

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

Grant to CSO’s on conducting a first-time voters’ education programme in Albania.

VC 3377/2025/2 Grants

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| **Project** | Strengthening Elections Integrity in Albania (SEI) |
| **Awarding entity** | **Council of Europe** |
| Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly |
| **Funding** | Federal Foreign Office of Germany |
| **Duration** | Projects shall be implemented by28 February 2026Reporting requirements shall be completed by31 May 2026 |
| **Estimated starting date** | 15 February 2025 |
| **Issuance date** | 17 January 2025 |
| **Deadline for applications** | 31 January 2025 |

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Appendices:

* Appendix I - Application Form
* Appendix II - Provisional budget (Template)
* Appendix III - Template Grant Agreement (for information only)

**How to apply?**

* Complete and sign the **Application Form** (See **Appendix I**)
* Attach a provisional budget (using the template reproduced in **Appendix II**)
* Attach the other supporting documents:

-Documents certifying the registration of the civil society organisation (CSO);

-Bank/financial statements authorized by a financial officer of the CSO;

-CVs of staff members who will be involved in project implementation;

-Contact details of three relevant referees.

Send these documents in electronic form (Word .and/or PDF) to the following e-mail address: tendertirana@coe.int. Emails should contain the following reference in subject**: Call for applications: First-time voters’ education programme in Albania.**

* Applications must be received **before 31 January 2025 (at 23:59, CET)**.
1. **INTRODUCTION**

This call for proposals is launched in the framework of the Council of Europe Project “Strengthening Elections Integrity in Albania” SEI, implemented by the Council of Europe, and funded by the Federal Office of Germany.

One of the main objectives of the project is to raise awareness among voters about elections, with a particular focus on first-time voters. The Council of Europe has a long-standing experience in supporting education programs for young people and has made significant contributions in this area by designing and conducting mock election programs for first-time voters in several member states. Promoting participation of first-time voters is also an objective for the Albanian Central Election Commission (CEC) as part of public awareness campaign on elections.

To fulfil this objective the CoE is seeking to award a grant to a national Civil Society Organisation (hereafter “CSOs”) active throughout Albania. Through a grant agreement, the selected CSO will work to develop, sustain, and integrate a systemic first-time voters’ education program in pre-university education institutions. While targeting the first time-voters from all public secondary schools in Albania ahead of 2025 parliamentary elections in Albania, the grant also aims in the long term, to support the education institutions in building the means and capacities to establish first-time voters’ education as part of their annual extracurricular education programmes.

1. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE PROJECT**

The project “Strengthening Elections Integrity in Albania” (SEI) focuses on supporting the CEC regulatory framework and institutional capacities related to the professionalisation of election administration, voters’ education programmes, with a focus on first-time voters, and efficiency and transparency of the Election Dispute Resolution (EDR) process which would contribute to enhance elections’ integrity, trust of citizens in the electoral process and ultimately increase turnout of voters.

More concretely, it aims at:

* Providing support to enhance professionalisation and independence of election administration through establishing and consolidating a permanent, modern, dynamic, and flexible training structure at the CEC in Albania.
* Strengthening information and education capacities of the CEC with particular focus on first time voters.
* Strengthening the CEC instruments and tools to effectively track election related complaints by establishing an online platform for complaints, and to effectively oversight the public activities of the state bodies by creating the platform for live monitoring of public activities.

Project partners include the Central Election Commission, Ministry of Education and Sport, National Agency of Pre-University Education, CSOs and media organisations.

1. **BUDGET AVAILABLE**

The indicative available budget under this call for proposals is up to 54,000 EUR (fifty-four thousand EUR).

Subject to availability of funds and extension of the Project initial duration, the Council of Europe reserves the right not to award all available funds, and/or to redistribute the available funds in a different manner depending on the project proposals received and on the outcome of the call for proposals.

1. **REQUIREMENTS**
2. **General objective**

First-time voters play a crucial role in shaping elections and strengthening democracy by increasing youth participation in democratic and decision-making processes. By fostering critical thinking and civic awareness, they help build a culture of informed participation, strengthening democracy for years to come. In the digital age, combating and preventing disinformation makes awareness-raising even more vital. State and educational institutions as well as CSOs must provide access to unbiased information and contribute to awareness raising. The CEC has approved the programme for the education, information, and awareness of the voters for the Parliamentary Elections taking place on 11 May 2025. It aims to inform and sensitize vulnerable groups, *inter alia,* persons with disabilities, young people (mainly first-time voters), and women to increase their participation in elections. Another important aspect of the CEC programme is raising awareness on electoral malpractices including family voting, undue influence and intimidation and vote-buying.

The Council of Europe has provided substantial contribution in this regard by developing and conducting mock election programmes for first-time voters in several member states. In Albania, the programme is piloted at the national level in several consecutive elections, in co-operation with the CEC and Ministry of Education and Sport. It combined improvements of the pre-university education curricula as well as development of mock election programmes for Matura students all over the country in electoral years. In the past this assistance has been confined to electoral periods, leaving certain age groups excluded during non-electoral years. To bridge this gap, it is essential to sustain the program needs by integrating it into pre-university education curricula as part of fostering democratic competencies.

Through the project “Strengthening Elections Integrity in Albania”, the Council of Europe aims to integrate and sustain the first-time voters’ education curricula into both formal and non-formal education programmes in Albania. For this purpose, it is looking for a competent CSO to take part in the implementation of this initiative which will contribute to fostering civic engagement, raising awareness about elections, and prepare young people for an active participation during the election process.

The following actions are required for the implementation of this initiative:

**Mock Elections:** Design an interactive election simulation that replicates real-world voting processes, including registration, ballot design, and voting.

**Training of Teachers:** Produce materials and workshops to train teachers on electoral processes and civic education, equipping them to guide students effectively.

**Curriculum update:** Assess the curriculum to identify the areas for improvement, outdated information, and gaps to address; incorporate case studies and interactive activities like debates on election-related topics and updates such as recent changes in law, the use of technology.

**Other Educational Materials:** Develop informative content about voting rights and the importance of civic participation, especially of first-time voters; include tools/materials such as role-play kits, videos, and practical exercises for teachers to use in the classroom.

**Partnerships:** Collaborate with the CEC in view of its voters’ education, mock elections and awareness raising strategy; collaborate with the Ministry of Education and Sport, and National Agency of Pre-University Education, with regards to accreditation and implementation of the initiative throughout secondary education institutions at the national level.

**Outreach and Awareness:** Organize awareness campaigns through social media to engage first-time voters. These campaigns should focus on the importance of participating in elections and voters rights.

**Feedback and Follow-Up:** Collect feedback through evaluation surveys to enhance future initiatives; Deliver certificates of participation to students and teachers to encourage their future involvement, as a way of sharing their experience with their families, peers, and the community.

**Means of action**

* Capacity development through training, simulation and coaching;
* Peer learning and observation.
* Web-based materials and application software.
* Educational tools and didactic materials.
1. **Implementation period**

The implementation period of the projects should start on 15 February 2025 (see indicative timetable under VIII. below) and shall not extend beyond 28 February 2026.

Reporting requirements shall be completed on 31 May 2026 **at the latest**.

Projects completed prior to the date of submission of the applications will be automatically excluded. As regard projects started prior to the date of submission of the applications, or prior to the date of signature of the grant agreement, only those costs incurred after the date of submission of the grant application could be eligible (provided the agreement concerned so provides).

1. **Target groups and stakeholders**

Projects should target in particular the following key stakeholders:

* Pre-university pupils and first-time voters;
* Educators/school teachers.

The above list is not exhaustive, and projects may propose to target other relevant stakeholders, while keeping in mind the general objective of the Project.

1. **Budgetary requirements**

Project proposals shall be accompanied by a detailed draft budget (See **Template Budget, in Appendix II**) amounting to a maximum of **54,000 EUR** (fifty-four thousand Euro). The estimated budget must be consistent, accurate, clear, complete, and cost-effective, in the light of the activities proposed.

Each Grantee shall also be required to contribute to the project either by way of its own resources or by contribution from third parties. Co-financing may take the form of financial or human resources, in-kind contributions or income generated by the action or project.

1. **Further to the general objective, preference will be given to:**
* Civil society organisation with a strong track record of similar civic education projects in collaboration with educational institutions;
* Civil society organisation with experience in implementing large scale electoral education and awareness raising programmes at the national level. At least 30.000 pupils are expected to participate in mock election programme throughout Albania.

Note: The methodology proposed may be adjusted in view of improving its impact following each cycle based on the lessons learned / experience gained.

1. **The following types of action will not be considered:**
* Projects/actions providing financial support to third parties (re-granting schemes);
* Projects/actions concerning only or mainly individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
* Projects/actions supporting political parties.
1. **Funding conditions:**

The funds for each grant should in principle be distributed as follows:

* 80% will be paid to the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium when the Grant Agreement between the Parties is signed;
* the balance will be paid to the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium based on actual expenditures incurred, and after the presentation and acceptance by the Council of Europe of the final narrative and financial reports for the Grant implementation.
1. **Reporting requirements:**
* **narrative reporting** requires a full narrative report on the use made of the grant and a copy of the register of the persons present during each of the activities, including names and signatures of participants;
* **financial reporting** requires in particular a statement in the currency in which the Grant Agreement will be concluded (Euros or local currency), in English, stating the payments made for the implementation of the activities, certified by the responsible financial officer of the Grantees, accompanied by “appropriate original supporting documents” (see below). The Council of Europe reserves the right to ask for summary translations of invoices into English. If for legal reasons the original documents must be retained by the Grantees, certified copies must be submitted with the financial statement.

“Appropriate original supporting documents” refers to signed contracts, invoices and acceptances of work (for all transactions), payment authorisation for all transactions should also be provided in case the Grantees use such practice, and reliable evidence of payment (authorised payment order and bank statement).

As regards round tables / conferences, presenting “appropriate original supporting documents” requires presentation of a programme indicating the title, dates, venue, and agenda of the event; the names of persons facilitating the event, a signed list of participants, the contracts with the owner of venue of the event (e.g. hotel) for the rent of premises, food and beverages of participants, invoices from the owner of the venue of the event for the above services, and a report on the results of the event (see narrative reporting above).

As regards consultancy services, presenting “appropriate original supporting documents” requires presentation of evidence of the outputs produced, contracts with experts and consultants containing a specific description of services to be carried out, invoices produced after the works have been performed and delivered (the specialities of the consultants shall correspond to the nature of activities for which they are contracted).

As regards travel fees / lodging of experts and participants, presenting “appropriate original supporting documents” requires presentation, where relevant, of contracts with a travel agency for travel fees and lodging, invoices of the travel agency indicating destinations, dates, ticket costs, and names of the travelling persons, a programme of the event indicating the names of the experts and signed lists of participants.

The above description is not comprehensive. Any doubt regarding the interpretation of the notion of “appropriate original supporting documents” should lead the Grantee or the Lead Grantee in case of a consortium to consult the Council of Europe.

1. **HOW TO APPLY?**
2. **Documents to be submitted:**

Each application shall contain:

* the completed and signed **Application Form** (See **Appendix I**);
* a provisional budget (using the template reproduced in **Appendix II**);
* the other supporting documents:

-Documents certifying the registration of the CSO;

-Bank/financial statements authorised by a financial officer of the CSO;

-CVs of staff members who will be involved in project implementation;

-Contact details of three relevant referees.

**Applications that are incomplete will not be considered.**

1. **Questions**

General information can be found on the website of the Council of Europe: [www.coe.int/en/web/tirana](http://www.coe.int/en/web/tirana) and [social media](https://www.facebook.com/CoEinTirana/).

Other questions regarding this specific call for proposals must be sent at the latest one week before the deadline for the submission of proposals, in English, and shall be exclusively sent to the following address: tender.tirana@coe.int with the following reference in subject: **Questions: First-time voters’ education programme in Albania.**

1. **Deadline for submission**

The application form, **completed and signed by all Grantees**, together with the supporting documents, must be submitted in electronic form (Word and/or PDF) to the following e-mail address: tender.tirana@coe.int. Emails should contain the following reference in subject: **Call for Applications: First-time voters’ education programme in Albania.**

Applications must be received **before 31 January 2025 (at 23:59, CET)**. Applications received after the above-mentioned date will not be considered.

1. **Change, alteration and modification of the application file**

Any change in the format, or any alteration or modification of the original application file, will cause the immediate rejection of the application concerned.

1. **EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE**

The projects presented will be assessed by an Evaluation Committee composed of at least three members, including staff members of the Council of Europe.

The procedure shall be based on the underlying principles of grant award procedures, which are transparency, non-retroactivity, non-cumulative awards, not-for-profit, co-financing and non-discrimination, in accordance with [Rule 1374 of 16 December 2015 on the grant award procedures of the Council of Europe](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=SG/Rule(2015)1374&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=99CCFF&BackColorIntranet=99CCFF&BackColorLogged=99CCCC).

The applicants, and their projects, shall fulfil all of the following criteria:

1. **Exclusion criteria:**

Applicants shall be excluded from the grant award procedure where they or, in the case of legal persons, their owner(s) or executive officer(s):

a. have been sentenced by final judgment on one or more of the following charges: participation in a criminal organisation, corruption, fraud, money laundering, terrorist financing, terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, child labour or trafficking in human beings.

b. are in a situation of bankruptcy, liquidation, termination of activity, insolvency, or arrangement with creditors or any like situation arising from a procedure of the same kind, or are subject to a procedure of the same kind;

c. have received a judgement with res judicata force, finding an offence that affects their professional integrity or constitutes a serious professional misconduct;

d. do not comply with their obligations as regards payment of social security contributions, taxes and dues, according to the statutory provisions of the country where they are established.

e. are an entity created to circumvent tax, social or other legal obligations (empty shell company), have ever created or are in the process of creation of such an entity;

f. have been involved in mismanagement of the Council of Europe funds or public funds.

By signing the Application Form, applicants shall declare on their honour that they are not in any of the above-mentioned situations (See **Appendix I, Item 12**).

The Council of Europe reserves the right to ask applicants at a later stage to supply the following supporting documents:

* for the items set out in paragraphs a), b), c) and f), an extract from the record of convictions or failing that an equivalent document issued by the competent judicial or administrative authority of the country where the applicant is established, indicating that these requirements are met;
* for the items set out in paragraph d), a certificate issued by the competent authority of the country of establishment.
1. **Eligibility criteria:**

In order to be eligible for a grant, an applicant must:

* be legally constituted as a civil society organisation in Albania;
* be entitled to carry out in Albania all the activities described in its project proposal.
* have been active for at least 5 years in the field of civic education or in areas related to electoral civic education;
* have sufficient financial capacity (stable and sufficient sources of funding) to maintain its activity throughout the period for which the grant is awarded and to participate by way of its own resources (including human resources or in-kind contributions);
* have sufficient operational and professional capacity, including staff, to carry out activities described in its project proposal;
* have a bank account.

**Multiple applications are not allowed and shall lead to the exclusion of all applications concerned.**

1. **Award criteria**

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

* the relevance of the experience of the applying organisation(s) and staff with a particular focus on experience working with students, especially first-time voters (35%);
* the extent to which the action meets the requirements of the call (30%);
* the relevance and added value of the project with regards to the objective of the call, at all stages of its implementation. It should also ensure that gender perspective is mainstreamed in all stages of its implementation (25%);
* the quality, accuracy, clarity, completeness and cost-effectiveness of the application and the estimated budget (10%).
1. **NOTIFICATION OF THE DECISION AND SIGNATURE OF GRANT AGREEMENTS**

On completion of the selection process, all applicants will be notified in writing of the final decision concerning their respective applications as well as on the next steps to be undertaken.

The selected Grantees will be invited to sign a Grant Agreement (See Appendix III, for information only), formalising their legal commitments**. Potential applicants are strongly advised to read the draft contract, in particular its requirements in terms of payment and reporting.**

1. **INDICATIVE TIMETABLE**

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| **Phases** | **Indicative timing** |
| **Publication of the call** | 17 January 2025 |
| **Deadline for submitting applications** | 31 January 2025 |
| **Information to applicants on the results of the award procedure** | 10 February 2025 |
| **Signature of the grant agreements** | 15 February 2025 |
| **Implementation period** | 15 February 2025-28 February 2026 |

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