

4 September 2020

## **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. What is more, it allows them to support the ongoing transformation processes in the region.

The German Government uses cultural relations and education policy instruments 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 as well as to promote the principles of a fundamentally free, democratic and pluralist order. This will foster peaceful coexistence among nations in Europe in the future. As in previous years, the Federal Foreign Office expects its 2021 budget to include funding for this goal.

### **Project work during the COVID-19 pandemic – limits and opportunities**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global watershed moment which has a direct impact on the implementation of projects in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Russia. Above all else, a host of restrictions and unknowns in the planning process are making it more difficult to carry out exchange and encounter projects, for their success and effectiveness largely hinge on people being able to meet face to face. As a result, the German Government as a funder is faced with the challenge of adapting the programme’s framework conditions in such a way that intelligent and innovative formats can make possible close international contact at a time marked by physical distance.

The German Government is using the current point in time to adapt the implementation modalities of the funding programme to the current situation and, at the same time, to anchor **forward-looking strategies on project implementation** in the programme. In addition to ensuring its short-term and effective implementation, the opportunity should be seized to initiate long-term innovation processes to further develop the programme.

It therefore has to be outlined for each project submitted in this funding cycle how the goals can be reached in the event of further restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, if

necessary, alternatives should be formulated. In particular, there should be greater emphasis on **digital and hybrid formats**. Only limited resources have been earmarked for work-placement programmes, scholarships for stays abroad and trips (research trips, educational trips, etc.) in 2021.

### **Opportunities presented by the crisis: fresh momentum for the digital transformation**

An even greater focus will be placed on the digitalisation of formats and structures this year. This is intended to broaden the target group in the Eastern Partnership countries and in Germany, to support the networking of the players as well as to simplify the implementation of supraregional projects. It is only possible to guarantee the proper implementation of the project if the organisations in charge have the necessary digital infrastructure. In view of the current challenges facing civil-society stakeholders and with the aim of preserving existing networks, resources will be made available for funding limited in time and purpose to cover structural costs. These must be costs incurred in the course of the implementation of funded projects (e.g. procurement costs for hardware or software) or structure-enhancing projects. This remains contingent upon a substantive connection to one of the four funding objectives. The assumption of these costs is initially limited to the current funding period. You can find detailed information as well as an overview of types of project which are especially suited to digital formats in the document FAQs Skizzeneinreichung ÖPR (FAQs on submitting project outlines for the Eastern Partnership programme), which you can find in the download section of <http://oepr.diplo.de>.

### **Maintaining the dialogue with hybrid formats**

Measures that facilitate dialogue and personal contacts play a major role in achieving the goals of the Eastern Partnership programme. Personal, cross-border contacts are a crucial means of rebuilding the trust that has been lost against the background of territorial conflicts. They therefore cannot be fully replaced either by purely digital formats or by other measures aimed at achieving the project goal. Hybrid formats which switch between online and offline phases and/or are implemented in part locally (offline) or supraregionally (online) can be suitable ways of carrying on dialogue processes in 2021 under the current difficult conditions.

### **Climate-sensitive advancement of the programme**

Protection of the environment and the climate is one of the central issues of our time and should, to a greater extent than in the past, play a major role in the conception and implementation of individual measures within the programme. The aim is to raise awareness among everyone concerned of the importance of the resource-efficient and sustainable implementation of projects. It must be set out in a convincing manner how aspects of ecological sustainability are taken into account in the project and/or what contribution the

project will make to ecological sustainability. Air travel, which is difficult anyway due to the current travel restrictions, should only be planned if it is directly linked to the purpose of the project – otherwise digital formats or climate-friendly alternatives should be used.

### **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 expand durable civil-society cooperation structures between actors from Germany and the Eastern Partnership countries or Russia**. In addition, projects must be adapted to the relevant country or regional contexts and address topics of relevance to this background. **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, focusing on countering 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. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into sharp relief the prevailing problems in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and in Russia. Adequately countering disinformation campaigns poses a considerable challenge. The current situation underscores the need to deal in a professional and assured manner with scientific content, information and data – both those of senders and recipients. In 2021, therefore, projects focusing on “encountering disinformation – strengthening the communication of scientific facts, data journalism, fact-checking and media literacy”, which examine the interface between (social) media, the digital transformation and the news in general are to be funded.

Funding will continue to be provided for projects that serve to establish and further a pluralist media landscape. Particular consideration will be given to projects that 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.

Measures, including training and further training for journalists, bloggers and other media actors in the countries in question, work-placement programmes in Germany for

journalists as well as projects to enhance media competence, e.g. via suitable measures in schools and universities or in the field of civic education, are 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 rule, are particularly important in times of political tensions – not least in view of the different narratives circulating within societies.

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 instigated before any political action is taken and which are aimed at restoring the necessary trust between civil 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. Here, too, the use of hybrid formats is intended to ensure that some face-to-face encounters, which are so crucial, take place despite the prevailing travel and contact restrictions.

In Germany, as in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Russia, there is considerable solidarity in civil society with those suffering most from the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. In order to support these **vulnerable groups** as well as enhance the diversity of all groups targeted by the programme, the focus in 2021 will be on funding those projects which are directed at members of these groups and/or explicitly include them.

### **Basic prerequisites for project funding**

#### **1. 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**: 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 or Germany, or in Poland or France (please see below).

Projects that involve cooperation between civil-society actors from Germany and one (**bilateral projects**) or several (**multilateral 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 be eligible for support.**

The German Government wants to prevent an overly high concentration on measures in the countries' capitals and large cities. 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 again in 2021.

**Partners from Polish civil society** can continue to participate in civil-society projects funded by the programme. Both **joint Franco-German and German-Polish projects with one or several partners in the target countries** are thus 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 or Poland. The prerequisite for the funding of these projects is the active participation of a Polish or French partner organisation.

## **2. 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, as well as France or Poland, and the Eastern Partnership countries or Russia. **Actors outside the field of governance and business** 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 or business 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.

Great importance is attached within the programme 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.

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

The funding in question is **project funding**. This means that the projects have **an annual budget**. As a rule, the projects should therefore be concluded over the course of 2021, that is, **by 31 December 2021**. **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 **must run into a new calendar year or stretch over a maximum of three years in order to achieve the political aims being pursued**.

In this regard, it is not sufficient to merely state the need to continue 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.

The minimum funding amount is 10,000 euro; there is no maximum funding amount.

Please note that projects may receive funding more than once under the programme. However, there is no guarantee that follow-up funding will be granted (section 23 of the Federal Budget Code). The aim of the programme funding is to allocate start-up financing to projects. It is the role of the project organisation to ensure long-term financing through other sources of funding or revenue.

#### **4. 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 an 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 to start the project earlier. **In exceptional cases where a project is 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.

#### **5. 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 civil society is very interested in expanding cooperation with it in the above-mentioned countries and in getting involved with its own projects, it will probably not be possible for the Federal Foreign Office to support all ideas submitted 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 for which a funding application can be recommended. This **pre-selection process will be conducted on the basis of project outlines** that present the planned project briefly and concisely. During the pre-selection process, Division 601, the responsible Federal Foreign Office division, will be happy to answer **general questions on the programme and on specific project ideas**.

**Project outlines (in German or English) can be submitted from 04 September 2020 until 16 October 2020 via the website**

<http://oepr.diplo.de>

Further information and instructions on how to submit project outlines can also be found on the website. Once submitted, project outlines may not be changed. The website will be closed for submissions on 16 October 2020. No project outlines can be submitted after that date. Project outlines that are submitted in any other way will not be taken into account.

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.

After all of the project outlines received have been evaluated, the potential applicants will receive **notification**, probably at the beginning of 2021, with an assessment of whether an application for funding in accordance with section 44 of the Federal Budget Code, taking into account all other project outlines received, is likely to be successful.

**2. Submission of applications:** Formal applications can then be submitted for projects that have received a positive assessment. Applications must be submitted by post in German or English by the above deadline in order to be considered.

### **Whom can I contact if I have questions?**

If you have any **questions**, Division 601 of the Federal Foreign Office will be happy to help you. Please send an email to [601-oepr@diplo.de](mailto:601-oepr@diplo.de) or contact us by telephone (+49 (0)30 18 17 -7966; - 4272; -2148).

Should you experience any technical difficulties using the website <http://oepr.diplo.de>, please contact Julia Luther (tel.: +49 (0)30 1817 4272, email: [601-2-1@diplo.de](mailto:601-2-1@diplo.de)).