



QUESTIONS REGARDING THE NGO GRANT

Question 1: *In the call documents it says that the activities should cover at least 2 regions. What is meant by "region"? Does it mean 2 countries? Or can it be 2 regions in Armenia, for example?*

Answer : These are subregions of Europe; as indicated on page 3 of the call for proposals (see IV – Requirements, 1. General objective): “The grant will fund three projects covering different regions of Europe, namely Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe and Central Europe.”

For the purposes of providing a more precise answer, the regions of Europe can be seen as comprising the following countries (this categorisation is purely indicative):

- Eastern Europe: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Ukraine
- Western Europe: Andorra, Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom
- Northern Europe: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden
- Southern Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, North Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Türkiye
- Central Europe: Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Poland, Slovak Republic, Switzerland.

Each project must include activities involving countries from at least two of these subregions. There is no minimum number of countries required to be targeted within each subregion.

Question 2: *We have over 10 years of experience in civil society rights and protecting civic space outside Europe. Recently, we registered an NGO in a Council of Europe member state, and our team is now set up to work in Europe. I have the following questions:*

The requirements state that you need at least 5 years of experience in human rights, democracy, and rule of law advocacy. Our organization only has a tax record outside Europe, as it has just been registered. Does our experience outside Europe count for the selection criteria?

Although our NGO is officially registered in Europe, we are still setting up a new bank account. For now, would it be acceptable to use our current U.S. bank

account in the application? We will have the new account soon and can switch before signing contracts in 2025.

Answer : The criterion of being active for at least five years in the field of advocacy, policy-making and/or representation of interests related to democracy, human rights or the rule of law does not stipulate that this experience must be acquired within a member state of the Council of Europe or in Europe.

However, all accompanying documents submitted with the application form—such as the most recent annual report and audited financial statement—must relate to the organisation formally applying to the call, not to a third-party organisation in another country, even if the project team remains the same.

The account holder name must also correspond to that of the applicant organisation.

Question 3: *“I am writing to you on behalf of (...) with two questions regarding the NGO Grant in order to gain further insight and clarity.*

1. We would like to involve public authorities as a municipality in the project as a partner, do we have to ask them the same documents as the other organisations? (It could be very difficult to have a register extract or other document showing the legal status of the applicants and a list of the member organisations of the applicants)

2. In Annex II, note number 2, could you kindly provide more details on where we can find the articles 1.1 and 3.2, or perhaps write the statements of those articles?

Answer : 1) The grant is intended exclusively for non-governmental organisations: “In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant(s) must be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation in a member state of the Council of Europe”. However, applicant organisations are welcome to involve or partner with other entities – including for instance associations of municipalities - in the implementation of the project or programme for which the grant is to be awarded.

2) The footnote refers to Articles 1.1 and 3.2 of the Grant Agreement, with a further reference to the Description of the Action. The budget for seminars and conferences outlined in Annex I should align with the Description of the Action.

Question 4: *“I am in the middle of preparing the application and was asked an interesting question by our president - can we even apply since our country of registration is Switzerland ?”*

Answer : Yes: as indicated in the eligibility criteria (see page 8 of the call for proposals): “In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant(s) must be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation in a member state of the Council of Europe;” Switzerland is a member state of the Council of Europe.

Question 5: *I would like to submit a project to the Council of Europe to increase democratic participation, but is there a sample project outline or a legislation to be followed?*

Answer : The awarding of grants is regulated by Rule No. 1374 of 16 December 2015 on the grant award procedures of the Council of Europe. This text and some further information can be found on the [civil society portal](#). There is no sample project outline in relation to this call for proposals.

Question 6 (...). *Where can I find out what are the documents required for the application for grant support (...)*

Answer : The documents to be submitted with an application are available in the announcement: See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/-/new-grant-for-civil-society-organisations-launched-by-the-council-of-europe>

[Call for proposals](#)

Appendix I - [Application form](#) (WORD)

Appendix II - [Estimated budget](#) (EXCEL)

Appendix III - [Grant Agreement](#) (WORD)

Question 7: *We have a question concerning the supporting documents, namely audit reports. Audits are mainly conducted in the framework of certain projects which is a demand of funding organizations, and they are not annual. Can they be replaced by financial statement/s of the lead applicant signed and stamped?*

Answer : When national legislation and the organisation's statute do not require periodic or annual audits of the financial statements, this should be clearly explained in the Application Form.

Question 8: *Our organisation would like to apply for the new NGO grant. We were wondering whether we could write the grant proposal about Istanbul Convention and AI Convention?*

Answer : the Istanbul Convention and the Convention on Artificial Intelligence are indeed part of the standards of the Council of Europe around which projects could be built. **The broader purpose of the grants should however be borne in mind:**

“1. General objective

The grant will fund three projects designed to mobilise actors interested in countering the democratic backsliding and fostering a democratic culture

across Europe and strengthening the interaction, dialogue and exchanges between the Council of Europe and European civil society. The grant will fund three projects covering different regions of Europe, namely Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe and Central Europe.

The projects will in particular:

- raise awareness about the work done by the Council of Europe to make member states more resilient to pressures undermining democratic values, promote democratic governance and enhance civil participation in political decision-making, including the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy
- raise awareness about existing Council of Europe standards on civil society and how they can be used by civil society actors to advance their causes
- raise awareness about existing, and help to identify new opportunities of cooperation and interaction between the Council of Europe and civil society

(...)

2. Means of action

The following activities should be undertaken by each project:

- Dissemination of information regarding [Reykjavik Principles for Democracy](#)
- Dissemination of existing Council of Europe standards on civil society, such as the Recommendations [CM/Rec\(2007\)14](#) and [CM/Rec\(2018\)11](#)
- Dissemination of existing Council of Europe tools related to opportunities for participating in Council of Europe standard setting, monitoring and cooperation activities, such as the [Conference of INGOs \(CINGO\)](#), the [Practical Guide for Civil Society](#) and the [Civil Society Portal](#)
- Organisation of events on the work done by the Council of Europe in the area of democracy and engagement with civil society
- Dissemination of results of the events in blogs/news/articles in different media and social media channels.

The events can take the form of conferences, seminars, dialogues, webinars and/or workshops in different European regions. Each event will comprise of two components:

- a component on awareness raising about the work for democracy of the Council of Europe and discussing opportunities of increased cooperation and interaction between the Council of Europe and civil society;
- a thematic component of particular interest, e.g. a) the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy and their translation into actionable parameters; b) taking stock of and responding to the evolution of civic space in Europe; c) modalities of civil society involvement: representation, participation, deliberation.

Question 9: *I would like to know whether Ukraine and NGOs from this country are eligible to participate in this competition and whether they can take part in the consortium of applicants?*

Answer : Yes: as indicated in the eligibility criteria (see page 8 of the call for proposals): "In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant(s) must be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation in a member state of the Council of Europe;" Ukraine is a member state of the Council of Europe. The call for proposals explicitly covers also the situation of a consortium of organisations.

Question 10: My name is (...) and I am a member of the (...) Bar Association Board. In this capacity, I am interested in exploring potential collaborations for initiatives that align with our association's mission and values. I recently came across information about this project. In light of the details provided in the project announcement, we would like to inquire about the possibility of the (...) Bar Association's participation in this project.

Answer : A bar association may be considered a non-governmental organisation. However, the various eligibility criteria for this grant are to be borne in mind:

"In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant(s) must:

- be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation in a member state of the Council of Europe;
- be able to carry out activities described in its project proposal in at least two regions of Europe;
- have been active for at least five years in the field of advocacy, policy-making and/or representation of interests related to democracy, human rights or the rule of law;
- have expertise of the Council of Europe standards or experience of cooperating with the Council of Europe
- 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)¹;
- have sufficient operational and professional capacity, including staff, to carry out activities described in its project proposal²;
- have a bank account.

In case of a consortium, the above criteria should as much as possible be met individually by the organisations concerned, especially the lead organisation, it being understood that their combined experience, expertise and geographical coverage will be taken into account."

¹ The Council of Europe shall have full discretion in determining whether applicants are considered to have sufficient financial capacity in light of the complexity of the initiative proposed.

² The Council of Europe shall have full discretion in determining whether applicants are considered to have sufficient financial capacity in light of the complexity of the initiative proposed.

Question 11: I am writing on behalf of (...), an association based in Türkiye. I would like to know if organisations / associations based in Türkiye are eligible to apply for project funding, and if the application will be accepted. (...)

Answer : Yes: as indicated in the eligibility criteria (see page 8 of the call for proposals): "In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant(s) must be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation in a member state of the Council of Europe". Türkiye is a member state of the Council of Europe.

Question 12: *I saw a call for proposals has been published <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/new-grant-launched-for-civil-society-organisations> Is it worth it to apply or considering, we have never been part of CoE projects or cooperation, is it too soon to apply?*

Answer : One of the eligibility criteria listed in the call for proposals (see page 8-9) provides that the applicants shall "have expertise of the Council of Europe standards or experience of cooperating with the Council of Europe". These criteria are not cumulative and experience with Council of Europe activities can thus be replaced by appropriate expertise of the Council of Europe standards.

Question 13: *We are a consortium that is preparing a response to this call. We would like to communicate with you to clarify three points:*
a) is it possible to build a budget with your grant and an Erasmus youth grant
b) Is it possible to build a budget with your grant and state aid (municipality)?
c) is it possible to build a budget with your grant and corporate sponsorship assistance?
(...)

Answer : The co-financing requirements are outlined in the call for proposals as follows: Each Grantee shall also be required to contribute to the project either by way of its own resources or by contribution from third parties with an amount equivalent to at least 5% of the requested grant. Co-financing may take the form of financial or human resources, in-kind contributions or income generated by the action or project.

Applicants are required to specify the source of co-financing in Section 11 of the Application Form.

Question 14: (...) *We wanted to know if Azerbaijani NGOs can participate in your grant program.*

Answer : As indicated in the eligibility criteria (see page 8 of the call for proposals): "In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant(s) must be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation in a member state of the Council of Europe". Azerbaijan is a member state of the Council of Europe.

Question 16: *Wondering if a new NGO, meaning one that is on the early stages having yet no activity tracks or financial records, except the bureaucracy expenses for due legitimate diligences, is eligible for application submission?*

Answer : the call for proposals is aimed at experienced organisations with relevant expertise and knowledge; see the eligibility criteria on page 8 and 9, especially “have been active for at least five years in the field of advocacy, policy-making and/or representation of interests related to democracy, human rights or the rule of law”; “have expertise of the Council of Europe standards or experience of cooperating with the Council of Europe”; “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 (...)”. The list of supporting documents to be submitted also includes annual report and annual financial statements (section V on page 7).

Question 17: *We were advised to reach out to your department regarding the eligibility criterion of having expertise of the Council of Europe standards or experience of cooperating with the Council of Europe. While our organization (...) lacks direct experience working with the Council of Europe, our work consistently aligns with and upholds all Council’s standards.*

Answer : see response to question 12 above.

Question 18: *We write in regard to one of the eligibility criterion of being active for at least five years in the field of advocacy, policy-making and/or representation of interests related to democracy, human rights or the rule of law: Can you please clarify whether this is a criteria related to the legal personality of the main applicant (legal personality created at least five years ago with activities in the fields mentioned) or whether the criteria is to be understood more generally for the consortium applying and the relevant individuals responsible for the execution of the activity in case of allocation?*

Answer : The requirements for consortia are outlined on page 8-9 (“In case of a consortium, the above criteria should as much as possible [we underline] be met individually by the organisations concerned, especially the lead organisation, it being understood that their combined experience, expertise and geographical coverage will be taken into account”).

Question 19: (...) *Are we eligible to apply for the grant if our ONG is in the United Kingdom?*

Answer : As indicated in the eligibility criteria (see page 8 of the call for proposals): "In order to be eligible for a grant, the Applicant(s) must be legally constituted as a non-governmental organisation in a member state of the Council of Europe". The United Kingdom is a member state of the Council of Europe.

Question 20: *I represent the (...), which is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organization founded in 2012 in Georgia. In response to the challenging environment, we established [another] non-profit making organization (...) in Estonia in August 2024.*

Our team comprises (...)’s current members, ensuring continuity and expertise. We have opened a bank account in Lithuania.

As one of the criteria of eligibility is following: The Applicant "has been active for at least five years in the field of advocacy, policy-making and/or representation of interests related to democracy, human rights or the rule of law;"

I would greatly appreciate your guidance on whether we would be considered eligible to apply for this grant proposal through the Association (...).

Answer :

As explained in the response to question 1, while the eligibility criterion requiring at least five years of being active for at least five years in the field of advocacy, policy-making and/or representation of interests related to democracy, human rights or the rule of law has been designed to accommodate a range of possible situations, the list of supporting documents should clearly identify the organisation that formally submits the application and acts as the applicant. Please note that it is the responsibility of each prospective applicant to assess whether they are in a position to meet the above requirements, and the Council of Europe cannot provide individualised advice at this stage. If an applicant believes that specific circumstances may raise doubts about meeting a particular criterion, it is recommended to include an explanation demonstrating compliance with the requirements.
