members are legal residents or based in either the Donor States, or Beneficiary States;
    - they are not established or operating with the purpose of personal profit;
    - membership in the group is voluntary and non-discriminatory;
    - their purpose aligns with the objective of the EEA Civil Society Fund;
    - 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
    - they are represented by one single person, with legal residency in Estonia. An informal group cannot not be a direct recipient of the project grant.

A partnership declaration between the Project Promoter and each of its partners shall be submitted as a supporting document to the application. The declaration shall be in Estonian or in English and shall be based on a template provided by the Fund Operator.

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[7] Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

[8] Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

A project partnership shall not be mistaken for sub-contracting. Project partners always share a common economic or social goal through the implementation of the project, and are actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of the project. In contrast, sub-contracting is aimed at one or several specific deliverables, e.g. services or equipment to realize a specific activity within the project. Sub-contracting shall always be carried out based on an appropriate service or purchase contract.

All eligible partners must abide by 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, and comply with the fundamental rights and obligations enshrined in relevant instruments and standards.

4. PROJECT CONDITIONS

There are **two types of strategic project grants** available under this call:

4.1 Medium-sized grants

to support CSOs in setting both short- and long-term goals within their specific focus area

Project duration	Between 12 and 24 months
Project grant amount	Between €50 001 and €70 000 (up to €80 000 in case of donor partnership projects)
Indicative start of project implementation	January 2027

4.2 Large grants

ranging to allow CSOs working in partnership with other CSOs or CSO coalitions to address systemic issues or achieve sector-wide impact

Partnership requirement	The project must be carried out in partnership with at least two Estonian CSOs
Project duration	Between 18 and 24 months
Project grant amount	Between €80 001 and €100 000 (up to €120 000 in case of donor partnership projects)
Indicative start of project implementation	January 2027

Detailed rules for projects are described in the Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of the EEA Civil Society Fund Estonia.

4.3 Co-financing

The grant rate of the project is 100%.

4.4 Eligible expenditure

Detailed rules on eligible expenditure are described in the Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of the EEA Civil Society Fund Estonia and the Cost Eligibility Guidance for the EEA Civil Society Fund Estonia.

Eligible project expenditures may take the following forms:

Real costs: reimbursement of actual eligible costs incurred by the Project Promoter and/or Project Partner for the purpose of successful completing of the Project.

Simplified Cost Options (SCOs): pre-defined amounts or percentages that represent the best possible approximation of actual (real) eligible costs incurred in practice when implementing an action. SCOs are an alternative to reimbursement based on real costs.

Specific provisions on establishing the amounts to be used via flat rates, unit costs and lump sums shall be determined in the project contract. The following Simplified Cost Options are made available in this call:

- flat rate: a pre-determined percentage used to calculate one or more cost categories in the project, for example other project costs or indirect costs;
- unit costs: pre-defined unit costs used to calculate the costs of different activities, for example personnel, events, trainings, trips or other activities;
- lump sums: pre-agreed fixed amounts linked to the achievement of specific project outputs or results;
- draft-budget method: the applicant first submits a traditional budget, which is then fully converted into Simplified Cost Options, using unit costs and/or lump sums.

For further information, please consult the Cost Eligibility Guidance for the EEA Civil Society Fund Estonia.

The applicant shall submit a project budget based on the template found on the Fund Operator's website.

4.5 Payment of the grant

The grant will be paid in instalments defined in the project contract:

Advance payment
Advance payments will be made within 10 working days after the signing of the project contract.
For project grants of EUR 25,001–40,000 and medium-sized strategic grants of EUR 50,001–80,000, the advance payment may be up to 50% of the grant. For large strategic grants of EUR 80,001–120,000, the advance payment may be up to 40% of the grant.

Interim payments
Interim payments will be made within 10 working days based on the approval of interim project reports submitted by the Project Promoter.
For project grants of EUR 25,001–40,000 and medium-sized strategic grants of EUR 50,001–80,000, interim payments may make up to 40% of the grant. For large strategic grants of EUR 80,001–120,000, interim payments may make up to 25% of the grant.

Final payment
Final payments will be made within 10 working days after the approval of the final project report.
For all grant types, the final payment will consist of the remaining balance and will be at least 10% of the grant.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE, ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

All project applications are assessed against the following criteria:

- administrative and eligibility criteria;
- evaluation criteria published in the call for proposal.

5.1 Administrative criteria

Administrative compliance is checked against the following criteria:

- the project application has been submitted electronically via eGRANT system;
- the project application has been submitted by the deadline of the call;
- the project application includes all requested annexes as specified in the call;
- the project application is signed by an authorized person.

Non-compliance with any of the above criteria will lead to the automatic rejection of the project application.

5.2 Eligibility criteria

Eligibility is checked against the following criteria:

- the applicant is a non-governmental organisation, registered in Estonia, that meets the eligibility criteria defined in Article 3 of the call text;
- project partners (if any) are CSOs, or any other public or private entities established in Estonia, any other Beneficiary States[9], or Donor States, or any international organisation or body or agency thereof. Informal groups that are not registered legal entities in Estonia are also eligible as partners;
- in case of large projects, there are at least two project partners who are non-governmental organisations as defined in Article 3 of the call text, registered in Estonia;
- the requested grant amount is within permissible limits as published in the call;
- the proposed implementation period is within permissible limits as published in the call.

The Fund Operator may ask for additional information from the applicant in case of doubt whether any of the eligibility criteria above have been met.

In case of clerical mistakes in the project application or annexes, detected during the administrative or eligibility check, the applicant is given 3 working days to correct the mistakes and re-submit the document(s) in question. After re-submission of the document(s) the administrative and/or eligibility check is repeated.

Once the administrative and eligibility check has been completed, the applicants whose project applications have been rejected are notified of the decision of the Fund Operator and are informed of the reasons for the rejection.

In case the applicant has submitted more than one application as (lead) applicant, the most recently submitted application shall be considered; all other applications are automatically rejected.

5.2.1 Appeals

Applicants whose applications are rejected due to non-compliance with administrative or eligibility criteria will be informed of the reasons for rejection and have a period of 5 days to appeal the decision, counted from the day after the notification. Appeals should be directed to: csf@oef.org.ee.

[9] Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia

5.3 Selection criteria

Applications that meet the administrative and eligibility criteria of this call will be assessed by at least two impartial experts appointed by the Fund Operator.

The experts will independently score the project application according to the selection criteria in the grid below. The application can be given an overall score of maximum **100** points.

Selection criterion		**Max. score**
1	**Relevance**	**30**
1.1	Relevance of the project in relation to the focus of the call	8
1.2	Project's alignment and contribution to expected outcomes and outputs of the programme	12
1.3	Expected contribution to positive change for target groups, communities, public attitudes, policies, institutional practices or democratic participation, proportionate to the scale of the intervention	10
2	**Methodology**	**22**
2.1	Coherence of the project: it articulates a clear and logical intervention linking the problem area and needs to the proposed intervention, activities and expected results for the target group.	12
2.2	Activity plan: it is clear, practicable and sufficient to achieve the expected results	10
3	**Sustainability**	**8**
3.1	Likelihood that project results, capacities, partnerships, practices, knowledge or benefits for target groups will continue beyond project funding, where relevant and proportionate to the intervention	5
3.2	Multiplication of project results – will the results of the project be valuable to society at large, and/or are usable by other parties at a later stage	3
4	**Experience and capacity of the applicant (and partners, if applicable)**	**15**
4.1	The applicant demonstrates sufficient capacity to implement the proposed project, considering the size, complexity and risk level of the intervention, including relevant knowledge, competencies, resources, and partnerships	10
4.2	Alignment of applicant (and partners, if applicable) with 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	5
5	**Budget and cost efficiency**	**15**

5.1	Budget is realistic, coherent and proportionate to planned activities and expected results	10
5.2	Costs are necessary and represent value for money	5
6	**Communication**	**5**
6.1	Communication and outreach measures are appropriate to ensure transparency and accountability of implementation, dissemination of results to relevant target groups and stakeholders, and visibility of the EEA Civil Society Fund and donor support	5
7	**Added value**	**5**
7.1	The project contributes to country-specific concern of intercultural, interethnic, and/or interreligious understanding or dialogue and inclusion	3
7.2	Donor partnership projects: The choice of donor country partner(s) is well justified, and their role is clearly defined. The partnership brings complementary expertise, experience or resources that enhance the quality, effectiveness and expected impact of the project.	2
	Total score	**100**

An application must score at least **75** points to be recommendable for funding.

6. SELECTION PROCESS

All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

Timeline for the selection process:

June 2026	Announcement of call
August-September 2026	Information sessions for potential applicants
September 28, 2026, at 23:59 EEST	Deadline for submission of applications
October 2026	Application is checked against administrative and eligibility criteria
October-November 2026	Independent experts assess application
End of November 2026	Selection Committee meeting
Early December 2026	Decision on applications to be funded taken by Steering Committee of the Fund Operator
Mid-December 2026	Announcement of applications awarded funding on the programme's website www.eea-csf.ee
January 2027	Provisional start of projects

7. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The application shall include the following information:

- CVs of key staff involved in the project
- Partnership declaration(s) in case of projects that involve project partner

8. HOW TO APPLY

The deadline for applications is **September 28, 2026, at 23:59 Tallinn time** as evidenced by the date and time of receipt by the Fund Operator. Late submission will lead to rejection of the application.

Applications should be submitted electronically via eGRANT system oef.egrant.ee. Detailed instructions on how to submit an application can be found on the programme's website.

8.1 Questions and answers

Questions may be submitted **no later than 5 working days** before the deadline for the submission of applications. The Fund Operator has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

The questions must be submitted to: csf@oef.org.ee. No individual replies will be given to questions to ensure the equal treatment of all applicants. Questions and answers will be published on the programme's website at www.eea-csf.ee. It is therefore advisable to consult the website regularly.

Any complaints related to this call may be submitted to rikkumine@oef.org.ee.

8.2 Support to applicants

NENO provides the following support to CSOs applying for funding:

- information about the Fund, calls for proposals and application requirements, including information events held across Estonia;
- advice and guidance on questions arising during the preparation of project applications.

Information sessions shall take place on the following dates and places:
August 13, 2026, in Tallinn
August 26, 2026, in Narva
September 8, 2026, in Tartu

For counselling, please contact NENO eva@heakodanik.ee.

For detailed information please visit EEA Civil Society Fund in Estonia website www.eea-csf.ee.

9. CONTACT

All general inquiries and questions related to the application process should be directed to: csf@oef.org.ee

EEA Civil Society Fund Estonia webpage: www.eea-csf.ee

Open Estonia Foundation
Kentmanni 10-18, Tallinn
+372 615 5700

Katrin Enno, Programme Director, katrin@oef.org.ee
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Ksenia Gutnitšenko-Frolova, Programme Coordinator, ksenia@oef.org.ee
Jete Aljasmäe, Media Director, jete@oef.org.ee

Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations
Lõõtsa 8, Tallinn
+372 5373 3130

Eva Berzin, EEA Civil Society Fund coordinator, eva@heakodanik.ee

ANNEX 1: CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANTS

The checklist below enables applicants to self-assess whether they have complied with all administrative and eligibility criteria of the current call.

CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANTS	Yes/No
Administrative criteria	
Project application has been submitted electronically via e-grant system	
Project application has been submitted by the deadline of the call	
Project application includes all requested annexes as specified in the call: - CVs of key staff involved in the project - Partnership declaration(s) in case the project is submitted in partnership with other organisations and/or entities	
Project application is signed by an authorized person	
Eligibility criteria	
Applicant is a non-governmental organisation, registered in Estonia, that meets the eligibility criteria defined in Article 3 of the call text	
Project partners (if any) are CSOs, or any other public or private entities established in Estonia, any other Beneficiary States[10], or Donor States, or any international organisation or body or agency thereof. Informal groups that are not registered legal entities in Estonia are also eligible as partners	
In case of large project, there are at least two project partners who are non-governmental organisations as defined in Article 3 of the call text, registered in Estonia	
Requested grant amount is within permissible limits as published in the call text	
Proposed implementation period is within permissible limits as published in the call	

[10] Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia

ANNEX 2: RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT FOR THE EEA CIVIL SOCIETY FUND

All programmes and funds supported by the EEA and Norway Grants shall follow the principles of results-based management.

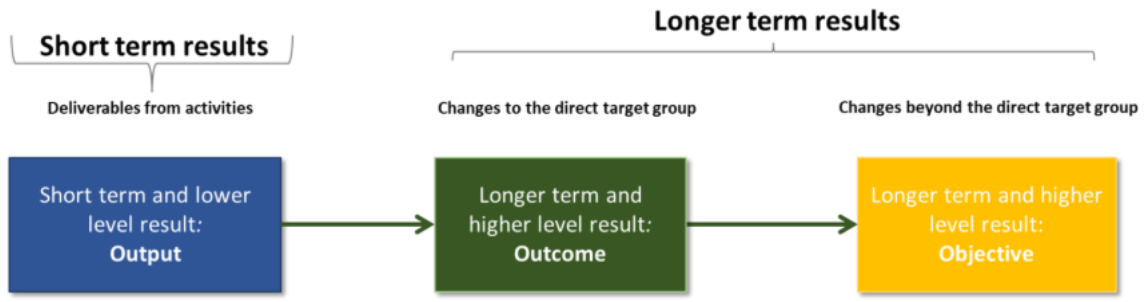
In results-based management, focus is first and foremost on the overall results to be achieved. For the EEA Civil Society Fund, this means focus is on the overall objective. The overall objective is, "A vibrant and resilient civil society protecting and promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights".

The next step in results-based management is to set a strategy for how to best achieve this overall objective. Results-based management offers a set of tools to do this including result chains, result frameworks, monitoring, and evaluation. We also manage risks for the achievement of results.

Overall, about results in the EEA Civil Society Fund

A result chain includes lower-level results that are called outputs, medium level results that are called outcomes, and finally the highest-level result that is the objective.

The result chain can be presented in a figure as follows:

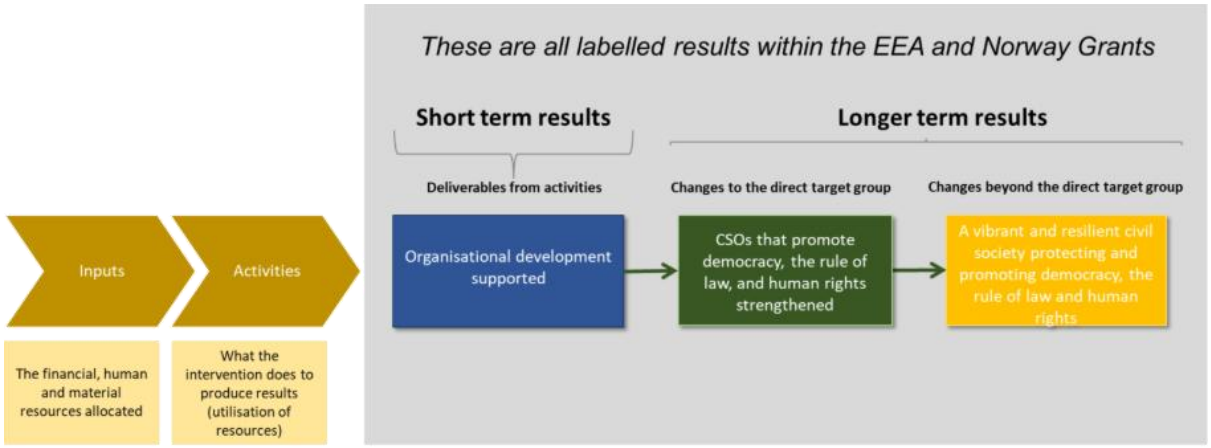


Here is one of the result chains for the EEA Civil Society Fund:

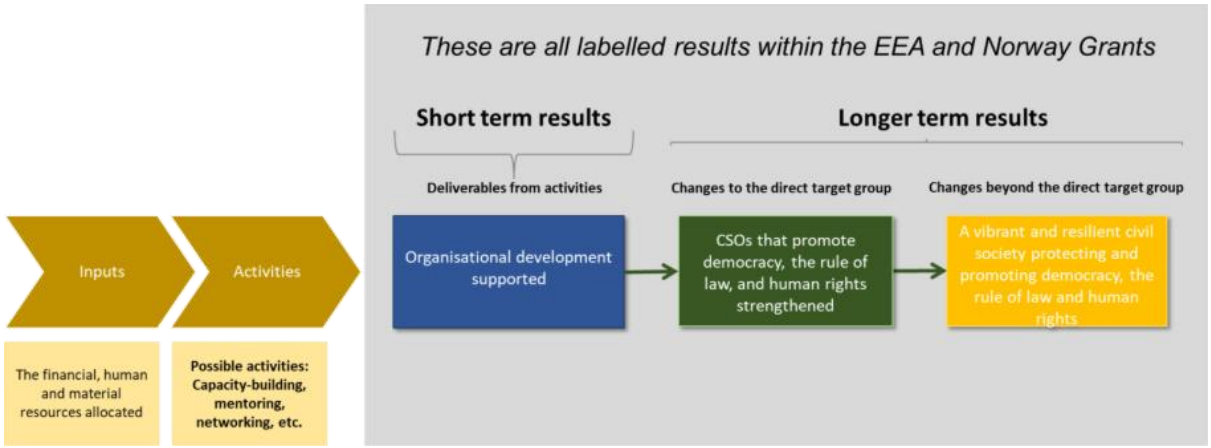


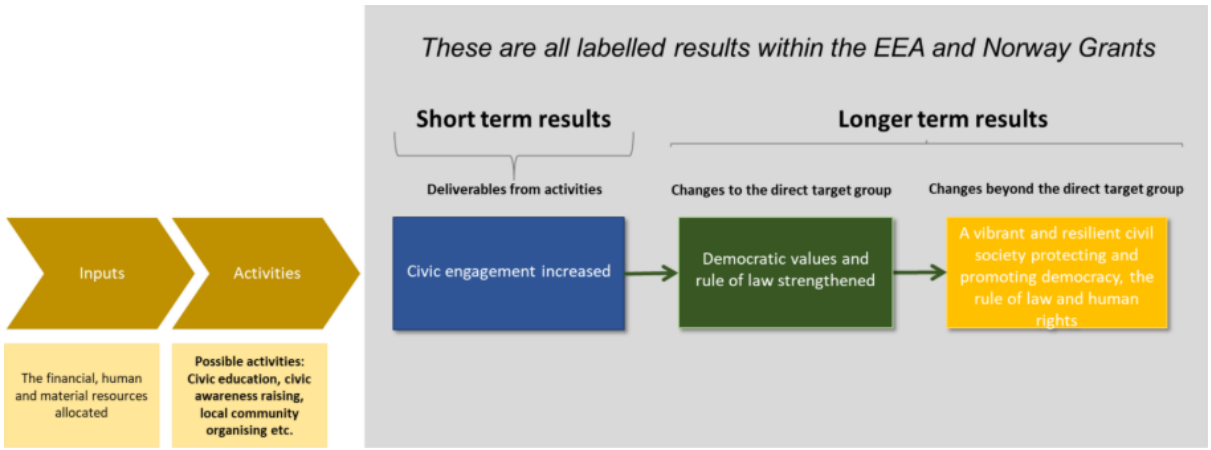
To achieve the outputs, it is necessary to implement activities using the available resources which can be called inputs.

Together with the activities and inputs, the result chain can be presented in a figure as follows:



The two figures below provide general examples of some activities that may be identified to achieve two of the outputs and outcomes in the EEA Civil Society Fund.

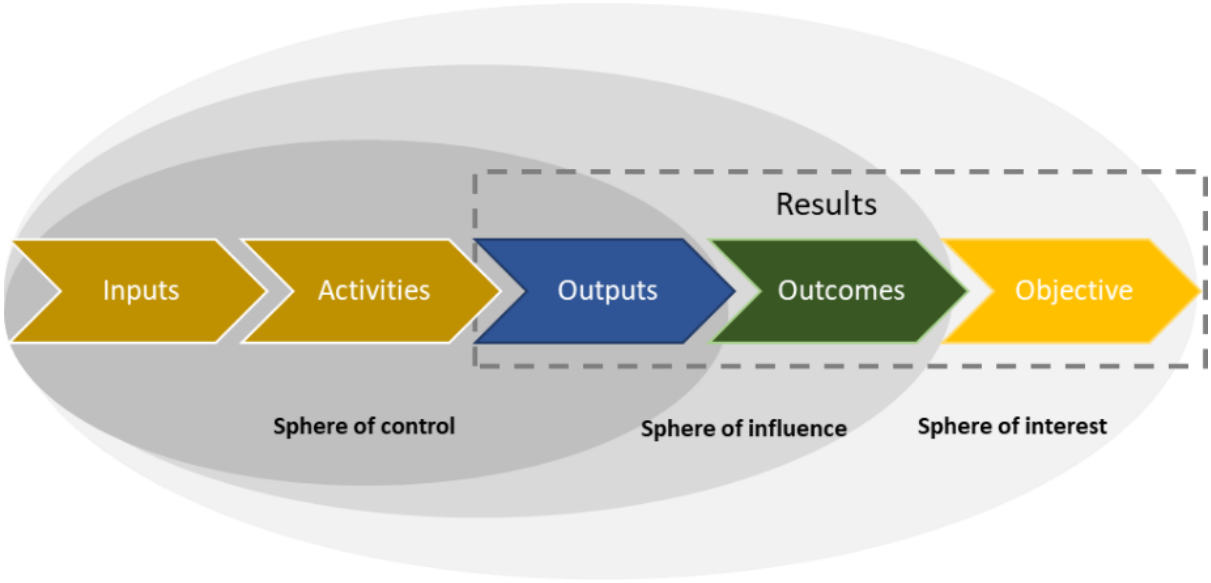




There are assumptions for how one level in the result chain connects to the next. For example, it is an assumption that if CSOs are supported to develop their organisations, then they will be stronger as CSOs. For each assumption it is useful to either provide evidence or plan for evidence through for example an evaluation. For this particular assumption on supporting organisational development, the FMO commissioned an external assessment of organisational grants in 2023 which is available on the EEA and Norway Grants website.

The higher up in the result chain, the less control stakeholders have on the achievement of the desired result. The evidence for how the previous level of the result chain contributes to this higher level of the result chain might also be more ambiguous.

Together with the inputs and activities, the different levels of control along the result chain can be presented in a figure as follows:



Key elements for project result-based management in the EEA Civil Society Fund

The EEA Civil Society Fund follows the Programme model. This means that the desired results at both the outcome and output levels will be derived from projects. As the Civil Society Results Framework specifies what is eligible for support, this means that all projects that would be eligible for support have to contribute to the results expected as per the result framework.

Every project must be situated only under one of the three outcomes (not multiple outcomes). Within the same outcome, projects may contribute to one output or more outputs. In addition to contributing to one single outcome, all projects that include bilateral cooperation must also report on bilateral results.

Each project within the programme can also have its own specific results chains. Applicants are encouraged to check alignment between their project specific results chains with the overall programme results chains. This can help preclude challenges in the implementation and reporting of the projects. However, applicants are not required to develop or work with project specific results chains.

Progress against the EEA Civil Society Fund programme results framework will be measured with the use of indicators. The indicators, including their unit of measurement, data sources of verification, baselines and targets, will be agreed in the project contract.

During implementation, the agreed indicators become a reporting tool. Project Promoters will be responsible for collecting and analysing data to report on the indicators and with narrative against the selected output(s) and outcome.

To ensure accountability and learning, applicants may plan for an evaluation either during or after project implementation.