

## **Information on the Federal Foreign Office Programme “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” enables civil-society organisations and the members of the public active in them to play their part as key actors and important partners of governance and to support the ongoing transformation processes in the region.

The German Government wants to use cultural relations and education policy instruments in order to enable discussion and understanding outside the realm of politics and across national borders on nations’ dreams and traumas and the conflict-ridden past, but also on hopes for development and social and societal progress. This can only be achieved if as many dedicated actors as possible from a country’s rural regions and urban centres are given the opportunity to enhance social cohesion and the establishment of civil-society structures and to promote the principles of a fundamentally free, democratic and pluralist order, thus fostering peaceful coexistence among nations in Europe in the future.

### **What are the aims?**

The German Government is funding measures that provide comprehensive support to the necessary transformation and internal integration processes via collaboration between German civil society and civil societies in the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia. This spans the entire range of cultural and civic education projects (with a focus on media, academia, education including vocational training, culture, language and work with young people).

The measures that are eligible for funding are therefore those that **establish or further permanent civil-society cooperation structures between actors from Germany and the Eastern Partnership countries or Russia. Furthermore, the projects must**

- **reach as many civil-society actors as possible (including via multipliers) and**
- **pursue one of the following additional goals:**

#### **1. Strengthening pluralism – establishing and furthering pluralism of information, opinion and the media**

The focus here is on media projects. The concept of pluralism is a key and constituent element of modern democracies. Their legitimacy primarily lies in the recognition of and respect for the wide range of opinions, interests and goals found in society. Accordingly, funding will be provided to projects that serve to establish and further a pluralist media landscape. Particular consideration will be given to projects which seek to build up

society's resilience against unreliable and false information by strengthening and training media actors and improving access to high-quality, pluralist (local) media.

Suitable measures thus include training and further training of journalists, bloggers and other media actors in the countries in question, as well as work-placement programmes in Germany for journalists. Projects to enhance media competence, e.g. via suitable measures in schools and universities or in the field of civic education, are also eligible for funding.

## **2. Promoting the discussion of values – strengthening values through civil-society dialogue and cultural measures**

Exchange and cultural projects can be funded under this goal in particular. An honest dialogue on similarities, but also on differences, is the basis of both internal integration processes and national partnerships. Such dialogue always takes place where people meet, talk and cooperate. Exchange 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 decision, are particularly important in times of political tensions.

Measures that teach and enhance the values listed above through civil-society exchange or cultural measures thus also qualify for funding. These include measures that facilitate dialogue and meetings between civil-society groups, as well as a large number of formats from all areas of cultural life primarily aimed at teaching the values mentioned above.

## **3. Opening up prospects for the future – academic, professional and socio-political training and further training measures**

The focus here is on training and further training projects (capacity-building). Everyone, particularly young people, fundamentally needs to have prospects for their own economic, societal and social progress and to be able to see chances for themselves and their environment to develop and thrive. The motivation for all societal, political and social engagement for one's own country stems from this. Training and further training are the foundations on which all people build their personal dreams and prospects for the future.

Academic, professional and socio-political training and further training measures, including via the awarding of scholarships, are thus eligible for funding. The target group is primarily, but not exclusively, young people.

## **4. Fostering dialogue and understanding – rebuilding trust lost as a result of territorial conflicts**

The focus here is on measures which aim to restore the necessary trust outside the realm of politics between societies affected by unresolved territorial conflicts. These conflicts and tensions resulting from different historical narratives in the region have also led to deep rifts among the civil societies in and between the countries. In particular, the gap between how people perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others, as well as issues concerning the integration of minorities, play a large part here. This leads to a

mutual loss of trust, the development and deepening of prejudices, and a lack of willingness to conduct dialogue. In order to counteract this, we need people and organisations that endeavour to understand the other side's point of view and develop a willingness to compromise from this understanding.

Civil-society cooperation measures that use instruments from the fields of culture and education with the aim of restoring the willingness to conduct dialogue, rebuilding understanding between groups affected by territorial conflicts, and thus restoring lost trust and overcoming prejudices, are therefore eligible for funding.

### **In which countries must the civil-society cooperation projects take place in order to be eligible for funding?**

Civil-society cooperation projects are eligible for funding if they take place in **Germany, Russia or the Eastern Partnership countries**. The Eastern Partnership countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Participants who receive funding should have their main place of residence in one of the Eastern Partnership countries, Russia, Germany or possibly France (in the case of Franco-German projects).

Projects that involve cooperation between civil-society actors from Germany and one **(bilateral projects)** or several **(transnational projects)** of the Eastern Partnership countries or Russia are eligible for funding.

As the aim of the programme is to establish, further and protect structures for civil-society cooperation between Germany and the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia, **purely national projects and projects that do not have a partner in Germany or the Eastern Partnership countries or Russia will not receive support**. In addition, importance is attached to projects being adapted as far as possible to the specific national or regional context.

The German Government wants to prevent an overly high concentration on measures in the countries' capitals and metropolises. It aims to give as many civil-society actors as possible in the above-mentioned countries the opportunity to establish links among themselves and with actors in Germany. The German Government therefore wants to focus in particular on projects that take place in the **target countries' regions**.

At the Franco-German Council of Ministers on 13 July 2017, the German and French Governments decided to further intensify cooperation between Germany and France. Putting this decision into practice, the Federal Foreign Office and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs therefore agreed to allow French non-governmental organisations to take part in the programme "Expanding Cooperation with Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership Countries and Russia". So **joint Franco-German projects with one or several partners in the target countries** are also welcome. Only the German partner is entitled to submit an application, but participants who receive funding may have their main place of residence in France.

### **Who are the actors in eligible projects?**

The **actors** involved in the projects to be funded **must come from the field of civil society** in Germany, possibly France, and the Eastern Partnership countries or Russia. **Actors**

**outside the field of governance** thus form the target group of the measures. Typical actors include the media, associations, foundations (including the political foundations), institutions of higher education, youth associations, culture professionals and other non-governmental organisations. Public-service broadcasters are also regarded as part of civil society.

Actors involved in governance can only be regarded as part of civil society in exceptional cases when civil-society actors do not exist because of local conditions and when the concrete measures to be funded provide sufficient guarantee that the political aims being pursued will be achieved.

The programme attaches great importance to cooperation between the project partners taking the form of a partnership between equals. As far as possible, all partners should be involved equally in the planning, organisation and implementation of the project. To ensure that this is the case, a declaration must be given on submitting a formal application that the project will be planned and implemented in cooperation. This declaration must be signed by all project partners.

#### **When should the projects take place?**

The funding in question is **project funding**. This means it is subject to the **principle of an annual budget**. As a result, the projects should be **concluded** over the course of a year, that is, **by 31 December**. **In justified cases**, however, the Federal Foreign Office can deviate to a **certain extent** from this principle and also approve projects that **run into the next calendar year**. The prerequisite for this is that the project absolutely needs to **run into a new calendar year or to be longer than 12 months in order to achieve the political aims being pursued**.

In this regard, it is not sufficient to point out the sustainability of the project. The aim here is that as many civil-society actors as possible will benefit from funding for as many projects as possible.

It will be regarded as necessary to recognise concrete measures of longer than one (calendar) year if the funding's foreign policy goals cannot be achieved without this recognition. For example, this would be the case if concrete measures can by definition only be carried out if they run over a calendar year because they need to cover a university semester.

It will be regarded as imperative to recognise concrete measures that run over a calendar year if no alternative for carrying out the project is available.

#### **When can a project start?**

In principle, funding can only be granted if the project has not started before the date of the funding decision. However, **when the application for funding under Section 44 of the Federal Budget Code is submitted**, it is possible to apply at the same time to the Federal Foreign Office for permission for the measures to start earlier. **In exceptional cases where measures are allowed to start earlier**, project costs can be covered from the specific date stated in the approval provided that a grant award document is subsequently issued. This means that projects can start **at one's own risk** from this date, before the grant award

document has been issued. Legal entitlement to funding only exists upon receipt of a grant award document.

### **How does the Federal Foreign Office decide on funding?**

The Federal Foreign Office decides on formal applications in accordance with Section 44 of the Federal Budget Code. As there is a very high level of interest among civil society in expanding cooperation with civil society in the above-mentioned countries and of getting involved with their own projects, it will probably not be possible for the Federal Foreign Office to support all proposals via the available funds. In order to keep the administrative burden as low as possible for all involved, the decision on funding is made in two stages:

**1. Pre-selection process:** A pre-selection process will identify the project proposals that have the best chances of being awarded funding in line with the above-mentioned criteria and can thus be recommended to apply for funding. This **pre-selection process will be conducted on the basis of project outlines** which present the planned project briefly and concisely. During the pre-selection process, the responsible Division 601 of the Federal Foreign Office will be happy to answer **general questions on the programme and on specific project ideas**.

In the case of projects funded by the Federal Foreign Office in previous years, a brief evaluation of the objectives achieved should be submitted with the project outline.

**2. Submission of applications:** Formal applications can then be submitted for projects given a positive assessment. Applications must be submitted in German, by post by the given deadline, in order to be considered.

If you have any questions or require further information related to the programme, Division 601 of the Federal Foreign Office will be happy to help.

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