

Call 3: ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND IN CROATIA Call text for applicants to Call for Sectoral Innovation Projects¹

Deadline for submission of Concept notes: October 26, 2020, 12:00 Croatian time

Anticipated deadline for submission of full project proposals: January 18, 2021, 12:00 Croatian time (or 1 month after applicants receive invitations to proceed with preparation and submission of full project proposals)

Community Foundation Slagalice, in consortium with SOLIDARNA - Foundation for Human Rights and Solidarity, Association for Civil Society Development SMART and CNVOS – Centre for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of CSOs, acting as the Fund operator (FO) for the EEA Grants Programme *Active Citizens Fund* in Croatia, announces the present open call for sectoral innovation Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) project proposals.

This is the third open call for this Programme, with an allocated amount of € 600.000.

The maximum grant amount for sectoral innovation projects is €200.000 and the minimum grant amount for sectoral innovation projects is € 150.000. Duration of sectoral innovation projects is 36 months.

The available funding will be allocated to projects proposed by CSOs through a transparent two-stage selection procedure. For more information concerning the application process, the selection criteria, as well as the evaluation and selection process, please see the Guidelines for Applicants available at <https://acfcroatia.hr/en/sectoral-innovation-projects/>.

The *Active Citizens Fund* in Croatia is part of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms (FMs) 2014 – 2021², funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Their aim is to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations between the Donor States and the Beneficiary States.

The total amount of € 8.500.000 will be allocated through the Programme in Croatia.

Main objective of the Programme on the EU level is ‘Civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered’. Programme is based on common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

¹ The call contains basic information, for more details please check Guidelines for applicants.

² More on EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms: www.eegrants.org.

An important priority of the Programme is also strengthening of bilateral cooperation between civil society organisations from Croatia and organisations from donor countries - Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

1. FOCUS OF THE CALL

The Call for sectoral innovations is designed to strengthen sustainability of Croatian CSOs active in all five-priority areas of the Programme and in respect to country specific priorities, by supporting **sectoral and inter-sector partnerships** that respond to **common, structural challenges with innovative sectoral solutions**.

This Call strives to respond to the recognized overall need for substantial strategic support to wider clusters of organizations within the sector, ready to **devise innovative solutions to structural challenges faced by CSO sector in Croatia**.

Though partnership (applicant and minimum 3 partner organizations) based, multi-year, strategically oriented action, call for **Sectoral Innovation projects will address one or a set of inter-related structural challenges and provide sector-wide solutions** that build upon the lessons learned from the past, in an innovative manner that enables long-term improvements that strengthen sustainability of the CSOs.

The expected results of this Call directly contribute to the achievement of the ACF Programme's Outcome 4 - Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society (organisations and sector).

Outcome/Output	Expected programme results	Indicator
Outcome 4	Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society (organisations and sector)	Number of CSOs that are members of civil society networks/ platforms
		Number of CSOs demonstrating diversification in funding sources
		Number of CSOs with transparent and accountable governance procedure
		Number of CSOs that regularly disseminate information on their activities and results to the public
Output 4.1.	Capacity-building provided to CSOs	Number of CSOs participating in learning initiatives supported by the programme
		Number of CSO leaders trained on leadership skills
		Number of supported CSOs with effective management procedures
		Number of CSOs conducting an assessment of their organisational capacity

Output 4.2.	Partnerships between CSOs supported	Number of partnerships between established/strong and less established/weaker/smaller CSOs
Output 4.3.	CSOs' outreach to citizens and local communities supported	Number of CSO paid staff trained in public communications and community outreach
		Number of CSOs trained in public communications and community outreach

The following are **illustrative examples of potential solutions** (some of which may form part of a coherent project design) to the one of **detected sectoral challenge of chronic deficit of active community support**, faced by CSOs active in the field of promotion and protection of human rights:

- o rebranding of CSO human rights sector;
- o enhancing CSO capacities for participatory and inclusive re-use of digital data and knowledge management for policy advocacy purposes;
- o social impact measurement and assessment;
- o development of strategic partnerships and new modes of CSO collaboration with socially responsible business community;
- o strategic strengthening of ties with **trade unions or other intersectoral or cross sectoral organizations/networks** which enables more massive citizen outreach;
- o building local philanthropic structures that support active citizenship in the five Programme priority areas;
- o improving CSO's financial resilience in the context of economic crisis through more cost-effective resource management and solidarity financing innovations;
- o membership development and active community engagement,
- o innovations in project and financial management that save staff time for membership development, community engagement and public communications.

2. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants are civil society organisations (CSOs) established in Republic of Croatia if they meet following definition:

“A non-profit voluntary organization established as a legal entity, having a non-commercial purpose, independent of local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organizations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered NGOs”. Eligible applicants shall abide by the principles of democratic values and human rights.

More specifically, eligible candidates must meet the following general conditions:

- 1) Are **non-profit** organizations that have not been created nor operate to generate personal profit. Although they may have paid staff and may engage in revenue-generating activities, they do not distribute profits to their members nor to their board. Where revenue-generating activities are undertaken, these should not represent the purpose of the NGO but should be solely a means to support its mission and values;
- 2) Have members who do not have any direct commercial interest in the outcome of the work of the organizations or of its commercial activities and should not pursue the commercial or

professional interests of their members. This requirement therefore excludes trade and professional associations, where the aims and purposes of the association are to further the specific interests of its members only;

- 3) Are voluntary in nature, formed voluntarily by groups or individuals and usually involving an element of voluntary participation in the organization;
- 4) Act in the public arena and for the public good on concerns and issues related to the well-being of people, groups or society as a whole;
- 5) Have some degree of formal or institutional existence, unlike informal or ad hoc groups, involving formal statutes or other governing document(s) defining their mission, objectives and scope;
- 6) Have transparent structures and an elected chair / board, and are accountable to their members and donors;
- 7) Are independent of local, regional and national government and other public authorities;
- 8) Are independent of political parties and commercial organizations,
- 9) Conducts transparent financial operations validated through Register of Nonprofit Organizations (RNO) with Croatian Ministry of Finance.³
- 10) The organisational Statute states that the CSO is active in selected priority Programme area and
- 11) Organisation's annual programme reports **confirm the minimum of four-year track record** in selected priority Programme area.

Political parties, religious institutions, social partners or profit-distributing cooperatives are not considered CSOs.

Foundations and the Croatian Red Cross societies are considered eligible CSOs if they fulfil the above principles.

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).

Organisations that have not recovered amounts due, following a final court decision in connection with the CSO Programme 2009-2014 in Croatia, shall not be considered eligible applicants and/or partners.

All eligible applicants, partners and project proposals shall follow the principles of common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities⁴ (based on race or ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or identity).

³ Applicants who are CSO by their legal status, by transparent financial operations, are considered to have submitted to the FINA, for the Croatian Ministry of Finance, an annual revenue and expenditure account from 1 January to 31 December 2019 and a balance sheet or annual financial statement of receipts and expenditures for 2019, in accordance with the accounting regulations of non-profit organizations, whereby the 2019 Annual Financial Report is visible in the Register of Nonprofit Organizations.

⁴ Article 1.2 of Protocol 38c on the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms (2014-2021)

3. ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

A project **must be implemented in partnership with at least three (3) project partners**. At least two (2) project partners must be CSOs established and registered in Croatia.

Project partners which are CSOs must meet the same general eligibility conditions for applicants set in the section 2 from point 1 to (and including) point 9.

The applicant shall sign a partnership agreement with each of the project partners if the proposed project is selected for financial support.

Other project partners are: public or private-law entity, as well as non-governmental organisation established as a legal person in any of the EEA Grants' donor countries – Island, Lichtenstein and Norway, any of the EEA Grants' beneficiary countries (beside Croatia, also Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Portugal), and/or countries outside the European Economic Area that have a common border with Croatia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) or any inter-governmental organisation or a body or agency thereof that is actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project. Projects including partnerships with entities from donor countries shall be scored with up to 5 additional points in the 2nd phase of selection process.

Eligible project partners are also informal groups under following conditions:

- informal group is not established for the purpose of personal gain;
- work for public good;
- are voluntary and non-discriminatory;
- are independent of local, regional and national authorities and other public institutions, political parties, religious communities, chambers and corporate entities.

Informal group shall be represented by a chosen individual as a signatory of partnership agreement. Informal group cannot be a direct beneficiary of project funding; their costs shall be carried by the project applicant organization.

4. NUMBER OF PROPOSALS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Each individual applicant can submit only **one project proposal in this call as a lead applicant**.

Lead applicant can be a partner in another application.

Each organization can participate in **no more than two project proposals in a partner role**.

5. PROJECT SIZE AND DURATION

Budget for sectoral innovation projects is € 600.000,00.

The grant requested must be between following minimum and maximum amounts:

- Minimum: € 150.000,00,
- Maximum: € 200.000,00.

Project grant rate

The applicants may ask for 100 % of an eligible expenditure of a project.

Project duration

Project duration is 36 months.

Location of the project

The selected projects will be implemented in Croatia.

Regarding the projects that are implemented in partnership with the organizations outside Croatia, some activities, if necessary, could be performed also within the territory of the country where the seat of the respective partner is. The financial support for activities outside Croatia has to be well-founded and directly related to the objective of the project and the desired results.

APPLICATION PROCESS

6. FIRST PHASE – PRESENTATION OF CONCEPT NOTE

In the first phase, applicants are invited to develop concept notes for their project ideas.

Deadline and submission process for the first phase: October 26, 2020, 12.00 (noon) Croatian time

Applicants must fill in the Concept note (in Croatian language) provided on the official Programme website www.acfcroatia.hr in accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines for Applicants.

All supporting documents detailed in the Guidelines must be included in the application. Please refer to the Guidelines for more information and clarifications related to various issues such as eligibility of costs, procurement, and selection criteria.

Applications shall be submitted **only in electronic form** to the following e-mail address: prijava.sektorski@acfcroatia.hr. The **subject** of the submitting e-mail shall be: **Application to call for sectoral innovation projects**

Only complete applications will be considered for the first phase evaluation and selection purposes.

Before the evaluation of the concept note, the Fund Operator will conduct administrative and eligibility assessment following the criteria described in the Guidelines for Applicants. The applicants will have five working days to submit any missing documents following a relevant request by the Fund Operator.

Each concept note application that meets the administrative and eligibility criteria shall be scored by two (2) impartial external experts appointed by the Fund Operator, according to the evaluation criteria published in the Guidelines for Applicants. Applications will be ranked on the basis of the average sum of awarded points.

Threshold for inclusion of the concept note into the next phase of application process is 70 out of 100 possible points.

Selection Committee will select around 7 best scored project proposals to enter the second phase of application process.

7. SECOND PHASE – FULL PROJECT PROPOSAL

Applicants invited to submit full project proposals in the second phase of the application process shall prepare and fill in the form »Cjelovita projektna prijava« (Full Application Form) in accordance with instructions. Full proposal shall be based on the concept note submitted in the first phase of the application process.

Indicative deadline and the submission process for the second phase: January 18, 2021 12.00 (noon) Croatian time, or one month after the notification of successful applicants

Applications shall be submitted **only in electronic form** to the following e-mail address: prijava.sektorski@acfcroatia.hr. The **subject** of the submitting e-mail shall be: **Application to call for sectoral innovation projects - second phase.**

Only complete applications will be considered for evaluation and selection purposes.

Before the evaluation of the concept note, the Fund Operator will conduct administrative assessment following the criteria described in the Guidelines for Applicants. The applicants will have five working days to submit any missing documents following a relevant request by the Fund Operator.

Each project application that meets the administrative criteria shall be evaluated by two (2) impartial external experts appointed by the Fund Operator. Both external experts shall be independent of the Fund Operator. All applications will be evaluated, following the process and evaluation criteria detailed in the Guidelines for Applicants.

Project proposals scoring a minimum of 70 points in quality assessment will be recommended for funding. Only the highest scoring project proposals within individual Programme outcome will be awarded with the ACF grant.

8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR THE APPLICANTS

Questions may be sent to the FO no later than eight (8) days before the deadline for the submission of concept note, i.e. until October 18, 2020, and eight (8) days before the deadline for the submission of full application. The FO has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date. Questions and answers will be published on the Programme website www.acfcroatia.hr/faq/.

The questions must be sent by email to the address podrska@acfcroatia.hr.

For more information visit the official Programme website www.acfcroatia.hr where you can find all information and documentation relating to this Call, including the **Application Form, Guidelines for**

Applicants, as well as a list of **Frequently Asked Questions**.

Timetable of workshops:

Event	Main purpose	Date	Venue
Information workshop	Detailed presentation of the call for proposal, especially result framework	04 September 2020 09 September 2020	on-line

9. COMPLAINTS MECHANISM

In accordance with the terms and conditions for the Active Citizens Fund in Croatia, the Fund Operator has established a Complaints Committee. Complaints/alerts may be submitted in case of suspicion of irregularity, bad governance, corruption in implementation of Active Citizens Fund in Croatia programme, including those on possible misuse of funding projects submitted by general public.

Complaints/alerts can also be submitted anonymously. Complaint/report/alert must be justified and consisted of the following information:

- Description of the irregularity (including whether it is alleged or real and how it occurred);
- Period the irregularity refers to or the timeline of its occurrence;
- How did the reporting person become aware of the irregularity;
- Identification of the individuals or legal entities related to the irregularity, and other information.

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

The final decision of the Fund Operator whether to approve or reject support to a project as well as the final decision on the shortlisted applications in the selection process is not subject to complaint/appeal.

General complaints/alerts related to the selection process as such can be submitted to the Complaints Committee providing the information as outlined above.

All complaints are first assessed by the Fund Operator. A complainant who is not satisfied with the conclusion made by the Fund Operator has the right to take the case to the Complaints Committee, which includes two members who are external to the Fund Operator and its Board and does not include programme staff responsible for assessing project applications.

The complaints must be submitted electronically to the following email: prigovori@acfcroatia.hr.