

ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND ROMANIA

Fund for Bilateral Relations

Guidelines for applicants

Call for proposals no. 1/2019

Bucharest,
September 4, 2019

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND ROMANIA AND THE FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

This call for proposals is part of **Active Citizens Fund Romania** programme (hereafter named “ACF Romania” or “Programme”). With a total allocation of **46,000,000 EUR**, the Programme will pursue a long-term development of the civil society sector sustainability and capacity, stepping up its role in promoting democratic participation, active citizenship and human rights for all, while strengthening bilateral relations with entities from the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

ACF Romania is part of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021. The **overall objective of the Grants** is to reduce economic and social disparities and to strengthen bilateral relations between the 15 beneficiary countries and the Donor States. **ACF Romania** is administered by a Consortium composed of the Civil Society Development Foundation, Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation, Resource Centre for Roma Communities, PACT Foundation and Frivillighet Norge, acting as Fund Operator designated by FMO – the Financial Mechanism Office of the EEA and Norway Grants.

The **objectives** of the **ACF Romania** are **to strengthen civil society and active citizenship and to empower vulnerable groups**. The following **Areas of Support** are targeted by the Programme:

- Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency
- Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity etc.
- Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV)
- Environment and climate change

ACF Romania will support projects under the following **outcomes**:

1. Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness
2. CSOs actively defend human rights and promote equal treatment
3. Vulnerable groups are empowered
4. Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society (organisations and the sector)

! Information on each Call for proposals will be available at www.activecitizensfund.ro

As part of the ACF Romania, the **Fund for Bilateral Relations** aims **to contribute to strengthening bilateral relations between Romania and the Donor States**. The Fund for Bilateral Relations will allow supporting activities aiming at strengthening bilateral relations between civil society organisations and other entities from Romania and the Donor States, the search for partners for donor partnership projects prior to or during the preparation of a project application, the development of such partnerships and the preparation of an application for donor partnership project, networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice between civil society organisations and other entities from Romania and Donor States.

All organisations and activities funded shall be based on the **common values** of respect of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights for all. All activities supported by the Fund shall follow the principles of good governance - they shall be participatory and inclusive, transparent, effective and efficient. There shall be zero-tolerance towards corruption. All activities supported by the Fund shall be in line with the principles of sustainable development, long-term economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection.

2. SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON THE PRESENT CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2.1 OBJECTIVE AND ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The **objective of this Call for proposals** is to support non-governmental organisations from Romania and entities from Donor States in developing sustainable partnerships and preparing and submitting an application for a donor partnership project under ACF Romania.

Eligible activities under the current Call for proposals are **mobility activities** that create or strengthen the base for present or future cooperation among Romanian organisations and Donor State entities in order to prepare and submit a donor partnership project under any of the Active Citizens Fund Calls for proposals (any Round). First Round of Calls for project proposals under ACF Romania is intended to be launched October/ November 2019.

The mobility activities supported by the Fund for Bilateral Relations shall:

- tackle themes under the Areas of Support and outcomes addressed through ACF Romania **and**
- are coherently described within the Application Form **and**
- underline the relevance and contribution to the objective of the Fund for Bilateral Relations and the objective of the present Call for proposals **and**
- clearly present the motivation to undertake the mobility project and the experience of the applicant and entity/ entities involved from Donor States, the structure of the mobility project, clearly and coherently describing the proposed activities (including a daily mobility plan) and also the follow-up activities after the mobility.

NB: Mobility activities can be implemented only in Romania and/or in any of the Donor States.

2.2 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants under the Fund for Bilateral Relations **are:**

2.2.1. Non-governmental and non-profit organizations (NGOs), legally established in Romania, which have acquired legal personality and operate under the Government Ordinance no.26/2000 and/or the Law no.21/1924 on associations and foundations (with subsequent amendments and completions).

Beside the above mentioned, **eligible Romanian applicants** are also:

- **County and Bucharest municipality foundations for youth and the National Youth Foundation** established under the Law no.146/2002 (with subsequent amendments and completions);
- **National Red Cross Society in Romania** established under the Law no.139/1995 (amended and supplemented by the Law no.524/2004) **and its structures with legal personality.**

2.2.2. Entities legally established in one of the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), intending to participate in a donor partnership project under ACF Romania.

In addition to the above mentioned criteria, **the applicants from Romania and Donor States shall meet the following requirements:**

- a) abide by the principles of human rights for all, democratic values, rule-of-law **and**
- b) do not promote intolerant, discriminatory and/ or hate speech.

NGO applicants from Romania and Donor States shall also meet the following requirements:

- a) 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, **and**
- b) have the capacity, according to their statutes, to act in the field addressed by the project, **and**
- c) are independent of the government and other local, regional and national public authorities¹ **and**
- d) are independent of political parties, **and**
- e) are independent of commercial entities² (such as companies, self-governing regies, individual enterprises etc.), **and**
- f) 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) **and**
- g) are directly responsible for designing and managing the project and do not act as an intermediary, **and**
- h) have transparent structures and elected chair/ board, and are accountable to their members and donors.

The Assessment of the fulfilment of the independence condition will be made on the basis of a concrete analysis of the situation of the organization in question.

2.3 NON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Not eligible Romanian applicants are any other legal entities that do not cumulatively respect the criteria mentioned in the section 2.2 Eligible applicants. Political parties, religious institutions (religious cults, religious associations established under the Law no.489/2006 on freedom of religion and general regime of cults), professional associations³, social partners (trade unions and employers organizations), profit-distributing cooperatives, are not eligible applicants.

Entities do not have the right to apply and receive funds under the Programme (regardless they are from Romania or from Donor States) if they are in any of the situations described below:

- (a) are bankrupt, are in the administration of a judicial authority or are being winding up, have suspended the activity, are subject of proceedings concerning these issues or are in a similar situation following the application of a similar procedure provided for in the national legislation or regulations in force;
- (b) are guilty of serious professional misconduct proven by any means the Fund Operator can justify;
- (c) have not fulfilled obligations related to the payment of social security contributions or taxes to the state budget in accordance with the national legislation;
- (d) have been the subject of a final decision *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization or any other illegal activity to the detriment of financial interests, without the evidence that corrective action has been taken in this respect in recent years;
- (e) organisations from which the amount due was not recovered, following a final court decision in connection with the NGO Programme 2009-2014 in Romania.

¹ For assessing if an organisation fulfils this condition it will be checked mainly the following aspects:

- Does not have more than half of the members local, regional and / or national institutions and / or authorities;
- Does not have more than half of the voting members of the Board of Directors / General Assembly local, regional and / or national public authorities or their natural persons;
- Does not have the organizational and operational structures established so that decisions are mostly influenced by local, regional and / or national public institutions and / or authorities.

² For assessing if an organisation fulfils this condition it will be checked mainly the following aspects:

- Does not have more than half of the members profit-making entities;
- Does not have more than half of the voting members of the Board of Directors / General Assembly, profit-making entities or their natural persons;
- Does not have the organizational and operational structures established so that decisions are mostly influenced by profit-making entities.

³ "Professional association" is the association which makes conditional the exercise of a certain profession with the membership in the association, and the purpose and objectives of the association are to further the specific interests of its members only.

The project proposal will be accompanied by a signed **Applicant Statement of eligibility (Annex 2)**, by which the Applicants certify that they meet all the eligibility conditions mentioned in the Section 2.2 Eligible applicants and that are not in any of the exclusion situations mentioned in Section 2.3 Non eligibility criteria. Through this statement, Applicants will also certify the eligibility of the partner(s) as stipulated in section 2.4 Eligible partners.

For the projects selected for funding, the Fund Operator reserves the right to request the Applicant to submit any kind of documents in support of the Applicant Statement of eligibility.

2.4 ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

In case the Applicant is a Romanian eligible organisation, eligible partners are exclusively entities from Donor States that could be involved in a mobility project under the Fund for Bilateral Relations and intend to participate in a donor partnership project under any the ACF Romania Calls for proposals. Eligible partners can be any non-governmental organizations, any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, established as a legal person in **Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway**. Public entities could be local and central public authorities, public institutions/ agencies, decentralized governmental public services, territorial administrative units, universities, etc.

In case the Applicant is a Donor State entity, eligible partners are exclusively Romanian non-governmental and non-profit organizations (NGOs) mentioned at article 2.2.1 that meet all the eligibility conditions mentioned in the Section 2.2 Eligible applicants and that are not in any of the exclusion situations mentioned in Section 2.3 Non eligibility criteria.

Please note that:

- Within this Call for proposals it is **NOT** compulsory to have an official partnership agreement at application stage. However, if costs will be incurred by a partner entity, the Applicant and Partner(s) will sign and send to the Fund Operator prior to the signature of the grant agreement an official partnership agreement (Annex 4 – Partnership agreement);
- It is mandatory to make reference in the Application form about the organisation(s) that will be involved from Romania or Donor States and submit evidence to prove contact/ communication with the respective organization(s) (e-mail correspondence, letter of intent from the organisation(s) etc.),
- In case of approval of the project proposal, it is recommended to send along with the final report a draft cooperation agreement with at least one of the organisations involved from Romania or Donor States. The minimum information about a possible future donor partnership project to be included in this agreement refers to overall project idea, selected area(s) of support and roles/contribution of each organisation.

2.5 ELIGIBILITY OF COSTS

Eligible costs under this Call for proposals are **costs for participants** involved in the mobility activities on behalf of the applicant and/ or partner, provided that they are in line with the usual practices of the organisations involved, respect the provisions under this Call and the national/ European legislation and are directly incurred by the project promoter or partner.

Only the following types of costs are eligible:

- International travel costs, economic class, including luggage fee, if the case;
- Travel insurance costs;
- Subsistence costs that can include:

- accommodation in Romania or Donor States;
- per diem for Romanian staff travelling to Donor States, under the Romanian legislation;
- per diem for staff from Donor State entities travelling to Romania, under the respective national legislation, but not more than the recommended flat rates for per diems as presented in Annex 1 to the Commission decision of 18.11.2008 on General implementing provisions adopting the Guide to missions for officials and other servants of the European Commission – C (2008)6215 final - and subsequent updates⁴
- in case the participants involved in the mobility are volunteers/other people involved with the Applicant or Partner(s), meals can be covered as direct/ real costs (and not per diem).
- Other transportation costs in Romania or Donor States, including transport to/from the airport, intra/interurban/rural transport. In case of staff, in this cost category are not included the costs of transportation inside the locality where the activity takes place (as these costs are covered by per diem);
- Protocol costs for meetings;
- Audit costs – **only** for Applicants or Partners from Donor States;
- VAT provided that by law it cannot be recovered.

NB: Salary costs are not eligible.

2.6 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION, GRANT AMOUNT, DURATION, LIMITATIONS

The **total maximum allocation for the present Call for proposals** is of **75,000 EUR**. If the entire amount will not be contracted and/ or spent, funds will be distributed towards a second Call for proposals due in 2020.

The **minimum grant amount per project** is **1,000 EUR** and the **maximum grant amount per project** is **3,000 EUR**, with a limit of not more than **EUR 1,500 EUR** per participant per travel.

Co-financing is not required. The project grant rate may be up to 100% of the total eligible expenditure of the project.

The **duration of the projects** is **minimum 0.5 months**⁵, and **maximum 1.5 months**, and implementation period for the project must be set in such a manner that activities do not start prior to **October 18, 2019** and are completed by **December 13, 2019**. As well, associated costs must be invoiced and paid by **December 13, 2019** the latest.

NB: An Applicant may submit **only one project proposal** within the present Call for proposals. If the same entity submits more than one proposal, then it has to opt for one of them within the deadline communicated by the Fund Operator. In case the applicant does not express its option for one of the proposals within the deadline, all proposals submitted by the same entity shall be declared ineligible.

2.7 APPLICATION DEADLINE

Launch date for the Call for proposals: **September 4, 2019, 15:00 EEST (Romanian time)**
Deadline for receiving the applications: **October 4, 2019, 23:59 EEST (Romanian time)**

Please note that the evaluation and selection process is ongoing, the available funds could be exhausted before the deadline. In this case the Call could be closed before the deadline.

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/3/2008/EN/3-2008-6215-EN-F1-1.PDF>

⁵ 0.5 months = 14 days

2.8 PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION DOSSIER

The Application Dossier will include:

- **Application Form** (Annex 1 - template attached), to be filled in **Romanian** or **English**. The Applicant shall submit Annex 1 filled in word format as well as a scanned format (such as pdf/ jpeg.), signed by the legal representative of the Applicant;
- **Applicant Statement of eligibility** (Annex 2 - template attached), to be filled in **Romanian** or **English**, signed by the legal representative of the Applicant, and submitted in scanned format (such as pdf/ jpeg.).

! The Guideline for Applicants and the Annexes of the Application Dossier can be downloaded from the Programme website www.activecitizensfund.ro.

The Application Dossier, with the required documents enlisted above, shall be delivered **only** via e-mail to bilateral@fdsc.ro no later than **October 4, 2019, 23:59 EEST** (Romanian time).

! Applications delivered by personal delivery, post/express mail or fax will NOT be accepted.

The Fund Operator shall inform by e-mail the applicant on registration of the Application Dossier and will publish a list of registered Applications on the programme's website no later than 7 days after registration of the application.

2.9 EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The evaluation and selection process will be ongoing. The applications will be selected according to a first come first served rule in the order of their registration, with the conditions that applications receive the minimum average score of **65 points** and funds are still available (namely they were not used up by previous selected applications).

2.9.1 Registration of the Application Dossiers:

All Applications Dossiers submitted via e-mail shall be registered and processed by the Fund Operator.

2.9.2 Compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria

The Fund Operator shall review the applications **for compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria**, based on the following grid:

Administrative and eligibility criteria	YES	NO
1. The Application Dossier (Annex 1 and 2) is complete and is submitted via e-mail to bilateral@fdsc.ro , no later than October 4, 2019, 23:59 EEST (Romanian time)		
2. The Applicant Statement of eligibility is fully filled in, signed by the legal representative of the applicant and sent in scanned format (such as pdf/ jpeg.)		
3. The applicant and partner/s are eligible.		
4. The grant requested is not below EUR 1,000 and does not exceed EUR 3,000.		
5. Project duration is not below 0.5 months, does not exceed 1.5 months and is completed by December 13, 2019		

Only grant applications that receive “YES” to all entries will qualify for the next stage of the evaluation. An applicant can appeal in writing the Fund Operator’s decision to reject a proposal at this stage. This should be done by e-mail to bilateral@fdsc.ro within 5 working days from the date when the decision was communicated, by providing reasoning that would justify the decision’s revision. The Fund Operator will communicate to the applicant the decision following the appeal within 10 working days from the registration of the appeal. The decision after appeal is final and no further appeal on the same Application could be formulated afterwards.

In order to verify the fulfilment of the eligibility criteria, the Fund Operator reserves the right to request clarifications. Request shall be made by e-mail (using the data provided in the application form) and the required clarifications must be provided by the applicant in writing, also by email, within 2 working days from the date of request. Failing in providing the requested information within the deadline may result in the rejection of the application.

2.9.3 Technical evaluation

Each Application that meets the administrative and eligibility criteria shall be evaluated by two impartial experts appointed by the Fund Operator. The experts shall separately and independently score the project according to the selection criteria below. For the purposes of scoring the projects, the average of the scores awarded by the experts shall be used. In case the difference between the scores given by the two experts is more than 30% of the higher score, a third expert shall be commissioned by the Fund Operator to score the project independently. In this case, the final score will be the average of the two closest scores. Appointing a third expert shall not apply in case where the score given by the third expert would not, in any way, result in the support of the project (giving that a minimum score for supporting projects of **65 points** is established for this Call for proposals).

The technical evaluation of a grant application is reviewed based on the following criteria:

Technical evaluation	Maxim Score
<p><i>1. Relevance and contribution to the objective of the Fund for Bilateral Relations and the objective of the present Call for proposals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevance to ACF Romania objectives/ outcomes and Bilateral Relations Fund aims; - Clarity of the proposed objectives for the mobility project and their relation to the objective of the current Call for proposals; - Presentation of the concrete outcomes of the mobility project and their contribution to strengthening bilateral relations. 	/25
<p><i>2. Motivation and experience to undertake the mobility project:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of the applicant organisation and partner(s) and their relation to ACF Romania Areas of Support; - Coherence among the expertise/ experience of the applicant organisation and partner(s) and motivation to implement the mobility project; - The manner in which the Applicant organisation and partner(s) follow the identification and development of ideas for future donor partnership project under the ACF Romania Call for Proposals. 	/30
<p><i>3. Structure of the mobility project, clarity and coherence of the proposed activities, involvement of partner(s) from Romania/ Donor States:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The manner in which the activities inside the mobility project support the achievement of the proposed objectives; 	/25

- Presentation and relevance of the preparatory activities for the mobility project; - Structure of the mobility itself and coherence of the draft mobility agenda; - Experience and expertise of the persons involved on behalf of the applicant organisation and partner(s).	
<i>4. Outcomes, dissemination and follow-up activities:</i> - Quality and feasibility of proposed dissemination and follow-up activities; - Presentation of results of the mobility project; - The manner in which the mobility project will contribute to strengthening bilateral relations.	/10
<i>5. The budget is balanced and realistic, built in accordance with the proposed activities and respects criteria mentioned in section 2.5.</i>	/10

For a proposal to be recommended for funding, it must receive at least 65 points. The Applications which receive at least 65 points will be recommended for funding in order of their registration (chronological order), until the financial allocation available for the present Call for proposals shall be used up.

2.9.4 Selection Commission

The selection decision is taken by a Commission composed of five representatives from the Fund Operator Consortium, with the relevant expertise and experience. The Decision is taken based on the recommendations resulted from experts' evaluation. The decision of the Commission is final and cannot be contested.

2.9.5 Informing Project Applicants on the results of the evaluation

The Fund Operator shall notify Applicants by e-mail about the results of the selection process. The lists of the projects proposed to be financed will be posted on the website of the Programme.

2.10 CONTRACTING, REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

The applicants selected for funding shall conclude a financing contract with Civil Society Development Foundation (templates will be provided at a later stage). During the contracting stage, Applicants will be requested to fill in Annex 3 – Project budget (in Excel format), that will become an annex to the Grant agreement. During the project implementation, the grant recipients will regularly provide to the Fund Operator information with respect to the development of activities included in the mobility project. At the end of the project implementation period, the grant recipients will provide a final technical and financial report, accompanied, if the case, by a request for balance payment (Annex 5 – Request for payment, Annex 6 – Technical and financial final report and Annex 6bis – Final financial report).

All project expenditures **must be justified with financial-accounting support documents**. Eligible expenditures are those actually incurred by the project promoter or partner(s) and meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the Grant agreement;
- they are directly connected to the project and they are indicated in the budget (Annex 3);
- they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
- they are used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the project promoter and determined according to the applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles; and
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

All payments must be converted into euro using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the European Commission published on its official website⁶, corresponding to the month during which the expenditure incurred (i.e. date of invoice).

For Applicants or partners from Donor States, project expenditures will be justified with financial-accounting support documents **or** an external audit report (Annex 7 – Recommended audit report).

Payments for the Grant agreement shall be done in two instalments:

- Advance payment of 80% of the grant, in euro, to be transferred based on a request for payment issued by the grant recipient, after the signature of the grant agreement by both parties. The advance payment shall be done in maximum 10 days from the signature of the contract and registration of the request for payment.
- Final payment (balance) up to 20% of the grant, in euro, to be calculated as difference between the approved eligible expenditures from the final report and the transferred advance payment.

The **final financial and technical report** must be submitted within maximum 45 calendar days from the end of the project implementation period. If the case, the Fund Operator will transfer the balance within 10 days from the final report approval.

2.11 FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

Questions related to this Call for proposals and the Fund for Bilateral Relations may be addressed by potential Applicants by e-mail and/ or phone to:

**Fundația pentru Dezvoltarea Societății Civile/
 Civil Society Development Foundation**

Address: Bd. Nerva Traian no. 21, Bucharest, Romania, sector 3, postal code 031044
 Tel: 0040 21 310 01 81/ 0040 745 122 191
 E-mail: bilateral@fdsc.ro
 Contact person: Vlad Dumitrescu, Program Manager

Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published on the Programme website www.activecitizensfund.ro once a week during the call.

In order to facilitate the identification of suitable entities from Donor States, the Fund Operator collaborates with two important bilateral partners:

Norwegian Helsinki Committee

<http://eeagrants.org/Who-we-are/Who-we-work-with/Norwegian-Helsinki-Committee>

and

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/budget/graphs/inforeuro.html>

Icelandic Human Rights Centre

<http://www.humanrights.is/english/>

A comprehensive **database of organisations from Norway** is available at:

<https://ngonorway.org/partners/>

3. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 – Application form (Word template)

ANNEX 2 – Applicant Statement of eligibility (Word template)

ANNEX 3 – Project budget (Excel template)

ANNEX 4 – Partnership agreement (Word template)

ANNEX 5 – Request for payment (Word template)

ANNEX 6 – Technical and financial final report (Word template)

ANNEX 6bis – Final financial report (Excel template)

ANNEX 7 – Recommended audit report (Word template)