Iceland Liechtenstein Norway Civil Society Fund

CALL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs)

IN BULGARIA

FIRST CALL FOR ORGANISATIONAL GRANTS

AVAILABLE FUNDING: EUR 4,000,000

DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2026, 23:59 EET

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 **Bulgaria**. 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, one of which is Bulgaria.

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 **Bulgaria** has a total allocation of EUR 23,46 million**.** A consortium of Open Society Institute – Sofia, in partnership with Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation, Trust for Social Achievement and Frivillighet Norge/Association of NGOs in Norway operates the EEA Civil Society Fund in **Bulgaria** on behalf of the Donor States.

This Call targets Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. The Call has a total allocation of **€ 4 000 000.**

SUMMARY OF THE CALL	
Title of the call	**First Call for Organisational Grants**
Responsible Partner in the consortium of the Fund Operator	Open Society Institute – Sofia
Purpose of the call	To support the strategic objectives and long-term goals of Bulgarian CSOs that promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.
Outcome	3. CSOs that promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights strengthened
Output	3.1 Organisational development supported
Relevant activities	See section 2
Eligible project applicants	See section 3
Project duration	Between one and three full calendar years within the period 2027-2029
Project grant amount	Between € 100 000 and € 300 000
Co-financing	No co-financing required
Funding modality	Organisational grant
Total funding for the call	€ 4 000 000
Partnerships	N/A
Call available in the following language(s)	English and Bulgarian
Questions deadline	20 September 2026, 23:59 EET
Application deadline	30 September 2026, 23:59 EET

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS 3
1. BACKGROUND FOR THE EEA CIVIL SOCIETY FUND IN Bulgaria 4
2. FOCUS OF THIS CALL 5
2.1 Purpose of this call 5
2.2 Programme Outcome and Output for the Call 6
3. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS 9
3.1 Eligible applicants 9
4. CONDITIONS 10
4.1 Co-financing 10
4.2 Eligible expenditure 11
4.3 Reporting 11
4.5 Payment of the grant 12
4.6 Information on the processing of personal data of applicants with proposals for organisational grants 13
5. ADMINISTRATIVE, ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA 13
5.1 Administrative and eligibility criteria 13
5.2 Selection criteria 16
5.3. Definition of Organisations working for Roma inclusion and empowerment 19
5.4. Additional circumstances excluding the award of a grant 20
6. SELECTION PROCESS 20
6.1. Evaluation and selection of proposals 20
6.2 Indicative timeline for the selection process 21
6.3 Informing applicants 21
6.4. Contracting 21
7. MANDATORY ATTACHMENTS TO THE APPLICATION FORM 22
8. HOW TO APPLY 22
8.1 Questions and answers 23
8.2 Support to applicants 23
9. CONTACT 23
10. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS TEMPLATES 23
11. CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANTS 23
12. RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT FOR THE EEA CIVIL SOCIETY FUND 24
Version log 25

1. BACKGROUND FOR THE EEA CIVIL SOCIETY FUND IN BULGARIA

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 Bulgaria is EUR 23,46 million.

Through an open tender process, the secretariat of the Donor States – the Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) – has selected a consortium led by Open Society Institute – Sofia, in partnership with Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation, Trust for Social Achievement and Frivillighet Norge/Association of NGOs in Norway as Fund Operator of the EEA Civil Society Fund in Bulgaria. The Fund Operator manages the EEA Civil Society Fund in Bulgaria 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 Bulgaria will include seven 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**

Within the programme's areas of support, the EEA Civil Society Fund aims to support the promotion of democratic values, civil society participation in decision-making processes, civic engagement, information integrity and media literacy, the protection of human rights, the fight against discrimination and for social justice. The programme places particular emphasis on gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, the promotion of LGBTIQ+ rights, as well as climate action, environmental protection and a just green transition. Another important focus is on developing organisational capacities and creating an enabling environment for the effective functioning of the civil sector.

Part of the programme's support is specifically dedicated to addressing challenges arising from Russia's war on Ukraine, countering gender-based violence and empowering groups that are marginalised, particularly Roma.

As a general condition, a minimum of 10% of the programme budget shall be allocated to the

[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.

inclusion and empowerment of Roma, including support for Roma-led organisations and Roma women and girls.

The programme encourages cooperation between civil society in Bulgaria and in the three Donor States: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

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

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 this results framework.

An overview of all open calls as well as other activities supported by the programme can be found on the website www.civilsocietyfund.bg

2. FOCUS OF THIS CALL

2.1 Purpose of this call

The purpose of this call is to support the strategic objectives and long-term goals of Bulgarian CSOs that promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

The support provided under the call shall contribute to the achievement of the Programme Objective, by way of supporting the ongoing and future activities of CSOs on the basis of a multiannual work plan and/or strategy. **The programme objective is: "A vibrant and resilient civil society protecting and promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights."**

Bulgaria is facing a number of interconnected challenges, including limited civic and democratic participation, growing impact of disinformation and misinformation, persistent social exclusion of Roma communities, and the societal consequences of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, including heightened information manipulation, increased societal polarisation, and growing pressure on democratic resilience and social cohesion. These developments underscore the need for strong, independent and sustainable civil society organisations capable of responding effectively to evolving societal needs, safeguarding democratic values, and fostering inclusive and resilient communities.

A vibrant and resilient civil society is essential for Bulgaria's democratic and social development. Civil society organisations play a central role in protecting human rights, strengthening the rule of law, promoting transparency and accountability, countering disinformation, and mobilising citizens for meaningful civic participation. Many Bulgarian CSOs face chronic funding shortages, unpredictable revenue streams and limited capacity for long-term strategic planning. These constraints reduce their ability to sustain institutional development, respond to emerging challenges, and maximise societal impact.

As supported by findings from the previous EEA Grants funding period, the organisational grants' modality constitutes an adequate response to the needs of recipient organisations. In the context of limited funding opportunities in civil society sectors across Beneficiary States, including Bulgaria, particularly in regard to institutional support, the organisational grants can address organisations' extensive and urgent needs to strengthen capacity and professionalise their processes, ensure their longer-term financial security and allow them to focus on their strategic goals and societal impact, rather than outputs as is the case for traditional project funds. This is in line with the objectives of the organisational grants to contribute to the EEA and Norway Grants' strong focus on capacity building.

This First Call for Organisational Grants aims to strengthen Bulgarian civil society by providing multi-year, lump-sum funding to organisations whose work advances democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The call prioritises support for organisations to implement **multi-annual strategies and/or work plans (covering a period of at least two years)** that set clear objectives, measurable results and credible pathways to long-term impact.

The First Call for Organisational grants shall stimulate a long-term strategic mindset within civil society organisations by encouraging the development, refinement and practical use of multi-annual organisational strategies. The call aims to encourage applicants to create or update strategic frameworks with ambitious yet achievable goals, and to integrate these strategies into their everyday work. By strengthening strategic planning capacities, the call seeks to ensure that organisations continue to apply and build on these strategic approaches beyond the funding period, contributing to more resilient, mission-driven and impact-oriented civil society actors.

What this call supports

- **Strategic development** — enabling organisations to design and implement multi-annual strategies and/or work plans that define priorities, results and KPIs.
- **Institutional resilience** — strengthening governance, financial resilience, monitoring and learning systems, and staff capacity to ensure sustainability.
- **Programmatic effectiveness** — supporting activities that contribute to the protection and promotion of democratic values, human rights and the rule of law.
- **Inclusion and outreach** — encouraging plans that reach underserved geographic areas and marginalised groups with a focus on inclusion and empowerment of Roma.
- **Accountability and transparency** — promoting high standards of financial management, auditability and transparency in line with Fund requirements.

At least 12% of the funds for organisational grants provided under this call shall be allocated on a priority bases to organisations with demonstrable strategic focus on and measurable contribution to inclusion and empowerment of Roma, including Roma women and girls[2].

Expected results from grantees

Multi-annual funding gives organisations the predictable resources and time needed to move beyond short-term project cycles, strengthen institutional capacity, test and scale effective approaches, and increase their long-term contribution to democratic resilience in Bulgaria. By requiring multi-annual strategies and defined KPIs, this call encourages organisations to focus on sustained change and measurable societal impact.

2.2 Programme Outcome and Output for the Call

In the programme's results-based management, focus is first and foremost on the overall results to be achieved. The programme uses a so-called results framework that helps keep this focus, and that defines what is eligible for support. Under each call, applicants must select a single outcome and assign their project application to this outcome, and within that outcome, to one output[3].

This call addresses the following outcome and, within that outcome, the following output:

[2] If insufficient suitable proposals from such organisations are submitted, the unallocated funds will be made available to other eligible organisations.

[3] An output is a lower-level result area that contributes to the outcome which is a higher-level result area. Together, the output and outcome form a result chain where each level is meant to contribute to the results on the next level. See more information in Annex 2 Results-Based Management

- **Outcome: CSOs that promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights strengthened**
  - **Output: Organisational development supported**

Thus, under this call, CSOs will receive support to implement their multiyear strategies and/or work plans, so as to enable them to pursue their mission and continue their operation on a higher professional level.

Expected results for successful applicants include: successful pursuit of their mission and goals on the basis of a multi-annual work plan and/or strategy; increase of their overall organisational strength, in terms of their human resources (paid or voluntary); strengthening of internal processes and structures, communication, financial viability; and addressing clearly defined needs within one or more of the Programme's areas of support.

Each supported project is expected to align with these main expected results, and report on them narratively and quantitatively, by including the relevant information on these results in their annual activity reports.

To track progress, projects should contribute to programme-level indicator from the outcome **„CSOs that promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights strengthened"** and/or its output – "Organisational development supported". 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 the 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.

During implementation, the agreed indicators 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 selected output and outcome.

In the application form, applicants are required to indicate if their project will report against one or more of the programme level result framework indicators. **In the project application form, applicants should clearly indicate which indicator(s) their project will contribute to, and the corresponding project-level target(s).** As per the selection criteria, projects will not be awarded additional points for high targets. Rather, projects will be assessed on whether the results are relevant, coherent and realistic.

Applicants could find detailed explanation of the indicators and how to demonstrate them on the program's website.

In order to measure improvements in their overall organisational strength, **beneficiaries of organisational grants will be obligated to participate in organisational surveys conducted by the Fund Operator at 2 points of the grant's duration:** prior to concluding the grant contract, and once the grant period is finished.

There are two types of indicators the supported organisations are expected to contribute to:

1) **Indicators at the programme level**

The indicators listed in the table below are used to monitor progress and measure results at the programme level for this Call.

Applicants shall indicate in their proposals which indicators at the programme level they expect their project to contribute to. The FO uses this information to monitor and measure the results at

programme level. The applicants under the Call for organisational grants must select at least one of the predefined indicators listed in the table below.

	Excerpt of the programme results framework	**Applicant: Select at least one predefined indicator and enter the target in the application form**
	Outcome: CSOs that promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights strengthened **Output: Organisational development supported**	
	Number of supported CSOs with improved overall organisational strength	
	Number of supported CSOs that have increased their capacity to utilise opportunities to apply for funding	
	Number of supported CSOs working on Roma inclusion and empowerment	
	Number of jobs with improved working conditions	
	Number of employees from supported CSOs with improved skills (include target and disaggregation according to the following categories) Youth (<29) / Number Adults (≥30) / Number Not specified / Number	
	(Grant specific indicator at the project level 1 – N)	

2) Indicators at the project level.

Applicants are expected to propose, as part of their strategy/work plan, their own indicators with defined target values. These indicators should enable tracking the progress on the implementation of the strategy/work plan and the achievement of the planned results. The existence, relevance, and quality of these indicators are key elements of the evaluation of the proposals under this call. For the approved projects, the FO will use this information to monitor and measure progress and results at both the project and program levels. Therefore, it is expected that approved applicants will include information on these indicators in their annual reports as well.

2.2.1 Eligible activities

There is no list of specific eligible activities under this call.

However, the activities proposed in the applicant's strategy/work plan are expected to contribute to the achievement of the Programme Objective and to be related to one or more of the Programme's Areas of support and/or the Programme Country-specific focus areas.

The Programme Areas of Support are:

1. Democratic values, civic engagement, information integrity and media literacy.
2. Civil society participation in democratic processes.
3. Human rights, anti-discrimination, and social justice.
4. Gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and LGBTIQ+ rights.
5. Climate action, environmental protection, and a just green transition.
6. Organisational development and an enabling environment for civil society.

The Programme addresses the following Country-specific Focus Areas:

1. Addressing challenges arising from the invasion of Ukraine

2. Countering gender-based violence
3. Inclusion and empowerment of refugees and migrants
4. Inclusion and empowerment of Roma, including support for Roma-led organisations and Roma women and girls"

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

3. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

3.1 Eligible applicants

The applicant is the entity responsible for the overall initiation, preparation and implementation of the project (the project promoter). Eligible applicants are civil society organisations registered in Bulgaria as non-profit legal entities, including those registered as chitalishta, that meet the following requirements:

- be registered in accordance with the Non-Profit Legal Entities Act (NPLEA) or the Chitalishta Act (CA);
- be independent of local, regional, or central government bodies, or of other state and public bodies and institutions, as well as of political parties and commercial entities. A civil society organisation is considered dependent when more than half of the members of its governing or supervisory body are appointed by local, regional, or central government bodies, by other state and public bodies and institutions, by political parties, or by commercial entities, or when any of them can impose or obstruct decision-making or in any way exercise a dominant influence over the organisation's activities.
- political parties, religious institutions, social partners, and cooperatives are not eligible applicants.
- organisations whose objectives are to promote and protect only the specific professional and occupational interests of their members are also ineligible.
- all eligible applicants must abide the core values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and comply the fundamental rights and obligations enshrined in relevant legal instruments and standards.
- the organisational structure of the applicants should ensure that principles for avoiding conflicts of interest are applied, including prohibiting the applicant's representative from entering into contracts with him/herself.

In addition, the following eligibility criteria shall apply:

- the applicant must have had legal personality for at least 60 months prior to the submission deadline;
- the applicant must demonstrate an average annual turnover over the past four financial years not less than the annualised value of the grant amount applied for;
- the applicant must have a multiannual work plan and/or strategy, outlining the organisation's goals and priorities and the corresponding planned budget, covering the period for which the organisation is applying for funding. A plan or a strategy covering a period of at least two years is deemed multiannual for this purpose*.

***Note:** Applicants may have different practices and policies regarding annual planning. In the application form, applicants must describe the organisation's usual practice and the approach used in preparing the strategy/annual plan with which they are applying under this call and how the grant

they apply for under this call will contribute to its implementation. The Operator accepts the following documents (or combination thereof) as admissible:

1. A strategy covering a minimum of 2 years, but not less than the period for which the applicant is applying under this call; or
2. A work plan covering a minimum of 2 years, but not less than the period for which the applicant is applying under this call; or
3. A strategy (minimum 2 years, but not less than the period for which the applicant is applying under this call) and a work plan for the period for which the applicant is applying.

Regardless of which of the above documents or combination thereof is submitted, the relevant documents/combination of documents must, at a minimum, contain information on the organisation's objectives and priorities for the relevant period, the planned activities/projects, and indicators for monitoring progress. The submitted organisational strategy and/or work plan should be accompanied by the corresponding overall organisational budget demonstrating the total resources needed to implement the strategy/work plan. The submitted overall budget should cover the entire period for which the applicant is applying for funding under this call. If applying for only one calendar year, the budget may cover that year only.

- The applicant must be in compliance with their payment obligations with regards to taxes, social security contributions and health insurance.

The applicant must also meet the following requirements:

- The applicant must not have any other contracted projects under the Calls of the Civil Society Fund in Bulgaria (as either a project promoter or a partner) where the project's implementation period overlaps with any year covered by the requested organisational grant.

4. CONDITIONS

Project duration	Grants should cover a period of at least one and up to three full calendar years within the period 2027-2029.
Grant amount	Between € 100 000 and € 300 000
Indicative start of project implementation	January 2027
Final date of eligibility of expenditure	31 December 2029
Number of applications	Each organisation may submit only one application under the First Call for Organisational Grants. Partnership applications are not eligible.

4.1 Co-financing

No co-funding is required.

The existence of other funding sources, beyond the organisational support applied for under this call, is not considered a co-financing requirement, nor does it constitute a fixed co-financing percentage for the implementation of the organisation's multiyear strategy or work plan.

4.2 Eligible expenditure

The application form requires the amount of requested organisational funding applied for under this call to be specified as a sum.

Specific method: The organisational grant is provided and reported using a simplified cost option – **lump sum** for the implementation of the organisational work plan/strategy.

In order for the Fund Operator to assess the impact of the requested support, applicants are required to submit an organisational overall budget that also includes the requested amount of support. The organisational budget must ensure the efficient use of funds in a manner that is proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the multiannual organisational work plan or strategy and should not include excessive or reckless expenditure. As this concerns the budget of the organisation as a whole, and not merely a project budget, there is no specific list of eligible costs.

Note: The inclusion of an expenditure item in the organisational budget approved by the FO cannot be considered as confirmation of the eligibility of that expenditure item.

The organisational grant provided to an organisation with an approved project under this Call is distributed across financial years in line with the organisational budget.

During the implementation process, the Project Promoter may justify reallocations of the organisational funding across financial years within the grant period (project duration).

The actions constituting the basis for payment shall be carried out between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the organisational grant contract, but no later than 31.12.2029.

4.3 Reporting

The project promoter must keep accurate records of expenditures in accordance with applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles and comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

Project Promoters receiving organisational grants under this call should report on the annual implementation of the work plan/strategy by submitting the following documents:

1. **Annual activity report**. The report must contain as a minimum: information on the main activities carried out during the reporting period, the funds spent on them, their relation to the organisation's objectives and thematic areas/programmes, and the results achieved, including in reference to the contracted Outcome and Output indicators; information about the contribution income (including amount of received grants and donations, their purpose and donors/sources), income from economic activities and other income, donations made; annual financial result. The report should describe the progress of the implementation of the strategy/work plan of the organisation for the respective year and justify any major shifts in strategic priorities.
2. **Annual financial statement**, accompanied by:
    - Information on revenues and expenditures by source of funding, including specifically mentioning the EEA and Norway Grants contribution provided under this call, as well as the allocation of expenditures by programme area/project and source of funding.
    - **An annual statutory audit report by an external auditor** on the audited annual financial statements. The report must cover and specifically mention the EEA and Norway Grants contribution provided under this call, and provide assurance that the grant has been used in accordance with the purpose and provisions of the organisational grant contract.

The deadline for submitting annual Activity and Financial reports is **30 September of the following calendar year**, according to the applicable legislation. Shorter deadlines may be agreed and reflected in the organisational grant contract.

The Fund Operator will organise an annual meeting with every Project Promoter of an organisational grant to review the progress of implementation.

Fund Operator and the FMO have the right to commission audits of the entire organisational accounts of the Project Promoter.

4.4. Amount of Financial Support

The maximum amount of annual organisational financial support provided under this call shall not exceed the planned annual amount of support for the respective year, according to the grant contract. The maximum total amount of organisational grant is equal to the sum of the approved annual financial organisational support for the period of the grant.

Financial corrections:

In case the information provided by the Project Promoter proves evident non-satisfactory performance, or the work plan/strategy is not implemented in line with the principles set in the grant contract, the grant paid to the Project Promoter may be cancelled or reduced proportionately.

4.5 Payment of the grant

The grant will be paid in tranches in euro. Payments to the Project Promoters follow the scheme below (linked to the grant's duration):

Grant type	Implementation period	Advance payment	Interim payments	Final payment- retained amount
Organisational grants	12 – 24 months	Up to 70%	N/A	Remaining amount
Organisational grants	12 – 36 months	Up to 40%	Up to 90% (incl. advance payment)	Remaining amount

The distribution of payments is indicated in the Grant contract.

The advance payment is to be paid up to 15 days after the signature date of the Grant contract.

Where interim payments are foreseen, they are to be paid up to 15 working days after date of approval by the Fund Operator of the financial and narrative reporting for the respective interim year as indicated in the Grant contract, and after conducting the corresponding annual meeting described in section 4.3.

The final payment/retained amount is to be paid up to 15 working days after the date of the approval by the Fund Operator of the financial and narrative reporting for the final year of the approved project, and after conducting the corresponding annual meeting described in section 4.3. The amount of the final payment shall be the difference between the final amount of the grant approved by the Fund Operator (e.g. after a reduction due to financial corrections) and the advance and interim payments made to the Project Promoter.

In the case of evident non-satisfactory performance, the Fund Operator has the right to cancel or proportionately reduce the payments to the Project Promoter.

4.6 Information on the processing of personal data of applicants with proposals for organisational grants

Open Society Institute – Sofia, in fulfilment of its obligations as part of the Fund Operator of the EEA Civil Society Fund in Bulgaria, stores and processes the personal data of applicants with proposals for the First Call for Organisational Grants.

The personal data collected serve to verify compliance with the criteria published in this Call and to prepare for the conclusion of a Grant contract (contained in forms, declarations, other required documents), as well as for the purposes of reporting to auditors, persons authorised by the Financial Mechanism Office, authorised national authorities.

The processing of the provided personal data is carried out by non-automatic and automatic means and includes collection, recording, organisation, storage, adaptation or modification, recovery, consultation, use, provision to the Financial Mechanism Office and other authorised persons, updating, destruction. Upon request by the person whose data is processed and stored - blocking, deletion or modification.

The period of storage of personal data is at least until December 31, 2035, according to the requirements of the Programme.

Personal data are provided voluntarily by the applicants. The representative of an applicant, who provides through the required documents and forms personal data of third parties included in the proposal, must have obtained the consent of these persons to provide their data to the managing organisation - OSIS. Refusal to provide personal data is grounds for the proposal not to be considered at the "qualitative assessment" stage, due to failure to meet the criteria for administrative compliance of the submitted proposal.

The persons whose data are provided have the right to access, correct or delete the personal data collected about them with the relevant consequences of these actions.

The persons whose data are provided have the right to be notified when their data is provided to third parties, other than those authorised by the Financial Mechanism Office and national authorities and auditors, the right to object to the processing of their data and their right to protection before the Commission for Personal Data Protection: www.cpdp.bg.

In connection with the exercise of their rights with respect to the personal data provided by them, applicants can familiarise themselves with the Personal Data Protection Policy of the Open Society Institute – Sofia Foundation at: https://osis.bg/?p=2275, as well as to contact the foundation at: 56 Solunska Str., Sofia 1000, tel: (+359 2) 9306619, e-mail info@osi.bg.

When submitting a proposal for an organisational grant, the representatives of the applicants should declare that they are familiar with and agree with the specified information regarding the processing of the personal data contained in the proposal for organisational grant and that they have the consent of the persons whose data is included in the proposal through the relevant texts in the Applicant's Declaration.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE, ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

5.1 Administrative and eligibility criteria

The following administrative and eligibility criteria will be checked upon submission of proposals before admission to quality assessment:

	Administrative and eligibility criteria checked upon submission of proposals before admission to quality assessment:
1	The application is submitted before the deadline for the First Call for Organisational Grants via the EGRANT system.
2	All sections of the application form are completed in accordance with the instructions.
3	The duration of the requested grant is between one and three full calendar years within the period 2027-2029.
4	**The requested grant amount is between EUR 100 000 – 300 000.**
5	**The applicant has been registered at least 60 months prior to the application deadline.**
6	Electronic copies of the organisation's annual activity reports for the last four completed calendar years are attached to the application form.
7	**The applicant has submitted only one proposal within the current Call for Organisational Grants.**
8	Electronic copies of the Statements of Income and Expenditure (from both non-profit and economic activities) for the last four completed financial years, demonstrating an average annual income equal to or exceeding the average annual amount of the funding applied for under this Call are attached to the application form.
9	**A multiannual work plan and/or strategy, and the corresponding planned budget, covering the period for which the applicant is applying for funding are attached to the application form. A plan or a strategy covering a period of at least two years is deemed multiannual for this purpose. For details see 3.1. Eligible applicants.**
10	An Applicant's Declaration (Annex 1), completed and signed in accordance with the instructions by the applicant's representative or a duly authorised deputy.
11	The Applicant's current statute (or other equivalent governing document), outlining the applicant's statutory mission and purposes is provided.
12	**The applicant is an organisation registered under the NPLEA or the Chitalishta Act.**

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the administrative review by email and/or through their applicant profile in the EGRANT system within an indicative period of 15 working days after the application deadline of the Call.

Applicants whose proposals are non-compliant with administrative criteria that are eligible for correction will be given the opportunity to remedy it within five working days.

Non-compliance under criteria 4, 5, 7, 9, and 12 of the table above is not subject to correction. If a submitted proposal is found to be non-compliant under any of these items, it will not be admitted to the next stage of the process.

For proposals that are rejected due to non-compliance with the administrative or eligibility criteria set out in this section, the procedure described in Section 5.1.1 (Appeals) shall apply.

The following administrative and eligibility criteria will be checked before signing grant contracts with organisations recommended for funding:

	Administrative and eligibility criteria checked before signing grant contracts with organisations recommended for funding
1	The applicant has fulfilled all mandatory conditions for concluding a grant contract as established by the Project Selection Committee and/or the Fund Operator.
2	The UIC Number specified in the Project Promoter Declaration is correct.
3	The Applicant's current statute (or other equivalent governing document) has been provided, from which it can be established that all circumstances relating to eligibility, including those listed below, are true: 4.1 The applicant is independent of local, regional, or central government authorities, as well as other state and public authorities and institutions. 4.2 The applicant is independent of political parties. 4.3 The applicant is not a political party, religious institution, social partner, or cooperative. 4.4 The applicant is not an organisation whose objectives are to promote and protect only the specific professional and occupational interests of their members 4.5 The applicant's organisational structure ensures the application of conflict-of-interest prevention principles, including the prohibition of self-dealing (contracting with oneself).
4	A Beneficiary Declaration, in accordance with a template provided by the Fund Operator, has been completed and personally signed by the applicant's legal representative or by a representative authorised through a notarised power of attorney.
5	The applicant has provided a statement of receivables and payables distributed by institutional sectors for the last completed financial year.
6	The applicant has no other contracted projects under the Calls of the EEA Civil Society Fund in Bulgaria (as either a beneficiary or a partner), where the project's implementation period overlaps with any year covered by the requested organisational grant.
7	The applicant complies with the core values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and comply the fundamental rights and obligations enshrined in relevant legal instruments and standards.

The Fund Operator may request additional information/documents from the applicant to determine compliance with these criteria. The applicant will be given 5 working days to provide the missing documentation, counted from the day after the notification.

5.1.1 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 working days** to appeal the decision, counted from the day after the notification. Appeals for the current call should be directed to: **appeal@osi.bg** with the subject line: **"Appeal".**

Requests for re-examination of project proposals for administrative or eligibility compliance are reviewed by the Open Society Institute - Sofia, and information on the final decision is sent to the respective applicant **within 10 working days** of receiving the request for re-examination. The outcome of the appeal is final and is communicated to the applicant via email or the EGRANT system.

5.2 Selection criteria

Applications that meet the administrative and eligibility criteria outlined in chapters 5.1 of this call will be assessed by at least two impartial experts appointed by the Fund Operator. At least one expert will be independent of the Fund Operator.

The experts will independently score the grant's application according to the selection criteria in the grid below. The selection criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading is given a score. The application can be given an overall score of maximum 100 points.

Selection criterion		**Max. score**
1	**Alignment of the applicant with the purpose of the call**	**40**
1.1	**Relevance of the statutory mission and purposes of the applicant to the programme objective, the purpose of the call and the Programme's areas of support** *The applicant's statutory mission and purposes are aligned with:* • *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;* • *the Programme objective, the purpose of the call, and the programme's areas of support and/or country-specific focus areas.*	5
1.2	**Level of alignment of the applicant's track-record with the Programme's objective, the purpose of the call and the programme's areas of support** *The applicant's activities, achieved results and demonstrated impact in the last 5 years are:* • *aligned with 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;* • *directly related to the Programme's objective, the purpose of the call and the programme's areas of support and/or country-specific focus areas.* *(Points given by the evaluators under this criterion will be multiplied by 5)*	25
1.3	**Impact** *The operations and the achievements of the applicant demonstrate systemic impact in one or more of the programme's areas of support and/or country-specific areas.* *Systemic impact refers to changes that go beyond the direct, immediate outputs of individual projects and instead affect the underlying structures, norms, policies, institutions, or practices that shape the broader environment in which civil society operates. It is impact that endures, scales, or spreads beyond the organisation's own activities.* *(Points given by the evaluators under this criterion will be multiplied by 2)*	10

2	**Quality of the multiannual strategy/work plan and its alignment with the purpose of the call**	**35**
2.1	**Relevance of the strategy/work plan to the Programme's outcome and areas of support** *Coherent strategic priorities aligned with 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 the Programme objective, outcome and areas of support are demonstrated;* *The objectives, priorities, planned activities, expected results, and indicators, included in applicant's Strategy/Work plan are aligned with the Programme's outcome and areas of support. (Points given by the evaluator under this criterion will be multiplied by 2)*	10
2.2	**Quality and relevance of the needs assessment & organisational diagnosis** *The Strategy/Work plan includes evidence-based analysis of:* • *the societal needs and challenges the strategy/plan is addressing and the social change it tries to achieve.* • *organisational (development) needs, challenges, capacity gaps, and external factors affecting sustainability.*	5
2.3	**Quality of the of the strategy/work plan** • *Strategic objectives & expected results are SMART, realistic, and aligned with the mission and programme outcome; clear link to societal challenges.* • *Activities clearly derive from strategic objectives; responsibilities, timelines, and success criteria match the strategy.* • *Selected indicators measure strategic progress, not just activity outputs; realistic targets and clear verification.* • *Coherence between priorities, programme outcome, planned activities, expected results, and indicators is demonstrated;* • *Demonstrated long-term thinking beyond project logic* *(Points given by the evaluators under this criterion will be multiplied by 2)*	10
2.4	**Quality of the organisational budget and sound financial management** *The organisational budget demonstrates a clear link to the organisation's strategic priorities, with funds allocated by programmatic areas and expected sources of funding identified.* *The planned spending appears proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the strategy/work plan*	10

	The Applicant clearly indicates how the requested grant under this call will contribute to the implementation of the submitted organisation's strategy/work plan. *(Points given by the evaluators under this criterion will be multiplied by 2)*	
3	**Organisational & Financial Management Capacity of the Applicant to Implement the Strategy**	**25**
3.1	**Governance & Management** *The applicant's governance structure and systems of management, documentation and quality assurance ensure adequate internal controls, transparency, and accountability of its operations.*	5
3.2	**Staff & Organisational structure** *The Applicant's staffing, structures, and competencies are adequate for delivering the strategy/work plan.* *The applicant and its team demonstrate adequate experience in managing grants and in results-based management.*	5
3.3	**Internal monitoring, learning systems, and data collection methods** *The applicant's systems and evaluation and monitoring frameworks for tracking progress, learning, and adapting the strategy are adequate.* *Credible, appropriate methods for collecting evidence on strategic results are demonstrated.*	5
3.4	**Financial management capacity** *Systems for sound financial management, with the ability to identify costs by funding source and thematic area are in place.* *Adequate accounting, budgeting, cash-flow management, and audit experience is demonstrated.*	5
3.5	**Financial health & sustainability** *It is likely that the organisational sustainability will continue beyond the grant. Long-term sustainability model, financial stability, income diversification, and financial reserves are demonstrated.* *Sufficient sources of funding to maintain activity throughout the grant duration are demonstrated. A stronger indication of financial health is present when the requested grant covers less than 50% of the planned organisational budget for the period applied for under this call, as this signals the existence of other significant funding sources and a more diversified income base.*	5
	Total Maximum Score	**100**
	Additional Information regarding Roma inclusion and empowerment	

	The applicant is an organisation working for Roma inclusion and empowerment *See the definition below.*	**"Yes" or "No"**

An application must score at least 50 points to be recommendable for funding.

Projects that receive a score of 0 on any of the subheadings may be rejected.

Scoring scale

The scores provided by the evaluators for each selection criterion are based on the following scale:

	Scoring scale (0–5 for each criterion)
5 – Excellent	Criterion is comprehensively addressed with no weaknesses. Proposal is comprehensive, coherent, mature, and supported by strong evidence.
4 – Good	Criterion is addressed to a large extent with only minor weaknesses. Proposal is well-developed, convincing, realistic, and aligned, supported by sufficient evidence.
3 – Adequate	Criterion is generally addressed with some weaknesses. Proposal is acceptable and generally clear, though there are gaps in logic, evidence, or feasibility.
2 – Weak	Criterion is partially addressed with significant weaknesses. Proposal demonstrates limited clarity or relevance, relies on generic statements, and has significant gaps.
1 – Very Weak	Criterion is barely addressed with serious shortcomings. Proposal is unclear, inconsistent, or not credible.
0 – Not Addressed	Criterion is not addressed or is non-evaluable. Information is missing, irrelevant, or contradictory.

5.3. Definition of Organisations working for Roma inclusion and empowerment

At least 12% of the funding under this call is earmarked for organisations working for Roma inclusion and empowerment. These are organisations that demonstrate a proven strategic focus on and measurable contribution to the inclusion and empowerment of Roma, including Roma women and girls. If insufficient suitable proposals from such organisations are submitted, the unallocated funds will be made available to other applicants.

An applicant will be classified as an organisation working for Roma inclusion and empowerment if **both evaluators** whose assessments form the organisation's final score **indicate "YES"** in the Additional Information regarding Roma inclusion and empowerment section of the evaluation sheet. Alternatively, an applicant may also be considered as such if **at least one evaluator** indicates "YES" **and** a decision to that effect is made by the Grants Selection Committee (GSC).

For the purposes of this call, an **organisation working for Roma inclusion and empowerment** is a civil society organisation whose mission, goals, strategic orientation, and proven practice contribute substantially to the inclusion, empowerment, equality, and protection of the rights of Roma communities, including Roma women and girls. Such organisations may operate at the local, regional, or national level.

An organisation is considered to be working for Roma inclusion and empowerment when it meets the following criteria:

A) Mission and strategic commitment
The organisation maintains a clearly expressed or easily identifiable commitment to Roma inclusion, empowerment, equality, or protection of Roma rights, including those of Roma women and girls. This commitment is reflected in the organisation's mission, strategic priorities, thematic focus, or long-term objectives. The organisation's strategy/work plan includes specific goals, activities, and indicators related to Roma inclusion, empowerment, equality, or rights protection. Roma communities are the primary target group of the organisation's activities.

B) Proven practice
The organisation has demonstrated experience in implementing sustainable practices in support of Roma communities, including through community work, advocacy, service provision, educational initiatives, empowerment, anti-discrimination actions, and other relevant interventions. The organisation can demonstrate measurable results related to Roma inclusion, empowerment, equality, or rights protection.

5.4. Additional circumstances excluding the award of a grant

The following circumstances may constitute additional grounds for not awarding grant funding:

- irregularities have occurred in the implementation of another project that resulted in the early termination of a grant contract under the CSF Bulgaria, in which the applicant is a project promoter or partner;
- the applicant does not adhere to 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
- it is established that the project promoter is undergoing liquidation or has been declared insolvent;

6. SELECTION PROCESS

6.1. Evaluation and selection of proposals

Each proposal will be evaluated against the announced criteria by two impartial and working independently from one another evaluators. At least one of them will be independent of the Fund Operator. The final score will be the average of the scores given by the two evaluators. In the event of a difference in the scores of more than 30% of the higher score, and provided that the higher score exceeds the minimum evaluation threshold indicated for participation in the ranking of projects (50 points), the proposal will be evaluated by a third evaluator-arbitrator. The final proposal score shall be the average of the two closest scores.

Any proposal passing the minimum evaluation threshold will be ranked with all other proposals in the competition having passed the minimum evaluation threshold. Based on the average of the scores given by the independent evaluators, the Fund Operator will establish a ranking order of applications, and forward it to **the Grants Selection Committee (GSC)**, composed of persons with the relevant sector expertise and experience of working in or with civil society.

The GSC will review the list, with special consideration to how the totality of the selected projects aligns with *inter alia* the fund objective, areas of support, country-specific focus areas and the specifics of the Call. Based on this review, the GSC may modify the ranking. The GSC will submit the list of its recommended projects to the Fund Operator. The Committee may also propose additional conditions for funding.

During the assessment process, the Fund Operator may request additional information from the applicant related to the applicant's track record and submitted work plan/strategy and/or the budget, including conducting an interview.

The Steering Committee of the Fund Operator will take the final decision regarding which projects to support. It may modify the decision of the Grants Selection Committee in justified cases. Upon request, the FMO shall be invited to observe the meetings of the Steering Committee where decisions on project selection are taken.

The decision of the Steering Committee is final and there is no right of appeal.

6.2 Indicative timeline for the selection process

30/07/2026	Announcement of the Call
August-September	The dates for information activities for potential applicants will be announced on the Programme website: www.civilsocietyfund.bg
20/09/2026	Deadline for questions
30/09/2026	**Deadline for submission of applications**
October	Applications are checked against administrative and eligibility criteria
October-November	Independent experts assess application
November	Grants Selection Committee meeting
December	Decision on applications to be funded taken by Steering Committee of the Fund Operator
December	Informing applicants of the results of the Call and contracting with the successful applicants. Announcement of applications awarded funding on the Programme's website: www.civilsocietyfund.bg
January 2027	Start of implementation of the projects approved for support

6.3 Informing applicants

The Open Society Institute will notify the result in writing to all applicants within 15 working days after the date of the decision is taken by email or via the EGRANT System, using the contact details provided by the organisation. The notification will include the scores of the application, the conditions of support (if any) and, in the case of unsuccessful applicants, the reasons for rejection. The decision is final and not subject to appeal.

Approved applicants will be invited to submit the documents required for contracting by email and/or through a comment in the EGRANT System. The Fund Operator will publish a list and information on the contracted grants after the completion of the contracting process for the Call.

6.4. Contracting

Grant contracts will be concluded with applicants whose project proposals have been approved by the FO and who meet the criteria for contracting, including, where applicable, all mandatory conditions for contracting set by the Fund Operator.

A contract template will be provided by the FO.

Before the contract is signed, applicants with approved projects must submit, in the manner indicated by the FO and within an additional specified deadline, the following required additional documents proving the eligibility of the project for contracting:

1. A completed and personally signed Beneficiary Declaration by the legal representative of the applicant, using the template provided by the FO.

2. A statement of receivables and payables distributed by institutional sectors for the last completed financial year.

The Fund Operator will sign grant contracts only with applicants who are determined to meet the eligibility criteria set forth in this document. In connection with the determination of eligibility, the Fund Operator reserves the right, if necessary, to request additional documents from applicants to verify their eligibility.

If any discrepancies are identified, the applicant will be given the opportunity to correct them within five business days of receiving a notification detailing the identified discrepancy.

7. MANDATORY ATTACHMENTS TO THE APPLICATION FORM

A finished application consists of a completed application form submitted in the electronic system EGRANT, with the following mandatory attachments:

Mandatory Annexes to the Application Form

1. A completed and signed Applicant's Declaration.

2. Electronic copies of the organisation's annual activity reports for the last four completed calendar years.

3. Electronic copies of the Statements of Income and Expenditure (from both non-profit and economic activities) for the last four completed financial years, demonstrating an average annual income equal to or exceeding the average annualized amount of the funding applied for.

4. A work plan and/or a strategy for the period applied for, but not less than two years.

5. The organisation's budget for the period applied for.

6. The Applicant's current statute (or another equivalent governing document).

8. HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted electronically through the EGRANT system. The date and time of receipt recorded by the EGRANT system will determine whether the application deadline has been met.

Only applications submitted through the EGRANT system will be accepted. Submissions by email or post will not be accepted.

Applicants can access the **application form** after registering in the EGRANT system and selecting the **First Call for Organisational Grants**

It is recommended that applicants familiarise themselves with the EGRANT system in advance. Technical support is available at administrator@civilsocietyfund.bg.

8.1 Questions and answers

The Fund Operator ensures equal opportunities for all applicants by continuously publishing vital information and updates on the program website. We encourage you to regularly consult the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section. Should you not find the answer to your inquiry there, the following support options are available:

The email address for submitting questions for the **First Call for Organisational Grants** is konkurs@osi.bg. The Fund Operator will respond within 3 working days. Questions and answers will also be published in the **First Call for Organisational Grants Q&A section** of the programme's website at www.civilsocietyfund.bg. It is therefore advisable to consult the website regularly.

The Fund Operator will respond to questions submitted up to and including 20 September.

The answers published by the Fund Operator in the section "Questions and Answers for the First Call for Organisational Grants" on the programme website are considered part of the Text of the Call.

Any complaints related to this call may be submitted to signal@civilsocietyfund.bg and will be handled according to the procedure described on civilsocietyfund.bg.

8.2 Support to applicants

Information Webinars and Sessions: The Fund Operator will host online and onsite sessions to guidance on completing application forms. The timeline will be announced on the programme website www.civilsocietyfund.bg

9. CONTACT

Website of the EEA Civil Society Fund in Bulgaria: civilsocietyfund.bg

Consortium Partner responsible for the First Call for Organisational Grants:
Open Society Institute – Sofia
56 Solunska str, Sofia 1000, Bulgaria
Tel.: +359 930 66 19
Website: osis.bg
Manager organisational grants: Kalina Stoilova
kstoilova@osi.bg

10. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS TEMPLATES

Annex 1. Applicant's Declaration

11. CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANTS

CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANTS	Yes/No
Administrative criteria	
The application is submitted before the deadline for the First Call for Organisational Grants via the EGRANT system.	

All sections of the application form are completed in accordance with the instructions, in Bulgarian and in Cyrillic (except for those for which another requirement is explicitly stated).	
The duration of the requested grant is between one and three full calendar years within the period 2027-2029.	
The amount requested is between EUR 100 000 – 300 000	
All mandatory attachments are attached to the application form (as described in section 7 and according to the instructions)	
The applicant has submitted only one proposal within the First Call for Organisational Grants.	
The applicant has no other contracted projects under the Calls of the EEA Civil Society Fund in Bulgaria (as either a beneficiary or a partner), where the project's implementation period overlaps with any year covered by the requested organisational grant.	

12. RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT FOR THE EEA CIVIL SOCIETY FUND

Please see the document on Results-Based Management available on the programme website civilsocietyfund.bg

VERSION LOG

Version	Date	Change
1	30.07.2026	Initial version published
2	31.07.2026	Information added in Section 6.2 on notifying applicants about Call results
3	01.08.2026	None; document reuploaded for technical reasons