

Call 1:

ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND IN SLOVENIA

Call for proposals for medium and large projects¹

Deadline for submission of concept notes: 11. 12. 2019 at noon, Slovenian local time

Anticipated deadline for submission of full project proposals: 10. 4. 2020 (or 1 month after applicants receive invitations to proceed with preparation and submission of full project proposals)

¹ The call contains basic information, for more details please check Guidelines for applicants.

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EEA AND NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISMS 2014 – 2021 ABOUT ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND

Support to civil society is a key priority for the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms (FMs) 2014 – 2021², funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Their aim is to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations between the Donor States and the Beneficiary States. They cooperate with 15 beneficiary countries, EU member states, one of which is also Slovenia.

Overall focus of Active Citizens Fund (ACF) 2014-2021 as a part of Civil society programme of FMs is set to long-term sustainable development and capacity building of non-governmental sector. **Main objective of ACF on the EU level is 'Civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered'**. Programme aims at strengthening the role of non-governmental organisations in promotion of democracy, public inclusion in decision-making processes on national and local level and human rights protection. An important priority of the programme is also strengthening of bilateral cooperation between civil society organisations from Slovenia and organisations from donor countries - Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

PRIORITY AREAS, OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND IN SLOVENIA

Active Citizens Fund priority areas of support are:

- 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,
- Environment and climate change.

Programme is based on common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Expected outcomes of the ACF in Slovenia are:

- Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role;
- Increased support for civic education and human rights;
- Vulnerable groups are empowered;
- Enhanced capacity and sustainability of CSOs and sector;
- Strengthened bilateral cooperation between civil society organisations from Slovenia and organisations from donor countries;
- Strengthened regional civil society cooperation.

² More on EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms: www.eeagrants.org.

To realise these goals and address challenges identified in common effort with NGOs in Slovenia, programme is set to:

- Financially support areas or activities which are under-financed or not financed at all in Slovenia, and organisations working in under-served areas as well as under-served target groups;
- Strengthen financial stability of non-governmental organisations, especially those working in the fields of democracy and human rights;
- Encourage use of innovative methods for promotion of active participation of individuals, including vulnerable groups;
- Empower vulnerable groups, including Roma and migrants;
- Promote development of innovative methods to strengthen advocacy, fund-raising, transparency and accountability of NGOs;
- Promote inclusion of youth.

MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND IN SLOVENIA

Active Citizens Fund is managed by Financial Mechanism Office – FMO based in Brussels, representing European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and reporting to Ministries of Foreign affairs of donor countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Upon a public invitation to bid CNVOS – Centre for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs, in consortium with Institute PIP – Legal and Information Centre Maribor, and DRPD Novo mesto – Society for the Advancement of Voluntary Work Novo mesto were selected to operate Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia.

INDICATIVE BUDGET FOR MEDIUM AND LARGE PROJECTS CALL

Total indicative budget of the call is 1.530.000,00 euros. The means are divided between two categories of projects:

1. category: medium projects (EUR 20.000 - 60.000)
2. category: large projects (EUR 60,001-120,000)

Expected outcome	Indicative budget for medium projects in euros	Indicative budget for large projects in euros
Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role	352.000,00	357.000,00
Increased support for civic education and human rights	168.000,00	170.000,00
Vulnerable groups are empowered	143.000,00	148.000,00
Enhanced capacity and sustainability of CSOs and sector	117.000,00	75.000,00
SKUPAJ	780.000,00	750.000,00

Each project must contribute to at least one of these expected outcomes. In case a project contributes to more than one outcome, a primary outcome, that is the one to which the project contributes the most, must be clearly indicated in the application form. Each project also has to contribute 10-15 % of the project budget for activities contributing to development of their organisation or the NGO sector.

ELIGIBILITY RULES

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants for both categories of projects are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in compliance with the conditions set in the Article 2 of the Non-governmental Organisations Act (Official Gazette of Republic of Slovenia no. 21 /18) and if they meet requirements set in the Manual for fund operators of the Active Citizens Fund³.

Eligible applicant is therefore an organisation:

- a) that is a private-law legal entity established in Republic of Slovenia;
- b) was established exclusively by domestic or foreign natural or legal persons under private law;
- c) is non-profit (organisation that based on the law or its founding document uses its profits or surplus of revenue over expenditure exclusively for realisation of its purpose or goals; does not divide its property among its founders, members or other persons, and in the event of its termination, after settlement of its obligations, its property is transferred to another non-governmental organisation with the same or similar purpose, or non-profit legal entity of public law);
- d) is not established to generate profit (organisation that based on the law is not established with the intention of for-profit operation or with the intention of making profit or with the intention of development, facilitation or promotion of for-profit operation of their founders or members);
- e) is independent of other subjects (organisation whose management body, administrative body and supervision body do not consist of more than a quarter of representatives of the state, local self-governing community, other public-law entities, barriers of public authority, international intergovernmental organisations, political parties, trade unions, chambers and corporate entities, or natural persons who independently engage in a gainful activity on the market, or representatives of other entities that are not non-profit);
- f) is not organised as political party, a church or other religious community, trade union or chamber.

All eligible applicants, partners and project proposals shall follow the principles of common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The applicants and partners will confirm this in the applicant and partner statements accordingly. Selection committee will have the power to suggest a rejection of a project, if it will establish that the applicants, partners and project do not follow the mentioned principles.

Each individual organisation can **submit only one project proposal** to this call. There are, however, no limitations as to the number of project proposals in which an organisation is in a partner role.

ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

A project may be implemented in partnership with one or more project partners. If a project is implemented in such a partnership, the applicant shall sign a partnership agreement with each of the project partners. A model agreement is a part of the call documentation. In the application process, partners will have to sign a partner statement as part of the application.

³ See Guidelines for applicants.

A project partner is a public- or private-law entity, commercial or non-commercial, or non-governmental organisation established in any of the ACF donor countries – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, any of the ACF beneficiary countries (beside Slovenia, also Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Poland, Portugal), or any inter-governmental organisation or a body thereof that is actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project.

Eligible project partners are also informal groups under following conditions:

- informal group is not established for the purpose of personal gain;
- work for public good;
- are voluntary and non-discriminatory;
- are independent of local, regional and national authorities and other public institutions, political parties, religious communities, chambers and corporate entities.

Informal group shall be represented by a chosen individual as a signatory of partnership agreement. Informal group cannot be a direct beneficiary of project funding; their costs shall be carried by the project applicant organization.

Partnership is not obligatory and does not bring additional scoring of the project **automatically**. All partners are requested to sign a Partnership statement in the process of project submission. The form of Partnership statement is a part of the call documentation.

Organisations that have not recovered amounts due, following a final court decision in connection with the NGO Programme 2009-2014 in Slovenia, shall not be considered eligible applicants and/or partners.

FOCUS OF THE CALL

Active Citizens Fund follows a common results-based framework, based on which fund operators in each beneficiary country in cooperation with FMO and with help of public consultation identify and set their outcomes and outputs that shall contribute to realisation of the expected results on the level of the programme.

PRIORITY AREAS AND SPECIFICS OF THE CALL

Project proposals must address one of the priority areas:

- 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,
- Environment and climate change.

In addition, applicants must also take into account:

- **Protection of the environment and climate change** will **only** be supported as part of measures to promote civic participation, advocacy, social innovation and active citizenship.

- In the field of **social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups provision of welfare and basic services** will **only** be supported as part of wider actions addressing awareness-raising, advocacy, empowerment and reform initiatives.
- Youth inclusion should be an important part of the projects (e.g. target group in civic education and civic mobilisation) and organisational development (leadership succession, rejuvenation of staff, etc.). For the activities targeted at youth, entering partnership with youth organisations should be considered.

EXPECTED PROGRAMME OUTCOMES AND OUTCOMES

In the tables below, expected outcomes and respective indicators on the level of the ACF in Slovenia are presented. Presented information should serve as a guide in development of project ideas as **only projects contributing to at least one outcome shall be considered for financial support of ACF.**

Each of the five outcomes has specific indicators, outputs and outputs' indicators set:

<i>Outcome 1</i>	<i>Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role</i>	<i>Number of national policies and laws influenced by the CSOs</i>
		<i>Number of CSOs using evidence/research to support their advocacy and policy work</i>
		<i>Number of media appearances where CSOs provide expertise on specific issues</i>
<i>Output 1.1</i>	<i>Citizens participation in civic activities promoted</i>	<i>Number of CSOs mobilizing citizens in civic activities, including in public policy decision-making</i>
<i>Output 1.2</i>	<i>Policy input submitted by CSOs</i>	<i>Number of evidence-based policy submissions by CSOs</i>
		<i>Number of CSOs involved in monitoring of public and private decision-making</i>
<i>Output 1.3</i>	<i>Innovative (new or improved) methods and approaches for advocacy and campaigning carried out</i>	<i>Number of innovative methods applied</i>
		<i>Number of awareness raising campaigns carried out</i>
<i>Outcome 2</i>	<i>Increased support for civic and human rights</i>	<i>Share of target group disapproving of public statements that express negative views or hatred against minorities</i>
		<i>Share of target group showing concern of human rights (disaggregated by gender, age)</i>
<i>Output 2.1</i>	<i>Civic and human rights education provided</i>	<i>Number of public and educational institutions partnering with CSOs on civic and human rights education</i>
		<i>Number of educational tools for civic and human rights education developed and/or disseminated by CSOs</i>
<i>Output</i>	<i>Implementation of international human</i>	<i>Number of strategic litigation cases supported</i>

2.2	rights standards promoted	<i>Number of CSOs registering and reporting HR violations</i>
		<i>Number of cases of human rights violations and discrimination filed/lodged</i>
		<i>Number of awareness raising campaigns carried out</i>
<i>Outcome 3</i>	<i>Vulnerable groups are empowered</i>	<i>Number of vulnerable individuals reached by empowerment measures</i>
<i>Output 3.1</i>	Innovative (new or improved) methods and approaches addressing the needs of vulnerable groups promoted	<i>Number of new or improved methods developed and/or implemented to address the needs of vulnerable groups</i>
<i>Output 3.2</i>	Members of vulnerable groups trained or involved in advocating for their needs/ the needs of their communities	<i>Number of vulnerable individuals trained for advocating for their needs/ the needs of their communities</i>
		<i>Number of CSOs adopting participatory methods with vulnerable groups</i>
		<i>Number of awareness raising campaigns carried out (in cooperation with vulnerable groups)</i>
<i>Outcome 4</i>	<i>Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society (organizations and sectors)</i>	<i>Number of CSOs with transparent and accountable governance procedure</i>
		<i>Number of CSOs with effective management procedures</i>
		<i>Number of CSOs demonstrating an increase of donations by at least 30 %</i>
<i>Output 4.1</i>	Capacity building provided to CSOs	<i>Number of CSOs participating in capacity building activities funded by the programme</i>
		<i>Number of CSO staff trained in capacity building activities funded by the programme (disaggregated by gender)</i>
		<i>Number of innovative (new and improved) methods developed to improve the transparency, accountability and efficiency of CSOs</i>

<i>Output</i> 4.2	CSOs strategies to engage citizens in CSOs activities developed	<i>Number of CSOs with new or updated plans to engage their constituencies</i>
<i>Output</i> 4.3	Organizational capacities enhanced	<i>Number of CSO with comprehensive capacity building plans for organizational development</i>

PROJECT SIZE AND DURATION

THE MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM GRANT AMOUNT PER PROJECT

Any grant requested under this public call must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

1. Medium grant:

Minimum amount: 20.000 EUR

Maximum amount: 60.000 EUR

2. Large grant:

Minimum amount: 60.001 EUR

Maximum amount: 120.000 EUR

PROJECT GRANT RATE

The maximum project grant rate indicated in the application may not exceed **90% of the total eligible project costs**. The applicant shall provide or obtain the remaining co-financing in the form of cash or in-kind contribution as voluntary work. The in-kind contribution may constitute up to 50% of the required co-financing.

For the calculation of the in-kind contribution, the price for each hour of voluntary work shall be set in accordance with the Rules implementing the Slovenian Volunteering Act.

PROJECT DURATION

At least 12 and at most 24 months. In the case of objective reasons that affected timely implementation of the project, the project promoter can ask for a non-cost extension for a period of up to 3 months, even if the project was planned to take 24 months. Application for prolongation is considered and decided upon by the fund operator.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Each applicant should envisage activities and related costs dedicated for organisational development or development of the NGO sector (at least 15 % in the case of medium and at least 10 % in the case of large projects).

ELIGIBLE COSTS

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

- a) they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract;

- b) they are connected with the subject of the project contract and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
- c) they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
- d) 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;
- e) they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the project promoter and determined according to the applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles; and
- f) 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.

DIRECT EXPENDITURES

The following direct expenditures are eligible provided that they satisfy the criteria set above:

- a) the cost of personnel assigned to the project (employments contracts, civil law contracts, private entrepreneurs, who are part of the project team), 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;
- b) travel and subsistence allowances for personnel and volunteers taking part in the project, provided that this corresponds to the project promoter's and project partner's usual policy on remuneration;
- c) cost 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;
- d) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
- e) 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; and
- f) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project.

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

INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs are all eligible costs that cannot be identified by the project promoter 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 incurred in carrying out the project may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed **15 % of direct eligible personnel costs**.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process is divided into two stages: in the first stage concept notes will be evaluated and those with highest scoring will be invited to the second phase.

1st stage: submission of the concept notes

In the first stage, applicants are invited to develop concept notes for their project ideas.

Deadline for submission of concept notes: December, 11th 2019, at noon.

Applications can only be submitted electronically via email address prijava_veliki@acfslovenia.si for large projects and prijava_srednji@acfslovenia.si for medium projects. These emails' sole purpose is submission of applications. If you have any questions regarding the call for proposal, please write to podpora@acfslovenia.si.

Guidelines for applicants, application forms and supporting documentation are available for download on <https://acfslovenia.si/>. The application has to be submitted on prescribed forms, attached in the application pack for the 1st stage of application.

Language of the application form

The application form and all the required annexes should only be submitted in Slovenian with a project summary in English, irrespective of whether the project is submitted by a national entity only or in cooperation with a partner from a Donor State.

Administrative and Eligibility check

Prior to the quality evaluation of the concept notes, the eligibility of the applicants and administrative compliance assessment will be done based on the copy of the statute and criteria, explained in the Guidelines for applicants.

When assessment is completed, all applicants will be notified about their eligibility. There will be 10 days available for appeal against the eligibility decision. Complaints committee will decide about the appeals.

External experts will evaluate all eligible concept notes according to the criteria, listed in the »Evaluation Criteria Table«. The evaluation of each concept note will be carried out by two evaluators. If the difference between the scores given by the two experts will be higher than 30 % of the highest score, a third evaluator will score the project independently. In such cases the average score of the two closest scores shall be used for ranking the project.

Evaluation criteria table:

Quality evaluation of the eligible concepts will be done based on the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation criteria	Description	Scoring
Relevance and importance of the project	Relevance of the problem and its justification Relevance of the project to objectives and priorities	40

*eliminating criterion: If below 20, the project is automatically rejected	of the ACF Project's added value Competence of the project team	
Methodology	Relevance of objectives for the identified problem Relevance of the proposed activities and feasibility of results Sustainability of the organisations	30
Financial and economic justification *eliminating criterion: If below 10, the project is automatically rejected	Cost effectiveness, value for money, division of resources between the partners	30

Based on received scoring, the ranking list of applications will be prepared. Proposed ranking list will be examined by the Selection Committee, who will propose, which concept notes will enter the second stage of the process. The final decision is made by the Fund operator.

Approximately 60 applicants applying for medium size grants and 30 applicants applying for large size grants will be invited to prepare full applications.

Notification on selection

Applicants will be notified on the selection of their concept notes to enter the second phase of the application process via e-mail indicated in application form, in February 2020. Applicants whose project proposals will not be selected for further development in the second phase of the process will have 10 working days available to appeal the decision. Appeals can be submitted at: pritozbe@acfslovenia.si. Appeals will be considered by Complaints Committee and its decision will be final.

2nd stage – submission of full proposals

Applicants, who will enter the second stage of application, will be invited to prepare and submit full proposals. The application forms consist of two main documents: description of the project, and budget & financing tables.

Deadline: 1 month after the received notice about the approval of the concept note, envisaged April 10th, 2020, at noon.

Applications can only be submitted electronically via email address prijava_veliki@acfslovenia.si for large projects and prijava_srednji@acfslovenia.si for medium projects. These emails' sole purpose is submission of applications. If you have any questions regarding the call for proposal, please write to podpora@acfslovenia.si.

Guidelines for applicants, application forms and supporting documentation are available for download on <https://acfslovenia.si/>. The application has to be submitted on prescribed forms, attached in the application pack for the 2nd stage of application.

Administrative compliance assessment will be done according to the criteria, explained in the Guidelines for applicants.

Selection criteria

Only projects that meet all administrative compliance criteria will be subject to quality assessment. It will be carried out by two external independent experts, separate from the Fund Operator. If the difference between the scores given by the two experts will be higher than 30 % of the higher score, a third expert will score the project independently. In such cases the average score of the two closest scores shall be used for ranking the project.

Selection Committee will propose projects to be supported. The final decision is on Fund Operator. Approximately 13 medium projects and 7 large projects are envisaged to be supported.

Full proposals will be examined by external experts according to the following selection criteria:

Selection criteria:	Description	Scoring
Relevance and importance of the project *eliminating criterion: If below 10, the project is automatically rejected	Relevance of the problem and its justification Relevance of the project to objectives and priorities of ACF Relevance of the projects for the needs of the target group	20
Methodology *eliminating criterion: If below 10, the project is automatically rejected	Inclusion of the target groups Feasibility of the action plan, etc. Project logic, concreteness of the project outputs	25
Financial and economic justification – value for money *eliminating criterion: If below 10, the project is automatically rejected	Necessity and appropriateness of costs, cost efficiency and cost effectiveness	20
Experience and management capacity of the applicant	Organisational and management capacity of applicants and partners to implement the project	10
Innovativeness	Upgrade of exiting or development of new services	5
Project impact and sustainability.	Impact of the project on the target group, the sector / cooperation. Use of the outputs and results beyond the project completion. Sustainability of project results	15
Quality of bilateral partnership with donor states partners (if applicable)	Relevance of the partner in terms of its fields of operation, experience and proposed role in the project. Contribution of the project to strengthening bilateral relations.	5

The minimum total number of points (threshold) necessary for the substantive and technical assessment of the project to be positive and thus for the project to be placed on the ranking list is 70 points out of the maximum 100 points that may be obtained.

Notification on selection

Applicants will be notified on the selection of their project proposals via e-mail indicated in application form, in June 2020. Applicants whose project proposals will not be selected for funding, will have 10 working days available to appeal the decision. Appeals can be submitted at: pritozbe@acfslovenia.si. Appeals will be considered by Complaints Committee and its decision will be final.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT TO PROJECT APPLICANTS

In the first application stage (concept note) support to project applicants is available on telephone and email until December 4th (one week before the application deadline). All inquiries concerning the call for proposals should be directed to podpora@acfslovenia.si. All questions and answers will be replied within one week and will be published on the programme's website. For quick information you can contact Veronika Vodlan (+386 1 542 14 22) or Tina Cigler (+386 7 39 39 311) or Brigita Horvat (+ 386 2 234 21 27).

For the second application stage (full application) individual personal assistance will be available upon request. Telephone and email support will also be available until one week before the application deadline. All inquiries concerning the call for proposals should be directed to podpora@acfslovenia.si. All questions and answers will be replied within one week and will be published on the programme's website.

Timetable of events:

Event	Main purpose	Date	Venue
Information workshop	Detailed presentation of the call for proposal, especially result framework	October 21 and 23	Ljubljana, Maribor
Quick info session	Presentation of the call, tailored to grass-roots	October 22, 23 and 24	Martjanci, Laško, Črnomelj, Mežica
Workshop for development of project ideas	Development of project ideas in accordance to Programme's outcomes and call for proposal's guidelines	November 4, 6, 8, 11 and 13	Ljubljana (outcome 1), Novo mesto, Maribor, Nova Gorica, Koper, Celje, Kranj