

"Inform, Empower, Act. Civil Society for good budgetary governance in Republic of Moldova".

2019-2021

Grant Call Guidelines

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1. Background

Independent Think Tank “Expert-Grup”, as lead partner, in consortium with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung e.V. (KAS, Germany), Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC, Lithuania) and Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE, Republic of Moldova), are implementing the EU-grant Project **“Inform, Empower, Act. Civil Society for good budgetary governance in Republic of Moldova”**. The total budget of the project is EUR 1.15 million EUR and it is financing by the European Commission and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung e.V. The implementation period of the project is February 2019 – January 2022.

The general objective of the project is to enhance civil society contribution to higher transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of budgetary formation and execution at the local level through participation and oversight.

Specific objectives:

1. To increase the level of information, awareness and motivation among the population and civil society at the local level about the budgetary process: importance of analyzing the local budgets, discussing spending priorities, monitoring the budgetary execution, with emphasis on procurements for large investment projects;
2. To empower the population and civil society at the local level with appropriate knowledge, tools and frameworks to take a more active role in consultations, contribution and oversight of the local public policies and budgets;
3. To enhance the involvement of the population and civil society in public policy development, budgetary process, monitoring and oversight activities of the public spending.

The main **activities** of the project are:

- Creating the local coalitions (25 local coalitions in 25 localities from 5 regions of the Republic of Moldova: North, Center, South, Gagauzia and Transnistria)
- Launching an information, awareness and visibility campaign
- Developing instruments for participatory budgeting
- Capacity building of 5 local implementing partners and members of local coalitions on participatory budgeting
- Promoting the improvement of the budgetary process at the local level
- Stimulating the participation of local coalitions in the budgetary process
- Promoting changes in the budgetary processes at the central level

The main target group are CSOs and civic activists at the local level. In particular the project is targeting members of local coalitions from 25 LPAs, created and led by 5 regional CSOs acting as key local implementing partners in North, Centre, South, Gagauzia and Transnistria regions (on average, 5 municipalities (urban/rural) per implementing partner). It is estimated that each local coalition will include around 30 members (CSOs and local activists, as well as representatives of LPAs), making it a total of 750 persons as primary beneficiaries of the project. The entire population of localities where the project will be implemented accounts to 400 – 500 thousand people.

2. Who can apply

CSOs officially registered in the Republic of Moldova and activating in the regions. Preference will be given to CSOs that are well established at the local/region level and have sufficient capacities and experience for implementing the activities envisaged in the project. Consortiums are allowed.

Political parties, religious associations, individuals, businesses and business associations are not eligible for this assignment.

3. Typology of the financial support

The financial support offered to the implementing partner for the implementation of the project activities at the local level will be in the form of grant, up to 60,000 EURO. It is expected to offer 5 grants allocated for the entire project duration (36 months). Local partner selection will take place in one round, and every grant will be disbursed in tranches (2 tranches per year, 6 tranches in total). The disbursement of the new tranche will be subject to the successful completion of project activities and milestones from the previous period. In some circumstances the amount of the initially established grant could be reviewed and diminished. In these cases, the remaining financial resources will be reallocated for other project activities or a new implementing partner will be selected (additional), subject to consultations and approval with the EU Delegation. The final amount of the grant will be established based on actual costs incurred. Grantees will be required to provide financial and narrative reports every 6 months.

4. Objectives of sub-granting

The overall objective of the granting scheme is to ensure financial support for local implementing partners in implementation of the project activities at local/region level. The grantees will follow four key objectives:

- (i) identification and mobilization of local stakeholders (LPAs interested to enhance their budgetary transparency, and CSOs and civic leaders at the local level, interested to engage in the budgetary processes at the local level);
- (ii) ensuring the visibility of the project at the local level, by dissemination the project materials, under the communication and visibility strategy implemented by the central project team;
- (iii) providing logistical support in organizing all activities and events at the local level (e.g. public hearings, round tables, trainings and workshops);
- (iv) ensuring the connection between the central project team and the beneficiary LPAs (including, obtaining relevant data and information on budgets and budgetary process) and members of the local coalitions.

Besides having reliable partners at the local level that would ensure the local ownership of project activities and deliverables, the financial support will turn the local implementing partners into local resource-centres, capable of mobilizing others for participatory budgeting. It will make the project sustainable, as after its end, there will remain the necessary capacities and infrastructure to advance the budgetary transparency and participation in other LPAs.

5. Project and eligible activities

Each selected CSOs will benefit of a preparatory phase for the project. During this phase, the central project team will build capacities of the selected CSOs in the area of participatory budgeting (more details are listed below). Based on the preparatory phase, the selected CSOs will be responsible for promoting the concept of participatory budgeting at the local level, by contributing to the implementation of the activities in 5 pre-selected localities for achieving the project objectives. Most of the activities will be implemented with the active participation of the central project team.

Preparatory phase

1. Participating in a 2-day general training organized by the central project team

The training will be held in Chisinau, will last 2 days and will be designed for 10 participants (2 people from each CSO). The training will have 3 components: (i) presenting the project and roles of responsibilities of every partner (delivered by the project team leader); (ii) presenting the general concept of participatory budgeting, its importance and opportunities (delivered by an EU expert from one of the international partners of the consortium); and (iii) presenting the implementation approach.

2. Participation in a study visit to Lithuania (activity organized by the central project team)

After the general training, there will be organized a study visit to Lithuania for the selected local implementing partners (2 persons from each organization, 10 people in total). It will be a 3-day visit, which will be organized together with the Lithuanian partner. It will serve to inspire the local implementing partners with good practices of participatory budgeting and its transformational impact at the local level. Namely, the participants will meet experts and CSOs from Lithuania that deal with budgetary transparency, as well as will meet some LPAs and policy makers in this area. The discussion will focus on the Lithuanian experience in implementing the budgetary calendar, conducting medium-term expenditure framework, conducting public hearings and engaging citizens in consultations on budgetary issues. The Lithuanian experience is very relevant for Moldova because both countries are from the Eastern Europe and share the same Soviet past, with corresponding challenges, Lithuania being much more advanced with having implemented reforms to democracy and market economy. All costs related to the study visit will be

3. Participation in a series of 5 thematic workshops (activity organized by the central project team)

The central project team will organize for the selected 5 CSOs a series of 2-day workshops, based on the concept of training-of-trainers. The workshops will focus on the following specific issues related to participatory budgeting:

- Workshop on understanding the budgetary process, budgetary calendar, interpreting the budgetary data and conducting Independent Budgetary Analyses and Citizens' Budgets.
- Workshop on participating in budgetary formation: defining budgetary spending priorities for the short, medium and long term, formulating requests for budgetary allocations, participating in public hearings and organizing independent consultation events on budgets.
- Workshop on human rights-based budgeting: identifying the vulnerable groups and representing their needs in budgetary allocation, and gender-based budgeting.

- Workshop on monitoring public procurements, with the focus on infrastructure projects and EU funded projects.
- Workshop on implementing territorial approach to local development by means of participatory budgeting.

Activities that will be implemented by selected CSOs based on the preparatory phase

1. Forming and managing 5 local coalitions per CSO (core activity of the regional partners)

The selected 5 regional CSOs will form a total of 25 local civic coalitions for budgetary participation and oversight (5 coalitions per CSO with about 30 members per coalition), involving the selected 25 localities. The project will seek to engage with vulnerable groups to be part of these local coalitions. These coalitions will be among the key direct beneficiaries of the action, and will represent the critical mass of local agents of change that will continue to inform and empower others, as well as engage in participatory budgeting, after the end of the action, using the delivered tools and expertise.

The process of creating local coalitions will start by identifying and securing the proper buy-in from the respective LPA (first level). There will be launched an open call for expression of interests among LPAs. The key selection criteria will be commitment of the mayor to increasing the transparency and openness of LPA about the budgetary process. Also, preference will be given to larger localities for three reasons: (i) the upcoming decentralization reform could make the small LPAs merge with larger ones, while the large LPAs, most likely, will not suffer changes that would impede the project implementation; (ii) larger localities are more likely to produce stronger impact, because there will be larger budgets exposed to civic participation and, hence, more opportunities to produce change at the local level; (iii) the project is meant to inspire other localities, and larger localities could inspire a larger number of communities, especially due to the reason mentioned in the previous point. Note: this step, while being mandatory for the North, Center, South and Gagauzia regions, is not mandatory in the case of the Transnistrian region. In this region, the process of creation of local coalitions will rely primarily on the identification of grass root CSOs and community leaders interested in the promotion of participatory budgeting.

After securing the buy-in from LPAs, the local implementing partners will identify candidates for forming local coalitions for participatory budgeting. They will consist of local grass root CSOs, community leaders, private sector representatives and will amount to about 30 persons per coalition.

The selection of coalition members will be a careful process and will involve stakeholders with clear motivation for participatory budgeting (e.g. youth activists, CSOs promoting the interest of vulnerable groups, representatives of pupils' councils, environment activists and other local civic leaders who advocate for more effective use of local public funds in their sectors of interest). The local implementing partners will keep a close contact with the members of the local coalitions, in order to keep them engaged and active. Also, the local coalitions will always be open for new members, meaning that these will be live structures. These approaches will ensure that the local coalitions will not remain only formal, but will contribute to promoting the participatory budgeting and more effective use of local public budgets.

2. Organizing general trainings and thematic workshops for the members of local coalitions – by June 2020.

Selected regional CSOs will act as focal point at regional level and will be responsible for the logistics, organization of events and provision of trainings for local coalitions and authorities (for 5 in each region). One of the main activities in this regard will be organizing general trainings and thematic workshops for the members of local coalitions. Based on the information received during the preparatory phase of the project (general training, study visit and thematic workshops), the selected 5 CSOs will organize general trainings and 5 thematic workshops (similar to the ones listed above in the preparatory phase) for the members of local coalitions. These activities will be implemented at the local level. Namely, every local implementing partner will organize in the beneficiary localities (5 per each CSO) the general training and the thematic workshops. The events will be attended by about 30 members of the local coalitions and representatives of beneficiary LPAs. The logistical arrangements will be conducted by the local implementing partners. Although the training will be delivered by the local implementing partners, the training materials will be developed together with the experts of the central project team. Also, at least one expert from the central project team will attend every general training and thematic workshop as a mentor.

3. Organizing in 5 LPAs together with local coalitions the best suitable participation mechanisms, including Participatory Budgeting.

For this purpose, the regional CSO together with project team for each local authority (total 5) will:

- Develop Memorandums of collaboration between local coalitions and Local Authorities for implementing participatory budgeting and other participatory frameworks;
- Organize local consultations and public hearings (1 local consultation and 1 public hearing per LPA per year);
- Monitor the implementation of local budgets;
- Develop supporting documents for increasing the participation and transparency of the local budgets:
 - gap analyses and action plans for the beneficiary LPAs (2 gap analysis and 2 action plans per LPA);
 - local citizens' budgets (2 local citizens' budgets per LPA);
 - independent analyses of local budgets (2 independent analyses of local budgets per LPA);
 - monitoring reports on public procurements (2 monitoring reports on public procurements per LPA).

In this context, the eligible activities/actions should have strong linkage with the project objectives and outputs, and lay down in following type of activities/actions (or similar):

- analysis of the budget, public assets and services, public institutions and policies related to community development and other issues related to public community interest;
- elaboration and/or implementation of the regulations, guides and other supporting materials for effective Participatory Budgeting mechanisms;
- elaboration of the monitoring tools for public budget, services and other issues;
- applying monitoring tools and other monitoring activities;
- activities for increasing public engagement and participation in budgeting processes and public decision-making process;
- organizing public events as part of project activities (public hearings, consultations, debates,

etc);

- community mobilization campaigns on the resolution of local problems;
- elaboration and implementation of communication strategies and awareness raising campaigns;
- knowledge sharing activities related to community issues, budgeting process and engagement of the citizens (trainings, mentoring, etc);
- advocacy and promotion activities related to implementation of the public policies, civic engagement and mobilization for achievement of the project objectives;
- networking activities for consolidation of local CSOs to actively get involved in Participatory Budgeting mechanisms, community development and decision-making;
- administrative costs of the implementing partner corresponding to the implementation of the project activities.

6. Application documents

A complete application will include the following documents:

- a short motivation letter should contains a clear statement regarding the regions where organization will operate (North, Central, South, Transnistria, Gagauzia as they are defined in the law regarding regional development nr. 438/2006), and reasons of participating in this competition;
- a short description of the organization (1-2 pages);
- the list of relevant project references (no limit);
- a short (2-3 pages) vision of the applicant about participation in the project activities mentioned under section 2 and 3 of the attached TOR;
- a proposed budget for project activities (according to template);
- the activity report of the organization for the most recent year;
- Certificate of registration (excerpt from the State Register of Legal Entities issued no later than 12 months prior to the application submission date will be requested in case of contract signature);
- Charter;
- financial reports for the last 3 years (balance sheets, profit and loses balance, etc.);
- the most recent audit report of the financial statements of the organization (if available).

The application should be presented in Romanian language.

7. Submission of the application

The documents must be submitted to the email address iulia@expert-grup.org with the subject: "Selecting of the regional implementing partners". Paper based applications will be rejected.

Clarifications regarding content of application will be requested only when the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the evaluation committee from conducting an objective assessment.

All applicants will be notified by email once application is received and registered.

8. Ineligible actions and costs:

The following types of action are ineligible:

- the actions that do not covered by the activities envisaged in the project;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions concerned only with one-off conferences, if it is not part of project activities;
- for-profit projects or not-for-profit projects serving interests of very limited target groups;
- actions supporting individual political parties;
- actions supporting religious doctrines, movements and institutions.

The following costs are non-eligible:

- any costs that are not related to the project objectives and outputs;
- salary costs exceeding 20% of the grant amount;
- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union or other donor grant;
- purchases of land or buildings, refurbishments or reconstruction of buildings or offices;
- currency exchange losses;
- costs to attend international conferences, seminars or workshops, travel costs, participation fees;
- scholarships for individual studies.

9. Evaluation process

The selection of the regional implementing partner will be carry out based on evaluation of the received applications in announced timeframe. The applications received after announced deadline will not be analyzed.

The evaluation will be performed by the evaluation committee comprised of representatives or appointed by the partners in the project (Expert-Grup, IPRE, KAS, EESC). The secretariat of the evaluation committee will be ensured by Expert-Grup.

Expected timeframe for evaluation is 30 days after announced deadline for submitting the applications. The result of evaluation process will be published on Expert-Grup web page and each winner (for 5 regions) will be informed individually.

First stage. Administrative checks

During the administrative check, the following will be assessed:

- if the deadline has been met;

- all documents required for application were presented;

Responsible for the gathering information for this stage is Expert Grup, which will present results of application period to the evaluation committee. Evaluation committee will take decision regarding the rejection of the applicants that did not meet the administrative requirements.

Second Stage. Evaluation according to qualification criteria (yes/no)

The applications that pass the administrative checks will be assessed by evaluation committee according to the following qualification criteria:

1. Legal registration;
2. Eligibility criteria, according to p. 2.
3. At least 3 years of experience in implementing projects/activities aimed at mobilizing local communities and engaging with LPAs;
4. At least 3 years of experience in organizing trainings and other capacity-building activities for local communities (organisation has organised at least one training or capacity-building activities per year).

Third Stage. Quality evaluation

The applicants that pass qualification stage will be distributed in 5 groups, according to 5 regions (North, Central, South, Transnistria, Gagauzia as they are defined in the law regarding regional development nr. 438/2006) and the evaluation will be carry out for each region separately.

The applicants will be assessed by the evaluation committee according to following criteria:

	Criteria	Max points
1.	Organisation's managerial capacity and experience (in case of consortium, only leader will be evaluated)	20
2.	Organisation's experience with similar activities	20
3.	Professional capacity of key staff (3 key persons: team leader and 2 experts)	20
4.	Understanding of the assignment and the relevance of the vision	20
5	Budget relevance (salary costs less 20%, distribution of the costs and expenditure to proposed activities)	20
	Total	100

All applications with accumulated score more than 60 points will be ranged in decreasing order (for each region, so will be 5 lists). The applicant receiving the highest scoring for each region will be invited for negotiating and signing the grant contract. If for different reasons, the contract will not be signed by the winner in 5 days after the contract was sent (by email) for signature, the next organisation from the list could be invited to sign the contract.

10. Liaison

Questions regarding this Grant can be sent to dumitru@expert-grup.org and iulia@expert-grup.org with the following indication in the subject – “Selecting of the regional implementing partners”. In order to ensure a fair approach for all those willing to participate in this competition process, all questions should be raised in writing to above mentioned e-mail(s). Expert-Grup will place all received questions and answers, as well as other relevant information on the www.expert-grup.org in the same place where was published announcement for this call (news line). Therefore, it is advisable to consult the website periodically to be informed about all questions and answers.

All information related to the completion of the application procedure will be regularly published and updated on www.expert-grup.org and social media accounts.