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|  | **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**  **Procedure for acceptance of project proposals for grants from the Republic of Bulgaria** |

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria through the Embassy/Consulate General of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Republic of Serbia announces a procedure for the acceptance and selection of proposals for projects that will be implemented with a grant within the framework of the Official development assistance (ODA) of the Republic of Bulgaria with an initial term to be implemented in 2024.

**Priority Areas for Project Implementation on the territory of the Republic of Serbia:**

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| • Protecting human rights, implementing human rights standards and improving access to justice.  • The affirmation of democratic values and reforming of the public sector according to European standards in the context of the European integration process of Serbia / incl. by sending Bulgarian experts/.  • Increasing administrative capacity in order to strengthen the rule of law, democratic governance and promote civil society and the social inclusion of young people in the decision-making process.  • Connectivity – small and medium-sized businesses, entrepreneurship, job creation for young people with an emphasis on regions that are the least developed in terms of economic development, access to education, healthcare, etc.  • Improving the learning environment in educational institutions with a focus on underdeveloped regions and educational institutions.  • Ensuring a quality and healthy environment and sustainable management of natural resources.  • Improving the energy efficiency of public and socially significant building stock with an emphasis on regions that are the least developed in terms of economic development. |

**1. Objectives and Scope of the Projects:**

• Providing assistance to the processes of democratic reforms, protection of human rights and minority rights, strengthening of the rule of law, public institutions, civil society, market economy, etc., including in the context of support for European integration;

• Stimulating and supporting the building of the administrative capacity of Serbia to achieve the processes of democratic reforms and the observance of human rights and the rights of minorities, especially in relation to institutions that currently do not have sufficient experience and personnel capacity for the relevant functions and activities;

• Support for freedom of speech and the media by promoting quality, independent and citizen journalism;

• Improving the business environment and increasing employment;

• Stimulation of good practices in the field of environmental monitoring and protection, as well as in the sustainable management of natural resources.

**2.  Target Groups:**

• NGOs;

• Organizations of local self-government;

• Educational institutions;

• Young people in the Republic of Serbia;

• Minority groups;

• Eco organizations.

**3. Expected Results:**

• confirmation of the good name and international authority of Bulgaria;

• improving socio-economic development and good governance;

• deepening the interaction between the institutions at the central, regional and local level, etc.;

• visible progress in guaranteeing the rights of national minorities through effective implementation of human rights standards and strengthening the human rights culture of local administrations and national councils of national minorities;

• support for freedom of speech and the media by promoting quality, independent and citizen journalism;

• strengthening the administrative capacity for democratic reforms and strengthening the rule of law, promoting good governance;

• increasing the awareness and civic activity of young people and their empowerment in the management of public policies;

• creating better conditions and increasing competitiveness for small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurship, with special attention to the creation of new opportunities for young people;

• better and healthier environment and sustainable management of natural resources.

**4. Eligible Project Budget:**

4.1. The minimum allowable value of a project is BGN 10,000 /about EUR 5,000/

4.2. Maximum value per project is:

• for projects whose main purpose is the delivery of goods and/or the provision of services - up to BGN 80,000 /about EUR 40,900/;

• for projects whose main purpose is to carry out repair and/or construction activities - up to BGN 160,000 (about EUR 81,800).

4.3. Co-financing of project activities provided by the applicant will be considered as an advantage in the evaluation, selection and approval of the projects.

4.4 Project proposals envisaging joint activities with Bulgarian institutions/ministries, schools, higher education institutions, institutes, research centers, non-governmental organizations, etc. / will also be given preference.

**5. Implementation Deadlines and Duration of the Projects:**

5.1. Project proposals must contain an indicative start date for project implementation after January 15, 2024 and no later than November 30, 2024.

5.2. The deadline for project implementation cannot be later than December 31, 2026.

**6. Eligible Candidates:**

• International and local non-governmental organizations;

• Municipalities and their associations;

• Educational, health and social institutions;

• International humanitarian organizations;

• Other organizations and associations that have no political goals and involvement.

**7. Eligible Activities and Project Costs:**

**7.1. Eligible activities:**

Activities contributing to the strengthening of public institutions in the partner country, responsible for developing and implementing national policy in priority areas and aiming to help strengthen their transparency, accountability and efficiency and contributing to strengthening the development of civil society and increasing its contribution for social justice, democracy and sustainable development, for example:

• Development of new/updating existing training modules;

• Organizing and conducting trainings for the employees of the administration of the partner country;

• Conducting trainings on specific topics in Bulgarian institutions to exchange good practices and increase the qualification of employees from the administration of the partner country;

• Organization and holding of seminars, forums, conferences;

• Research and strategy development;

• Activities to raise awareness of citizens' rights;

• Activities to promote multicultural dialogue and to limit racism, xenophobia, hate speech, discrimination and intolerance in society

• Activities to improve dialogue between non-governmental organizations and local, regional and national authorities;

• Activities related to improving the quality of social infrastructure /educational/health/ and increasing the potential of sites through the supply of equipment and materials, construction works, restoration, renewal, rehabilitation, measures to preserve and improve adjacent buildings and infrastructure, public buildings and other complementary objects, for example: Delivery of equipment and materials intended for objects of state or municipal ownership - schools, hospitals, kindergartens, homes for the elderly, etc.; Construction and repair works to improve the state of objects that are state or municipal property - schools, hospitals, kindergartens, homes for the elderly, etc.

**7.1.2. Mandatory activities that must be provided in the project:**

• Preparation of an audit report by an independent financial auditor;

• Activities to ensure publicity and visibility of the provided financial aid, according to the Guidelines for Publicity and Visibility of Bulgarian Development Aid, worth from 3 to 5% of the total value of the project, but not more than 5 thousand BGN;

• In the implementation of all projects financed with the Bulgarian development aid, the Guidelines for publicity and visibility of the Bulgarian development aid should be applied /see Appendix No. 2/.

**7.2. Eligible and ineligible expenses**

**7.2.1. Project implementation costs must simultaneously meet the following conditions:**

• To be carried out within the terms specified in the agreement for targeted grant funding after the start and before the end of the project implementation period;

• To be lawful, to be necessary and proportionate to the implementation of the activities permitted under the project in a manner compatible with the principles of economy, effectiveness and efficiency;

• To have been carried out against the necessary expenditure justification documents - invoices or other documents of equivalent evidentiary value according to national legislation;

• To be within the value of the project;

• To be for activities that are not financed with funds under another project, program or any other financial scheme originating from the national budget, the EU budget or another donor;

• The selection of a supplier of goods and services has been carried out in accordance with the current applicable national legislation;

• Costs for organization and management /costs for a project manager/coordinator/ should be up to 10% of the total allowable costs for the individual project.

**7.2.2. Ineligible expenses**

• Expenses that are outside the scope of eligible activities under this announcement

• Utility expenses - telephone expenses, subscription to internet services, newspapers and magazines, stationery; costs for ongoing maintenance of buildings such as electricity, water, taxes, municipal fees, etc.

• Bank costs - interest on loans, debt service fees and penalties for late payments, fees for financial transactions and others

• Refundable VAT

• Costs that are covered by other sources

• Fines, penalties and costs of legal proceedings

• Unjustified expenses incurred for activities outside of those agreed in the agreement

**7.2.3. Cost estimates**

The completed cost estimate is an integral part of the project proposal, with which the grant application is applied for under the announced competitive procedure. The estimate should contain specific and clear information about the planned costs of activities in accordance with those planned in the project proposal.

The cost estimate is entered for the activities included in the project proposal (Organization and management, Communication plan, etc.), and for each activity, the costs for all foreseen sub-activities related to the specific activity are entered sequentially (for example, for organizing an event, etc.). In the "Type of activity" column, a specific description should be entered for each specific expense.

When planning the costs related to publicity and visibility of the project, the requirements described in detail in the Publicity and Visibility Guidelines of the Bulgarian Development Assistance should be followed.

**8. Required Documents for Application:**

An application form is available on the following website in Bulgarian and English: https://www.mfa.bg/bg/3865.

All columns of the form should be duly filled in in Bulgarian and/or English. In the event that gaps are identified that hinder the evaluation of the project proposal, the Embassy/Consulate General of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Republic of Serbia may request additional information within a short period of time. Failure to receive such information within the specified period shall be considered grounds for rejection of the proposal.

**9. Method and Deadlines for Projects Applications:**

Project proposals will be accepted by e-mail at:

bul\_oda\_serbia@mfa.bg

**Project proposals must be sent as two separate files - /1/ in Word format and /2/ in PDF format (scanned with signature and stamp).**

Projects should be in Bulgarian or English.

**Projects are accepted until May 30, 2023.**

**10. Criteria for initial evaluation and eligibility of project proposals**

Project proposals that meet the following compliance and eligibility criteria will be accepted for evaluation:

• The applicant is an eligible beneficiary, according to the call for project proposals;

• The application form is filled in correctly and contains the necessary information for the evaluation of the project proposal (all applicable fields of the application form are filled in);

• The deadlines for implementation and the duration of the project correspond to those indicated in the advertisement;

• The goals and scope of the project proposal correspond to the priority areas and directions of ODA set in the announcement;

• The project proposal is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the priority goals of the Medium-term Development and Humanitarian Aid Program of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2024;

• The target groups of the project proposal correspond to those indicated in the advertisement;

• Project activities are eligible, according to the Guidelines of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development for activities that count as ODA;

• The project proposal includes communication activities that ensure visibility of the financial assistance provided by Bulgaria;

• The expected results of the activities provided for in the project proposal and the set indicators for their measurement are clearly defined.

**11. Cycle of payments for approved projects**

Payments under the approved project proposals are made in the following manner based on a signed agreement (as a sample):

Advance payment - in the amount of 50% of the amount of approved funds under the project;

Interim payment (second installment) – in the amount of 40% of the approved funds for the project after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has received and approved an interim report and a financial report on the interim implementation of the project;

Final payment - the amount to cover the costs incurred by the beneficiary to complete the project, but not more than 10% of the approved project funds, after receipt and approval by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of a final report, a consolidated financial statement on the implementation of activities, audited by an independent financial auditor.

**All unforeseen expenses above the approved budget of the specific project are financed with own funds.**

**Cost estimates must be consistent with the specified payment cycle.**

**12. Applicants must indicate whether the project is expected to have a negative effect on the environment in the country of implementation, as well as the need for an environmental impact assessment according to local legislation.**

**13. Additional information:**

Applicants are notified of the results of the procedure for evaluation, selection and approval of the project proposals within 14 working days from the completion of the individual stages of the procedure. The Embassy/Consulate General of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Republic of Serbia has no obligation to inform the applicants about the grounds for approval or rejection of the received project proposals.

**Annex 1**

**Decree No. 234 of the Council of Ministers of 01.08.2011 on the policy of the Republic of Bulgaria on participation in international development cooperation (excerpts)**

**Art. 23(3) A legal entity that:**

1. has been declared bankrupt;

2. is in liquidation proceedings or is in a similar procedure according to national laws and by-laws;

3. is in open bankruptcy proceedings or has entered into an out-of-court settlement with its creditors within the meaning of Art. 740 of the Commercial Law, and in case the applicant is a foreign person - is in a similar procedure according to the national laws and by-laws, including when his activity is under the order of the court, or has ceased his activity;

4. is deprived of the right to exercise a certain profession or activity according to the legislation of the country where the offense was committed;

5. has monetary obligations to the state or to a municipality within the meaning of art. 162, para. 2 of the Tax and Insurance Procedural Code, established by an effective act of a competent authority, unless a rescheduling or postponement of the obligations is allowed, or monetary obligations related to the payment of social security contributions or taxes according to the legal norms of the country in which is established;

6. there are outstanding private debts to the state, listed in art. 3, para. 7 of the Law on the National Revenue Agency.

**(4) Legal entities cannot apply if a member of its governing body is any of the below:**

1. has been convicted with an effective sentence for a crime of a general nature;

2. has not fulfilled his obligations related to payment of social security contributions or payment of taxes in accordance with the legislation applicable to the person;

3. has intentionally provided documents with false content when providing information required as a condition for financing activities under development assistance, or has not provided such information;

4. is deprived of the right to exercise a certain profession or activity according to the legislation of the country where the offense was committed;

5. is a legal entity for which there is a circumstance under para. 3;

6. there are outstanding private debts to the state, listed in art. 3, para. 7 of the Law on the National Revenue Agency.

**(6) When members of the governing bodies are legal entities, the requirements of para. 5 refer to their representatives in the relevant governing bodies.**

**(7) Persons may not apply for participation in the provision of development aid:**

1. in which a member of a management or control body, as well as a temporary person performing such a position, including a procurator or a commercial representative, is a related person within the meaning of § 1, item 1 of the additional provision of the Act on the prevention and detection of conflicts of interest with the department administering the relevant project, or with employees in a managerial position in its organization;

2. who have concluded a contract with a person under Art. 21 or 22 of the Act on Prevention and Determination of Conflict of Interest.

**Annex 2**

**GUIDELINES FOR PUBLICITY AND VISIBILITY OF BULGARIAN DEVELOPMENT AID**

1. **The information materials** used in the implementation of the communication plan for development projects, financed with funds under the **Bulgarian Development Assistance**, should contain the **following mandatory elements of visualization**:

1.1. The logo of Bulgarian Development Assistance; the flag of the partner country or the logo of the beneficiary implementing the project; text in the official language of the partner country, preserving the meaning of the following text in Bulgarian and English **The project /Project Title/ is funded with the Bulgarian Development Aid** (in case , that the name of the project is already mentioned in the relevant material, the text can be written as follows: **This project is funded with the Bulgarian Development Aid /This project is funded with the Bulgarian Development Aid/);** in case the information materials are intended for an audience speaking a different language than the official language of the partner country, the text can be written in English and, if necessary, in the language of the target audience if they speak the same language, different from the official language of the partner country.

 

1.2. In the case of a project that is co-financed and/or implemented simultaneously by another donor and/or international organization listed in item 1.1. mandatory elements, to be complied with and adapted to the publicity rules of the co-financing organization, without omitting the mandatory elements listed in item 1.1.

1.3. In publications, scientific publications, handbooks, informational web pages and others that are related to the presentation of sociological studies, statistical data, analysis, etc., which constitute an evaluation and/or may influence the audience in a way other than informing , presenting facts, the following text be used as a note:

- This publication (or other type of material) was prepared with the financial support of the Bulgarian Development Assistance. Only the contractors of the project /name of the contractor organization/ are responsible for the content. Under no circumstances can the materials (in the relevant publication/material) be considered as reflecting the position of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Development Assistance. / This publication has been produced with the assistance of the Bulgarian Development Aid. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of <name of the author/contractor/implementing partner/international organization> and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Development Aid.

**2. Printed information materials**

**2.1. Brochures, flyers, leaflets, posters, information bulletins, diplomas and certificates from trainings, attendance lists, folders, notebooks, notebooks, notepads, etc.** – they should contain the text and logo of the Bulgarian Development Assistance, tailored to the specifics of the target audience;

**2.2. Banners and billboards, etc.** – should contain all mandatory visual elements, including the logo of the Bulgarian Development Assistance. The name and logo of the beneficiary can also be added to them. Beneficiary can put up banners or billboards etc. (e.g. in the premises of institutions implementing or benefiting from the results of projects financed with the funds of the Bulgarian Development Assistance). They are placed in the halls where project events are held - seminars, conferences, trainings, meetings, etc.;

**2.3. Promotional and advertising materials of small size (pens, USB, keychains, badges, lighters, etc.)** - given the small area of the printable field, a mandatory element for visualization is the text: Bulgarian Development Aid and logo in a language appropriate with the specifics of the target audience;

**2.4. Information signs** - information signs should contain all mandatory elements for visualization, and the text must be written in the official language of the partner country and in English. If it is technically possible on site, it is recommended that the logo of the Bulgarian Development Assistance be placed on the information board, if possible accompanied by the logo or national flag of the beneficiary of the project.

**3. Public events** - The organizers of information and training events (seminars, conferences, workshops, information days, etc.) related to the implementation of development projects financed with funds under the Bulgarian Development Aid should explicitly announce that the relevant project is financed with funds under the Bulgarian Development Aid, using the above-mentioned elements of information and publicity measures. They can do this by placing banners in the halls where the event is held, which include the logo of the Bulgarian Development Assistance

All documents, publications and advertising and information materials related to the event must meet the requirements for visualization according to these guidelines / press releases, certificates of participation, advertising and information boards, multimedia presentations, posters, etc./.

**4. Articles and interviews** - In public appearances, articles and interviews of representatives of the beneficiary, related to the project, it is necessary to indicate the role of the Bulgarian Development Aid.

**5.** **Paid publications and broadcasts** - /advertisements, advertising spots, interstitials, reports, films, PR materials, etc./ the text should be incorporated: **Project /name of the project/ is financed with funds under the Bulgarian Development Assistance /The project /Project Title/ is funded with the Bulgarian Development Aid** and to place the logo of the Bulgarian Development Aid as a mandatory element for visualization, tailored to the specifics of the target audience.

**6. Internet**

The text " Project /project title/ is funded with funds under **the Bulgarian Development Aid /The project /Project Title/ is funded with the Bulgarian Development Aid**, taking into account the specifics of the communication channel and the audience, where possible the logo of the Bulgarian Development Aid is available development (the flag of the Republic of Bulgaria) and the flag of the partner country.

**7. Information stickers**

When purchasing technical and/or office equipment necessary for the implementation of the project or as a result of it, the beneficiary should place a sticker in an appropriate place on the surface of the equipment. On the sticker must be visualized (the flag of the Republic of Bulgaria) the logo of the Bulgarian Development Assistance, the flag of the partner country or the logo of the beneficiary, accompanied by text: **Project /name of the project/ is financed with funds under the Bulgarian Development Assistance /The project /Project Title/ is funded with the Bulgarian Development Aid.**