

ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND ROMANIA

Guidelines for Applicants

Call #5 – Strategic Support for Human Rights and Equal Treatment

Medium and Large Grants

Round 2

Fund operated by:



Fundația pentru
Dezvoltarea
Societății
Civile



fundația pentru
parteneriat



Centrul de
Resurse
pentru
Comunitățile
de Romi



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Table of Contents

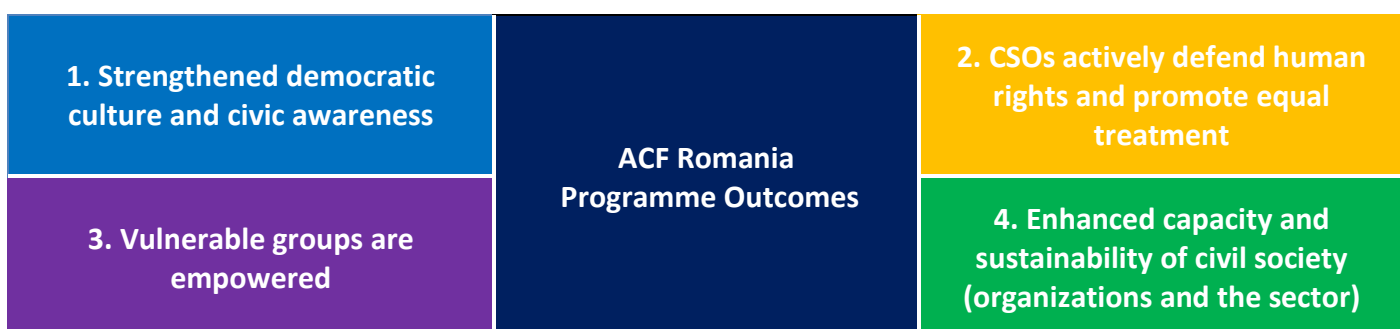
1. About Active Citizens Fund Romania	3
2. Outcome 2. CSOs actively defend human rights and promote equal treatment	4
3. Focus of the Call #5. Strategic support for human rights and equal treatment	5
3.1. Context	5
3.2. Types of grants and financial allocation	5
3.3. Objectives of the Call #5 and contribution to Programme results	6
3.4. Eligible projects	7
3.5. Eligible activities	7
3.6. Capacity building activities	10
3.7. Information and communication activities	11
4. Administrative and eligibility criteria	12
4.1. Territorial scope	12
4.2. Eligible Applicants.....	12
4.3. Exclusion criteria for Applicants	13
4.4. Eligible project partners	13
4.5. Grant rate and co-financing	14
4.6. Limitations	15
5. Eligibility of costs	15
5.1. General principles on the eligibility of costs	15
5.2. Direct costs	16
5.3. Indirect costs	16
5.4. Excluded costs	17
6. Preparation, submission and registration of project applications	18
7. Application deadline	19
8. Additional information and contact details	19
9. Evaluation and project selection	20
9.1. Verification of administrative compliance and eligibility	20
9.2. Technical and financial evaluation	21
9.3. Selection Committee	23
9.4. Executive Board	23
9.5. Announcing the results.....	23
9.6. Complaints Committee.....	23
10. Project contracting	24
11. Reporting, payments and audit	24
11.1. Procedures for reporting from project promoters	24
11.2. Payments procedures.....	25
11.3. Proof of expenditure and audit	26
Annexes	26

1. About Active Citizens Fund Romania

The [Active Citizens Fund Romania](#) programme (hereafter named “ACF Romania” or “Programme”) is part of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021. The **objectives** of the **Programme** are **to strengthen civil society and active citizenship and to empower vulnerable groups**. ACF Romania 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, while strengthening bilateral relations with organizations from the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). The Programme has a total allocation of **46,000,000 Euro**.

The **overall objective of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021** is to reduce economic and social disparities, and to strengthen bilateral relations between 15 beneficiary countries and the Donor States.

Programme Areas of Support	➤ 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, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity;
	➤ Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups;
	➤ Gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV);
	➤ Environment and climate change.



All organisations and activities funded shall be based on the common values and principles:		
Values	General Principles	Principles of sustainable development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect of human dignity • freedom • democracy • equality • rule of law • respect for human rights for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good governance • participatory and inclusive • accountable • transparent • responsive • effective and efficient • zero-tolerance towards corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-term economic growth • social cohesion • environmental protection

ACF Romania is administered by a Consortium composed of [Civil Society Development Foundation](#), [Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation](#), [Resource Center for Roma Communities](#), [PACT Foundation](#) and [Frivillighet Norge](#), acting as Fund Operator (FO) designated by FMO – Financial Mechanism Office of the EEA and Norway Grants.

2. Outcome 2. CSOs actively defend human rights and promote equal treatment

Outcome 2. CSOs actively defend human rights and promote equal treatment covers two priority areas of the Active Citizens Fund Romania: „*Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity*” and „*Gender equality and gender-based violence*”.

<p>Aims</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase awareness of citizens on their rights, along with their capacity to identify, report and challenge discrimination, hate speech in public space (social media, politicians’ statements, etc.), human rights violations, harmful institutional practices, as well as gaps in legislation and law enforcement. On a longer term, the individuals will further reflect a human rights approach in their actions, standing not only for their own rights but also for the rights of the others. To support NGOs to strengthen their capacity to conduct campaigns on human rights, undertake monitoring and watchdog activities on the implementation of policies in relation to gender equality and gender-based violence, advocate for human rights and equal treatment, conduct research on human rights issues and provide services to victims of discrimination and human rights violation.
<p>Approach</p>	<p>Projects to be supported under this Outcome shall tackle human rights by addressing the factors involved in generating or maintaining the challenges that various groups like Roma, women, LGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, elder people, children etc. are facing.</p> <p>There are strongly encouraged partnerships with other public/private entities to enhance awareness on human rights/equal treatment, provide services to victims of discrimination and human rights violation, monitor and advocate for the implementation of policies and legislation.</p>
<p>Special focus</p>	<p>A special focus of the Outcome 2 is to improve outreach to under-served geographic areas and/or target groups, out of which Roma inclusion and empowerment is given special attention. Also, gender equality and gender-based violence should be specifically approached through advocacy and awareness raising activities, service provision and monitoring and watchdog activities on the implementation of policies. Youth inclusion, a priority of the Programme, represents a special focus of the Outcome 2 as well.</p>
<p>Financial allocation</p>	<p>The total allocation available for open calls under Outcome 2 is 8,500,000 Euro.</p>
<p>Special allocations within the total financial allocation for Outcome 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,500,000 Euro is envisaged for <i>gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) area</i>. 1,000,000 Euro is envisaged for <i>combatting the infringement of human rights and discrimination against Roma</i>. a special allocation is foreseen for the development of civil society infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 800,000 Euro for small grants for small NGOs working in underserved areas and for underserved target groups 666,307 Euro for strategic grants for supporting implementation of long-term strategies of human rights organizations 200,000 Euro for rapid response grants allowing rapid response to emerging threats to human rights.

3. Focus of the Call #5. Strategic support for human rights and equal treatment

3.1. Context

Human rights cover a wide range of areas including economic, social, political and cultural rights, such as the right to work in just and favourable conditions; the right to social protection, to an adequate standard of living and to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental well-being; the right to education and the enjoyment of benefits of cultural freedom and scientific progress as well as civil and political rights; freedom of movement; equality before the law; the right to a fair trial and presumption of innocence; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; peaceful assembly; freedom of association; participation in public affairs and elections; protection of minority rights.

In Romania, discrimination, hate speech and social exclusion still largely affect Roma, women, LGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, elders etc. These groups have limited information on their rights and enforcing mechanisms (only 44% of the population would know their rights in case they were victims of discrimination or harassment - [2015 Eurobarometer](#)). They are facing negative stereotypes in the public space, institutional discriminatory practices (such as police brutality and forced eviction towards Roma, precarious living conditions for people with disabilities in psychiatric institutions etc.).

In 2019, a significant percentage of the population (31.2% – [Eurostat](#)) was at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Poverty can affect the right to participate, whereas a lack of participation may also increase the risk of poverty and marginalisation, creating a vicious circle. Children are particularly affected, and efforts should be made to change the paradigm of children as right holders rather than subjects of protection. Beside discrimination, hate speech become more visible in the public space. There are no designated procedures for recording hate crimes and no structured and systematic cooperation between law enforcement agencies and NGOs on recording and collecting data on hate crime.

Several challenges persist in relation to *gender equality* in areas connected to health, decision-making positions across the political, economic and social spheres or allocation of time spent doing care and domestic work and social activities. Various groups of women (Roma, migrant, rural, women with disabilities, older women) continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty and exclusion, trafficking in persons, labour/sexual exploitation. The situation is particularly acute for Roma women, who leave school early (only 16% have completed upper secondary education compared to 22% of Roma men); marry young (29% before they turn 18 compared to 12% of Roma men); stay at home (40% are not looking for work due to their care responsibilities) or are not in paid work (only 16% are employed compared to 34% of Roma men). *Gender-based violence (GBV)* remains widespread and is often sustained by gender role stereotypes ([80% of 26,398 victims in 2019 were women](#)). Moreover GBV increased since the beginning of 2020, according to data from the [National Agency for Equal Opportunities](#).

Civil society organisations have a critical role in alleviating some of these issues. Human rights organizations carry out significant work so that state institutions ensure respect for human rights. Recent examples of their activity are encouraging for the kind of expertise and determination that such a nongovernmental organization must have in order to obtain a favourable response from the authorities and, at the same time, to sensitize the general public on the cases of human rights violations. However, the notoriety of human rights non-governmental organizations in Romania is still low, with only 9% of citizens declaring that they are aware of such an organization and only half of them even managing to name one significant NGO of this type. Also, the financial support available for human rights organisations is scarce therefore they need dedicated strategic support in order to enforce their role and build constituencies.

The UN General Assembly 2020 acknowledges the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic at the level of human rights and the necessity to referring to economic, social and cultural rights concerns while tackling poverty and growing inequalities in numerous areas (including health, education etc.)

3.2. Types of grants and financial allocation

Under the Call #5 there are available the following types of grants			
	Medium and Large grants	Strategic grants	Total allocation Call #5
Financial allocation Round 1 ¹	4,245,609 Euro	666,307 Euro	4,911,916 Euro
Financial allocation Round 2	1,754,391 Euro	n/a	1,754,391 Euro
Total financial allocation*	6,000,000 Euro	666,307 Euro	6,666,307 Euro
*Out of which, Gender equality and GBV area specific allocation: 2,250,000 Euro			
*Out of which, Combatting the infringement of human rights and discrimination against Roma specific allocation: 750,000 Euro			

¹ The amounts included for the Financial allocation Round 1 represent the actual amounts allocated for contracting the projects selected to be financed for the Round 1, considering that there is no reserve list for the Round 1 under the Call #5.

! Attention

Funds allocated for the Round 1 of the Call #5 for medium, large and strategic grants and not contracted (if any) will be automatically reallocated to the Round 2 of the same Call for medium and large grants.

Medium and Large grants		
Type of grants	Medium grants	Large grants
Financial allocation for the Round 2	1,754,391 Euro	
Publication date of the Call	17 February 2021	
Opening date of the application process (application process exclusively through the online platform http://finantaripublice.fdsc.ro)	17 February 2021	
Application deadline	20 April 2021; 16:00 (Romanian time)	
Project duration (minimum and maximum)	6-24 months	12 - 24 months
Grant amount (minimum and maximum)	50,001 - 75,000 Euro	75,001-150,000 Euro
Capacity building activities	Possibility to allocate up to 20% of the total eligible costs of the project budget to capacity building measures	

3.3. Objectives of the Call #5 and contribution to Programme results

Programme Outcome 2	CSOs actively defend human rights and promote equal treatment
The objectives of the Call #5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enforce human rights advocacy and watchdog role of NGOs on human rights and equal treatment for all, gender equality issues and combatting gender-based violence To increase awareness of citizens on their rights, along with their capacity to identify, report and challenge discrimination, hate speech in public space, human rights violations, harmful institutional practices, as well as gaps in legislation and law enforcement.
Programme Areas of support targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity Gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV)
Country specific concern addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening the capacity and sustainability of the civil society sector Roma inclusion and empowerment Youth inclusion
Underserved thematic domains targeted	Human Rights, Roma inclusion and empowerment, Gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV), Youth
Target groups	<p>The final beneficiaries of the projects should be persons at risk of/ affected by discrimination and human rights violation, such as Roma, women, LGBTQIA+, gender-based violence survivors, victims of hate crime, refugees, victims of trafficking, children, persons in detention, people affected by poverty and social exclusion, persons with mental health issues, persons living in institutions, young people who left institutions, elder people, etc. are targeted by the Call.</p> <p>Other intermediate groups could also be targeted in order to achieve results at the level of the people at risk of/affected by discrimination and human rights violation, such as general public, law enforcement (policemen, judges, etc.), public services employees (teachers, social workers, physicians, nurses, etc.), media, academia, NGOs, etc.</p>

3.4. Eligible projects

The Call #5 supports initiatives tackling human rights in the context of nowadays challenges in fostering democracy, reducing poverty and shifting perceptions to a rights-based approach in different areas. Such initiatives shall have a significant contribution to **raising awareness on human rights and equal treatment**, especially in contexts where threatening/ violation of human rights is proven common.

The Call aims at shifting implementation of policies and institutional practices towards respecting human rights and equal treatment for all through advocacy, monitoring and watchdog interventions. Projects to be supported shall efficiently mobilize beneficiaries, other stakeholders, available resources (such as existing services, expertise, volunteers) in order to create premises for local ownership and sustainability. Such interventions could benefit from research on the problems approached and on the factors that influence their existence and persistence.

Complementary to larger advocacy and/or awareness raising initiatives, projects could improve/provide services to people at risk of or affected by discrimination and human rights violations, including gender-based violence. A human rights-based approach should be at the heart of the service provision. Improvement of existing services could target services provided by both public and private entities.

This Call strongly encourages partnerships with:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • other public/private entities to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhance awareness on human rights/ equal treatment - improve/provide services to victims of discrimination and human rights violation - monitor and advocate for the implementation of policies and legislation

Special financial allocations	In this Call, interventions related to gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) represents a special focus.
	The Call supports measures to combat the infringement of human rights and discrimination against Roma.

Under the Call #5 the following types of projects are not supported for funding	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	projects that exclusively or essentially target academic research, feasibility studies, conferences and other individual/unique events, infrastructure, individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	projects that focus exclusively on service provision;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	projects that involve obtaining / awarding individual scholarships;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	projects involving only training activities (see Attention note in 3.5);
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	projects for emergency support, unless they are an indispensable component of the project;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	refinancing activities (e.g. re-granting or loans given to other organizations or individuals/ legal entities);
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	projects that focus on the purchase of equipment, buildings or offices;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	the day-to-day activities of the Applicant (the project application must be elaborated for a specific project, as a set of well-defined and correlated activities, which will lead to concrete results within a well-defined time frame.)

3.5. Eligible activities

! Attention

Please note that the activities listed below are only examples that can be part of a project which has to be understood as a defined group of activities implemented to develop a response to a specific need, activities that need to be done in a logical sequence to achieve a set of predefined targets using the given resources.

Analytical activities such as studies, reports, data collection on human rights issues are eligible as part of more complex projects (i.e. preparatory work for proposed advocacy campaigns, data-based argumentation to public policy proposals or public decision-making, etc.).

Communication campaign is a planned series of coordinated communication activities that are realized to achieve a common goal, for a defined target group and are conducted in a defined period of time. Awareness raising campaigns should have a common subject of communication activities and a common message. A single project could encompass more than one awareness raising campaign, but the subject and the goals of the campaigns must be clearly defined and distinguished. A single communication activity (i.e. single event, advertisement, announcement(s) in social media etc.) is not considered as a campaign, but as part of one, and must not be counted separately.

Training activities are also eligible as part of more complex projects that include additional activities supporting the beneficiaries involvement in community life and public decision-making processes (follow-up activities, mentoring, coaching etc.) in order to produce changes in selected target groups.

Type of eligible activities (non-exhaustive list):

- ✓ **Campaigns to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and support/ consolidate/ expand positive changes in attitudes and practices related to:**
 - human rights,
 - gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV)
- ✓ **Promoting and creating secure and stimulating spaces for citizen to identify and report violations of human rights and actively, defend human rights and promote equal treatment.** This could include development and use of instruments, platforms, user-friendly websites, mechanisms, etc.
- ✓ **Developing partnerships with public and private entities (such as media, but not only) to promote and defend human rights.** This could include:
 - awareness raising campaigns;
 - advocate for human rights/equal treatment;
 - reporting hate crime, discrimination, human rights violations, etc.;
 - collecting information on respecting human rights (including through investigative journalism);
 - provide multidisciplinary assistance to victims of violation of human rights etc. or facilitate access to expertise on human rights issues;
 - tackling the right to freedom of expression in the context of respecting human rights (especially in case of media and investigative journalism);
 - increase outreach to groups that are subject to human rights violation;
 - identify and adopt good practices in the area of human rights.
- ✓ **Promoting the adoption of a human rights perspective in the activities of NGOs working in other fields** such as education, health, social services, etc. **and to foster positive measures to prevent conflicts.** This could include development of materials/ instruments/ methodologies.
- ✓ **Studies, reports, data collection on human rights related issues** (for example women rights and gender equality, identifying and understanding stereotypes, implementation of international human rights norms into domestic policies, nationalism and human rights, activism on human rights, business & Human Rights; Children's Rights; Disability Rights, Health & Human Rights; International Justice; LGBTQIA+ Rights; Refugees etc.) to document further initiatives in lobby, advocacy, campaigning and developing services.
- ✓ **Monitoring and watchdog activities on the implementation of national policies, strategies, recommendations of the international monitoring bodies related to:**
 - human rights;
 - gender equality and GBV
- ✓ **Advocating for improvement of legislation, law enforcement, improvement/ development of services for victims of discrimination and human rights violations**
- ✓ **Providing/ improving support services for victims (as well as for witnesses and third parties) of discrimination and human rights violations, including gender-based violence/ gender equality related services** (such as medical, hotlines on gender-based violence, legal advice or counselling services, day care services, reintegration services for ex-inmates, informal education, and women's shelters)
- ✓ **Countering hate speech with positive measures** such as creating collaborative (multi stakeholder) networks to build mutual understanding, promote dialogue and inspire constructive action in various fields.
- ✓ **Education and training targeting different target groups** for example, students, co-workers, teachers, physicians etc. in school or work environment in order to adopt/ enforce/ include a human rights and equal treatment approach in their activity.
- ✓ **Public education and information campaigns related to discrimination** in order to recognize abuse or rights infringement and to claim their rights, **especially in cases where discrimination is widespread and has a history of going unchallenged** – schools, work environment, the medical profession, the armed forces, the police, the judiciary, as well as sport.
- ✓ **Supporting human rights/ equal treatment cases litigation** (counselling, legal assistance, etc.).
- ✓ **Initiatives that tackle economic rights** (the right to work in just and favourable conditions), **freedom of opinion and expression, participation in public affairs and elections, equality before the law, the right to a fair trial and presumption of innocence etc. of discriminated groups** (people with a low level of education/ qualifications, low economic/ social status etc.).
- ✓ **Promoting children as right holders** rather than subject of protection.

- ✓ Initiatives that tackle **a human rights perspective to ageism**

All projects funded under the Call #5 shall contribute to the achievement of:

Results Framework Outcome 2

Expected programme results	Indicators	Targets* to be reached at Programme level	Requirements for applicants
Programme Objective Civil society and active citizenship strengthened, and vulnerable groups empowered	Programme-level Indicator A Number of people engaged in civil society organization activities.	50,000	All projects must report against this indicator.
Outcome 2. CSOs actively defend human rights and promote equal treatment.	Indicator 18. Share of target group favourable to human rights.	+ 25%	All projects must select and report against at least one Outcome 2 indicator [18] and/or [19].
	Indicator 19. Number of beneficiaries of services provided or improved.	2000	
Output 2.1. Advocacy and awareness raising on human rights/ equal treatment supported	Indicator 20. Number of awareness raising campaigns carried out on human rights	30	Projects selecting the Outcome indicator 18 must contribute to at least one Output from this table and must select and report against at least one corresponding Output level indicator.
	Indicator 21. Number of human rights/ equal treatment cases litigated.	20	
	Indicator 22. Number of partnerships between CSOs and public/ private entities on human rights	20	
Output 2.2. Research on human rights-related issues conducted	Indicator 23. Number of research reports on human rights issues produced	8	Projects selecting the Outcome indicator 19, must contribute to at least two Outputs from this table (Output 2.3 is mandatory) and must select and report against at least two corresponding Output level indicators (the Outcome indicator 24 is mandatory)
Output 2.3. Services provided to victims of discrimination and human rights violations	Indicator 24. Number of CSOs providing services to victims of discrimination and human rights violations	35	
Output 2.4. Monitoring and watchdog activities on the implementation of policies in relation to gender equality and gender-based violence supported	Indicator 25. Number of monitoring /watchdog initiatives on gender equality or GBV	15	

* The target values to be reached at Programme level are presented for informative purposes only. Within the project proposals, applicants will establish the target values in concordance with the project objectives and project budget.

Note:

In addition to the results and indicators included in the above list, applicants may add **up to two** relevant results (outcome, outputs) and corresponding indicators. These additional results and indicators will be selected from the ones set out at programme level (excepting those under the Outcome 4, which are addressed in section 3.7. Capacity building activities). In exceptional cases, the additional results and indicators could be proposed by the Applicants.

For more in depth information about the Programme indicators (description, measurement etc.), please consult the *Programme Indicators. Guidance document 2.0*, available at <https://activecitizensfund.ro>. For example, for the indicator 1 Share of target group showing civic awareness, a survey will have to be administrated by the Project Promoters during the implementation of the project, and relevant administrative and financial provisions must be made.

3.6. Capacity building activities

In case of medium and large grants, up to 20% of the total eligible costs of the project budget can be allocated for activities that contribute to the organizational development of the Applicant and/or, if the case, of the NGO Partner/s from Romania. **Organizational development activities do not have to be in direct connection with the project activities.** They should be planned according to the needs of the Applicant and, if the case, of the Romanian Partner/s and must be correlated with an organizational development objective.

The allocation for these types of activities should be commensurate with the specific capacity building needs addressed through the project and balanced with the contribution to the Outcome 2 and its specific outputs (section 3.6.).

Type of eligible capacity building activities (non-exhaustive list):

- ✓ **Develop transparent and accountable governance procedures**, such as participatory processes for strategic planning, development of internal regulation documents; establishment/development of an independent governing body; systems for prevention of conflict of interest; regulations/ methodologies/ tools for consultation of beneficiaries and other stakeholders;
- ✓ **Develop effective management procedures**, such as financial rules,; management system of organization's knowledge and documents which is used systematically; policies and practices for human resources development;
- ✓ **Regularly communicate information on organization's activities and results to the public** by organizing events, publishing and distributing annual reports and other specific publications, media presence and keeping a functional webpage updated;
- ✓ **Develop and diversify the funding sources** through fundraising strategies, actions, campaigns;
- ✓ **Develop competencies among employees/ volunteers in key areas that contribute to the development of the organization**, to achieve its strategic objectives and which are complementary to those supported or linked to the direct activities of the project;
- ✓ **Training and coaching through the transfer of experience from other organizations/ experts;**
- ✓ **Awareness campaigns about the role of NGOs.**

Thus, the project will additionally contribute to the:

Results framework Outcome 4

Expected programme results	Indicators	Targets* to be reached at Programme level	Requirements for Applicants
Outcome 4. Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society (organizations and the sector)	Indicator 32. Number of CSOs with transparent and accountable governance procedures	+30%	Projects including capacity building objective/s and activities must select and report against at least one Outcome 4 indicator [32], [33], [34] and/or [35]
	Indicator 33. Number of CSOs with effective management procedures	+30%	
	Indicator 34. Number of CSOs that regularly disseminate information on their activities and results to the public	+30%	
	Indicator 35. Number of CSOs with at least two funding sources, each comprising at least 20% of their total annual budget	+30%	
Output 4.1. Capacity building provided to CSOs	Indicator 36. Number of CSOs participating in learning initiatives funded by the programme	800	Projects including capacity building objective/s and activities must select and contribute to at least one Output from this table, respectively select and report against at least one corresponding Output level indicator.
	Indicator 37. Number of CSOs that implemented fundraising campaigns	25	
Output 4.2. Citizens awareness about the role of the CSOs in society	Indicator 38. Number of people reached by awareness campaigns about the role of CSOs	2,000,000	

Note:

* The target values to be reached at Programme level are presented for informative purposes only. Within the project proposals, applicants will establish the target values in concordance with the project objectives and project budget.

For more in-depth information about the indicators (description, measurement etc.), please consult the *Programme Indicators. Guidance document 2.0*, available at <https://activecitizensfund.ro>.

An **Organizational Development Matrix (self-assessment tool)** is available for the Applicants on the

[Programme website](#). Applicants are strongly recommended to use this self-assessment tool to evaluate their internal organizational capacity in order to include tailor-made capacity building objective(s) and activities within the Applications.

Costs with the purchase of equipment within the category of organizational development costs will be accepted only if they support organizational development objectives and involve results mentioned in the project Application and respect the eligibility conditions specified below in section 5. Eligibility of costs.

! Attention

In case the projects contributed also to diversifying funding sources, the amount raised through fundraising activities during the project duration must be spent for the cause it was raised and in accordance with ACF principles and values. At the end of the project, the NGO will have to submit a declaration in which will specify the size of the raised amount, the aim for which is going to be spent and the acknowledgement that the funds will be spent according to these aims.

According to the State aid compliance principles of the Active Citizens Fund, the ACF does not provide any economic advantage to undertakings. The supported activities are of non-economic nature.

3.7. Information and communication activities

When developing their project proposals, the Applicants should describe information and communication actions aiming to create awareness of the project and its objectives, any bilateral cooperation with entities in Iceland, Liechtenstein and/or Norway, as well as of the implementation, results and the impact of support from the Donors to the project. Applicants should take into account the following **minimal obligatory requirements** that have to be planned, developed, budgeted, implemented and reported to the Fund Operator:

1. **At least two information activities** on progress, achievements and results in the project, such as a seminar or a conference with stakeholders, a press conference or press event, including a launch activity and/or a closing activity for the project.
2. Measures for making **information on the project available on the web, either through a dedicated website or through a dedicated webpage on the organisation's existing website with linking between the pages, or, alternatively, through an active social media profile (Facebook profile) for the project where a website does not already exist.** Where a social media profile (Facebook profile) is created for a project the social media profile shall remain visible and all information shall remain accessible also after the final eligibility date of the project.
3. The information about the project (either on website or social media) must be regularly updated and shall include: information about the project, its progress, achievements and results, the cooperation with entities in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, relevant photos, contact information and a clear reference to the Programme and the EEA and Norway Grants.
4. All projects having a Donor States Project Partner and/or receiving a minimum of € 150,000 support from the EEA and Norway Grants shall be required to have the dedicated project information in English as well as in Romanian.
5. An indication of **how the information and communication measures are to be evaluated in terms of visibility and awareness** of the project, its objectives and impact, and of the Donors.
6. Organisers of **information events** such as conferences, seminars, fairs and exhibitions in connection with implementation of the project **make explicit and visible the support of the donor countries.**
7. Provide **information on the project to the widest possible audience** at the appropriate national, regional and/or local levels.
8. Ensure that those taking part in the project have been **informed of the Programme's funding.**
9. Put up a **billboard at the site of each operation**, during implementation, and replace it no later than six months after completion of the project with a permanent commemorative plaque that is visible, of significant size, in case of projects fulfilling the following two conditions:
 - Projects whose total grant amount to the project exceeds EUR 50,000.
 - The operations consist in the financing of a physical object, infrastructure or of construction operations.
10. Ensure that at least 10 photos (minimal resolution is 1920*1080p) from project activities will be provided to the Fund Operator.

! Attention

Please keep in mind that fulfilment of all these minimal requirements have to be described in the Application form (Annex 1) under *A2 Information and Communication* and budgeted accordingly, if the case. The proposed information and communication actions should be in close connection and

adapted to the project activities.

All information and communication materials related to the projects that are carried out with ACF support have to be in line with the **Communication and Design Manual** available on the <https://activecitizensfund.ro>

Please note that, in case the Application is selected for funding, the Applicants will develop a Communication Plan in a format to be provided by the Fund Operator.

4. Administrative and eligibility criteria

4.1. Territorial scope

The Programme aims to support **Romanian NGO projects in Romania**, without prejudice to actions that are carried out in Donor or Beneficiary States or Border States with Romania under partnerships created to implement the selected projects.

In exceptional and well justified cases, there could be allowed initiatives to participate/organize capacity building activities in other EU countries than the one already mentioned above.

4.2. Eligible Applicants

4.2.1

Eligible applicants are exclusively the following:

- | |
|--|
| (a) Non-governmental and non-profit organizations (NGOs), with Romanian nationality that acquired legal personality, are organised and operating under the Government Ordinance 26/2000 and/or the Law 21/1924 on associations and foundations (with subsequent amendments and completions); or |
| (b) County and Bucharest municipality foundations for youth and the National Youth Foundation established under the Law 146/2002 (with subsequent amendments and completions); or |
| (c) National Red Cross Society in Romania established under the Law 139/1995 (amended and supplemented by the Law 524/2004) and its structures with legal personality; |

4.2.2.

In addition to the above mentioned criteria, the applicants shall meet the following requirements:

(a) abide by the principles of human rights for all, democratic values, rule-of-law and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(b) do not promote intolerant, discriminatory and/or hate speech, and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(c) 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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(d) have the capacity, according to their statutes, to act in the field addressed by the project, and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(e) are independent of the local, regional and national government and other public entities ¹ , and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(f) are independent of political parties, and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(g) are independent of commercial entities ² (such as companies, self-governing regies, individual enterprises etc.), and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(h) 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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(i) have transparent structures and elected chair/board, and are accountable to their members and donors, and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(j) are directly responsible for designing and managing the project and do not act as an intermediary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

¹ To assess if an organisation fulfils this condition, the FO will mainly check the following aspects:

- It does not have more than half of the members local, regional and/ or national institutions and / or authorities;
- It 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 representatives (natural persons);
- It 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 To assess if an organisation fulfils this condition, the FO will mainly check the following aspects:

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

4.3. Exclusion criteria for Applicants

4.3.1.

Not eligible applicants	
(a) any legal entities that do not fall under/do not pertain to any of the three categories mentioned in the section 4.2.1.	✘
(b) any legal entities that do not comply with all requirements at section 4.2.1 (a) or 4.2.1 (b) or 4.2.1 (c)	✘
(c) any other legal entities that do not cumulatively respect the criteria mentioned in the section 4.2.2	✘
(d) political parties	✘
(e) religious institutions (religious cults, religious associations established under the Law 489/2006 on freedom of religion and general regime of cults)	✘
(f) professional associations (the associations 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)	✘
(g) social partners (trade unions and employers organizations)	✘
(h) profit-distributing cooperatives	✘

4.3.2.

Applicants do not have the right to apply and receive funds under the Programme 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 <i>res judicata</i> 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.	✘

Note:

The project proposal will be accompanied by a signed Declaration of eligibility (Annex 3) of the Applicants certifying that they meet all the eligibility conditions mentioned in the section 4.2. Eligible Applicants and that are not in any of the exclusion situations mentioned above, from a) to e), in the sub-section 4.3.2 within Exclusion criteria for Applicants.

In case of projects selected for funding, the Applicants will be requested to submit an updated **Declaration of eligibility**. The FO reserves the right to request the Applicant any kind of documents in support of Declaration. The analysis of the eligibility of any applicant or partner will be made on individual basis, with the consideration of the specific documents presented. In this sense, the Fund Operator reserves the right to appreciate *in concreto* each situation and decide based on its own judgement upon the eligibility, of any applicant or partner. In case the Fund Operator will decide that the eligibility criteria are not fulfilled, the applicant and/ or partner will be informed upon the rationale standing for the decision.

4.4. Eligible project partners

Projects may be implemented in partnership with project **Partners**. Project Partners shall share a common economic or social goal with the Applicant, which is to be realised through the implementation of the project. Partners shall be actively involved in and effectively contributing to the implementation of the project.

Partnerships are not mandatory, but highly encouraged, especially with Partners from the Donor States. The following legally established entities are **eligible to be project partners**: any **non-governmental organisations, public entities** (such as local and central public authorities, public institutions /agencies, decentralized governmental public services, territorial administrative units, universities, etc.) as well as **private entities** (commercial or non-commercial), **established as a legal person** either in: **Romania, Donor States** (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein), **Beneficiary States** (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia,

Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia) and/or **Countries outside the European Economic Area that have a common border with Romania** (Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia), any **international organisation or body or agency** thereof.

Only the following entities are **eligible to receive funding as project Partners** under the Programme:

- NGOs that meet the eligibility requirements set for the Applicants under section 4.2.2 and are not in the situations specified under section 4.3.2 a)-e) nor are among the not eligible applicants mentioned in the section 4.3.1 c) – h) Exclusion criteria for Applicants;
- international organisations or agencies or bodies thereof (international intergovernmental organizations or international non-governmental organizations);
- public entities

Other types of partners may not have access to the grant, but may contribute to the activities and/or to the co-financing required for the project.

The **Declaration of eligibility** submitted by the Applicant with the project proposal will also certify the fulfilment by the Partners of the eligibility conditions specified in this section.

In case of projects implemented in partnership with one or several entities, it is mandatory for the Applicants to submit with the Application form a **Partnership Declaration** (Annex 4) signed with the Partner/s (including Partners from Donor States). The Partnership Declaration shall be in English in the case of projects implemented in partnerships with entities from other countries than Romania and Moldova.

The Applicant coordinates the implementation of the project and, in case it is selected for funding, will represent the Partners and will sign the grant contract. Eligibility of costs generated by the Partners must respect the same rules that apply to the costs generated by the Applicant.

A project partnership shall not be mistaken for sub-contracting. Project partners always share a common economic or social goal through the implementation of the project, and partners cooperate throughout the entire project realisation. Sub-contracting is aimed at one (or perhaps several) specific deliverables, e.g. services or equipment in order to realise a specific activity within the project. Sub-contracting shall always be carried out based on appropriate service or purchase contract, according to the applicable public procurement rules as defined below in section.5.1. General principles of the eligibility of costs.

Applicants may collaborate in implementing the project with informal or *ad hoc* local groups, self-help organizations (including grassroots organizations) – that are not registered legal entities in Romania. They are **Collaborators** and must meet the following requirements: are not for personal profit, act for public good, are voluntarily and non-discriminatory in nature, are independent of local, regional and national government and other public entities, political parties, religious institutions and commercial entities. **Collaborators** cannot be a direct recipient of the project grant and will not be able to conclude expenses in their own name². For collaborators it is not necessary to conclude and submit a Declaration of Partnership.

Partners and Collaborators shall have the capacity to implement relevant activities within the project. The Applicant will present in the project proposal the added value brought by the involvement of Partners and Collaborators in the implementation of the project.

4.5. Grant rate and co-financing

The project grant rate	can be up to 100% of the total eligible costs of the project
	When determining the grant rate, the Applicant will take into account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need to ensure its commitment and ownership, as well as the sustainability of the project; • any economic benefit (e.g. cost savings or increased profit resulting from receiving a financial contribution). Economic benefits shall be used in a manner which supports the long-term objectives of the project.

In case **co-financing is provided**, it can be in form of cash and/or in-kind contribution, in the form of voluntary work.

In cases where co-financing is ensured in cash, it is preferable to be from sources such as donations, sponsorships, membership fees, etc. and not through other projects/grants. The project cannot be co-financed by other programmes of the EEA and Norway grants, European funds or European Union budget nor other type of in-kind contribution.

For the calculation of in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work, the Applicant and project partner/s will take into account the actual time allocated for the implementation of the project (in hours/month) and the price shall be set in the range of the minimum gross hourly wage in Romania and the average gross hourly wage in Romania (valid for 2020), including the employer's social contribution, depending on the character of the delivered work. The Applicant should provide justification for

² The expenditure related to the involvement of the informal group shall be borne by the project promoter.

establishing the corresponding price of the voluntary work hour. For project partner/s whose primary location is in one of the Donor States or other Beneficiary States or countries outside EEA with a common border with Romania, the range in the respective country will be applied.

Please note that the in-kind contribution cannot be provided by a staff member who has, at the same time, an individual employment contract concluded with the Applicant or project Partner/s for the same type of responsibility.

In case in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work is provided, it should be included in the project budget and must comply with the general principles on the eligibility of expenditures.

4.6. Limitations

Eligible Applicants or partners cannot receive more than **550,000 Euro in total** support from the Programme or be involved in more than **4 projects** during the course of the Programme, excluding any grants in rapid response to emerging needs and any support received through the Fund for Bilateral Relations and the Regional Civil Society Initiatives³.

During the selection stage, the FO will verify, at Programme level, the compliance with the limitations mentioned above for the projects recommended for funding by the Selection Committee, for which there are funds available within the Call. In case of a project where a partner does not respect the maximum number of projects allowed to be funded at Programme level, the Selection Committee could decide not to select the respective project for funding (and justify the decision) or to select it and request the replacement of the project partner that does not respect the rule. In case of a project where a partner does not respect the rule related to the maximum amount to be contracted at Programme level, the Selection Committee could decide not to select the respective project for funding (and justify the decision) or to select it and request the Applicant to propose a solution such as to ensure that the rule is respected. In case an organization has several projects with an average total score above 65 points, is breaking the limitations at Programme level, the Selection Committee will decide which of the projects will be selected for funding based on their relevance and contribution to the Programme.

An Applicant shall submit **maximum two project proposals for the Round 2 under the Call #5**. There are no restrictions regarding the number of project proposals submitted in which an organization participates as partner.

In case an Applicant submits more than two project proposals under the Call #5, the FO will request the Applicant to indicate the applications that will enter the administrative and eligibility verification in order to comply with the limitation established. If the Applicant does not respond in 5 days from the receipt of the FO request, all its applications will be rejected and none of them will enter the administrative and eligibility verification.

5. Eligibility of costs

! Attention

This chapter is completed by the provisions of the Annex 2b - Guidelines for budgeting which is an integral part of this Guidelines for Applicants. If there are different provisions between this Applicant's Guide and the Annex 2b - Guidelines for budgeting, the provisions from the latter will prevail.

5.1. General principles on the eligibility of costs

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred by the project promoter and/or the project partner, which meet the following criteria:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the grant contract;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	they are connected with the subject of the grant contract and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in case of services and works). Exceptionally, costs in respect of which an invoice has been issued in the final month of eligibility are also deemed to be incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid within 30 days of the final date of eligibility. Overheads and depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred when they are recorded on the accounts of the project promoter and/or project partner.

³ For more information on the Fund for Bilateral Relations and the Regional Civil Society Initiatives, please consult <https://activecitizensfund.ro>

The internal accounting and auditing procedures of the project promoter and partner/s must permit direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue recorded in the analytical / cost center accounting of the project with the amounts reported in the financial statements on the project and supporting documents.

5.2. Direct costs

The eligible direct expenditures for a project are those expenditures which are identified by the project promoter and/or the project partner, in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules, as specific expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly.

The following direct expenditures are eligible provided that they satisfy the eligibility criteria previously mentioned (section 5.1. General principles on the eligibility of costs):

➤	costs of personnel assigned to the project, comprising actual remuneration including social security charges and other statutory costs as applicable, provided that this corresponds to the project promoter's and project partner's usual policy on remuneration;
➤	travel and subsistence allowances for personnel and volunteers taking part in the project, provided that they are in line with the project promoter's and project partner's usual practices on travel costs;
➤	costs of new or second hand equipment provided that it is depreciated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applicable to the project promoter and generally accepted for items of the same kind. Only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be taken into account and included in the project budget. In case the promoter has clear arguments that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of that equipment may be eligible;
➤	costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
➤	costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a project promoter for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement;
➤	costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract.

Costs related to construction, reconstruction, renovation, or refurbishment of a real estate **shall not exceed 50%** of the eligible direct cost of the project.

Where the entire purchase price of equipment is eligible the applicant must ensure that:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | keeps the equipment in its ownership for a period of at least five years following the completion of the project and continues to use the equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period; |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | keeps the equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft or other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least five years following the completion of the project; and |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | sets aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the equipment for at least five years following the completion of the project. |

The specific means for the implementation of this obligation will be specified in the grant contract.

! Attention

It is mandatory for all applicants to include in the Project budget (Annex 2a), under Activity 1 Project management, costs related to participation to trainings and meetings provided by the Fund Operator during the implementation of the project (accommodation, transport, per diem). A minimum of 4 trainings with duration of 2 days each for 2 persons should be taken into consideration.

As a general rule, for purchases and contracts awarding within the grant contracts, national and European Union legislation on public procurement shall be complied with.

For purchases with a **value of 5,000 Euro or higher**, the project promoter/partner shall invite at least three suppliers/ service providers to submit offers. The contract should be awarded to the bid offering the best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate). The entire selection procedure should be documented.

5.3. Indirect costs

Indirect costs are all eligible costs that cannot be identified by the applicant and/or the project partner as being directly attributed to the project but, which can be identified and justified by its accounting system as being incurred in direct

relationship with the eligible direct costs attributed to the project. Indirect costs of the project shall represent a fair apportionment of the overall overheads of the project promoter or the project partner. They may not include any eligible direct costs. Project promoters and project partners may apply a **flat rate of up to 15% of direct eligible personnel costs of the project** to cover indirect costs, commensurate with the real indirect costs need.

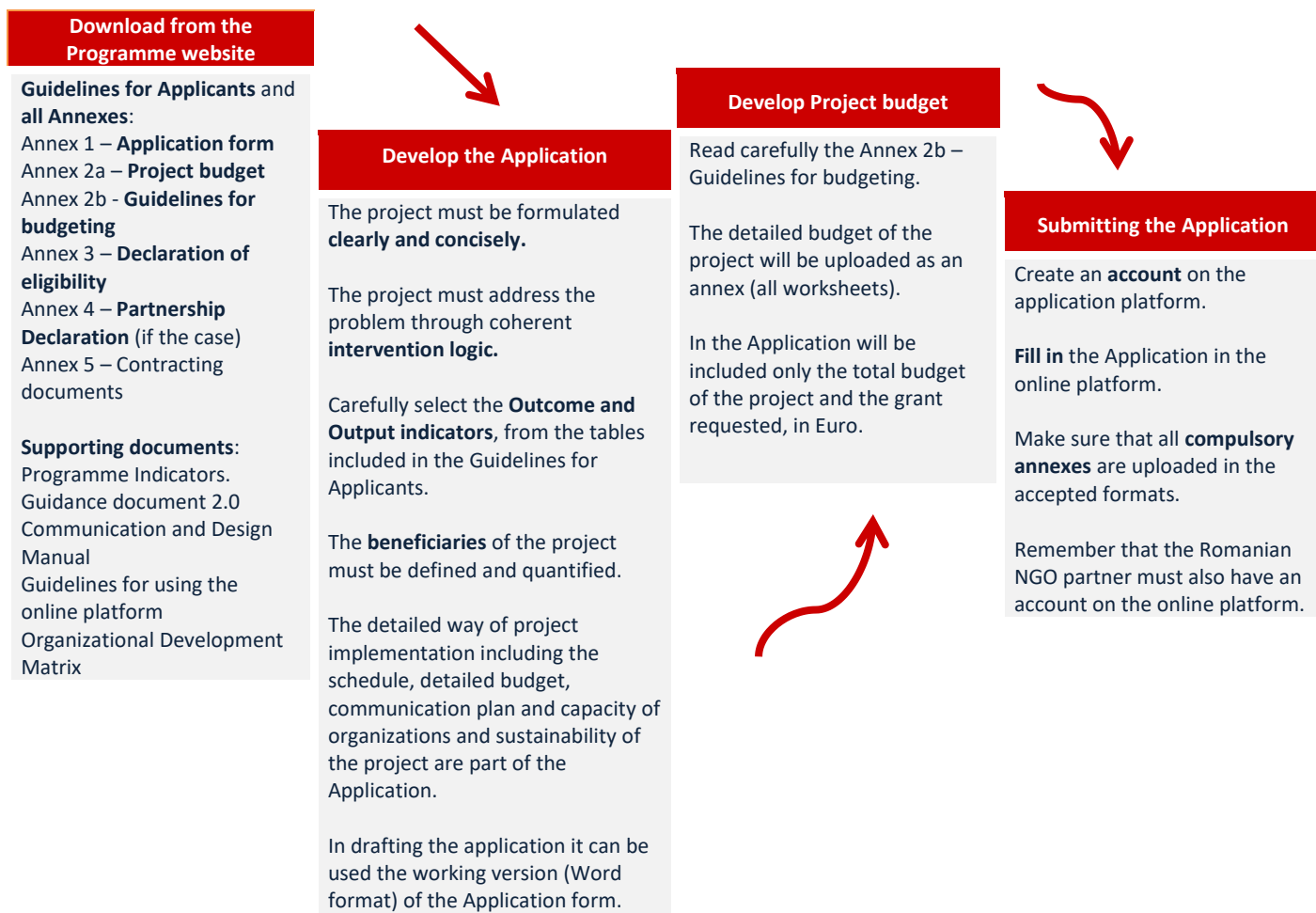
In case of project partners that are international organisations, or bodies or agencies thereof, indirect costs may be identified in accordance with the relevant rules established by such organisations.

5.4. Excluded costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges (e.g. costs for loans taken in connection with the project, penalties / taxes related to late payment of invoices, penalties and interest for late payment of contributions and taxes to the state budget, etc.);
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs related to the special accounts of the project requested by the Fund Operator, provided they are mentioned in the grant contract and the costs of the financial services imposed by the grant contract;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	costs related to purchase of land or real estate: ONLY the costs related to the construction, reconstruction, renovation or modernization of a building can be considered eligible, but will not exceed 50% of the directly eligible cost of the project;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	exchange losses;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	recoverable VAT, according to the legal regulations in force;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	costs that are covered by other sources; double financing must be avoided (e.g. if the full value of a previously purchased equipment was financed from another grant, the depreciation of this equipment cannot be the eligible expenditure within the project);
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	finances, penalties (ex. fines imposed by public bodies due to the lack of security measures on the site of a building, parking fines, fines for late payment) and costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project;
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	excessive or reckless expenditure (these must be taken in relation to the principle of eligibility of expenses according to which they must be "proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project" - (e.g. business travel class, purchasing state of the art equipment where cheaper options would cover the same need);

6. Preparation, submission and registration of project applications

Only applications submitted before the deadline in the prescribed format with all the annexes and in an electronic version via platform <http://finantari publice.fdsc.ro> will be evaluated. In order to submit an application it is necessary to follow the next steps:



! Attention

Only the information included in the Application and in the compulsory annexes will be considered for evaluation.

A list of applications received will be published on the Programme website. A detailed procedure for online application is described in the *Guidelines for using the online platform* available on [the Programme website](http://finantari publice.fdsc.ro)

The Application will be filled in Romanian (the only exceptions are the sections indicating otherwise and the Partnership Declaration in case of a foreign partner). The Application is complete only when it contains all following documents:

Document	Check	Submission through http://finantari publice.fdsc.ro
Application form	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Filled in the platform
Project budget (Annex 2a)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Uploaded as annex in EXCEL format
Declaration of eligibility (Annex 3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Uploaded as PDF or JPEG format
Partnership Declaration (if the case) (Annex 4)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Uploaded as PDF or JPEG format

7. Application deadline

Medium and large grants	
Round 2:	
Publication date of the Call:	17 February 2021, 09:00 (Romanian time)
Opening date of the application process: (application process exclusively through the online platform http://finantaripublice.fdsc.ro)	17 February 2021
Application deadline:	20 April 2021; 16:00 (Romanian time)

! The final form of the project proposal is considered the one uploaded on the online platform (<http://finantaripublice.fdsc.ro>) and validated until the deadline.

The deadline for completing and validating the online Application form and attaching the required documents is **20 April 2021, 16:00 (Romanian time)**. After this date, it will no longer be possible to fill in a new project Application and modify / fill in the project Application already submitted for the Call #5 – Strategic support for human rights and equal treatment. Access will be automatically limited by the online platform server.

We strongly recommend submitting the Application earlier than on the deadline set in the Guidelines. Postponing the Application submission for the last day may cause problems due to the system overloading that would not enable to complete and validate the Application on time.

8. Additional information and contact details

Questions related to this Call for proposals may be addressed by potential Applicants by e-mail and/ or phone by at least 7 days prior to each closing date(s) to:

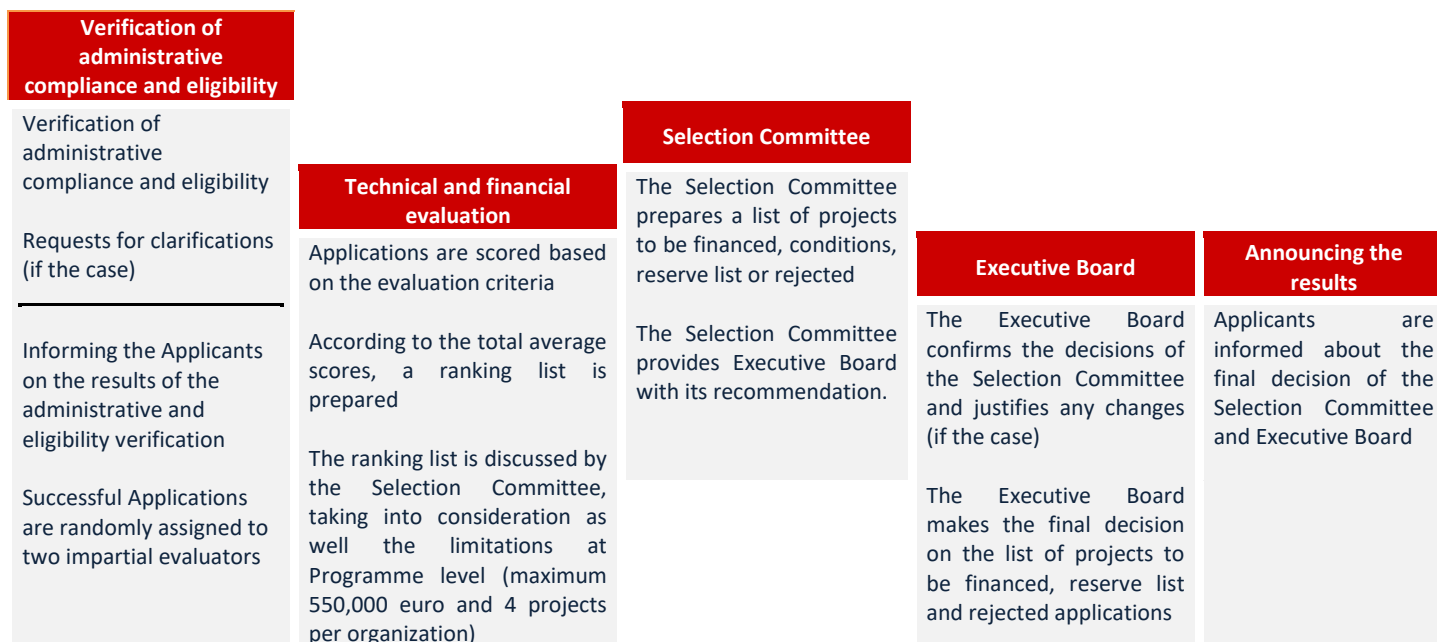
For the Call #5
Fundația pentru Dezvoltarea Societății Civile/ Civil Society Development Foundation
Tel: 0040 21 310 01 81/ 0040 752 444 303
E-mail: apel5@fdsc.ro
Contact person: Oana Țigănescu, Senior Grants Officer

- ✓ The FO will submit the answers in 5 working days from the reception of the questions and with at least two days before the deadline.
- ✓ The questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published regularly on the Programme website <https://activecitizensfund.ro>.
- ✓ Please check regularly the Programme website for updated information on this Call for proposals or for upcoming calls and events.

Please note that technical support related to the online application platform use/functionality is available for applicants at the following e-mail address: support@fdsc.ro.

9. Evaluation and project selection

All applications received under this Call for project proposals will enter into the evaluation and selection procedure as follows:



9.1. Verification of administrative compliance and eligibility

All applications submitted within the deadline mentioned in the present Guidelines for Applicants will be assessed according to the administrative and eligibility criteria, based on a Yes/No grid. The assessment of eligibility will be conducted only for the applications that are compliant with the administrative criteria.

Requests for clarifications will only be sent when the information provided is not clear enough and sufficient to allow an objective assessment of the administrative compliance and eligibility of the application. Please note that documents mentioned under the section 6. Preparation and submission of project Applications cannot be requested in case they are already missing from the online application package.

Below is the grid for administrative compliance and eligibility:

I. ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLIANCE	Yes	NO
The project application includes all the annexes required for the current Call for proposals:		
a. The online Application Form (Annex 1) is filled in Romanian, including the summary in English and is complete (all compulsory fields are filled in)		
b. The project Budget is filled in, respects the format from Annex 2a, is provided in Euro and is uploaded (in Excel format)		
c. The Applicant's Declaration of Eligibility (Annex 3) is filled in, signed and uploaded (scanned format)		
d. Partnership Declaration/s (Annex 4) is filled in, signed by the Applicant and Partner/s and uploaded (scanned format) if the case		
The assessment of eligibility will be conducted only for the applications that are compliant with the administrative criteria.		
II. ELIGIBILITY	YES	NO
1. The Applicant is eligible		
2. Partner/s is/are eligible		
3. The project falls into the types of grants (amount, duration) that can be awarded within the current Call for proposals		

Note:

In case of inconsistencies between the amounts mentioned in the Application form and those included in the Project budget (Annex 2a), those from the Project budget (Sources of funding) will be taken into consideration.

The Application is automatically excluded from further evaluation if one or more administrative and eligibility criteria were not met.

The Applicants will be notified via e-mail regarding the result of the administrative and eligibility verification.

After receiving the notification, applicants may **appeal the decision over compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria** within **10 calendar days** from the notification date of the results, to apel5@fdsc.ro. The appeal will be formulated in writing and will include the reason for which such a request is well justified. The contestant cannot submit new documents in support of the case and cannot modify the content of the initial submitted application. The FO will take into consideration only the appeals submitted by the legal representative of the applicant or by the person empowered on his behalf. The FO's decision after appeal is final and will be communicated to the Applicant within 15 working days from the receipt of the appeal. No further appeal on the same application could be formulated afterwards.

A list of applications that entered in the technical and financial evaluation phase will be published on the Programme's website (<https://activecitizensfund.ro>).

9.2. Technical and financial evaluation

Each application that meets the eligibility and administrative criteria will be scored on a scale from 0 to 100, by two impartial evaluators (at least one of them independent from FO). The evaluation process is based on the evaluation criteria with scores. The score 65 out of 100 points is the minimum score for each application in order to be proposed for financing. The final total score is an arithmetic average of points given by both evaluators.

In case the difference between the scores given by the two experts is more than 30% of the higher score, the Application will be scored by a third impartial and independent evaluator. The average total score of the two closest scores shall be used for the ranking of the projects.

If the score given by a third expert would not in any way result in recommending the application for financing, a third expert will not be appointed.

The evaluation is performed in **two stages**, as follows:

- the **first stage** is focused on evaluating the dimension "*1. Project relevance and coherence*". For this dimension is set a **threshold score of 23 points**. There are three situations:

(1) Both scores given by the two evaluators are above the minimum threshold set for the dimension "<i>1. Project relevance and coherence</i>",	(2) Both scores given by the two evaluators are below the minimum threshold set for the dimension "<i>1. Project relevance and coherence</i>",	(3) One score given by one evaluator below the minimum thresholds (evaluation stops) and the other score given by the other evaluator above the minimum threshold set for the dimension "<i>1. Project relevance and coherence</i>" and score the entire project
The project enters the second evaluation stage and the Application is further evaluated.	The project is considered rejected and does not enter the second evaluation stage (the application is no further evaluated). The average score for the dimension " <i>1. Project relevance and coherence</i> " shall be used for the ranking of the projects.	The Application will be scored by a third impartial and independent evaluator. The average total score of the two closest scores shall be used for the ranking of the projects.

- the **second stage** consists in evaluating the rest of the dimensions. In this stage there are two thresholds:
 - Dimension "*2. Methodology and feasibility of the project*" - **15 points**
 - Dimension "*4. The budget of the project*" - **5 points**

If an Application has a total average score of 65 points or above, but any of the average scores for the dimensions "*2. Methodology and feasibility of the project*" or "*4. The budget of the project*" does not meet the respective threshold, it will not be recommended for financing.

The grid for technical and financial evaluation:

Dimensions and criteria of evaluation	Maximum score	Minimum threshold score
FIRST STAGE		
1. The project relevance and coherence	35	23
The project contributes to the Programme and Call objectives and to the achievement of the selected outcome, output/s and indicators as defined by the Programme and the proposed results are feasible	12	-
The problem approached by the project is justified (identification of the problem, documenting the problem, challenges, the target group affected/involved)	5	-
The project addresses the problem through a clear and coherent intervention logic between objectives, activities and expected results	5	-
The beneficiaries are strategically chosen, clearly defined and their needs are properly addressed	8	-
The project includes capacity building activities adequate to the needs of the applicant/partner	5	-
SECOND STAGE		
2. Methodology and feasibility of the project	30	15
The project objectives are specific, measurable and realistic	5	-
The activities are sufficiently described, feasible and the schedule proposed is realistic.	10	-
The chosen indicators are realistic and correspond to the outcome(s) and activities of the project	5	-
The risks of the project implementation are identified and relevant; the proposed mitigation measures are appropriate	5	-
The communication activities are described, measurable, relevant and respond to the programme rules	5	-
3. Sustainability	10	-
There are properly identified the conditions to ensure sustainability of the project and to achieve a multiplication effect.	5	-
The proposed activities are directed towards the sustainability of the project outcome/s (including by identifying and generating/ attracting the necessary sources of funding).	5	-
4. The budget of the project	10	5
The foreseen costs are economic, justified and correlated with the proposed activities.	8	-
The budget is correctly filled in and foreseen costs are eligible	2	-
5. Applicant and partners	15	-
The role of the partner/s within the proposed intervention, the necessity and the added value of the partnership	3	-
Through the proposed partnership, the project contributes to the consolidation of Bilateral Relations (projects with partners from Donor States)	2	-
Applicant and Partners (if the case) and the proposed project team have the experience*, expertise, motivation and capacity for implementing the project <i>*For new established organizations or without experience it will be taken into consideration the motivation and the experience of the proposed project team</i>	5	-
The project team is adequate for the implementation of the project (number of people involved, role and responsibilities, management)	5	-
Total	100	65

9.3. Selection Committee

Following the technical and financial evaluation, a ranking list will be produced based on the average scores awarded by the experts and an evaluation report will be drafted. It will comprise the list of all the Applications that have entered the technical and financial evaluation stage, the average score obtained by each of them and the recommendations of the evaluators.

The evaluation report, including the ranking list, will be submitted by the FO to a **Selection Committee** consisting of independent experts and representatives of the FO Consortium with relevant expertise and experience. At this stage, representatives of FMO, the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the National Focal Point in Romania are observers. Also, representatives from relevant institutions (ministries, governmental agencies etc.) may be invited as observers.

The **Selection Committee** will review the ranking lists and the recommendations made by the evaluators and will recommend to the FO the applications to receive grants, within the amount available for the Call for project proposals. The conclusions of the **Selection Committee** may include conditions, clarifications and a reserve list with the project applications that are recommended to receive grants, but cannot be supported at the time of the decision due to lack of funding.

The **Selection Committee** may amend and modify the ranking of the project applications in justified cases (**including for ensuring the respecting of the limitations at Programme level of maximum 550,000 euro and 4 projects per organization as Applicant or Partner**).

9.4. Executive Board

An **Executive Board** of the Programme is responsible for taking the final decision concerning the selection of applications. The Executive Board may modify the decision of the Selection Committee in justified cases. If such a modification results in a rejection of a project that otherwise would have been approved, the affected Applicant will be informed in writing about the justification for the modification.

The decision of the Executive Board is definitive and is not subject to appeal.

9.5. Announcing the results

Once the final decision is taken, the result of the selection process for both successful and unsuccessful Applicants will be accessible online, in the organisation's account (the average score obtained for each evaluation criterion and also the total average score of their application). Applicants will be informed via e-mail on the fact that the selection results are available in the organisation's account.

Upon request, unsuccessful Applicants and Applicants whose applications are on the reserve list will be provided with more detailed feedback on the assessment of their application. Applicants who have projects proposed for funding will be informed on the conditions they have to fulfil in order to sign grant contracts.

The final list of selected projects and promoters will be uploaded on the Programme's website <https://activecitizensfund.ro> only upon the signature of all grant contracts for the specific Call.

9.6. Complaints Committee

A **Complaints Committee** is established at the level of the Programme and is composed of three members. The objective of the Complaints Committee is to provide an accessible, transparent and consistent mechanism for complainants to express concerns regarding a supposed occurrence of mismanagement at the level of the Programme.

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

10. Project contracting

Award letter

All Applicants whose project proposals are recommended and approved for financing will receive an **award letter** comprising the general and special conditions to be fulfilled and the compulsory documents to be submitted in order to sign grant contracts.

The documents included in Annex 5 may be requested by the FO. Based on these documents, the FO will also check the fulfilment of the eligibility conditions at the moment of the signature of the contract.

Direct mentoring and assistance

After selection, the FO will provide support to Applicants in fulfilling the general and special conditions in order to sign the grant contracts, especially related to aspects concerning the indicators/targets, development of the risk management plan, communication plan, etc.

The FO may invite the Applicants for meetings (face to face, Skype, phone), provide guidance to clarify possible unclear elements related to the projects to be contracted and to settle the final budgets.

Grant contract




The grant contract sets out the terms and conditions of grant assistance as well as the roles and responsibilities of the parties.

If the Applicant fulfils all the requirements included in the award letter, the grant contract will be signed and, after its entry into force, it becomes a Project Promoter.

The indicative timeframe for the contracting phase is between one and three months since the reception by the Applicants of the award letter.

11. Reporting, payments and audit

11.1. Procedures for reporting from project promoters

Each project promoter has to submit to the FO the following types of reports:		
INTERIM Technical and Financial reports within 30 calendar days after spending at least 70% from the advance/ instalments.	FINAL Technical and Financial reports within 45 calendar days from the end of the project implementation period	
Statistical progress reports four times per year, with following deadlines: 20 January, 20 March, 20 August and 20 October		
The number and frequency of the interim reports are determined by the project duration as follows:		
6 – 12 months (including 12 months)  ONE INTERIM REPORT	12-20 months (including 20 months)  UP TO 2 INTERIM REPORTS	20-24 months (including 24 months)  UP TO 3 INTERIM REPORTS

Technical reports will contain information on the achieved results and implemented activities, progress towards achieving indicators, sustainability, etc.

Financial reports will contain information on the expenses made by PPs and partners during the reported period of time in order to implement the project.

Interim payments are conditioned by the submission and approval of interim technical and financial reports by the Project Promoter and their approval by the FO. Together with the final technical and financial reports, they will serve as the basis on which the final project balance will be calculated.

In case of projects with the implementation period from **6 up to 12 months** (including), the interim reports (technical and financial) have to be submitted to FO no later than 30 calendar days after the middle of the project implementation period.

! Attention

In case the middle term interim report does not include expenditures of at least 70% of the advance payment, the PP cannot ask for the entire interim payment. However, the PP has the possibility to submit an additional interim report, proving that the 70% threshold was reached, in order to receive the difference of the interim payment.

In case of projects with the implementation period from **12 up to 24 months**, the interim reports (technical and financial) have to be submitted to FO as follows:

- first interim report (technical and financial) - within 30 calendar days from spending at least 70% of the advance payment;
- next interim reports (technical and financial) - within 30 calendar days from spending at least 70% of the difference between the funds actually received and the eligible expenditure validated by the FO

$$=70\% \times (\text{advance payment} + \text{interim payment(s)} - \text{eligible expenditures from the previous reported period/s})$$

! Attention

The last interim technical and financial report will be submitted to the FO no later than three months before the end date of the project implementation.

The FO reserves the right to request other intermediate technical and/or financial reports, if considered necessary for the monitoring of the implementation of the projects.

The PPs are requested to submit to FO, during **contracting phase** or **within the first month** of contract implementation, an **estimated schedule** of the submission of the interim reports (and of the amounts to be requested per report, if the case) and to inform FO in case there are changes to this schedule (changes in amount or changes in due dates of the interim payments).

Statistical Progress Reports (SPR) which consist in brief information regarding the progress registered as regards both the indicators and expenses will be requested from all PPs. SPRs do not have to be accompanied by supporting documents.

11.2. Payments procedures

The payment system ensures a **positive financial flow** for the projects, while minimising as much as possible the risks related to difficulties/ impossibility to recover the unspent amounts from the PPs. Payments to project promoters will be made in Euro (to project dedicated Euro bank accounts indicated by themselves and mentioned in the grant contract) and reporting will be made at the InforEuro rate⁴ corresponding to the month when the expense was committed/invoiced (e.g. date of the invoice not the date of the actual payment).

Every project promoter has the obligation to open two dedicated bank accounts for the grant contract it signs with the FO, as follows: an Euro account in which it will receive the grant contract related payments in Euro from the FO and a national currency (RON) account in which they will transfer the equivalent in national currency of the funds received in the Euro account. Both accounts will be indicated in the grant contract.

In case of projects implemented in partnership, each Romanian project partner that manages any amount of the grant has the obligation to open a dedicated Euro account where they will receive the grant from the project promoter and also a dedicated national currency account (RON) for the project.

The PPs and the Romanian project partners have to use the RON dedicated bank account for all payments related to the project implementation. As an exception, the payment of salaries related to the personnel that is not 100% allocated to the project and the payment of the indirect costs can be made from the general account of the organization, with the obligation to reconcile the transfers between accounts by the end of the month following the one in which the payments were made.

In case of projects implemented in partnership with entities whose primary location is outside Romania, it is recommended for those Partners to have two dedicated accounts for the project: one in Euro and the other in the national currency (if different from Euro). The partners may decide not to open dedicated accounts. In both cases the Partnership Agreement should specify the Partner account/s used for the project.

Payments of the project grant to project promoters may take the form of advance payments, interim payments and payments of the final balance. The maximum amount of the advance payment as well as the number and value of the interim payments will be differentiated according to the duration of the project and will be clearly stated in the grant contract.

⁴ InforEuro rate is published on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/index_en.cfm

The table below summarises the main payment methods applicable within ACF Romania, based on project duration:

Project duration	Maximum advance payment percentage	No. of interim payments	Interim payment percentage	Maximum percentage of the balance
from 6 months to 12 months (including)	40%	1 (one)*	50%	10%
from 12 months to 20 months (including)	30%	2 (two)	30%	10%
from 20 months to 24 months (including)	30%	3 (three)	20%	10%

* Except when the PP submits two interim reports and the interim payment is split in two payments based on these two reports

In cases of projects that have been assessed as posing a high risk for the programme⁵, the FO may make a justified decision to change the payments scheme (reducing pre-financing or exceptionally, applying a scheme without pre-financing under which the FO reimburses project promoters only the amount of grant expenses verified by the FO).

The payment method shall not change in case of extension of project grant contracts based on addendum, unless otherwise specified in the respective addendum. As a general rule:

Payments general rule		
Advance payments	Interim payments	Final payment / Reimbursement by the PP
To be paid up to 10 working days after the date of the grant contract signature, unless a later date has been set in the project contract.	To be paid up to 10 working days after date of FO approval of interim reports and payment claims.	To be paid by the FO up to 10 working days after the date of FO approval of the final report and payment claim. The reimbursement is to be paid by the PP (in case of negative balance) up to 10 working days after the date of receiving from the FO the notification regarding the amount to be reimbursed.

11.3. Proof of expenditure and audit

For Applicants and Romanian partners an audit report will not be accepted by FO as sufficient evidence of the expenses involved. Costs incurred by project promoters and project partners shall be supported by receipted invoices, or alternatively by accounting documents of equivalent probative value. Indirect costs identified according to section 5.3 do not need to be supported by proof of expenditure.

A report by an independent auditor, qualified to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents, certifying that the reported costs are incurred in accordance with the Programme rules, the national law and relevant national accounting practices will be accepted by the Fund Operator as sufficient proof of expenditure incurred for **project partners whose primary location is outside Romania**⁶ or project partners that are **international organisations or bodies or agencies thereof**.

The financed projects might be audited in the context of a compliance audit commissioned by the FO.

The FMO could also organise audits and on-the-spot verification for Programme and projects and EFTA Board of Auditors/Office of Auditor General of Norway may conduct audits of the Programme and projects.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Application form / Annex 2a – Project budget / Annex 2b – Guidelines for budgeting / Annex 3 – Declaration of eligibility / Annex 4 – Partnership Declaration / Annex 5 – Contracting documents

⁵ This shall be based on a risk assessment prepared and documented by the FO, taking into account, inter alia, the project promoter's previous experience and/or its administrative and financial capacity.

⁶ This includes **project partners from Donor States** (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein), **beneficiary states** (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia) **and from countries outside the European Economic Area that have a common border with Romania** (Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia).

Guidelines for Applicants
www.activecitizensfund.ro

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