

Berlin, 26 September 2024

Expanding Cooperation with Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership Countries and Russia

The programme Expanding Cooperation with Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership Countries and Russia (Eastern Partnership programme) helps civil society to play its part as a key player in democratic development and to support the ongoing transformation processes in the countries where it operates. Through the Eastern Partnership programme, the Federal Government supports measures that **establish or expand durable civil-society cooperation structures between democratic, non-governmental stakeholders from Germany and the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) or Russia. The goal is cooperation and the equitable distribution of tasks between the project partners in Germany and in the relevant partner countries.** This spans the entire range of cultural and education policy projects (with a focus on media, science and academia, education including vocational training, culture, language and work with young people).

In the third year of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and in view of the continuing shrinking of spaces for **civil-society players and structures**, supporting them remains a relevant endeavour in all Eastern Partnership countries. Given these developments, our **main interests** in the **Eastern Partnership schedule for 2025** continue to be (1) **strengthening and reconstructing civil-society structures in the context of European integration and cooperation**; (2) **strengthening resilience in the face of Russian destabilisation attempts and promoting independent, neutral and inclusive reporting** by enhancing professionalisation, network-building and continuity of employment for journalists and civil-society players – including those in temporary exile; and (3) **strengthening the political and social participation of women and marginalised and vulnerable groups** in line with the guidelines for feminist foreign policy.

The intention of these measures is to strengthen the work done by civil society in the countries of the Eastern Partnership as well as by democratic Russian and Belarusian civil society and increase resilience within society to disinformation. Exchanges, cultural policy measures fostering discourse on shared values and human rights, and projects supporting the academic, vocational and socio-political education of young people can encourage greater social engagement.

I. All projects must pursue at least one of the following overarching objectives:

1. *Strengthening pluralism and resilience* – in order to promote pluralism of opinion and the media and to tackle disinformation

The concept of pluralism is a key and constituent element of modern democracies, whose legitimacy primarily lies in recognising and respecting the wide range of opinions, interests and goals found in society.

Within the framework of this programme, support goes to projects that advance the establishment and development of pluralism of information, opinion and the media, tackle disinformation and increase resilience. Particular consideration is given to projects that seek to enhance societies' resilience to unreliable and false information by strengthening and training media stakeholders and improving access to high-quality, pluralist (local) media. The intention is also to support journalists and media professionals who are in temporary exile, so that they can continue to go about their work until it is possible for them to return to their home countries.

2. *Promoting the discussion of values and human rights* – with a view to deepening mutual understanding

This objective primarily facilitates the funding of exchanges and cultural projects. Organised encounters are intended to enable people to exchange views on fundamental values such as respect for human rights, the legitimacy of the administrative authorities, the independence of the judiciary, the right of the individual to life and self-determination, and the principle of majority decision-making. Standing up for these values together also advances mutual understanding within the Eastern Partnership region as well as enhancing knowledge of those countries in Germany.

Projects eligible for funding are those which transmit and reinforce the fundamental values mentioned above through civil-society exchange or cultural policy measures and which promote network-building within civil society in the partner countries. Support can also go to initiatives which make the distinct identities of the partner countries transparent to the German public.

3. *Generating prospects and democratic transformation* – to strengthen democracies, tackle corruption, work towards closer relations with the EU and facilitate individual educational opportunities

Under this objective, support can go to initiatives that strengthen democratic efforts seeking to create secure social prospects for all. Especially in Ukraine, our priority is supporting transformation processes and the preservation and reconstruction of civil-society structures that have been destroyed by Russia's war of aggression. Furthermore, we particularly support projects that are simultaneously focused on the prospect of EU membership for Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. Projects eligible for funding also include academic, professional and socio-political initial and further training measures that encourage greater social engagement and facilitate political and social participation.

4. *Supporting dialogue and rapprochement – confidence-building measures to overcome regional conflicts in the future*

Projects eligible for funding are those which deploy instruments from the fields of culture and education in unresolved regional conflicts to help prevent or overcome crises, thereby laying the foundations for future understanding. In 2025, this funding goal will be focused in particular on the countries of the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, in the course of Russia's war of aggression, people from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and elsewhere have left their homes and settled in other Eastern Partnership countries because they faced threats and repression on account of their views. Projects that have an element of bringing those people together with (civil) society in their new countries are also eligible for funding.

II. In the 2025 funding year, projects focusing on one of the following objectives will be given priority in the selection process:

1. *Strengthening and reconstructing civil-society networks in the context of European integration and cooperation*

Russia's war of aggression has created huge challenges for the work of civil-society players, not least because civic spaces keep shrinking. We intend to continue strengthening non-governmental structures and supporting the reconstruction of civil society, particularly in the EU candidate countries Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and, above all, Ukraine – in line, among other things, with the Berlin Ukraine Recovery Conference of June 2024 – and in Armenia. We intend to channel more funding into projects that help support the process of closer alignment with the EU and essential reforms by, for example, working to foster democracy, advance the rule of law and combat corruption.

Exchanges and organised encounters between young people play a role here, with an emphasis on Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

2. *Strengthening resilience in the face of Russian destabilisation attempts and promoting independent, neutral and inclusive reporting*

Projects are to be funded that counteract disinformation campaigns and fake news and improve the media literacy of digital non-natives with a view to fostering discerning, autonomous and critical media consumption. This includes professionalisation, network building and further training for journalists and others working in the media sector. With regard to Russia and Belarus, the Eastern Partnership programme also supports the development and establishment of structures for people in temporary exile. Maintaining the ability of, above all, Russian and Belarusian media professionals to work irrespective of their location fosters critical media consumption and indirectly strengthens democratic structures in those countries. At the same time, it secures independent news provision for people in those countries and in exile.

3. Strengthening the political and social participation of women and vulnerable and marginalised groups

This includes projects that raise awareness of civic engagement on the part of women, LGBTIQ people and vulnerable or marginalised groups and strengthen their ties with other civil-society stakeholders. As part of a feminist foreign policy, it is important to the Federal Government that all sections of the population are involved in political decision-making processes and that their levels of political and social participation are enhanced. This applies not least to the still unsatisfactory representation of women in both the political and pre-political spheres.

Such projects particularly include those that work with at-risk civil-society stakeholders and vulnerable groups, such as children and young people, people with disabilities and LGBTIQ individuals and strengthen their political and social participation, as well as projects that have an impact outside cities / in rural areas.

Formal requirements (please see [FAQ for further information](#)):

Civil-society cooperation projects are eligible for funding if they are implemented in **Germany, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine or Russia** and involve at least two project organisations (one from Germany and at least one from one of the partner countries). Additional partner organisations from **France** and/or **Poland** are expressly welcomed within the framework of Weimar Triangle cooperation. Support can also go to projects with partner organisations which are in temporary exile within the region.

Only civil-society projects are funded, i.e. players outside the sphere of governmental or economic activity.

The funding in question is project funding. As such, it is subject to the budgeting principle of annuality, meaning that, as a rule, the projects should be concluded during the year 2025, i.e. **by 31 December 2025**. The Federal Foreign Office can only approve projects that run into the next calendar year in justified exceptional cases.

The minimum funding amount is EUR 50,000; there is no maximum funding amount. Project outlines (in English or German) can be submitted from 14 October until 08 November 2024, **exclusively** via the website

<http://oepr.diplo.de>.

Further [information and instructions](#) on how to submit project outlines can also be found on that website. We regret that subsequent changes to already submitted project outlines or submissions at a later date are not possible.

In principle, grant recipients are required to submit properly collated proof of expenditure and project reports. The Federal Agency for Foreign Affairs and the Federal Foreign Office use these to monitor whether funds have been used correctly and to gauge the success of

projects and of the funding programme as a whole. Further information is available (in German) in the [General and Particular Supplementary Provisions on the downloads page](#) and will be provided during the approval process.

Should you have any questions, please first consult the FAQ. If you have any questions not answered by the FAQ, the Eastern Partnership programme team at the Federal Agency for Foreign Affairs will be happy to help. Simply email oepr@bfaa.bund.de or, for content-related questions, contact the relevant member of Federal Foreign Office staff:

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Should you experience any **technical difficulties** using the website <http://oepr.diplo.de>, please contact Julia Meltke (tel: 0(049)30 18 4730 14125, email: bf-f-pf-1-17@auswaertiges-amt.de).