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## 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 organisations to play their part as key stakeholders for democratic development. What is more, it allows them to support the ongoing transformation processes in these countries. 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 focus here is on 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, academia, education including vocational training, culture, language and work with young people).

In particular, Russia's ongoing illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and its direct impact on all Eastern Partnership countries means that **providing support for civil-society structures both in this region and in temporary exile continues to be necessary.** In view of current developments in the Southern Caucasus, support for civil society in the region is especially important.

Given these developments, our **main interests** in the **Eastern Partnership schedule for 2024** continue to be (1) **preserving and reconstructing democratically oriented civil-society structures and networks in the region**, especially in Ukraine, or **in temporary exile**; (2) **strengthening resilience**, especially with regard to disinformation, as well as (3) the special **support for vulnerable groups.**

With these measures we want to strengthen the work done by civil society in the countries of the Eastern Partnership as well as in democratic Russian and Belarusian civil society entities and increase resilience within society to disinformation. Exchanges, cultural policy measures for discourses relating to 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 the recognition of and respect for the wide range of opinions, interests and goals found in society.

Within the framework of this programme, projects are supported that promote the establishment and furthering of pluralism of information, opinion and the media and which tackle disinformation and increase resilience. Particular consideration is given to projects that seek to build up society's resilience against unreliable and false information by strengthening and training media stakeholders and improving access to high-quality, pluralist (local) media. Moreover, journalists and media professionals are to be supported also in temporary exile in order to enable them to 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.**

Exchange and cultural projects can be funded under this goal in particular. Organised encounters are intended to make it possible to exchange views on fundamental values such as respect for human rights, the legitimacy of the administration, the independence of the judiciary, the right of the individual to life and self-determination, as well as the principle of majority rule. Standing up for these values together also promotes mutual understanding within the Eastern Partnership region as well as awareness of these countries in Germany.

Measures that teach and enhance the values mentioned above through civil-society exchange or cultural policy measures and which promote networking of civil societies in the partner countries are eligible for funding. Initiatives which render visible the distinct identities of the partner countries in Germany are also promoted, partly in order to establish a nuanced understanding in Germany of the background to the Russian war of aggression as well as the history of the entire Eastern Partnership region.

**3. *Creating future prospects and democratic transformation* – to strengthen democracies, tackle corruption, support closer relations with the EU and to facilitate individual educational opportunities.**

Under this objective, initiatives can be supported that strengthen democratic efforts seeking to create secure social future 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 support in particular projects that, at the same time, are focused on the future accession to the EU of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. Academic, professional and socio-political training and further training measures that encourage greater social engagement and facilitate political and social participation are also eligible for funding. The intention is to also

help ensure that (civil) society structures are preserved in fields in which they are exposed to particular difficulties.

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

Measures that deploy instruments from the fields of culture and education in unresolved regional conflicts and have an impact in terms of preventing or overcoming crises, thereby laying the foundations for understanding in the future, are eligible for funding. In 2024, this funding goal is focused in particular on the countries of the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), as well as on the Republic of Moldova. In view of current developments in the Southern Caucasus, fostering dialogue and rapprochement in the region is especially important at the present time and of continued relevance. Moreover, in the course of Russia's war of aggression, people from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, among others, have left their home countries and settled in other Eastern Partnership countries because they faced threats and repression on account of their views. Projects that address the aspect of bringing these people together with the (civil) society in their new home countries are also eligible for funding.

**II. In the funding year 2024, projects focusing on one of the following objectives will be given priority in the selection process:**

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

We support the work of civil-society organisations under the changed circumstances, for example in temporary, regional exile or after their return to their home countries and the reconstruction of civil society they will pursue. With a view to supporting the efforts of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia to move closer to EU membership, we will also promote projects in 2024 that support the necessary reforms and, for example, are aimed at fostering democracy, freedom of the press and the fight against corruption.

Furthermore, we support exchange formats and measures fostering encounters between young people with a focus on Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

In the light of extensive repressive measures in Russia and Belarus, Eastern Partnership projects with civil society in these countries – although we, for our part, wish them to continue – entail a high level of personal risk for those involved who are still based in those countries. We would therefore like to make location-independent offers, in particular for those parts of Russian and Belarusian civil society which are democratically minded.

## ***2. Counteracting disinformation campaigns and fake news***

Projects that counteract disinformation campaigns and fake news, as well as promote the media literacy of non-digital natives, should be funded in order to foster discerning, autonomous and critical media consumption. This includes the professionalisation, networking and further training of journalists and others working in the media sector. With regard to Russia and Belarus, the Eastern Partnership programme supports in particular the development of structures in temporary exile. Ensuring that Russian and Belarusian media professionals are able to continue working is an important contribution towards combatting disinformation. For this guarantees that there are independent news sources both for people in Russia and Belarus and for the Russian-speaking population in the region.

## ***3. Strengthening the political and social participation of women, as well as vulnerable and marginalised groups***

This includes projects that raise awareness of women's social engagement and their networking with other civil-society stakeholders. As part of a feminist foreign policy, it is important to the Federal Government that all population groups are involved in political decision-making processes and that their political and social participation is strengthened. This also applies to the ongoing unsatisfactory representation of women both inside and outside the political sphere.

This includes projects that work with vulnerable civil-society stakeholders and vulnerable groups, such as children and young people, people with disabilities and LGBTIQ individuals to strengthen their political and social participation, as well as projects that have an impact outside urban agglomerations/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, the countries of the Eastern Partnership** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) **or Russia** and involve at least two project organisations (one from Germany and at least one from at least one of the partner countries). The additional involvement of partner organisations from **France** and/or **Poland** is possible and expressly welcomed. Projects with partner organisations which are in temporary exile can also be promoted.

**Only civil-society projects** are funded, i.e. stakeholders outside the field of governance and business.

The funding in question is project funding. This means that it is subject to the principle of an annual budget. As a rule, the projects should therefore be concluded by the end of 2024, i.e. **by 31 December 2024**. The Federal Foreign Office can only approve projects that run into the next calendar year in exceptional duly substantiated cases.

The minimum funding amount is 50,000 euro; there is no maximum funding amount. Project outlines (in English or German) can be submitted from 20 October until 17 November 2023 exclusively via the website

<http://oepr.diplo.de>

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

In general, grant recipients are required to submit proof of proper use of funds and project reports to verify the correct use of funds and the success of the projects and the funding program as a whole. Further information can be found in the [General and Special Conditions in the downloads](#).

**Should you have any questions, please first consult the FAQ.** If you have any questions not answered by the FAQ, please contact Division 601 of the Federal Foreign Office, which will be happy to help. Please send an email to [601-oepr@diplo.de](mailto:601-oepr@diplo.de) or directly to the responsible colleague:

Fabien Ness: +49 (0)30 1817 1376 / [601-1@diplo.de](mailto:601-1@diplo.de) (Belarus, Russia)

Julia Luther: +49 (0)30 1817 4272 / [601-5@diplo.de](mailto:601-5@diplo.de) (Republic of Moldova, Ukraine)

Mariette Pfister: +49 (0)30 1817 7975 / [601-6@diplo.de](mailto:601-6@diplo.de) (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia)

Daniel Demele: +49 (0)30 18 4730 14 101 / [daniel.demele@diplo.de](mailto:daniel.demele@diplo.de)

Should you experience any **technical difficulties** using the website <http://oepr.diplo.de> please contact Julia Meltke (tel: +49 (0)30 18 4730 14125, email: [bf-f-pf-1-17@auswaertiges-amt.de](mailto:bf-f-pf-1-17@auswaertiges-amt.de)).