

On the basis of the Grant Agreement No. 12715 01 signed between the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), for the provision of financial support to the Project “Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub” (hereinafter referred as to the “Project”), the Balkan Civil Society Development Network publishes

Open Call for Proposals to Receive Funding for Ad-Hoc Support Grants

➤ **What is Ad-Hoc Support?**

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

The instrument of ad-hoc support grants is established to respond rapidly to changing conditions and immediate needs, being flexible to address new challenges as they arise. Therefore, it follows a simplified and accelerated review procedure to ensure timely responses to address a concrete issue or a challenge.

➤ **Who Can Apply?**

All types of CSOs, platforms and organisations, registered in at least one of the countries of the Western Balkan region- Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Republic of North Macedonia, as long as these are:

- a) Non-governmental and
- b) Not for profit.

This means that the following types of organisations can participate:

- Individual organizations, associations, foundations, and networks, notably registered in one of the 6 countries of the WB region;
- Regional networks of CSOs, associations and foundations (including non-governmental, not for profit, coalitions, partnerships, networks, sectoral or thematic interest groups, media outlets, research institutes and think tanks), registered in at least one of the 6 Western Balkan countries, that have member organizations in more than 2 countries in the region;
- Informal regional networks of CSOs, notably non-registered platforms of associations and foundations (including non-governmental, not for profit, coalitions, partnerships, networks, sectoral or thematic interest groups, media outlets, research institutes and think tanks) that have member organizations in more than 2 countries in the region.

These types of networks can apply with one organization leading the network or through a consortium of organizations.

➤ **Results/ Priorities to be Achieved with the Implementation of the Ad-Hoc Support Grants:**

BCSDN with this Project aims to establish a Regional Civil Society Development Hub as a regional center with a global impact that will create and share knowledge and innovation on CSOs' role in promoting democracy and supporting the development of civil society in the Western Balkans in the long term. The Hub will support effective, transparent, and accountable CSOs that will contribute to protecting civic space, enabling the use of new and established funding mechanisms, working methods, and means of cooperation.

The overall objective of the Hub is strengthened regional cooperation to promote civic space in the Western Balkan countries.

This will be achieved by addressing the following specific objectives:

SO 1: CSOs contributed to a conducive environment for civil society development that enables them to be influential actors in society;

SO 2: CSOs contributed towards effective, transparent and accountable work to protect civic space.

In respect to the above-stated objectives, the funding available under this call may be provided for the following thematic areas (*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;
- To encourage broader CSO and multi-stakeholder coordination and cooperation for promoting civic space;
- To support resource mobilization to promote civic space;
- To improve 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.

Guidelines for Applicants

➤ **Type of assistance available:**

The ad- hoc support instrument will provide two different streams of support:

1. Support for Immediate Needs

This mechanism should be used when there is an immediate need to quickly fund and support civil society actors who must pursue urgent advocacy, legal support, communication or other forms of immediate reactions to tackle challenges (e.g. pressures on civic space and incidences of hate speech) or to seize advocacy/campaigning opportunities. Fast responses in these situations are very important as certain conditions need to be in place for civil society to be able to operate freely and to further develop.

The purpose of this assistance is NOT to support activities that could be planned/predicted in advance.

The essence of this support is to stimulate active regional cooperation and the transfer of learning from one country to another by enabling regional exchanges that will investigate solutions to the existing problems that CSOs are facing. Also, this instrument will be used when there is insufficient time to operate through the standard grant award procedure.

Cases when you can apply for immediate need support:

(the list presented is for orientation purposes and is not an exhaustive one)

- For the preparation of expert papers and proposals during the process of passing a new draft law or policy (for example, when you have concrete proposals, but you need additional expert support to prepare an evidence-based justification for them);
- For the organization of a public campaign to gain public support (for example, when a new draft law is published for consultations and you want to do an outreach campaign to gain high public support to stop the law or some articles);
- For the preparation of a response to hostile attacks on the work of your organization (for example, when an important newspaper publishes an article full of insinuations about your work or NGOs in your field and you need legal and communicational support to fight the accusations and to prepare a suitable response);
- For the organization of a conference/workshop/another type of event in your country to immediately react to incidences of hate speech, for example, when regional experts will be invited to participate and share their experience on how to tackle the challenge;
- For introducing internal accountability mechanisms and standards for an organization when CSOs' integrity has been threatened (for example, a local politician wants to impose himself on the governance structure of your organisation and you need an expert to support you to prepare internal policies regarding conflict of interest/codes of conduct);
- For the organization of a regional conference, regional events or other types of gatherings for the exchange of experience (for example, you organize a regional conference on the management modes of national parks, where you invite representatives from the region and experts to discuss the possibilities of including residents in the administration of the preserved areas of national importance).

2. Support for Innovation

Innovative uptakes to the fight for reclaiming civic space will also be supported, including exploring the collective power of different groups (e.g. young people, women and vulnerable groups) to lead and transform their communities. Gatherings that would work towards finding solutions to restrictions of civic space will be the second streamline of the ad-hoc support instrument. The support provided should contribute to accomplishing the objectives by addressing the challenges through an innovative approach, defined according to the Innovation for Change definitions:

- New solution in a new context
- New solution in an established context
- Established solution in a new context
- Established solution(s) recombined to serve an objective.

Cases when you can apply for innovative support:

(the list presented is for orientation purposes and is not an exhaustive one)

- For introducing new methods of work and communication in the organization to upgrade existing ones or to respond to a new situation (for example, development and/or implementation of diverse methodologies, web tools, programmes and mechanisms for organizing the work in your organisation and for the provision of services for your target groups);
- For introducing innovative (new or improved) methods for applied advocacy (for example, when an organisation introduces a method that was not used before, or if existing methods are being evidently/significantly upgraded, based on analyses, data and evidence, leading to the professionalization of advocacy);
- For introducing innovative methods for campaigning (for example, to encourage NGOs to implement result-oriented campaigns where they will pay attention not only to their outreach but more importantly to the changes they want to make in public opinion with the campaign);
- For introducing new mechanisms and means of cooperation for enlarging civic space (for example, including “unusual suspects” in your campaign- going beyond the already established cooperation with certain entities and introducing new actors that you usually don’t cooperate with, such as an association of small and medium enterprises, or some professional organizations, etc.).

➤ **Ad-hoc Funding Mechanism:**

Concerning support for immediate needs and for innovation, regardless of the actual grant that may be awarded to the CSOs requesting support, there is a possibility to directly fund an expert or other societal actors such as media, research institutes, think tanks, universities, which will provide the needed expertise to support CSOs in times of crisis. The organization of a thematic gathering in line with the priorities of this call can be also supported with funding.

In particular, the assistance provided through this instrument can be awarded for the following types of grants:

1. **Expert missions:** The use of identified expert support (experts can be individuals or private entities) can be funded in a case where an organization from the WB region requests 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, etc.

In order to comply with the principle of “regional approach”, the expert from one country will be assigned to share their expertise and experience with a requesting organization in another country.

The expert’s missions can be implemented in two ways:

- a) The organization requesting the expert’s support can apply for funding and can include in the project proposal and the respective budget and costs for an already identified expert who will perform the assignment. In this case, the application form shall be substantiated with a CV of the proposed expert and at least three recommendation letters regarding the successful completion of similar assignments. After assessing the CV, BCSDN may deny a project funding and may deny the use of a particular expert if the expert cannot prove the necessary expertise. In this case, BCSDN may propose to the applicant some of the experts available from the expert database and in agreement with the applicant may assign a particular expert to perform the respective assignment.
- b) The organization requesting the expert’s support can apply for funding elaborating the immediate need for particular expertise, and the expert(s) will be identified and appointed by BCSDN from the expert database in an agreement with the successful applicant.

The **expert database** is established to provide the necessary expertise for different types of assistance requested by organizations. This database consists of experts demonstrating a good understanding of current civic space trends in the region and experience on issues related to civil society: democracy, human rights, good governance and transparency, gender equality, social justice, environment and climate change, etc. The experts are selected based on predefined selection criteria and will be invited by BCSDN to provide their services when needed.

This database consists of experts coming not only from the Western Balkan region but also from other countries in Europe where BCSDN has its members¹.

2. **Regional conference/Workshops/Community actions:** The organization of single- or multi-country events with regional participation can be funded as well. Single events may be organized in one country from the WB region on a particular thematic area where regional experts may be invited to share their experience. Multi-country events on a particular thematic area may be organized in several countries from the WB region simultaneously or consequently in a short period, where regional experts may be invited to share their experience.

Regional gatherings of CSOs, civil society actors, and their constituencies will be encouraged to interact and to share their problems and solutions (ideas), promote their causes, learn together, and establish consensus on their needs and the priorities that must be acted upon in the short, medium or long term. The regional gatherings can be both in line with the immediate needs stream or innovation stream of support. In order to comply with the principle of “regional

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

approach”, organizations from at least three countries of the Western Balkan region should actively be involved in the organization of the events.

Priorities of this component will include mainstreaming human rights, gender equality, the environment and a healthy planet as topics, as well as organizations that deal with reclaiming civic space and their role. The space for their action and support for their participation in policy- and decision-making would be the primary aim of this support. Innovative uptakes to the fight for reclaiming civic space will also be supported, such as exploring the collective power of different groups (e.g. young people, women, and vulnerable groups) to lead and transform their communities, hackathons that would work to find solutions to issues of restrictions of civic space and so on.

➤ **What is the Limit for the Projects’ Duration?**

The duration of the projects varies depending on the type of assistance requested:

- Grants requesting expert support - the time for the expert mission is estimated up to 15 days;
- Grants requesting the organization of a regional event - the time for the event is estimated up to 5 days.

➤ **What is the funding limit?**

The maximum funds available for this instrument - Ad-Hoc Support Grants is EUR 340.000,00.

It has been foreseen that these funds will be disbursed for at least 14 expert missions and at least 14 regional events.

The maximum grant limit for an individual grant is EUR 10.000,00.

➤ **Eligible costs**

Eligible costs are those incurred by the grant’s beneficiary. Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in case of services).

To be considered eligible, costs should meet the following criteria:

- a) are necessary for the implementation of the project and the achievement of the indicated project results;
- b) are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management including fair and market-based calculations and cost-efficiency;
- c) are in accordance with the requirements of the applicable tax and social legislation;
- d) will be incurred between the start and end dates of the project, as stated in the project contract;
- e) are indicated in the proposed budget for the project;
- f) are identifiable and verifiable, which means that they must be recorded in the beneficiary's accounting records and determined in accordance with applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles - marked and accompanied by the original invoice, legal basis, proof of payment, and proof of supply of service/goods.

➤ **Ineligible costs**

Ineligible costs include:

- a) Costs related to the preparation of the project proposal;
- b) Costs covered from other sources;
- c) Currency exchange rate losses;
- d) Repayment of loans;
- e) Credits to third parties;
- f) Recoverable VAT;
- g) Travel costs for business or first class;
- h) Extra allowances, such as sitting allowances, or equivalent to finance allowances for participating staff/ invited speakers/ participant of workshops;
- i) Fines, penalties and legal costs, except in cases where they are an integral and necessary component for achieving the project objectives;
- j) Excessive and reckless spending of funds.

Value added tax (VAT) is an eligible cost only in case the applicant is not entitled to recoverable VAT. Applicants shall be aware of this rule when preparing their financial plan for the projects and shall consider only those VAT costs that are non-recoverable by the state. Applicants whose project proposals will be selected for the grant will be asked to provide a statement on non-recoverable VAT.

➤ **Deadline for submission of applications:**

This call is open from the date of publication onwards until all funds are fully disbursed.

Taking into account the implementation period of the Project and the grants' duration, **this Call for Proposals will be open until 30 June 2021.**

Applications can be submitted at any time by this date. Applications will be approved continuously until all available funds are disbursed.

The final date for eligibility of the costs incurred under the awarded ad-hoc grants shall be no later than 31 July 2021.

➤ **When is an answer received?**

If the application meets the above criteria and is approved, the applicant will be duly informed. The assessment and decision regarding the approval/ disapproval of applications will be made monthly, **each first Monday in the month**. However, the assessment and approval/ disapproval may be done even more frequently, on an ad-hoc basis for applications that require a faster response.

BCSDN may request additional information or clarifications from the applicant regarding the project proposal including the budget. The entire communication with the applicant will be done with the email address of the applicant, which is stated in the application form (e-mail address of the contact person).

➤ **Provisions for the implementation of contracts**

Upon receipt of a decision on project financing, the applicant will receive a grant agreement prepared according to a standard sample. The grant agreement shall contain information on the action that will be implemented, the period for implementation, payment terms and reporting requirements.

Before signing the contract, negotiations between the applicant and BCSDN are also possible for the final definition of eligible activities and costs.

➤ **How to apply?**

Applications should be submitted electronically to regionalhub@balkancsd.net with the subject: **Application for Ad-Hoc Support Grant - Regional Hub.**

➤ **Mandatory documents**

- a) Application for ad-hoc support grants (please read carefully the instructions given below regarding the application's parts);
- b) A copy of a valid document for the establishment of the organization/ the applicant;
- c) Basic act (statute) of the applicant;
- d) **ONLY** for applications for expert support with an expert already proposed: CV of the expert proposed and at least three recommendation letters for similar assignments.

NB

Applications should be written in English ONLY.

The applicants should strictly follow the template enclosed to this call. All parts of the application have to be filled in:

- The applicant's data;
- The application;
- The budget for the project (if an organization applies for particular expertise without suggesting an expert, this part should not be filled in);
- The justification for the proposed budget (if an organization applies for particular expertise without suggesting an expert, this part should not be filled in)

Applications not submitted as per the instructions given above will not be considered for funding.