

TERMS of REFERENCE
For Selecting Experts
To be Registered in the Expert Database
Established with the Project
“Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub”

1. BACKGROUND

Legal Basis:

The legal basis for this assignment is derived from the Grant Agreement No. 12715 01, signed between the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), where SIDA has agreed to provide financial support to the project “Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub”.

Relevant Background:

The Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is a network of 14 civil society organizations from countries and territories in southeast Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Montenegro, Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey and Bulgaria). Our mission is to empower civil society and influence European and national policies towards a more enabling environment for civil society development to ensure sustainable and functioning democracies in the Balkans.

Our goals and objectives are the following:

1. To increase the role of civil society by strengthening its voice in policy- and decision-making at the national, regional, and EU level;
2. To promote civil dialogue between civil society actors, state institutions, and the European Union to influence the public policies;
3. To develop advocacy knowledge and skills among civil society actors as a base for greater impact; and
4. To strengthen communication, coordination, and cooperation between civil society actors in the Balkan region.

BCSDN’s target group includes CSOs working on civil society development (CSDev) in the Balkan region. The direct beneficiaries are local civil society development and resource organizations. With its activities, the network targets stakeholders such as national institutions and international governmental organizations (IGOs). Among national institutions, the focus is on national public bodies and/or offices that cooperate with CSOs in member countries. Among IGOs, in focus are the EU institutions, Council of Europe (CoE), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Western Balkan Fund and related inter-governmental initiatives in the Balkan region.

BCSDN promotes the principle of inclusiveness for marginalized and vulnerable groups in society (including the Roma community and inhabitants of rural areas). BCSDN works in countries of the Balkan region, Europe and internationally, according to its mission, vision, and goals.

Protecting Civic Space - Regional Civil Society Development Hub:

Following BCSDN and its members' common vision to strengthen a vibrant, pluralistic, and rights-based civil society in the Balkans, BCSDN prepared a project proposal regarding the establishment of a Regional Civil Society Development Hub that will serve as a regional center with a global impact, which creates and shares knowledge and innovation on the role of CSOs in promoting democracy and supporting the development of civil society in the Western Balkans in the long term. The proposal was presented to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which approved the Project "Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub," which was then initiated in September 2019.

The overall objective of this Hub is to strengthen regional cooperation for promoting civic space in the Western Balkan countries. To facilitate this, the re-granting component of the Hub, the Regional Fund, will provide different types of funding mechanisms to respond rapidly to changing conditions and emerging needs of civil society in the Western Balkans, being flexible to support civil society's needs and address new challenges as they arise.

This will be achieved with the support of the following funding mechanisms available:

- Regional – multi-country grants;
- Ad- hoc support grants.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The ad-hoc support mechanism is an instrument that was established to provide rapid funding for a CSO's immediate need or an innovation for promoting civic space when there is insufficient time to operate through the standard grant award procedure.

An immediate need may be considered a situation where the applicant needs urgent advocacy, legal support, communication or other forms of immediate assistance to tackle challenges (e.g. pressures on civic space and incidences of hate speech) or to seize advocacy/campaigning opportunities. Fast response in these situations is very important as certain conditions need to be in place for civil society to be able to operate freely and to further develop.

The innovative uptakes to the fight for reclaiming and/ or expanding civic space may also be supported by the ad-hoc support grants, such as exploring the collective power of different groups (e.g. young people, women, and vulnerable groups) to lead and transform their communities.

In this respect, organizations from the WB region may express a need for particular support- including peer advice, the exchange of experience on specific civic space topics and applying to an open call for the provision of the ad-hoc support grants following detailed instructions and eligibility criteria. The expert database will be established to ensure such support and to facilitate the achievement of the Hub's objectives.

Expert database

The expert database will be established to provide the necessary expertise for different types of assistance requested by organizations. This database will be composed of experts coming not only from the Western Balkan region but also from other countries in Europe, and in particular where BCSDN has its members¹.

The experts will be selected based on the established criteria regarding the necessary qualifications and competencies as stipulated in this ToR. Those individuals who demonstrate a good understanding of current civic space trends in the region and who have experience on issues related to civil society (democracy, human rights, good governance and transparency, gender equality, social justice, environment and climate change, etc.) will be registered in the database.

Once an expert is registered in the database, their respective information, including experts' CVs and experts' profiles, will be made publicly available on BCSDN Executive Office's website and other appropriate media.

Requested services regarding future assignments

The purpose of this ToR is to select experts who will be registered in the expert database. Once an expert is registered in this database, later on, they may be invited by BCSDN to perform a particular assignment for a requesting organization.

For example, a Western Balkan organization may request peer advice and the exchange of experience on specific civic space topics: e.g. an opinion of a new law, support in advocacy strategy, support in improving internal accountability mechanisms, support in the organization of a campaign and so on. The requesting organization should apply for funding to the open call for the ad-hoc support grants.

Once an application is approved for funding, the expert(s) will be selected from the expert database according to their professional experience and availability to perform the particular assignment for which funding was approved. The experts' assignments will be performed as part of the ad-hoc support grants and are estimated to last up to 15 days. Details about the specific assignment will be available in the application form for ad-hoc support grants, which the requesting organization submits.

When selecting experts from the database, particular attention will be paid to the "regional approach", meaning that an expert from one country will be assigned to share their expertise and experience with a requesting organization from another country.

The individual contracts that will be signed with the experts regarding particular assignments will contain clear provisions on the expected outputs that the expert should provide with their engagement. In general, once the assignment is completed, the experts will be requested to provide an expert mission report elaborating on the activities conducted and the results achieved.

The following thematic areas will be eligible for funding in the respective open call for ad-hoc support grants (the list presented is for orientation purposes and is not an exhaustive one):

- To advance the state of fundamental freedoms (freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly);
- To improve civic dialogue and the cooperation between civil society and public institutions;
- To improve the legal framework and practices concerning the financial viability of civil society;

¹ <http://www.balkancsd.net/about-us/members/>

- To encourage broader CSO and multi-stakeholder coordination and cooperation for promoting civic space;
- To support resources mobilization for promoting civic space;
- To improve the trust in CSOs by introducing accountability mechanisms and standards for CSOs' work in the WB region, including the Dynamic Accountability approach of the Global Standard for CSO Accountability.

For example, an assignment may refer to supporting an applicant to prepare an evidence-based justification for expert papers and proposals in the process of passing a new draft law or policy; **OR** for organizing a public campaign to gain public support to intervene in a new law that is open for consultations with the public; **OR** for development of internal policy for conflicts of interest/a code of conduct for an organization, in which integrity has been threatened; **OR** for participating in a regional conference in improving the management modalities of the national parks by sharing experience on how residents may be involved in the administration of the preserved areas of national importance, etc.

3. EXPERTS' PROFILE

Experts should demonstrate a good understanding of the WB region and current civic space trends, issues, and terminology. Our candidates should be result-oriented persons, demonstrating excellent communication, facilitation and presentation skills. To be selected for registration in the respective database, the experts should comply with the following

Selection Criteria- Professional Experience Required

- At least 5 years of work experience in NGOs or with NGOs on thematic issues related to promoting CSOs' accountability, transparency, resource mobilization and civil society enabling environment;
OR
- Practical experience in leading/participating in at least 5 advocacy campaigns relevant to this call;
OR
- At least 5 years of work experience in NGOs or with NGOs to advance civic space in topics such as (at least one of the listed topics):
 - Human rights and fundamental freedoms,
 - Gender equality,
 - Environment,
 - Working with vulnerable groups,
 - Mobilizing communities,
 - Public policy development,
 - Network development and management,
 - CSO financial management,
 - EU Acquis.

Language skills

- Fluency in written and spoken English.

Would be considered as an asset:

- Research and practical experience in the Balkan Region.

4. TIMELINE

The experts registered in the database may be awarded an assignment and requested to provide their service during the period foreseen for the implementation of the ad-hoc support grants, i.e. from July 2020 until July 2021.

5. HOW TO APPLY

Individuals are invited to send the following documents in English to this e-mail address: regionalhub@balkancsd.net, with the subject: **Application for Registration in the Expert Database- Regional Hub:**

- Expert's CV;
- Expert's Profile Form (in the template form enclosed to this ToR);
- Reference letters from at least three organizations that have used the expert's assistance on similar assignments and topics.

Deadline for application:

15 July 2020 (Wednesday) at 24:00, Central European Time.