



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

NGO Grant to promote CSO engagement in Council of Europe
DICS/Grant/2024/2

Project	Boosting trust and engagement of citizens in democratic processes
Awarding entity	COUNCIL OF EUROPE Civil Society Unit
Funding	Voluntary Contribution 2024 Democratic Institutions and Civil Society Division
Duration	Projects shall be implemented by 30 October 2025. Reporting requirements shall be completed by 30 November 2025.
Estimated starting date	01 March 2025
Issuance date	30 October 2024
Deadline for applications	01 December 2024

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APPENDICES:

- Appendix I - Application Form
- Appendix II - Provisional budget (Template)
- Appendix III - Template Grant Agreement (for information only)

HOW TO APPLY?

- Complete and sign the **Application Form** (See **Appendix I**)
- Attach a provisional budget (using the template reproduced in **Appendix II**)
- Attach the other supporting documents:
 - A register extract or other document showing the legal status of the Applicant(s)
 - Latest available annual report of the (Lead) Applicant
 - Latest available audited annual financial statement of the (Lead) Applicant together with the audit report
 - A list of member organisations of the Applicant(s)
- Send these documents in electronic form (Word .and/or PDF) to the following e-mail address: NGO-Unit@coe.int. Emails should contain the following reference in subject: “Application for NGO Grant”.
- Applications must be received **before 01.12.2024 at 23.59 Central European Time (CET)**

I. INTRODUCTION

This call for proposals is launched in the framework of the Council of Europe Project “3950 – Boosting trust and engagement of citizens in democratic processes”. The project aims to further enhance mutual engagement of CSOs and the Council of Europe through a series of information and capacity building activities for national and regional NGOs to facilitate their involvement in different areas of the work of the Council of Europe. Additionally, the project aims at raising awareness and building capacity of civil servants, CSOs and citizens through a competence building program on participatory and deliberative processes at national level in Council of Europe member States.

Project proposals shall aim to produce an added value to the Council of Europe efforts in this domain.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE PROJECT

The purpose of the Project 3950 is to contribute to countering the democratic backsliding which can be observed in Council of Europe member states.

In particular, it aims to strengthen the engagement of citizens in decision making in their countries and the mutual engagement of the Council of Europe and civil society. Through the project interventions actors interested in fostering democratic culture across Europe will be mobilised and their competences and capacities will be strengthened. The planned activities aim to promote the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, introducing participatory and deliberative mechanisms at national level and creating a "culture of participation" in the Council of Europe member States and with Council of Europe. The project outputs are conferences, good practices, regional workshops, webinars, joint training, tailor-made competence -building programs and awareness raising.

Project partners include CSOs and public authorities from member states.

III. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The indicative available budget under this call for proposals is 120.000 € (one hundred and twenty thousand Euros). The Council of Europe intends to award 3 grants of a maximum amount of 40.000 € (forty thousand Euros) each. One organisation can only submit one proposal.

Subject to availability of funds and extension of the project initial duration, the Council of Europe reserves the right not to award all available funds, and/or to redistribute the available funds in a different manner depending on the project proposals received and on the outcome of the call for proposals.

IV. REQUIREMENTS

1. General objective

The grant will fund three projects designed to mobilise actors interested in countering the democratic backsliding and fostering a democratic culture across Europe and strengthening the interaction, dialogue and exchanges between the Council of Europe and European civil society. The grant will fund three projects covering different regions of Europe, namely Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe and Central Europe.

The projects will in particular:

- raise awareness about the work done by the Council of Europe to make member states more resilient to pressures undermining democratic values, promote democratic governance and enhance civil participation in political decision-making, including the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy
- raise awareness about existing Council of Europe standards on civil society and how they can be used by civil society actors to advance their causes

- raise awareness about existing, and help to identify new opportunities of cooperation and interaction between the Council of Europe and civil society

The projects shall be carried out by an international non-governmental organisation (INGO), umbrella non-governmental organisation, or consortium of NGOs with strong expertise and experience in advocacy, policymaking, and representation of interests in the areas of democracy, human rights and/or the rule of law and with expertise of the Council of Europe standards or experience in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

Each project shall include activities in at least two different regions of Europe. The regions to be covered by the proposal as well as the foreseen activities for each region (see point 2. Means of action) shall be specified in the application form.

2. Means of action

The following activities should be undertaken by each project:

- Dissemination of information regarding [Reykjavik Principles for Democracy](#)
- Dissemination of existing Council of Europe standards on civil society, such as the Recommendations [CM/Rec\(2007\)14](#) and [CM/Rec\(2018\)11](#)
- Dissemination of existing Council of Europe tools related to opportunities for participating in Council of Europe standard setting, monitoring and cooperation activities, such as the [Conference of INGOs \(CINGO\)](#), the [Practical Guide for Civil Society](#) and the [Civil Society Portal](#)
- Organisation of events on the work done by the Council of Europe in the area of democracy and engagement with civil society
- Dissemination of results of the events in blogs/news/articles in different media and social media channels.

The events can take the form of conferences, seminars, dialogues, webinars and/or workshops in different European regions. Each event will comprise of two components:

- a component on awareness raising about the work for democracy of the Council of Europe and discussing opportunities of increased cooperation and interaction between the Council of Europe and civil society;
- a thematic component of particular interest, e.g. a) the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy and their translation into actionable parameters; b) taking stock of and responding to the evolution of civic space in Europe; c) modalities of civil society involvement: representation, participation, deliberation.

Proposals shall include information regarding region and country coverage and indications of the activities and events to be implemented in each region and country.

Implementation period

The implementation period of the projects should start on 1 March 2025 (see indicative timetable under VIII. below) and shall not extend beyond 30 October 2025.

Reporting requirements shall be completed on 30 November 2025 at the latest.

Projects completed prior to the date of submission of the applications will be automatically excluded. As regard projects started prior to the date of submission of the applications, or prior to the date of signature of the grant agreement, only those costs incurred after the date of submission of the grant application could be eligible (provided the agreement concerned so provides).

3. Target stakeholders

Projects should target the following key stakeholders:

- civil society representatives from international and national NGOs involved in advocacy, policy-making, representation of interests etc and concerned with the subjects of democracy, human rights, the rule of law;
- representatives of academia concerned with the subjects of human rights, democracy, the rule of law (including members of the Council of Europe network of Schools of Political Studies and OCEAN – Open Council of Europe Academic Networks)

The above list is not exhaustive, and projects may propose to target other relevant stakeholders, while keeping in mind the general objective of the Project 3950.

4. Budgetary requirements

Project proposals shall be accompanied by a draft budget (See **Template Budget, in Appendix II**) amounting to a maximum of 40.000 € (forty thousand Euros). The estimated budget must be consistent, accurate, clear, complete, and cost-effective, in the light of the activities proposed.

Each Grantee shall also be required to contribute to the project either by way of its own resources or by contribution from third parties with an amount equivalent to at least 5% of the requested grant. Co-financing may take the form of financial or human resources, in-kind contributions or income generated by the action or project.

5. Further to the general objective, preference will be given to:

- Projects proposed by an INGO, umbrella organisation, consortia of NGOs with strong expertise and experience in advocacy, policymaking and representation of interests in the areas of democracy, human rights and/or the rule of law;
- Projects proposed by an INGO, umbrella organisation, consortia of NGOs with expertise of the Council of Europe standards or with experience of cooperating with the Council of Europe;
- Projects targeting also organisations promoting the rights of women, youth, and persons in vulnerable position;
- Projects involving events in different European regions.

6. The following types of action will not be considered:

- Projects/actions providing financial support to third parties (re-granting schemes);
- Projects/actions concerning only or mainly individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- Projects/actions supporting political parties.

7. Funding conditions:

The funds for each grant should in principle be distributed as follows:

- 80% will be paid to the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium when the Grant Agreement between the Parties is signed;
- the balance will be paid to the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium based on actual expenditures incurred, and after the presentation and acceptance by the Council of Europe of the final narrative and financial reports for the Grant implementation.

8. Reporting requirements:

- **narrative reporting** requires a full narrative report in English on the use made of the grant, the fulfilment of the objectives of the project, results achieved, and challenges encountered. The narrative report must include a summary of participants' feedback, a copy of the register of the participants during each of the events, including names, organisations and signatures of participants, photos of the events and links to blogs or articles written. The narrative report shall include recommendations, in the light of the experience gathered during the initiative, for the work of the Council of Europe on Reykjavik principles and future action for strengthening Council of Europe engagement with civil society;
- **financial reporting** requires in particular a statement in Euros, in English, stating the payments made for the implementation of the activities, certified by the responsible financial officer of the Grantee(s), accompanied by "appropriate original supporting documents" (see below). The Council of Europe reserves the right to ask for summary translations of invoices into English. If for legal reasons the original documents must be retained by the Grantee(s), certified copies must be submitted with the financial statement.

"Appropriate original supporting documents" refers to signed contracts, invoices and acceptances of work (for all transactions), payment authorisation for all transactions should also be provided in case the Grantee(s) use such practice, and reliable evidence of payment (authorised payment order and bank statement).

As regards round tables / conferences, presenting "appropriate original supporting documents" requires presentation of a programme indicating the title, dates, venue, and agenda of the event; the names of persons facilitating the event, a signed list of participants, the contracts with the owner of venue of the event (e.g. hotel) for the rent of premises, food and beverages of participants, invoices from the owner of the venue of the event for the above services, and a report on the results of the event (see narrative reporting above).

As regards consultancy services, presenting "appropriate original supporting documents" requires presentation of evidence of the outputs produced, contracts with experts and consultants containing a specific description of services to be carried out, invoices produced after the works have been performed and delivered (the specialities of the consultants shall correspond to the nature of activities for which they are contracted).

As regards travel fees / lodging of experts and participants, presenting "appropriate original supporting documents" requires presentation, where relevant, of contracts with a travel agency for travel fees and lodging, invoices of the travel agency indicating destinations, dates, ticket costs, and names of the travelling persons, a programme of the event indicating the names of the experts and signed lists of participants.

The above description is not comprehensive. Any doubt regarding the interpretation of the notion of "appropriate original supporting documents" should lead the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium to consult the Council of Europe.

V. HOW TO APPLY?

1. Documents to be submitted:

Each application shall contain:

- the completed and signed **Application Form** (See **Appendix I**);
- a provisional budget (using the template reproduced in **Appendix II**);
- the other supporting documents:
 - A register extract or other document showing the legal status of the Applicant(s)
 - Latest available annual report of the (Lead) Applicant
 - Latest available audited annual financial statement of the (Lead) Applicant together with the audit report
 - A list of member organisations of the Applicant(s)

Applications that are incomplete will not be considered.

2. Questions

General information can be found on the website of the Council of Europe: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/civil-society/home> and <https://www.coe.int/en/web/steering-committee-on-democracy/home>

Questions regarding this specific call for proposals must be sent at the latest on 12.11.2024, in English, and shall be exclusively sent to the following address: NGO-Unit@coe.int, with the following reference in subject: “Question regarding NGO Grant”.

The replies to the questions received will be posted on the website of the Council of Europe on 20.11.2024: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/civil-society/home>

3. Deadline for submission

The application form, **completed and signed by all Applicants**, together with the supporting documents, must be submitted in electronic form (Word and/or PDF) to the following e-mail address: NGO-Unit@coe.int. Emails should contain the following reference in subject: “Application for NGO Grant”.

Applications must be received **before 1.12.2024 at 23.59 Central European Time (CET)**. Applications received after the above-mentioned time will not be considered.

4. Change, alteration and modification of the application file

Any change in the format, or any alteration or modification of the original application file, will cause the immediate rejection of the application concerned.

VI. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

The projects presented will be assessed by an Evaluation Committee composed of three staff members of the Council of Europe with expertise in the area of democracy or the organisation of awareness-raising campaigns.

The procedure shall be based on the underlying principles of grant award procedures, which are transparency, non-retroactivity, non-cumulative awards, not-for-profit, co-financing and non-discrimination, in accordance with [Rule 1374 of 16 December 2015 on the grant award procedures of the Council of Europe](#).

The applicants, and their projects, shall fulfil all of the following criteria:

1. Exclusion criteria:

Applicants shall be excluded from the grant award procedure where they or, in the case of legal persons, their owner(s) or executive officer(s):

- a. have been sentenced by final judgment on one or more of the following charges: participation in a criminal organisation, corruption, fraud, money laundering, terrorist financing, terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, child labour or trafficking in human beings;
- b. are in a situation of bankruptcy, liquidation, termination of activity, insolvency or arrangement with creditors or any like situation arising from a procedure of the same kind, or are subject to a procedure of the same kind;
- c. have received a judgement with res judicata force, finding an offence that affects their professional integrity or constitutes a serious professional misconduct;
- d. do not comply with their obligations as regards payment of social security contributions, taxes and dues, according to the statutory provisions of the country where they are established;
- e. are an entity created to circumvent tax, social or other legal obligations (empty shell company), have ever created or are in the process of creation of such an entity;
- f. have been involved in mismanagement of the Council of Europe funds or public funds.

By signing the Application Form, applicants shall declare on their honour that they are not in any of the above-mentioned situations (See **Appendix I, Item 12**).

The Council of Europe reserves the right to ask applicants at a later stage to supply the following supporting documents:

- for the items set out in paragraphs a), b), c) and f), an extract from the record of convictions or failing that an equivalent document issued by the competent judicial or administrative authority of the country where the applicant is established, indicating that these requirements are met;
- for the items set out in paragraph d), a certificate issued by the competent authority of the country of establishment.

2. Eligibility criteria:

In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant(s) must:

- be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation in a member state of the Council of Europe;
- be able to carry out activities described in its project proposal in at least two regions of Europe;
- have been active for at least five years in the field of advocacy, policy-making and/or representation of interests related to democracy, human rights or the rule of law;
- have expertise of the Council of Europe standards or experience of cooperating with the Council of Europe
- have sufficient financial capacity (stable and sufficient sources of funding) to maintain its activity throughout the period for which the grant is awarded and to participate by way of its own resources (including human resources or in-kind contributions)¹;

¹ The Council of Europe shall have full discretion in determining whether applicants are considered to have sufficient financial capacity in light of the complexity of the initiative proposed.

- have sufficient operational and professional capacity, including staff, to carry out activities described in its project proposal²;
- have a bank account.

In case of a consortium, the above criteria should as much as possible be met individually by the organisations concerned, especially the lead organisation, it being understood that their combined experience, expertise and geographical coverage will be taken into account.

Multiple applications are not allowed and shall lead to the exclusion of all applications concerned.

3. Award criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- the relevance and added value of the project regarding the objective of the call (30%)
- the extent to which the action meets the requirements of the call (30%);
- the quality, accuracy, clarity, completeness and cost-effectiveness of the application and the estimated budget (20%);
- the relevance of the experience of the applying organisation(s) and staff (20%).

VII. NOTIFICATION OF THE DECISION AND SIGNATURE OF GRANT AGREEMENTS

On completion of the selection process, all applicants will be notified in writing of the final decision concerning their respective applications as well as on the next steps to be undertaken.

The selected Grantee(s) will be invited to sign a Grant Agreement (See Appendix III, for information only), formalising their legal commitments. **Potential applicants are strongly advised to read the draft contract, in particular its requirements in terms of payment and reporting.**

VIII. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

Phases	Indicative timing
Publication of the call	30 October 2024
Deadline for submitting applications	01 December 2024
Information to applicants on the results of the award procedure	24 January 2025
Signature of the grant agreements	07 February 2025
Implementation period	1.03.2025-30.10.2025

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² The Council of Europe shall have full discretion in determining whether applicants are considered to have sufficient financial capacity in light of the complexity of the initiative proposed.