

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

Since 2014, the programme Expanding Cooperation with Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership Countries and Russia (Eastern Partnership programme) has been supporting civil societies in fulfilling their role as democratic stakeholders and actively shaping the transformation processes in the countries where they operate.

In order to promote freedom, security and prosperity in our immediate neighbourhood – and thus also in the EU and in Germany – the Federal Government supports, as part of the Eastern Partnership programme, **measures to establish and expand sustainable civil society cooperation structures between democratic, non-state actors from Germany on the one hand and from the countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), as well as from Russia on the other.**

The programme is characterised by the establishment of long-term cooperation projects, collaboration on an equal footing and an equitable distribution of tasks among the project partners in Germany and the programme countries. The programme comprises the full spectrum of cultural and educational projects.

In the fifth year of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and in view of the continuing shrinking of spaces for civil society stakeholders and structures in large parts of the region, support for them remains all the more relevant.

1. Strengthening pluralism and resilience – in order to promote diversity of media and opinion and to tackle FIMI.

Pluralism is a constituent element of modern democracies, whose legitimacy lies above all in tolerance towards the diversity of opinions, interests and values within a society.

As part of the Eastern Partnership programme, funding is provided for projects that strengthen diversity of information, opinion and media, combat foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) and enhance resilience against it in the respective countries. The projects are intended to enhance the resilience of societies to unreliable and false information by strengthening and training media professionals and by improving access to high-quality, pluralist (local) media. Measures promoting the development and use of digital protection technologies may also be funded to this end.

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 in addition to enhancing knowledge of those countries in Germany. Measures are eligible for funding if they promote and strengthen the aforementioned fundamental values through civil society dialogue or cultural policy projects, and contribute to the networking of civil society in the partner countries and in the context of European integration and cooperation.

3. Creating future prospects and supporting democratic transformation – to strengthen democracies, tackle corruption and promote closer relations with the EU

Under this objective, initiatives can be supported that strengthen democratic efforts seeking to create secure future social prospects for all individuals. In Ukraine in particular, our priority is to support reform and transformation processes, also with a view to furthering EU integration, and to preserving and rebuilding civil society structures that have been damaged or destroyed by Russia's war of aggression. Furthermore, we are supporting, in particular, projects that promote the EU accession process for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, Georgia's EU perspective, and Armenia's closer relations with the European Union. In Russia and Belarus, we are focusing our funding on sections of civil society that, despite increasing repression and, where applicable, operating in exile, are still able to have an impact within the countries themselves and which, for example, stand up for the enforcement of fundamental rights. 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, particularly among marginalised groups. This also includes measures to support civil society activists and project partners who are subject to increased hardship due to war, persecution, repression or particularly challenging social contexts.

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

Measures in the fields of culture and education are eligible for funding if they help to prevent or manage crises arising from unresolved regional conflicts, thereby laying the groundwork for mutual understanding. This funding goal is focused in particular on the countries of the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and the Republic of Moldova. Project proposals that focus on the regional perspective of cross-border **Black Sea cooperation** among the neighbouring countries, thereby creating synergies with the EU's Black Sea Strategy, are welcome.

Furthermore, people from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus have left their home countries in the course of Russia's war of aggression or are suffering state repression and have settled in other Eastern Partnership countries because they were subjected to threats and repression on account of their convictions. Projects that promote dialogue and social participation among these people, strengthen their links with civil society in their new home countries, and thus contribute to resilient, inclusive and democratic societies, are also eligible for funding.

The following country-specific priorities apply in addition in the **2027 funding year**:

- **Armenia/Azerbaijan:** Project proposals aimed at promoting the reconciliation process across borders at the (civil) society level.
- **Armenia:** Project proposals aimed at further supporting Armenia's closer relations with the EU.
- **Belarus:** Promoting the independent media landscape in exile, as well as the autonomy of the Belarusian language and culture.
- **Georgia:** Project proposals aimed at supporting a pluralist and resilient civil society and media landscape, as well as combating disinformation.
- **Ukraine:** Project proposals that contribute to the objectives of the Ukraine-Germany Bilateral Cultural Season 2027/2028.

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 target countries). Additional partner organisations from **France** and/or **Poland** are expressly welcomed within the framework of Weimar Triangle cooperation. Projects with partner organisations that are currently in temporary exile in the region or in Germany are also eligible for funding.

Funding is provided **exclusively for civil society projects and structures**; no state or business entities are supported.

These project funds are subject to the principle of an annual budget. As a rule, the projects should therefore be concluded by the end of 2027, i.e. by 31 December 2027. However, the Federal Foreign Office also welcomes multiannual projects (up to a maximum of three years), provided that a detailed and plausible justification is submitted.

The minimum funding amount is 50,000 euro. Expenses for security measures relevant to the project are eligible for funding as a rule. Project proposals (in English or German) can be submitted from 7 August until 15 September 2026 exclusively via the website

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

Further information and instructions on how to submit project proposals can also be found on the website. Subsequent changes to project proposals that have already been submitted or submissions at a later date are not possible.

Recipients are required to submit requisite 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 also be provided during the approval process.

Should you have any questions, please first consult the FAQ. If you cannot find answers to your questions there, the relevant team at the Federal Agency for Foreign Affairs will be happy to assist you and, if necessary, will put you in touch with colleagues at the Federal Foreign Office. Please send an email to oepr@bfaa.bund.de.

Should you experience any **technical difficulties** using the website <http://oepr.diplo.de>, please contact Ms Julia Meltke (email: f-pf-1-1-8@bfaa.bund.de) or Ms Janett Stefaniak (email: f-pf-1-1-5@bfaa.bund.de).