

## Civil Society programme for Albania and Kosovo

### Call for Project Proposals and Guidelines for Application

The Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) and Partners Albania for Change and Development (PA), invite domestic Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)<sup>1</sup> from Albania and Kosovo to apply for project grants. Only applications that comply with all the requirements presented below will be considered. The deadline for application is **June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 14:00hrs** local time.

#### **I. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMME FOR ALBANIA AND KOSOVO**

The ‘Civil Society programme for Albania and Kosovo’ is financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prishtina.

The overall goal of the programme is to support the democratic participation and development of a strong and vibrant civil society in Albania and Kosovo, by supporting NGOs that advance the EU accession process through contribution to one of the following thematic areas:

<b>For CSOs in Albania</b>	<b>For CSOs in Kosovo</b>
1. Non-discrimination and marginalised groups;	1. Non-discrimination and gender equality;
2. Independent media;	2. Minorities and marginalized groups;
3. Environment protection;	3. Environment protection;
4. Anti-corruption	4. Anti-corruption

Grants will be awarded to active NGOs with mission and demonstrated experience in the thematic areas of the programme to which the application corresponds. Applicants should present complete project proposals that contribute to the above listed thematic areas. In preparing the project proposals, applicants should carefully reflect upon the situation and circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subject to the quality of applications, maximum efforts will be given to ensure equal distribution of grants across the thematic areas.

#### **i. Introduction**

Marginalized groups in Kosovo, especially Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian (RAE) communities continue to be discriminated although the legal framework in place is in line with the European standards. Members of these communities are the most disadvantaged with regards to the basic rights,

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<sup>1</sup> As per the definition of the Law no. 8788, dated 7.5.2001 On Non for Profit Organizations in Albania and Law 06/L-043 on Freedom of Association in Non-Governmental Organizations in Kosovo.

healthcare, education, housing, employment and standard of living.<sup>2</sup> Their situation worsened even more during the COVID-19 pandemic. In parallel, gender discrimination and inequality are still present. Women continue to be discriminated in various forms and gender based violence continues to be under-reported due to lack of awareness and/or patriarchal norms. The rates of domestic violence have also increased since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup> Inequality is persistent also with regards to women representation in the society, at all levels of participation and decision-making, with only 24.67% women holding leading positions in local institutions.<sup>4</sup>

The situation with environment is another challenge that needs more work and political will. Problems such as air pollution, lack of waste water treatment plants, inefficient waste management system, unprotected rivers and lakes, illegal dumps and so on require concrete and firm action. Same applies to the climate change with no adaptation strategy in place and no concrete measures to mainstream climate action or raise public awareness.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, corruption in Kosovo continues to be widespread and remains an issue of concern for the majority of population. While the political instability and Covid-19 pandemic caused great and new challenges, there is a need for stronger political will to effectively address corruption issues, as well as a robust criminal justice response to high-level corruption.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the progress and achievements in transitioning toward democracy and a market economy, Albania still faces high rates of unemployment, corruption and there are still inequalities toward people with disabilities, minorities, women or people coming from rural areas and social exclusion is present across the country. Related to the freedom of media, The 2020 Reporters Without Borders Index<sup>7</sup> ranked Albania in the 84<sup>th</sup> position, a drop of two positions compared to last year. The report underlined that the government had stepped up its attempts to control the media under the guise of the fight against fake news and disinformation. On regard to the environment developments, Albania has been considered as a biodiversity hotspot in Europe but water and air pollution, biodiversity losses, waste management and soil erosion, still remain key environmental challenges. Consequently, there are many unsolved environmental problems which should be immediately and properly addressed. As per Corruption Perception Index of 2020, Albania scored 36 out of 100 points, ranked in the 104<sup>th</sup> place among 180 countries. Transparency International considers Albania as the Europe's most corrupt country, due to the country fall with 23 places in the last three years. According to the report, issues of conflict of interest, abuse of state resources for electoral purposes, insufficient disclosure of political party and campaign financing, and a lack of media independence are prevalent across the country by promoting higher levels of corruption year after year.

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<sup>2</sup> Inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo from the perspective of RAE communities, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020

<https://www.kas.de/documents/286052/0/Policy+brief+20-08-28+Inter-Ethnic+Relations+in+Kosovo+from+the+perspective+of+RAE+Communities+%28ENG%29.pdf/948dd754-2dc9-10b9-7320-4bd28fdda198?version=1.0&t=1609941674635>

<sup>3</sup> COVID-19 dhe dhuna në familje: Kur shtëpia s'është vendi më i sigurt

<https://balkaninsight.com/2020/04/21/covid-19-dhe-dhuna-ne-familje-kur-shtepia-seshte-vendi-me-i-sigurt/?lang=sq>

<sup>4</sup> Balkan Policy Research Group (2021), Women in Politics III, Gender Representation at Local Level,

<https://balkangroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-in-Politics-III-Gender-Representation-at-Local-Level-Web-15.03.2021.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/albania>

While the above challenges are general and cover the wide scope of thematic areas, the EU reform processes would significantly benefit from a targeted civil society involvement. Thus applicants are expected to present proposals that address specific issues within the respective thematic areas, with the recommendation to focus on concerns raised or highlighted during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic period.

## **II. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

### **i. Eligibility criteria**

To be eligible for financing, applicants should:

1. Be active NGOs<sup>8</sup>;
2. Be registered as a domestic non-governmental/non-for-profit organization, according to the Albanian and Kosovo legislation (branches of foreign and international NGOs registered in Albania and Kosovo are not eligible to apply);
3. Be fully responsible for project implementation. Partnerships with other NGOs are allowed only if the leading organization takes full responsibility for project implementation and management, including execution of all project expenditures;
4. Have a mission that is in line with the thematic area to which the application corresponds; and
5. Show relevant capacity and experience with regards to the proposed project.

The applicant may act alone or in partnership with another partner organization. Potential partner organization must satisfy the second eligibility criteria as applicable to the applicant himself.

Note that the grant beneficiaries of the previous two calls for application of this programme are not eligible to apply under this call be it as a lead or partner organization.<sup>9</sup>

### **ii. Number of applications and grants per applicant**

Organizations may apply with only one application as a lead applicant.

An application may have only one lead applicant and one partner organization.

### **iii. Levels of intervention**

Applicants may propose interventions that address relevant issues at local and/or central level.

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<sup>8</sup> Evaluation of whether an NGO is active will be based on the presented budget for the preceding 3 years and previous relevant experience of the organization.

<sup>9</sup> Information on the projects supported can be accessed at:

1. KCSF - <https://www.kcsfoundation.org/en/grants/supported-grants/norway-scheme/>

2. PA - [https://partnersalbania.org/News/norway-scheme-the-civil-society-programme-for-albania-and-kosovo/?fbclid=IwAR2t8Rb6WZhmeNIWQzsZ1YUZ80rys10\\_a9oqRqW60fdCwSiZjaZc0U0UoLY](https://partnersalbania.org/News/norway-scheme-the-civil-society-programme-for-albania-and-kosovo/?fbclid=IwAR2t8Rb6WZhmeNIWQzsZ1YUZ80rys10_a9oqRqW60fdCwSiZjaZc0U0UoLY)

Projects shall be country specific and address challenges within the selected country. NGOs can apply for interventions only in their respective country. Cross border projects will not be considered under this call.

#### **iv. Targeted beneficiaries**

Regardless of the principal beneficiaries'/target groups, the final beneficiaries should be citizens of the community where the project is implemented or the country in general. For the principal beneficiaries'/target groups, equal gender participation should be targeted. Whenever possible, a similar approach is to be followed also for the inclusion of other under-represented and marginalized groups, especially those mostly affected by Covid-19 pandemic (poor, minorities, women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities, LGBTI, etc.).

#### **v. Financial allocation for this call**

The overall indicative amount made available for this call for project proposals is 300,000 EUR distributed among the implementing partners/countries as per the table below:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Available budget</b>	<b>Tentative no. of grants</b>
Kosovo	180,000 EUR	6 – 7
Albania	120,000 EUR	4 – 5

Yet, subject to the fulfilment of eligibility criteria and evaluation, KCSF and PA reserve the right not to distribute all the available funds.

The total proposed budget size of the applications to be financed by this programme must fall between the following thresholds:

Minimum amount: **EUR 25,000** (including audit costs)

Maximum amount: **EUR 30,000** (including audit costs)

The budget should be realistic and ensure qualitative implementation of the activities. Subject to a clear elaboration of the proposal and genuine needs, up to 15% of the total proposed budget can be allocated for organizational capacity building (i.e. internal systems, staff capacity building, office equipment, etc.).

Co-funding is not mandatory for this call for project proposals but it can be proposed from the applicant. The programme can cover 100% of the total budget of the project.

When financial support for organizational capacity building is requested, information provided should explain the grounds and type of the requested support. In addition, a clear and concise plan justifying the request along with the benefits that this support brings to the organization should be provided.

#### **vi. Timeframe**

The proposed duration for the implementation of the proposed projects shall be minimum 10 months and maximum 12 months. The implementation of the selected projects is expected to start in October/November 2021. If projects are proposed to commence later, they are to be finalized at latest by October 2022.

## **vii. Eligibility of operations and costs**

### **a. Eligible interventions/actions**

The proposed interventions (projects) should target one of the thematic areas of the call for proposals and aim to deliver concrete results that feed the overall goal of the programme.

Note that the call does not provide suggestions for intervention so that it does not affect your proposals. However, regardless of the proposed intervention and thematic area to which it relates, the proposal of the applicants should seek proactive and direct contribution in the respective area, with careful consideration of the ongoing situation and circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Project results:**

Applications should present clear, measurable and achievable project results that ensure accomplishment of the proposed project overall objective. Also, the logic of intervention and activities should be clearly interlinked with the achievement of the project results within the proposed deadline.

### **b. Ineligible interventions / activities**

The following interventions / activities will not be supported:

- Interventions that are directly affiliated with or supportive of political parties;
- Emergency assistance or charities;
- Capital Investments;
- Same or very similar interventions to those supported by KCSF and PA through the previous calls for proposals of this programme and/or other implemented grant schemes;
- Projects composed entirely or mostly of preparatory work and/or studies;
- Projects composed entirely of social service delivery (applicable for Kosovo);
- Projects composed entirely of capacity building activities (applicable for Kosovo);
- Projects composed entirely or mostly of social service delivery (applicable for Albania);
- Projects composed entirely or mostly of capacity building activities (applicable for Albania);
- Cross border projects between Albania and Kosovo and proposals for activities to be implemented outside Kosovo and Albania;
- Activities which are of service nature and rather belong to the Technical Assistance for public institutions and/or other entities;
- One shot events/ activities;
- Awareness raising campaigns without proper follow up;
- Interventions which are subject to multilevel dependency and approval, thus posing high risk for achieving results;
- Sub granting to third parties. Small scale financial support to beneficiaries is allowed only in cases when all expenditures are executed by the implementing organization;
- Scholarships.

Unless they are imperative for the achievement of the intended project results, in principle, the activities outlined below will not be supported:

- Conferences or round table discussions;
- Research and feasibility studies, especially as a tool to design the rest of the intervention;
- Study trips outside the country.

### **c. Eligible costs**

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

- are necessary for the successful implementation and achievement of the indicated project results;
- are reasonable, justified and comply with the requirements of sound financial management including fair and market-based calculations and cost-efficiency;
- comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- will incur during the implementation of the project;
- are indicated in the proposed budget;
- are identifiable and verifiable;
- Value Added Tax – VAT will be considered as an eligible cost only for Albania.

### **d. Ineligible costs**

The costs presented below are considered ineligible:

- Costs associated to organizational capacity building that exceed 15% of the total budget to be supported by the programme;
- Customs and import duties;
- Debt or payments for losses;
- Value Added Tax - VAT (applicable only for Kosovo NGOs, for invoices above EUR 200);
- Loan interest;
- Money exchange fees;
- Equipment depreciation expenditures;
- Purchase of land or immovable property;
- Purchase of vehicle or generator;
- Payment of expenses covered by other donors;
- Credit to third parties.

Even though no limit for the budget categories is set, in principle the biggest share of the budget (>50%) should be dedicated to expenses related to direct project activities (category 2.0 in the budget template). In exceptional cases when this principle is not satisfied in the presented budget, a detailed justification explaining the rationale must be provided.

Applicants hold full responsibility for the correctness and accuracy of the proposed budget including arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs.

### III. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

#### i. Mandatory documents

<p><b>NGOs from Albania:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Court decision/registration</li><li>- Certificate of Registration released from the court with the latest updates, no older than 3 months</li><li>- In case of partnership, certificate of registration of the partner organization</li><li>- Statute of the organization</li><li>- Certificate of tax payment obligations (no debt)</li><li>- Latest two (2) Financial Statements of the organization</li></ul> <p><i>(the above documents to be submitted in scanned copy)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Application form (.doc)</li><li>- Logical framework (.xls)</li><li>- Plan of activities (.xls)</li><li>- Budget (.xls)</li><li>- In case of co-funding for this project, the co-funding proof (e.g. contract, decision, letter of commitment, etc.)</li></ul>	<p><b>NGOs from Kosovo:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Certificate of registration of the NGO, issued by the NGO Department</li><li>- In case of partnership, certificate of registration of the NGO of the partner organization</li><li>- Statute of the applicant organization</li><li>- Fiscal number certificate</li></ul> <p><i>(the above documents to be submitted in scanned copy)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Application form (.doc)</li><li>- Logical framework (.xls)</li><li>- Plan of activities (.xls)</li><li>- Budget (.xls)</li><li>- In case of co-funding for this project, the co-funding proof (e.g. contract, decision, letter of commitment, etc.)</li></ul>
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Application form, Logical framework, Plan of activities and Budget should be filled out in full compliance with the provided instructions and respective templates.

#### ii. Submission of applications

Applications can only be sent electronically. NGOs from Kosovo should submit the completed applications at [norapplication@kcsfoundation.org](mailto:norapplication@kcsfoundation.org) whereas NGOs from Albania at [norapplication@partnersalbania.org](mailto:norapplication@partnersalbania.org).

To verify that their application is complete applicants are encouraged to use the checklist presented in the application form. In case of changes in any submitted document during the period when the call is open, the applicant should submit the entire set of documents electronically again and note in the submission e-mail that it is a changed submission. Note that these documents will be considered final.

KCSF and PA will confirm the receipt of the application by replying to the applicant with an acknowledgement email.

Applications that are incomplete, that do not comply with rules and forms, and those submitted after **June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 14:00hrs local time** will not be reviewed.

### **iii. Contact information**

For any question on preparing the documents for application you can contact us **only** at [kcsfnor@kcsfoundation.org](mailto:kcsfnor@kcsfoundation.org) and [norapplication@partnersalbania.org](mailto:norapplication@partnersalbania.org) no later than **June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021**. All questions and answers will be published in the Q&A section of KCSF and PA website no later than **June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021**. Applicants are strongly advised to see questions and respective answers published in the websites.

To ensure equal treatment and full transparency, KCSF and PA cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants, an operation or specific activity.

Please refrain from contacting KCSF or PA in any form aside of the above presented e-mails.

## **IV. EVALUATION AND NOTIFICATION**

### **i. Administrative compliance (verification of formal criteria)**

During this phase all applications are assessed if the following has been respected/submitted:

1. Deadline for submitting the call for proposals;
2. No. of applications submitted by the lead applicant;
3. Technical requirements indicated in the application form;
4. Mandatory documents;
5. Geographical coverage;
6. Budget size;
7. Project duration.

Applications that do not meet the specified requirements will be automatically rejected.

The results of the administrative compliance are communicated to each applicant in written.

### **ii. Evaluation of applications**

Applications that pass the Administrative compliance will be evaluated in accordance with below presented criteria. Evaluation will be carried out by external Evaluation Boards composed of members with experience with similar programs and knowledge on the relevant areas and related developments.

#### **A. Thematic compliance evaluation**

To be eligible for full evaluation of proposals, applicants should meet the following mandatory requirements:

1. The mission of the organization is compliant with the thematic area to which the application corresponds;
2. Demonstrate relevant experience in the thematic area;
3. Project proposal is relevant to the thematic area.

This implies that only applications that meet these conditions are subject to the full evaluation based on the criteria set out below.

## **B. Full evaluation of project proposals**

### **i. Capacities of the organization (20%)**

*Organizational and technical capacities:*

- a. Personnel;*
- b. Infrastructure and technical capacities for implementing the proposed intervention/project;*
- c. Administrative and financial management capacity.*

### **ii. Quality of application (50%)**

- a. Analysis of the need and possibilities relevant to the proposed intervention and implementation area. Relevant legislation, strategies, and/or plans at national, regional and/or local level should be referenced including a description of how the action relates to them. Circumstances created by Covid-19 should be carefully considered.*
- b. Description of the project including the overall objective and proposed implementation methodology and approach.*
  - In cases when the proposed project is a continuation of a previous or ongoing intervention (implemented by the applicant organization or other organization/entity), explanation on how it is intended to build on the corresponding activities and results.*
  - If the proposed project is part of a larger programme, explanation on the suitability or coordination with that programme or any other planned project.*
- c. Definition of clear, measurable and achievable project results that ensure accomplishment of the proposed project objective.*
- d. Proposed activities including information on timeframe, implementation method and interconnections. In case of partnership, the role of the partner.*
- e. Principal beneficiaries'/target groups and final beneficiaries including their benefit from the proposed intervention. Data on the distribution of beneficiaries by gender and under-represented group whenever applicable.*
- f. Identified project stakeholders and their role in project implementation.*
- g. Monitoring plan including clear indicators to measure the implementation quality and timing.*
- h. Potential risks that may negatively impact project implementation including information on the probability of occurrence (high, medium or low) and mitigation measures. Eventual deterioration of the pandemic situation and its impact to the project should be treated with great caution.*
- i. Methodology for visibility and outreach.*
- j. Possibility for replication and expansion of activities.*

### **iii. Budget (30%)**

- a. Justification of the need for organizational capacity building, plan and benefits of the organization;*
- b. Realistic and cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget.*

The maximum evaluation per application is 100 points. The minimum passing threshold is 70 points, as well as the half of available points in each of the three broad categories presented above (. Capacities of the organization, Quality of the application and Budget).

### **iii. Final decision**

Applications with maximum evaluation scores, up to the expense of the allocated budget for this call, will be supported. However, KCSF and PA will give maximum efforts to ensure a balanced representation of each thematic area in the list of awarded grants.

The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prishtina will be consulted before any final decisions are made. The Embassy reserves the right to veto the project proposals.

When active participation/cooperation with other institutions, organizations or other entities is compulsory for the implementation of the project, successful applicants are required to submit a scanned copy of the Memorandum of Cooperation, Letter of support or any other document indicating clearly the commitment of the respective entity. Failure to submit the document/s within the specified deadline will be considered grounds for disqualification of the application.

In addition, for successful applicants, eventual checks and budget clarifications preceding the signature of the contract shall be conducted to address mistakes or inaccuracies. In terms of the budget such corrections shall not in any circumstance lead to an increase of the budget to be supported by the programme.

### **iv. Notification of the decision**

Each applicant will be informed on the overall assessment/total scores in writing. Unsuccessful applicants believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the evaluation process may complain within 3 (three) working days from the day when the rejection letter/email has been sent. In such case, KCSF and PA will inform the applicant(s) on the achieved scores per broad category.

Information on the selected applications will be published in KCSF and PA websites after the contracts are signed.

## V. IMPORTANT TENTATIVE DATES

<b>Process</b>	<b>Tentative date</b>
Launch of the Call for Proposals	<b>1 June 2021</b>
<b>Online information session – Kosovo</b>	<b>9 June 2021</b>
<b>Online information session – Albania</b>	<b>10 June 2021</b>
Deadline for requesting clarifications/questions	<b>18 June 2021</b>
Last date on which answers are published	<b>23 June 2021</b>
Deadline for submission of applications	<b>28 June 2021, 14:00hrs local time</b>
Information on administrative compliance	<b>16 July 2021</b>
Information on evaluation	<b>August/September 2021</b>
Contract signature	<b>September/October 2021</b>
Projects start	<b>October/November 2021</b>
Last date for projects closure	<b>30 October 2022</b>