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## **GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC CALL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS/NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC FINANCES**

Balkan Monitoring Public Finance is announcing the public call for submission of project proposals within the European Commission's CIVIL SOCIETY FACILITY AND MEDIA PROGRAMME 2014-2015: Support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organizations – "CSOs as equal partners in monitoring public finances"

Project CODE: IPA 2015/370-293

Deadline for submission: **Thursday, 1st November at 12:00 hours.**

*The goal of these guidelines is to provide clear and concise instructions to all potential applicants and interested subjects of the process of submitting project proposals in line with the framework of the public call for non-governmental organizations/civil society organizations.*



## 1. Background and description of activity

In targeted countries:

- the public finances are not transparent,
- impact on adoption of policies and decisions related to the public finances is not strong enough,
- the CSOs' participation in monitoring public finance and policy-making is poor,
- the number of independent studies is low
- the investigative journalism is almost non-existent,
- the understanding and interest for public finance among the wider public is rather low.

Therefore, it has been recognized that:

- there is a growing need for systematic monitoring of public finance and financial institutions,
- it is necessary to increase the capacity (of CSOs) to impact the adoption of policies and decisions related to the public finances,
- public financing has to be brought closer to citizens because the current understanding of public finance among the wider public is rather low.

## 2. Overall objective of the public call for project proposals

The objective of submitting a project proposal in the public call is to contribute to creating transparent and accountable policy and decision-making processes in the area of public finance in the field of environment. The general objective of the call

This is an opportunity to invite civil society organizations (CSOs)/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). to submit project proposals related to development goals of the project: “CSOs as equal partners in monitoring public finance” and its specific objectives:

- empower the CSOs to strengthen their knowledge in the area of public finance, monitor public finance, provide policy proposals and participate in policy processes, raise public awareness, facilitate discussion with political actors and other relevant stakeholders, communicate and advocate for better accountability and transparency in the area of public finance
- support media to communicate and inform the public on the issues or policy processes related to public finance

- encourage the experts to conduct researches and baseline studies on the specific topics related to public finance
- create cooperation platforms or support networking among different stakeholders for creating transparent and accountable policy and decision-making processes in the area of public finances.

This call for proposals explicitly focuses on four general topics of public finances such as public debt, public-private partnerships, tax justice and public infrastructure in the following priority areas: transparency, rule of law, good governance, anti-corruption, economic growth, including citizens and CSOs in the budgeting process, public finance education, monitoring and oversight of public institutions, tax reforms. Funds will be allocated to those civil society organizations whose projects contribute to resolving one or more priorities and meet quality criteria and other conditions.

### **3. Funds (grants) available for projects**

Projects eligible for this public call are those whose requested budgets are between 4.000 EUR and 8.000 EUR. The BMPF project reserves the right not to award all available funds in the event that project proposals do not meet the given criteria. Available funds for this call are 45.600 EUR per country.

Interested CSOs should co-fund their projects or secure a part of the funds from other donors. At least 10% of the matching fund and maximum of 50% of the matching fund is expected.

Grants allocated within this public call may finance administrative costs and staff costs to a maximum of 40% of the requested amount. The remaining 60% of the funds should be foreseen for the programming activities of the project.

#### **3.1. Eligibility of costs: costs which may be taken into consideration for the grant**

Only "eligible costs" can be considered for a grant. The categories of costs considered as eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and a ceiling for "eligible costs". Note that the eligible costs must be based on real costs based on supporting documents.

Recommendations for the award of a grant are always subject to the condition that the checking process preceding the signature of the contract does not reveal any problems requiring changes to the budget (for instance arithmetical errors, inaccuracies or unrealistic costs and other ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and lead the BMPF project to impose modifications or



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reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. The amount of the grant and the percentage of the co-financing as a result of these corrections may not be increased.

It is therefore in the applicant's interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

### **Eligible direct costs**

To be eligible under the Call for Proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the EU General Conditions applicable to European Union-financed grant contracts for external actions.

Note that taxes, including VAT will only be accepted as eligible costs when the following conditions are fulfilled:

- i. The value added taxes are not recoverable by any means;
- ii. It is established that they are borne by the final beneficiary; and
- iii. They are clearly indicated in the project proposal.

### **Contributions in kind**

Contributions in kind are not considered actual expenditure and are not eligible costs. Contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing. Notwithstanding the above, if the description of the action as proposed by the Lead CSO and its partners foresees contributions in kind, such contributions have to be provided.

### **Ineligible costs**

The following costs are not eligible:

- taxes, including value added taxes (except for when the conditions set out under Direct Eligible Costs above are fulfilled);
- customs and import duties, or any other charges;
- purchase, rent or leasing of land and existing buildings;
- fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation;
- operating costs;
- second-hand equipment;
- bank charges, costs of guarantees and similar charges;
- conversion costs, charges and exchange losses with any of the component specific euro accounts,



- as well as purely financial expenses;
- contributions in kind;
  - any leasing costs;
  - depreciation costs;
  - debts and debt charges;
  - provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
  - interest owed;
  - costs declared by the beneficiary and covered by another action or work programme;
  - credits to third parties.

#### **4. General information on the call for project proposals**

Project documentation must contain the following:

- Project proposal (Word format - Annex 1),
- Budget breakdown (Excel format - Annex 2),

Additional documentation is a very important part of the project and should be submitted in its entirety in order for the project proposal to be evaluated. Additional documentation must contain the following:

- Copy of a valid certificate of registration of an organization in the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). (for the project owner/ applicant and project partners, if any),
- Copy of organization's statute (applicant and partners, if any),
- CVs of persons engaged in the project
- Completed Administrative identification form (Word format – Annex 4),
- Completed Financial identification form (Excel format – Annex 5),
- Completed and signed Eligibility statement (Word format – Annex 6),
- Check list (Word format – Annex 7)
- Copy of the final annual financial report for the previous year (balance sheet and income statement) certified by a responsible agency for financial operations and licensed and authorized accountant, unless the organization is established in the current year,

In the case of project approval, the original documents can be requested.



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## 5. Who may apply?

Participating in this public call is open to all on an equal basis, for CSOs and NGOs (associations or foundations) formally registered in the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and in accordance with the valid legal regulations.

In order to apply to the public call the applicants must:

- Be a legal non-profitable entity registered in the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), in accordance with valid legal regulations (association or foundation).

Potential applicants **may not participate** in the call or will not receive grants unless they submit the signed **Eligibility statement** (Annex 6) with the project proposal.

Applicants will be excluded from participation in the call or from the allocation of grants if, at the time of submission of project proposals:

- (a) they are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) they are guilty of providing false information to an authorized contractual party, which are required as a precondition for participation in the call for submission of project proposals or if they fail to submit the required information;
- (c) they tried to obtain confidential information, exert influence over the Evaluation commission or authorized contractual party during project proposals evaluation process.

## 6. Duration

The duration of the projects can be between 4 and 6 months, and the projects must be implemented during the period between 01/12/2018 and 31/05/2019. Activities happened prior this date cannot be funded.

## 7. Locations

The projects must be implemented in the IPA Beneficiaries in the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). Exceptionally, some actions can take place



out of the region, if they contribute to the goals of the project. For instance, presentation of the project in EU Parliament, or other activity that must take place out of the region.

## 8. Types of projects

The projects to be funded have to be prepared in accordance with the public call and the specific objectives contained therein. Project proposals have to clearly meet the needs stated within the public call.

The projects have to provide a solution for the specific needs of the local community and the target groups identified by the project.

Projects should consist of independent operational activities with clearly defined operational goals, target groups and planned outcomes.

Projects should be an integrated methodological set of activities, created to achieve certain goals and specific results within a limited time period.

*The general work plan of the applicant or project partner cannot represent the project.*

*Possible project activities can include:*

- Direct advocacy actions
- Desk research
- Baseline-studies
- Facilitating contact, consultation and discussion between different stakeholders
- Communication and information activities aimed at supporting consultation with stakeholders
- Organization of conferences, roundtables, workshops and seminars
- Advocacy for the revision of existing legislation and adoption of new legislation in accordance with EU standards and requirements
- Establishment of dialogue with political parties, groups of parliamentarians or legislative bodies
- Drafting policy or legislation recommendations
- Public awareness raising campaigns
- Publication of leaflets, manuals on best practice
- Media articles, programs serials and campaigns

***The following activities are not recommended for allocation of grants:***

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions including market promotion activities;
- “one-off” conferences, and similar events;
- actions concerned only or mainly with academic research and/or feasibility studies;
- actions including grant-making activities (i.e. the use of funds to make grants or loans to other organizations);
- actions concerned only or mainly with infrastructure investments and/or the procurement of equipment;
- actions linked to political parties or of political/partisan nature;
- actions dealing with emergency relief or charitable donations;
- actions that fall within the general activities of competent state institutions or state administration services, including local government;
- actions in relation to:
  - the tobacco industry (CAEN code 16)
  - production of alcoholic distilled beverages (CAEN code 1591)
  - arms and munitions (CAEN code 296).

## **9. Visibility**

Note that the applicant must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU-financing (see the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU external actions laid down and published by the European Commission at [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/visibility/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/visibility/index_en.htm)).

## **10. Number of project proposals and grants per applicant**

An applicant can apply with one proposal only.



## 11. Where and how to collect and submit the application material

Pertinent information as well as an electronic version of the entire application package can also be obtained from: <http://wings-of-hope.ba/balkan-monitoring-public-finance/public-call-for-csosngos-in-the-field-of-public-finances>

Applicants must submit their applications in English. The application consists of the application form and budget in forms provided under this call of proposals and additional documentation listed under 4.

Completed applications, with all mandatory documentation, must be send via email to: [diellza.saliu@birn.eu.com](mailto:diellza.saliu@birn.eu.com). **In the subject, it has to be stated the following: Project proposal under the call “BMPPF”.**

Every applicant who submitted a project and which was received on time by the project will receive pertinent receipts.

The deadline for submitting applications is **Thursday, 1st November at 12:00 hours**.

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or post) or delivered to other addresses **will not be taken into consideration**.

## 12. Further information

If the need arises, informative meetings on the public call with potential applicants of project proposals (“open days”) will be held in the during the public call.

In these meetings, potential applicants will be informed in detail about the call, manner of applying, criteria, etc.

Should any additional information and clarifications be required, potential candidates may send a request with the reference to the Public Call for Applicants to the email address: [diellza.saliu@birn.eu.com](mailto:diellza.saliu@birn.eu.com). Queries can be submitted by **19/October/2018**, and the answers will be provided in writing within 5 working days from the date of receiving respective queries. For transparency purposes, the answers will also be published to the project’s website.

## 13. Evaluating and selecting project proposals

Applications will be considered and evaluated by the “CSOs as equal partner in monitoring public finances” project team with the possible assistance of external assessors. All actions submitted by applicants will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria:

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria, the application shall be rejected on this sole basis.

(1) Administrative conditions:

- The Application has been submitted via email and the submission deadline has been respected. If the deadline has not been respected the application will automatically be rejected.
- The Application satisfies all the criteria specified in points of the Checklist in the grant application form. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that sole basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

(2) Conditions related to the applicant and activities:

- Confirmation that the applicant and the activities, meet the conditions set out in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10.

(3) Evaluation of project quality and financial evaluation:

Evaluation of the project quality, including the proposed budget, will be carried out in accordance with the criteria set out in the evaluation table presented on page 12 of this document. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection criteria and fund allocation criteria.

The goal of the selection criteria is to help in the assessment of financial and operational capabilities of applicants in order to ensure that they:

- have stable and sufficient funds for their own work during the entire project implementation period;
- possess the professional capability and qualifications necessary for the successful implementation of the project. This also applies to the applicant's partners.

Fund allocation criteria ensures that the quality of submitted projects is evaluated based on the defined priority areas, and that funds are approved on the basis of activities which maximize the general impact of the public call for project proposals. The criteria refer to the significance of the proposed project, alignment of the project with the goal of the public call and the priority areas, project quality, expected results, project sustainability and cost-effectiveness of requested funds.

Please pay attention to the following important information:

### ***Scoring system:***

Scoring criteria is divided into sections and subsections. **Each subsection must be evaluated with assigned scores between 1 and 5 in a following way: 1 = very bad; 2 = bad; 3 = appropriate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.** Each member of the commission completes an individual evaluation table, and all members sign the summary evaluation table for each project proposal. Ranking the project proposals is carried out in a manner that the first ranked project proposal is the one with the highest score, followed by the project proposal with the next lowest score up until the project proposal with lowest scores.

Only projects with a score of 50 or more points will be taken into further consideration, as the proposals below this threshold have not met the set standards, thus questioning the efficiency of their ability for implementation.

In order to be taken into consideration for funding, projects with budgets over 20,000 BAM have to receive 75 or more points during evaluation process. The decision on grant approval is based on the total number of projects that can be financed within the available funds. These limits are set in order to define minimum quality of project proposals and ensure the best value for money. Projects with the highest scores will have priority in grant disbursement.

### **Note on Section 1. Financial and operational capacity of the applicant**

In the case that the total score in Section 1 is lower than 10 points, the project will be excluded from the further evaluation process, as the organization does not have the minimum capacities to ensure quality implementation of the proposed project.

### **Note on Section 2. Relevance**

In case that the total score in Section 2 is lower than 18 points, the project will be excluded from further consideration as the score implies that, although the applicant meets financial and operational capacities, the project's concept is not relevant or in line with the defined priorities of the public call; the project does not address the needs of the local community.

## Evaluation table

Section	Maximum score	Average score
<b>1. Financial and operational capacity</b>	<b>15</b>	
1.1 Are applicant and partners sufficiently <b>experienced in project management</b> ?	5	
1.2 Do applicant and partners have sufficient <b>professional capacities</b> ? (specific knowledge in the relevant field)	5	
1.3. Do applicant and partners have sufficient <b>management capacities</b> ? (including staff, equipment and capacities for financial management)?	5	
<b>2. Relevance</b>	<b>25</b>	
2.1. How relevant is the project compared to the <b>goal</b> and one or more <b>priorities</b> defined in the Public call? Note: score 5 (very good) can be assigned only if the project is addressing at <b>least one of the priorities</b> .	5	
2.2 Are stakeholders clearly defined and strategically selected (agents, final beneficiaries, <b>target groups</b> )?	5	
2.3 Are the <b>needs of the target group</b> and final beneficiaries clearly defined and does the project address them in the right way?	5	
2.4 Does the project incorporate <b>added value</b> , like innovative approach and good practice models?	5	
2.5 Does the project proposal advocate for <b>rights-based approach</b> and does it influence vulnerable groups? (Promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, protection of environment, international cooperation, youth, etc.).	5	
<b>3. Methodology</b>	<b>20</b>	
3.1 Does the <b>plan of activities</b> and proposed <b>activities</b> logically and practically correspond with goals and expected results?	5	
3.2 How consistent is the overall project design? (especially, does it reflects analysis of identified problems, possible external factors)	5	
3.3 Is the level of <b>involvement of partners in project implementation</b> satisfactory? Note: if there are no partners the score will be <b>1</b> .	5	
3.4 Are <b>objectively measurable indicators</b> included in the project?	5	
<b>4. Sustainability</b>	<b>25</b>	
4.1 Will proposed activities have <b>concrete influence</b> on target groups?	5	
4.2 Will the project have <b>multiple effects</b> ? (including possibility for application on the other target groups or implementation at the different	5	



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<i>location and/or extending the effects of the activities as well as exchange of information on the experience gained through the implementation of the project)</i>		
4.3 Are expected results of suggested activities <b>institutionally sustainable</b> ? ( <i>will the structures that enable project activities exist after the completion of the project? Will there be a local ownership over the project results?</i> )	5	
4.4 Are expected <b>results sustainable</b> ? (if applicable, name the <i>structural impact of implemented activities – improvements of legal frameworks, methods, code of conduct, etc.</i> )	5	
4.5 Is it likely that expected long term results/outcomes will influence local economic conditions and/or quality of life in target areas?	5	
<b>5. Budget and cost efficiency</b>	<b>15</b>	
5.1 Is the ratio between estimated costs and expected results satisfactory?	5	
5.2 Are suggested costs <b>necessary</b> for project implementation?	5	
5.3 Budget - is the budget clear and does it include a narrative part? (including explanations for technical equipment) - meets the principle that administrative and personnel costs cannot be above 40% of the total budget? - have CVs and job descriptions been enclosed where applicable?	5	
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>100</b>	

Following the evaluation, a table listing the applications ranked according to their score and within the available financial envelope will be established as well as a reserve list following the same criteria.

## 14. Notification of the decision

All applicants, whether their project proposals are approved for funding or rejected, will be notified in writing of the decision on their project proposal within 24 days of closing the public call. Results will be announced at the web site of the project <http://wings-of-hope.ba/balkan-monitoring-public-finance/public-call-for-csos/ngos-in-the-field-of-public-finances>.

A decision to reject a project proposal or deny funds will be made if:

- The applicant does not meet the conditions of the public call;
- Project activities are unacceptable (e.g. proposed activities go beyond the scope of the public call for project proposals, the project's stipulated duration exceeds the maximum allowed time



period, the requested amount of funds exceeds the maximum allowed amount or is lower than the minimum, etc);

- The project proposal was not sufficiently relevant; financial and operational capacities of the applicant are not sufficient, or the projects selected for funding have been superior in these areas;
- The quality of the project proposal was technically and financially lower in comparison to the projects selected for funding.

## 15. Conditions related to project implementation after grant approval

After a decision has been made on grant approval, the non-governmental organization whose project has been approved will be offered a contract for project implementation. Before signing the contract and if needed, the project is entitled to request certain modifications from the organization to the project, in order to align it with the rules and procedures of project implementation.

## 16. Indicative time table

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
<b>Deadline for request for any clarifications from the BMPF project</b>	19/10/2018	12.00
<b>Last date on which clarifications are issued by the BMPF project (at <a href="http://wings-of-hope.ba/balkan-monitoring-public-finance/public-call-for-csos/ngos-in-the-field-of-public-finances">http://wings-of-hope.ba/balkan-monitoring-public-finance/public-call-for-csos/ngos-in-the-field-of-public-finances</a>)</b>	24/10/2018	-
<b>Deadline for submission of Application Form</b>	1/11/2018	12.00
<b>Information to applicants on the evaluation of the Application Form</b>	24/11/2018	-

This indicative timetable may be updated by the project during the procedure. If so, the updated timetable will be published on the project web site <http://wings-of-hope.ba/balkan-monitoring-public-finance/public-call-for-csos/ngos-in-the-field-of-public-finances> and the project Facebook page (Balkan Monitoring Public Finances).



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## LIST OF ANNEXES

- Annex 1** Project Proposal
- Annex 2** Budget Breakdown
- Annex 4** Administrative Identification Form
- Annex 5** Financial Identification Form
- Annex 6** Eligibility Statement
- Annex 7** Check List

