

call for proposals

Stronger Roots for Civil Society Program

Stronger Ties of Civil Society Networks in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary

Deadline: 9 June 2020 at 13:00 pm

1. Introduction

The existence of a free and active civil society is one of the attributes of a healthy participatory democracy. It fulfils a variety of crucial roles, such as building trust and solidarity among people, protecting the environment, providing support to vulnerable groups and enhancing transparency and good governance. Civil society organizations (CSOs) derive from a wide range of shared aspirations. Yet, at the same time, they need broader societal support and close mutual collaboration to maintain their legitimacy, effectiveness and financial stability.

Reflecting these ideas, Open Society Fund Prague (CZ), Open Society Foundation Bratislava (SK), Glopolis (CZ) and the NIOK Foundation (HU) have created a consortium to jointly implement the “Stronger Roots for Civil Society” program. The program strives to increase the organizational and sectoral resilience of CSOs in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary and embed them in the societies in which they operate.

Resilience is the capacity to prepare for any sort of disruption, to overcome shocks and challenges, and to adapt and grow from such experience. CEE civil societies have been facing various challenges both from within and from without, such as efforts to divide or delegitimize the CSOs and undermine democratic institutions. We are yet to see what the impact will be on societal divisions due to the latest challenge - the coronavirus pandemic.

In autumn 2019, the consortium announced its first Call for Proposals in which it supported 35 CSOs, which are now boosting their efforts to build constituencies and strengthen their relations with the public.

Yet, we need the whole civil society sector to stay strong, influential and stable. There is so much that civil society organizations can do to increase their relevance, impact, adaptability and shared identity by effectively cooperating. The deepening and broadening of civil society networks is one important avenue in this direction.

In spring 2020, therefore, the consortium is announcing its second **Call for Proposals which aims to support a great variety of CSO platforms, coalitions, umbrella and roof organizations, working groups and spontaneous joint initiatives (hereafter all simply referred to as “networks”) in extending their constituencies, strengthening mutual ties and engaging actors of diverging views.**

The consortium believes that the strong ties of the CSOs to each other and to the people around them are crucial for tackling the complicated issues that CEE societies are currently facing. Civil society networks become more effective when their members and partners represent diverse range of expertise and skills. They also become more resilient when they represent varied experiences, approaches and worldviews.

Broad consultation processes by coalitions of CSOs, business people and public institutions with a diverse range of views resulting in the adoption of education strategies or palliative care reforms laws can be examples of such successful collective impact initiatives. In our view, civil society can help to bridge various societal divisions, not only through its actual cooperative work, but also by providing a concrete example that constructive discussion is possible among actors holding diverse views.

2. Goals and Theme of the Call for Proposals

This Call for Proposals is open to civil society organizations in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia and aims at expanding the range of membership and constituencies (partners, donors and other stakeholders) of their networks.

Successful applicants will receive funding and small support from consultants so that their networks contribute to a shift towards greater mutual understanding, respect and trust, shared identity and transversal cooperation in Czech, Hungarian and Slovak societies.

The grant should help CSO networks to involve more diverging worldviews and stakeholder perspectives in their strategic processes. In particular, grantees are expected:

- to broaden their understanding of the context, in which the network operates, as it is perceived by other actors in the field
- to set goals shared with different actors in the field
- to assess developments in the network's agenda from diverging perspectives
- and to become a more open, inclusive and learning structure.

What is Transversal Cooperation

Transversal cooperation is based on the assumption that the more conscious contacts, constructive dialogue, considerate and collaborative interactions that exist among diverse actors, the more resilient (relevant, effective, adaptable and sustainable) the civil society sector is.

While cooperation and constituency building strengthen every organization, transversal cooperation is focused on **engaging unlike societal actors** with/in structures that represent the **aggregated interests** of CSOs (i.e. CSO networks). These **CSO networks** can:

- bring together individuals, organizations (or even other networks)
- have various goals (advocacy, awareness raising, professional development, capacity or community building, etc.)
- be formal or informal
- be professional or non-professional (including youth-, female-, local- or movement-based initiatives) and
- use various descriptions (such as platforms, umbrellas, coalitions, roof organizations, roundtables, initiatives, working groups etc.)

This Call for Proposals seeks to support those civil society networks which aim to **systematically engage with outsider groups with whom they have not cooperated before**, namely with:

- 1) civil society representatives of diverging worldviews, in particular group/s coming from more distant **geographical locations** in the country and/or more disparate **ideological orientations** – as their **new members**
- 2) multiple representatives of **the network's stakeholders** such as other civil society organizations or networks, business and/or government institutions - in innovative forms of **collaboration or partnership**.

This will result in establishing **together** new, or improving existing, network's **processes/mechanisms** of contextualization/problem analysis, collective vision building, strategic planning, flexible coordination, monitoring, evaluation or learning.

All of the projects will strengthen the **capacities, competencies and values** needed for more integrated societies: openness, understanding, empathy, broader identity, positive and forward-looking approach, complexity management, capabilities to cooperate, capacity to learn and bounce back from failures.

Each project is expected to carefully **monitor** the expected and unexpected effects, **evaluate** and **reflect** on its outcomes, collaborative processes, and offer best practice and lessons learned from their transversal cooperation.

3. Guidelines for the Proposed Project

Eligible networks are invited to build on their strategy, experience and current needs and extend their collaborative efforts in the most useful direction agreed by the members: involving either new member group/s (please see point 1 above) or key non-member constituency/ies (please see point 2 above) in their strategic processes.

Applicants can engage the prospective members or non-member constituencies in the whole strategic cycle (from analysis and planning to monitoring and evaluation to learning) or in just the most useful or feasible activities of the strategic processes (i.e. just analysis and assessment of the common challenge). They are equally free to choose engaging one or more groups of prospective members (local/regional CSOs and/or CSOs of diverging worldviews) or non-member constituencies (business and/or government and/or other CSO networks), the amount and diversity of these target group/s' representatives, and the degree (depth) of their involvement. However, any lower quantity of those newly involved should be compensated by the greater quality (depth and sustainability) of their involvement.

Applicants are welcome to propose their own ideas for and ways of approaching, negotiating and building relationships with the prospective members or non-member constituencies most appropriate to the nature, capacities and strategy of the network. The project's goals must be realistic and the proposed changes should be achievable within a given time frame.

The projects should include a clear description of the diverging attitudes and of the needs of prospective members or non-member constituencies, how the network plans to include their concerns and feedback into the given network's operation, and what collaborative action will ensue.

Examples of Transversal Cooperation Activities

Here are some concrete examples of eligible activities:

- organizing personal meetings, closed events, strategic debates, workshops or negotiation processes with more conservative - or conversely, more progressive/liberal - CSOs/networks working on the same topic to create a shared vision, agenda or action plan
- building (online and in particular offline) communication channels and tools to systematically engage capital-based networks in consultation, coordination with, or support for local CSOs in various parts of the country
- events or processes building or improving relationships among divergent stakeholders (including informal processes, social events, managed confrontations, crisis simulation or out-of-comfort zone experiences)
- engaging different types of potential donors in co-designing a network's objectives, impact measurement, evaluation and/or communication
- involving indifferent or opposing government officials/politicians in joint problem analysis, identification of solutions and collaborative action
- exploring unlikely partnerships with businesses and other stakeholders

4. Eligibility Criteria

Who Can Apply

This Call for Proposals is open to **civil society networks that adhere to the principles of democracy and human rights and represent the aggregate interests of civil society groups in one of the project countries: either the Czech Republic, or Hungary, or the Slovak Republic.** Both traditional (organized) platforms, coalitions, working groups, umbrella or roof organizations, as well as new (spontaneous) civic initiatives, that are trying to build bridges among different groups are welcome to apply.

The applying network **must:**

- **represent at least 10 different entities in the given country** (civil society organizations, institutions or individuals). If several networks are applying, the number of their members together must be over 10.
- **have at least 6 months of previous active existence** (The applicants will be asked to prove that their network is an active and transparently working body with active participation and joint decision-making by its members. We also expect that the submitted proposals will be created as a common decision of the network's members.)
- **be based in the Czech Republic, Hungary or the Slovak Republic**

The proposal has to be submitted by a **registered legal entity**, usually a single civil society organization representing the whole network, or the platform itself if it is registered:

Czech Republic: registered legal entity in the Czech Republic, having a non-commercial purpose, defined by Czech law as a civic association (spolek, ústav, obecně prospěšná společnost), a foundation or endowment fund (nadace a nadační fond), or an organization department of a church or religious society (účelové zařízení církví)

Hungary: registered legal entity in Hungary, defined by Hungarian law as a foundation (alapítvány) or an association (egyesület).

Slovakia: registered legal entity in the Slovak Republic, having a non-commercial purpose, defined by Slovak law as a civic association (občianske združenie), a foundation (nadácia), a non-profit organization providing public beneficial services (nezisková organizácia poskytujúca verejnoprospešné služby), a non-investment fund (neinvestičný fond), a non-profit organization (nezisková organizácia), an association of legal entities (združenie právnických osôb), or the Slovak Red Cross (Slovenský Červený Kríž)

Non-Eligible Types of Organizations

Political party-affiliated associations, state-funded governmental institutions or profit distributing cooperatives are not eligible to apply for our support. Neither will a sole proprietorship nor a natural person be considered an eligible project applicant.

Duration and Amount of Grants

In this Call for Proposals, a total sum of €50,000 per country may be distributed and 2-5 projects are expected to be supported in each country.

Applicants may submit one proposal per network for a grant of a minimum of €10,000 up to a maximum of €40,000 per project. Co-financing is possible, but not required for the project proposal.

Grant amounts: 10 000–40 000 Euros

Expected duration of projects: 12–18 months

Expected starting date of the supported projects: August 2020

End date of the supported projects: December 2021 the latest

Other Requirements: Safeguarding Standards

The successful applicants will be asked to adhere to the donors' safeguarding standards, in order to protect children and vulnerable persons and prevent any kind of violence or abuse during the implementation of the project.

5. Granting Process

This Call for Proposals will be administered in two rounds. In the first round, the applicants are asked to submit **an electronic Concept Note of maximum length of 2 pages in English language**. In the Concept Note, the applicants will mainly prove that their network/platform/coalition, etc. is an active body, describe the transversal cooperation activities they would like to implement and the target groups they would like to engage with through their project.

Furthermore, the applicants must attach:

Czech and Slovak applicants:

- the last official annual report of the applicant organization
- an official financial report for 2019 or 2018 (incomes and expenses)
- network membership or partnership agreement (if the network has it)

Hungarian applicants:

- the last annual report and Public Benefit Annex (Éves beszámoló és közhasznúsági melléklet)
- network membership or partnership agreement (if the network has it)

These supporting documents may be submitted in local languages.

The Concept Note together with the supporting documents shall be submitted electronically at this link. The deadline for submitting the Concept Notes is on 9 June 2020 at 13:00 CET.

Selection Process

The selection process of the Concept Notes is two-fold:

1) administrative review

The Concept Notes will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

- eligibility (please see section 4)
- Concept Note being submitted by the deadline
- applicant submitted all the required supporting documents

2) project content review

The Concept Notes will be reviewed and ranked according to the following selection criteria:

Criterion	Explanation	Maximum Score
Transversal Cooperation Focus	The degree of divergence of the target group/s' worldview/perspective (from those of the applicant network), the target group/s' strategic engagement with the network	40 points
Quality of the Concept	Clearly stated goal and achievable results of the project	25 points
Character of the Network	Recent activity, impact, transparency and governance of the network	20 points
Target Groups Analysis	Importance of the target group/s to the network, analysis of the needs of the target group/s.	15 points
Maximum Score		100 points

After the project content review, up to the 7 best Concept Notes will be selected per country. It is expected that these results will be announced in late June or in July.

In the second round of the selection process, the above-mentioned selected applicants will be asked to complete a Full Application and may be asked to participate in a personal or online interview with the selection committee. In July 2020, we expect to select 2–5 final grantees.

6. Other Information

Webinar for Applicants

The interested organizations are cordially invited to participate in a webinar on this Call for Proposals where the Stronger Roots program team will explain the concept of transversal cooperation in greater detail and answer any and all relevant questions.

The information webinar will take place on 19 May from 13.30–15.30 pm. Please register [here](#).

For inquiries regarding the webinar, please contact Jitka Hausenblasová at hausenblasova@glopolis.org.

If you have any specific questions regarding this Call for Proposals, please contact the respective country coordinators:

Czech Republic, Hungary: Michaela Vyležíková at michaela.vylezikova@osf.cz

Slovakia: Ondrej Škvarenina at ondrej.skvarenina@osf.sk

Stronger Roots for Civil Society 2020

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