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Support to projects of civil society organizations (CSOs) in WB within the project
Together For LGBTQI+ Equality

GUIDELINES FOR GRANT APPLICANTS

Deadline for submission of applications:

27 April 2026 until 12h00



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1. BACKGROUND

The project **Together For LGBTQI+ Equality**, within which framework this 2nd Call for Proposals of CSOs was published, is implemented by the Centre for Civic Education (CCE), in partnership with Queer Montenegro, Queer Center Skopje, Tuzla Open Center, Open Mind Spectrum Albania, Center for Social Group Development and ERA – LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey.

The project is financed by the European Union through the NDICI-Global Europe Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy, the 2023 Global Call for Proposals, and co-funded by the Ministry of Regional investment development and cooperation with Non-Governmental organisations.

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to an improvement in the lives of LGBTQI+ persons in the Western Balkans (WB) and foster their inclusion in all spheres of public and private life.

The target groups of the project are LGBTQI+ CSOs, LGBTQI+ persons in all six Western Balkans (WB) countries, staff members of LGBTQI+ organizations, judicial officials and lawyers. The final beneficiaries are LGBTQI+ communities in 6 WB countries, gaining improved legislation, increased support and heightened awareness within the general population about their position.

The LGBTQI+ community in the Western Balkans faces significant challenges, with international bodies highlighting ongoing discrimination and systemic neglect. ILGA-Europe's 2023 report underscores the lack of public services, forcing NGOs to step in, especially in Albania. Anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric, often framed around child protection, has fuelled discrimination in Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia. Transgender minors face increasing healthcare barriers, while violence at Pride events and hate crimes, including murders, have risen.

Far-right groups manipulate sex education topics to incite hostility, exacerbating social divisions. LGBTQI+ individuals, particularly trans people, face housing insecurity, economic hardship, and healthcare discrimination. Regional rankings on LGBTI rights remain low, with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia all struggling with acceptance and legal protections. European Commission reports continue to express serious concerns on this.

Activists and human rights defenders face mounting threats, restrictive laws and shrinking civil society space. LGBTQI+ organizations are prime targets, highlighting the urgent need for action. This initiative aims to address immediate needs while fostering long-term inclusion through education, advocacy and community empowerment. A collaborative regional approach is essential to securing equal rights and dignity for LGBTQI+ individuals across the Western Balkans.

Having regard to the foregoing, the project **Together For LGBTQI+ Equality** will implement two calls for proposals. This call is aimed at encouraging civic activism and direct assistance to the CSOs to participate in the Europeanization and democratization of society through financial support to their projects, strengthening their capacity to successfully implement these activities in accordance with European rules and providing continuous mentoring throughout projects. Therefore, a comprehensive capacity-building programme in project management, strengthening visibility of these project activities and for building skills in the area of advocacy in relation to protection of rights of LGBTQI+ individuals in the Western Balkans.



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2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The overall objective is to promote equality of LGBTIQ persons and their inclusion in all spheres of public and private life, in line with related EU guidelines.

The specific objectives of this Call for Proposals are:

- strengthen capacities of civil society, including through advocacy, public awareness raising, alliance building, and strategic litigation to contribute to repealing discriminatory laws, policies, measures and practices against LGBTIQ persons; and to contributing to policy-making in the area of non-discrimination.

3. PRIORITIES, THEMES AND ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The priorities and proposed topics of the projects for this Call for Proposals should be a response to the current challenges in LGBTIQ+ sector in WB countries. Namely, stand-alone projects addressing issues of discrimination of LGBTIQ+ persons will be funded.

Within this framework, project proposals should be thematically focused on the following areas:

- Legal assistance, policy monitoring and advocacy – Providing legal aid, monitoring policy implementation and advocating for legislative reforms to strengthen protections for LGBTIQ+ persons.
- Capacity building for LGBTIQ+ CSOs and human rights defenders – Organizing training programs and strengthening watchdog functions to enhance the effectiveness of LGBTIQ+ organizations in promoting and protecting human rights.
- Public awareness, education and cultural initiatives – Conducting awareness campaigns, producing educational materials and organizing innovative cultural events to foster societal acceptance and counter misinformation.
- Healthcare, social inclusion and service evaluation – Monitoring and evaluating public sector services, advocating for improved access to healthcare and social support, and addressing discrimination in key areas like housing and employment.
- Regional collaboration, networking and knowledge exchange – Establishing cross-border partnerships, facilitating the exchange of best practices, and organizing regional forums to enhance cooperation among stakeholders.
- Research, monitoring and advocacy for systemic change – Conducting research, publishing policy recommendations and monitoring hate crimes and discrimination to drive evidence-based advocacy and institutional accountability.

Activities that can be supported by this call within the abovementioned priorities, themes and areas:

- Participation in monitoring of policy implementation;
- Monitoring and evaluation of services delivered by the public sector;
- Networking and partnership building;
- Gathering and exchange of information, know-how and experience;
- Organisation of training events and implementation of training programmes;
- Develop or strengthen watchdog functions;
- Organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops, round tables, etc.;
- Research and analysis;
- Education activities;
- Monitoring activities;



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- Publications;
- Drafting policy or legislation recommendations;
- Advocacy for the revision of the existing legislation and adoption of the new ones;
- Organising innovative cultural events;
- Production of print and video materials.

Notes: the list of activities is not exhaustive but can serve as a possible guide for interested CSOs in the context of the set objectives, priorities and themes of the call. Mainstreaming of gender dimension within the projects is strongly recommended.

Activities that cannot be supported by this call:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorship for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, etc;
- actions related to sub-granting to other parties;
- actions concerning only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or trainings;
- actions concerned only or mainly with study visits or participation in international forums;
- infrastructure projects or projects essentially focused on the purchase of equipment;
- purchase and/or renovation of buildings or offices;
- activities undertaken before signature of the contract;
- actions aimed at making a profit;
- actions related to charitable donations;
- actions discriminating individuals or groups of people on the ground of their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack of them, or ethnic origin;
- actions supporting individual political parties;
- actions already funded by other EU programmes.

4. FINANCIAL ASPECT OF THE CALL

A total of **EUR 300,000** will be allocated through this Call for Proposals.

The amount of funds that can be allocated for an individual project under this call will range from a minimum of **EUR 10,000** to a maximum of **EUR 18,000**.

The requested amount of funds within this call can range between a minimum of **70% and a maximum of 100% of eligible costs**. The difference between the total cost of the action and the approved amount within this call, if not 100% supported, must come from funds that are not the budget of the EU.

The maximum amount of funds provided for staff salaries/fees, office expenses and possible costs of purchasing equipment must not exceed 50% of the total costs of the entire project, whereas the maximum amount for staff salaries/fees is 45%.

Financial reports of the subgrants will be subject of an external audit. In the case of submission of partnership projects, only one organization - the project lead applicant – will be directly responsible for managing the financial resources of all partner organizations in the project.

This call encourages cooperation with local institutions, but also with other CSOs so that even those organizations that are less developed could get a possibility to be supported through this call¹.

¹ The lead applicant and the co-applicants/partners are Beneficiaries of the contract and both have to follow the same eligibility criteria (for instance, a municipality as a co-applicant is not eligible, but it can be an associate, see 5.3.)



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5. RULES OF THE CALL

5.1. Who can apply?

In order to be eligible for participation in this call, CSOs must meet all criteria as follows:

- be a legal person;
- be non-profit-making;
- be a civil society organisation;
- be registered in one of the WB countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) at least 12 months before the deadline for submission of project proposals;
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project.

Organisations applying under this Call cannot request funds that would be used as co-financing for other projects.

CSOs which have been supported within the NDICI-Global Europe Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy, 2023 Global Call for Proposals, Budget line: 14.020211, Reference: EuropeAid/177407/DH/ACT/Multi are not eligible to apply for this Call.

5.2. Partnerships / Partners

Partnerships are not mandatory, but they are allowed and advisable. Partners participate in creating project proposals and its implementation. They **use financial resources under the same conditions that apply to the project applicant**. Therefore, partners must meet the **following criteria**:

- be a legal person;
- be non-profit-making;
- be a civil society organisation;
- be registered in one of the WB countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) at least 12 months before the deadline for submission of project proposals;
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project.

Information about the project partners should be included in the document 'Partners', which is part of the Application Form.

5.3. Associates

Other organizations, besides the project applicant and the partner, can also be involved in the project implementation. They have the status of "associates". Associates play a role in the project implementation, but they may not receive funding from the grant, except for per diem and travel costs, when applicable. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria that apply to project applicants and partners, i.e. **associates can be public institutions, local governments, representatives of the business community, etc.**

Information about the associates should be included in the document 'Associates', which is part of the Application Form.



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5.4. Location of the project implementation

Projects have to be implemented in one of the WB countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

CSOs are encouraged to cover less developed areas of the respective countries.

5.5. Number of applications per project applicant

Each CSO can participate in this call only once, i.e., either as a project applicant or as a partner.

5.6. Duration of the project implementation

Funds will be allocated for projects implemented within a minimum of **5** and a maximum of **8 months**.

5.7. How to apply?

Project proposals should be written in English.

Applicants are required to submit a filled **application package**, which consists of:

1. application form
2. budget proposal

documentation (scanned):

1. copy of the registration of the organization;
2. a copy of the statute of the organization;
3. financial report for 2025 submitted to the Tax Administration of the respective countries.
4. Signed and certified statement that more than half of the members of the governing body of the organization are not members of the political party bodies, public officials, executives, civil servants or state employees.

In the case of a partnership project, it is necessary to submit the same supporting documentation for both the partners and the lead project applicant. For all partners, it is necessary to submit a "Partnership Statement" (*which is part VI of the Application Form*), stamped and signed by an authorized person of the organization with the status of a partner in the project.

The electronic version shall be sent exclusively to the email grants.1@cgo-cce.org with a subject - "Call for support to projects of CSOs in WB - Together For LGBTQI+ Equality".

Incomplete project proposals, project proposals submitted in any other way not prescribed by this call, as well as proposals submitted in inappropriate forms shall not be considered.

5.8. Deadline for submission of applications



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The deadline for submitting applications is 27 April 2026 until 12h00.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The time of sending the email with application will be used as confirmation of the date of submission of project proposals.

All applicants will receive a confirmation from the CCE on the receipt of the email with a project proposal.

5.9. Further information about submission of applications

If needed, further information can be obtained by sending questions to grants.1@cgo-cce.org, no later than 27 April 2026, with email subject reference: “Call for support to projects of CSOs - LGBTIQ-question”. Answers to individual questions will be sent exclusively by e-mail.

Note: To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the CCE cannot give an opinion on the objectives, expected results and activities of the proposed projects, as well as on other elements of the application.

Questions that may be relevant to other project applicants, together with answers and important notes for project applicants, will be published on the CCE website www.cgo-cce.org after the deadline for their submission and the latest seven days before the deadline for sending applications to the Call for Proposal.

6. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

The evaluation of applications will be conducted in **two phases**. The first phase will include an administrative check of the received documentation and the eligibility criteria.

Projects that pass administration phase will go to the second phase.

The second phase involves the evaluation of the applications by the Evaluation Committee, according to the Evaluation Grid presented in the Guidelines for grant applicants.

The proposals that pass this administrative check will be evaluated according to the Evaluation Grid presented below.

Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum points
1. Relevance of the action	12
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the priorities and objectives defined by the call?	5
1.2 How clearly are the target groups and final beneficiaries defined? To what extent is the project in line with the needs of the target groups?	5
1.3. Is the project based on a robust assessment and analysis of the problem it addresses?	2
2. Objectives and results	5



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2.1 Are the objectives and results of the project clearly defined and aligned with the objectives of the call?	5
3. Feasibility of the project and involvement of partners	14
3.1 Are the proposed activities adequate, feasible and in line with the objectives and estimated outputs of the project?	6
3.2 Is the action plan clear and realistic/feasible?	4
3.3 Are the roles of the project partners and associates clearly defined in terms of responsibility for implementation of activities?	2
3.4 Are CSOs outside Belgrade, Prishtina, Podgorica, Sarajevo, Skopje and Tirana involved as lead applicant or partners?	2
4. Technical and operational capacities of the organization	4
4.1 Does the organization have the capacity for technical and financial project management?	2
4.2 Does the organization have relevant previous experience in the field addressed by the proposed project?	2
5. Sustainability of the project	5
5.1 Does the project have financial, institutional and political sustainability?	5
6. Budget	10
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	4
6.2 Is the ratio between estimated costs and estimated results satisfactory?	6
Maximum total score	50

Once all the proposals have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached.

The list of supported projects will be published on the website www.cgo-cce.org, as well as on the websites of partner organizations.



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7. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CALL

	Date	Time
1. Information sessions	02 April	Online - 10h00
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications about the call	13 April	
3. Deadline for publication of clarifications	15 April	
4. Deadline for submission of project proposals	27 April	12h00
5. Information to organizations that have passed the administrative check	30 April	
6. Information to organizations whose projects have been selected for funding	15 May	
7. Contract signature	28 May	
8. Mandatory capacity building programme for subgrantees	27-29 May	

Note: This is a provisional timetable of activities, except for the dates indicated in items 2, 3 and 4. CCE reserves the right to modify the timetable, and the modified timetable will be published on the official website www.cgo-cce.org.