

ONGOING CALL FOR INTERVENTION PROJECTS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Operator of the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme (ACF Regional, ACFR), *i.e.* the consortium made up of the Foundation in Support for Local Democracy (leader), the Education for Democracy Foundation, and the Information Society Development Foundation, issues the ongoing call for intervention projects. The Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants.

The legal framework for the Programme is provided by:

- Protocol 38C of the EEA Enlargement Agreement on the EEA Financial Mechanism (2014-2021),
- Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 between Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Poland,
- Programme Implementation Agreement on the implementation of the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme in Poland financed from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021, between the Financial Mechanism Office affiliated with the European Free Trade Association and the Foundation in Support of Local Democracy,
- Manual for Fund Operators of the Active Citizens Fund.

The total allocation earmarked for quick response (intervention) grants is EUR 542,070, of which EUR 216,828 is allotted to the first round, and EUR 325,242 to the second round.

The Operator reserves the right to reallocate funds between rounds.

Due to the ongoing application and evaluation process, the available financial allocation could be exhausted before the deadline.

The following amounts are allotted to particular support areas corresponding to the Program's outcomes:

- Outcome 1. Increased support for human rights: EUR 235,665
- Outcome 2. Vulnerable groups are empowered: EUR 78,555
- Outcome 3. Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness: EUR 227,850

All grant applications should contribute to achieving the planned Programme outcomes.

The Programme supports projects implemented across Poland. However, **activities cannot take place in the city of Warsaw and the projects beneficiaries cannot be based in Warsaw (though project promoters can be based in Warsaw).**

The criteria for selection are, thus, as follows: total score given by experts and allocation for outcomes incl. special focus areas.

The total allocation for the call for intervention projects covers all Poland, and is not divided by region.

The prerequisite condition to obtain the grant is receiving from evaluating experts a score equal to or exceeding **75%** of the total possible score. Nonetheless, the limited total allocation amount will not allow for funding all project applications awarded a score above this threshold.

There is one type of quick response (intervention) grants available:

- minimum grant amount: EUR 6,000
- maximum grant amount: EUR 15,000
- implementation period: 3 to 8 months,
- co-financing: optional,
- Applicants may apply for additional funding towards bilateral cooperation with Donor State entities: up to 15% of the basic grant amount (up to EUR 2,250).

The Operator reserves the right to amend call rules before the second round.

DEADLINES FOR APPLICATIONS AND APPLICATION EXAMINATION TIMELINE

Applications deadline:

You can submit intervention project applications on an ongoing basis, in **two rounds**:

- **first round:** from 12.00 (noon) CET on 07 September 2021 (Tuesday) to 12.00 (noon) CET on 30 December 2021 (Thursday).
- **second round:** Q3 2022–Q2 2023 .

Applications will only be accepted *via* the Electronic Grant Application and Management System (EGAMS), available at: <http://generator.aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl>.

Instructions for Use are available in the EGAMS (also on the Programme website <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/konkurs-interwencyjny/>, Attachment 3).

Applications submitted without using the EGAMS will not be examined.

Announcement of call results:

During the call, the Fund Operator will perform an ongoing assessment of the submitted applications. For both calls, we will take decisions on awarding quick response (intervention) grants every month. For applications filed until the twentieth day of a given month, the Fund Operator will perform assessment and publish results by the end of the next calendar month.

Application timeline and grant decision deadlines for the first round:

Application timeline	Publication of grant decision
7–20 September 2021	31 October 2021
21 September–20 October 2021	30 November 2021

21 October–20 November 2021	23 December 2021
21 November–20 December 2021	31 January 2022
21–30 December 2021 to 12.00 (noon) CET	28 February 2022

The Fund Operator will publish lists of entities who were granted funding on the Programme website after the completion of each monthly evaluation of applications submitted for intervention projects. Applicants will be notified of evaluation results *via* e-mail. Completed evaluation sheets will be made available in the EGAMS.

Intervention application forms, together with instructions for their completion, are available on the Programme website at: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/konkurs-interwencyjny/> (Attachment 2).

ABOUT THE ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND – REGIONAL PROGRAMME

Active Citizens Fund – Regional is a programme funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway (hereinafter referred to as ‘Donor States’) under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism (so-called ‘EEA Funds’) open to 15 EU Member States in Central and Southern Europe.

EEA Funds have allocated funding for civil society organisations. EUR 53 mln has been set aside for supporting civil society organisations in Poland. This amount has been broken down into two parts: EUR 30 mln for the Active Citizens Fund – National Programme¹ and EUR 23 mln for the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme.

The Fund aims to strengthen civil society, promote active citizenship, empower vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion, and level the playing field in terms of opportunities.

Furthermore, the Programme seeks to develop bilateral relations between civil society and entities based in Poland and Donor States, and to promote regional exchange and networking, with particular emphasis on sharing knowledge and good practices in strengthening civil society.

Grant competitions offer support for actions taken by Polish civil society organisations – independently or in partnership with other entities from Poland, the Donor States (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein), the Beneficiary States eligible for EEA Funds (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia), and Poland’s non-EEA neighbours (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia). When implementing a project with a partner from a Donor State, you may apply for additional funding to cover partnership costs.

The Programme supports actions conducted by organisations based across Poland, **however, project activities cannot take place in the city of Warsaw**. Particular consideration will be given

¹ Active Citizens Fund – National Programme is being carried out by a consortium made up of the Stefan Batory Foundation (leader), the Shipyard Foundation, and the Academy of Civic Organizations Foundation (for more, go to: <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/>).

to projects which engage youth – in the capacity of both participants and recipients of project actions – and focus on climate change, environmental protection, and counteracting the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Programme shall be based on the common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The Programme shall follow the principles of good governance; it shall be participatory and inclusive, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient. There will be zero-tolerance towards corruption. The Programme will be consistent with sustainable development, long-term economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection. The Programme will follow a results and risk management approach.

WHAT ARE INTERVENTION PROJECTS?

The objective behind the call for intervention projects is to fund activities which constitute a rapid civic response to crisis situations identified by Applicants, *i.e.* a sudden change in the social situation or growing problems affecting a specific target group. The planned intervention should respond to specific, urgent problems and provide solutions which are implementable within three (3) to eight (8) months. These projects must also be aligned with one of the Programme's three thematic support areas, corresponding with the Programme's thematic outcomes:

1. Increased support for human rights,
2. Vulnerable groups are empowered,
3. Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness.

Activities implemented as part of intervention projects should constitute a response to a specific and current crisis situation or sudden opportunity, but cannot consist in organising a cyclical event (e.g. a short activity held annually by the Applicant). It is not required for project outcomes to fulfil the sustainability criterion or form a basis for introducing systemic change.

Detailed description of the adopted definition of intervention project is available in the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects*.

AREAS OF SUPPORT IN THE CALL FOR INTERVENTION PROJECTS

Area 1.

Increased support for human rights.

In Area 1: Actions aiming to raise awareness about human rights and equal treatment, counteract and prevent human right violations and all other forms of discrimination, provide support to those suffering from human right violations and/or discrimination.

Projects in this area should contribute to:

- better understanding of the principles behind human rights and equal treatment, of how they are related, and how they impact everyone's every-day life – not just particular communities or target groups, but also their leaders and those acting to the benefit of such communities (activists, public officials, social workers, etc.);

- limiting the impact and weight of stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, hate speech, and disinformation in the area of human rights and equal treatment, which includes challenging the belief that human right and equal treatment principles are being used to fight for unearned privilege;
- appreciating and recognising human rights as a vital factor which impacts national decision-making;
- improving the skills of individuals, non-governmental organisations, and public institutions acting for human rights and equal treatment (project beneficiaries other than representatives/employees of project promoters);
- increasing the number of sectoral and cross-sectoral actions for human rights and equal treatment;
- reducing the number and severity of human right violations, and ensuring equal treatment of victims.

Area 2. Vulnerable groups empowered.

In Area 2: Actions aimed to raise awareness about the needs of minority group members and those at risk of social exclusion; raise awareness of social inequalities; accelerate social integration; empower minority group members and people at risk of social exclusion.

Projects in this area should contribute to:

- raising citizen awareness of and empathy for social inequalities and the problems experienced by vulnerable groups;
- boosting social integration and reducing exclusion by taking high-quality educational and development actions, as well as developing and promoting models of effective collaboration for diversity and counteracting exclusion at local, regional, and national levels;
- empowering members of excluded groups by strengthening their voice, ensuring representation and advocacy which impact social policy at both local and national levels.

In the context of implementing the general objectives of Area 2, providing basic social services can be supported only if such services are connected with awareness raising, advocacy, empowerment, or reform initiatives. Especially welcome within Area 2 are initiatives led by organisations and individuals who represent directly groups at risk of exclusion or discrimination.

Area 3. Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness.

In Area 3: Actions aimed to show how non-governmental organisations impact the development of local communities and democratic culture; strengthen civil society; increase the significance of citizenship education; expand cooperation and partnerships at local and regional level; enhance critical thinking skills; strengthen watchdogs; disseminate knowledge on climate change; facilitate advocacy for social causes.

Projects in this area should contribute to:

- fuller, deeper understanding of the meaning and importance of democratic mechanisms in decision-making, especially amid crisis;
- giving project participants opportunities for a personal and positive experience of participating in democratic decision-making at local level and/or acting for the common good;

- disseminating knowledge on tools and procedures of democratic decision-making, as well as the skill of using them in practice;
- promoting a conciliatory approach to resolving local issues, creating space for discussions, debates, and dialogue (in this context: also improving visibility/recognition of NGOs as vital actors in social life);
- raising awareness about the significance and role of information, and enhancing competences related to verification and interpretation of information obtained from different sources;
- promoting democratic practices in existing local institutions, such as units of local government, other public institutions, non-governmental organisations and informal groups;
- increasing direct involvement of members/local residents in impacting local policy;
- building involvement in actions for the community (citizenship education, trust, dialogue), bolster a sense of agency, ensure stronger citizen involvement (also in every-day matters) and community mobilisation, promote volunteering and acting *pro publico bono*;
- facilitating cooperation between local stakeholders, *i.a.* for deepening processes of social integration;
- obtaining social competences, indispensable for active involvement in social life.

The call for intervention projects will prioritise projects concerning the **special focus areas defined for the Programme, *i.e.***

In Area 1:

1. Actions involving migrants and refugees
2. Actions supporting LGBT+ persons
3. Anti-discrimination actions

In Area 2:

4. Counteracting domestic violence

In Area 3:

5. Watchdog activity
6. Ensuring residents participation in policy-making at local level

In content-based evaluation, we will award additional points if a substantial part of a project is aligned with a special focus area.

Detailed descriptions of support areas are available in Attachment 1 to the call published on the Programme website at <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/konkurs-interwencyjny/> *i.e.* in the tab *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects.*

The ACFR results framework is described in the Attachment at <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/rezultaty/>.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants, *i.e.* entities who intend to submit applications independently or assume the role of partnership leaders, must meet the following criteria:

- they are registered with the National Court Register (KRS), entered into the register of ordinary associations or the register of Rural Housewives Circles maintained by the President of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (ARiMR);
- they are capable of presenting their financial statements prior to signing the grant agreement or, if they are not required to draft financial statements, a comprehensive summary of revenue and expenditure for the last reporting year (in the case of organisations operating for less than 12 months – a summary of revenue and expenditure for their period of operation);
- they are independent² of local, regional and central authorities, public entities, political parties and for-profit entities;
- they do not seek to generate profit, and – if they pursue business activity – any profit made is allocated to the objects and aims listed in their memorandum of association;
- they act for the common good, not only to the benefit of its members³;
- they act for the public interest, are driven by democratic values, and respect human rights;
- no application for declaring bankruptcy has been filed against the Applicant, the Applicant is not in liquidation or receivership, has not suspended activity and there are no similar proceedings pending against the Applicant;
- they are not in arrears with public-law payments payable to the Tax Office (US) or Social Insurance Institution (ZUS);
- no governing body member has been convicted of an intentional crime prosecuted by public indictment or a tax offence.

Applicants can have the following legal form:

- **associations, including ordinary associations**, acting as associations pursuant to the Associations Law Act of 7 April 1989 (references to Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020, poz. 2261, as amended). Before signing the grant agreement, ordinary associations will be asked to present:
 - a written consent/resolution of all members to enter into the grant agreement,
 - a power of attorney for the association's management board / representatives to sign the grant agreement on behalf of the association;
- **foundations**, acting under the Act on Foundations of 6 April 1984 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020 r. poz. 2167, as amended). Foundations with a single-member management board and no supervisory body are not eligible for a grant;
- **unions of associations**, acting under the Associations Law Act of 7 April 1989 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020, poz. 2261, as amended);

² An entity is defined as dependent when local, regional or central authorities, public entities, political parties and/or for-profit entities have the direct or indirect right to appoint at least half of that entity's governing or supervisory body. If public authorities or a public entity (e.g. theatre or university) or a for-profit entity (e.g. bank or company) enjoy the right to determine at least half of the composition of the given entity's governing or supervisory body, then that entity is considered to be dependent on said institutions, which precludes that entity from standing as applicant for a grant. If an entity associates only public authorities, public and/or for-profit entities, such an entity is dependent on those public and for-profit entities, which precludes that entity from standing as applicant for a grant. If most members of a given entity represent public authorities, public and/or for-profit entities, this means that those representatives have the casting vote on the composition of that entity's governing and/or supervisory bodies. If an entity is identified as dependent on such entities, it cannot apply for a grant.

³ Grants are not available for professional associations who aim solely to support and protect the interests of its members. Entities whose activity is limited to supporting only one entity, e.g. a specific school, university, theatre, are not eligible for grants

- **social cooperatives.** A social cooperative is eligible for grants if it is composed only of natural persons and/or non-governmental organisations and/or church legal persons⁴ as defined in the Social Cooperatives Act of 27 April 2006 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020 r. poz. 2085, as amended);

- **non-profit companies** (Polish joint stock and limited liability companies who do not seek profit, who allocate any and all of their profit to the implementation of the objectives listed in their memorandum of association, and who do not distribute profit between their shareholders and employees. These conditions must be specified in the company's founding documents: memorandum or articles of association). Moreover:
 - a company is eligible for a grant if its shareholders are only the following entities (one or more): associations, unions of associations, foundations, social cooperatives, rural housewives' circles, faith-based organisations, which belong to the group of entities eligible for a grant,
 - companies with only one organisation as its shareholder, and with a single-person management board, are not eligible for a grant;

- **rural housewives' circles** established under the Rural Housewives Circles Act of 9 November 2018 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020 r. poz. 553, 932, as amended), acting as associations under the Associations Law Act of 7 April 1989 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020, poz. 2261, as amended) and/or acting as independent rural circles under the Act on Social and Professional Farmer Organisations of 8 October 1982 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. 2019, poz. 491, as amended). The grant cannot exceed the amount determined by the circle members as the highest liability amount which their entity can incur;

- **faith-based organisations** if they meet the principles identified above and if the funded activities do not directly or indirectly promote a religious doctrine, mission or proselytism related to the beliefs of a particular faith (beyond basic religious/cultural awareness raising), on condition that:
 - the objectives listed in their memorandums of association include public benefit activity,
 - they are registered with the National Court Register (KRS);
 - they may incur liabilities on their own behalf.

The actions presented in the application must be compliant with the memorandum of association, bylaws and other documents detailing the mission, aims and methods of the Applicant. The Applicant's activity cannot consist in religious practices or leading a religious cult (including proselytising and spreading faith), political party activity or election campaigns. Moreover, a grant cannot be allocated for business or for-profit activity. It is not permitted to collect fees from project participants, *i.e.* applicants may not charge a fee for tickets to project events or sell project publications.

ATTENTION: Please check if the Applicant actually meets the above criteria. We do not require documentation confirming the above declarations upon application submission. While evaluating the applications, we will rely on the Applicant's declarations. Once a grant is awarded, the Applicant will be requested to present documents confirming the declarations made. The detailed list of required documents can be found in *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects* (see Chapter 10.1.1). If the Applicant fails

⁴ Social cooperatives combined of church legal persons must meet the same criteria as the faith-based organizations applying for funding.

to produce such proof, it will not be possible to sign the grant agreement. If it is revealed that the Applicant made false statements in the application, the grant agreement will not be signed.

ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

The Applicant can implement a project independently or in cooperation with a Partner or Partners. Partners must share project values, actively participate in project preparation and implementation, and comply with the formal and legal requirements of the Programme.

The following entities can be Partners to a project:

- **non-governmental organisations, public and private entities, non-profit and for-profit entities (excluding self-employed sole traders) based in:**
 - Poland,
 - other Beneficiary States eligible for EEA Funds (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia),
 - Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway),
 - neighbouring states, *i.e.* non-EEA countries neighbouring on Poland (Belarus, Russian Federation, Ukraine);
- **international organisations⁵, their bodies and representations,**
- **informal groups from Poland**, on condition that they act for public good, are voluntary and non-discriminatory, and are independent of local, regional and national authorities, as well as other public authorities, political parties, religious institutions and for-profit entities. Informal groups shall be represented by one single person, who signs the project partnership agreement on behalf of the group. An informal group cannot be a direct recipient of the grant.

It is inadmissible to establish a partnership when:

- one of the entities is the founder/partner/shareholder of the other organisation;
- there are personal relations between the entities, *i.e.* the same persons sit on the governing and/or supervising bodies of both entities;
- the leader of the informal group (*i.e.* the potential partner) sits on the governing and/or supervisory body of that entity.

The involvement of Partners, their roles and tasks, must be confirmed in a written declaration. This document is required already at the stage of application submission. Once a grant is awarded, a partner agreement must be signed before the grant agreement is concluded.

Projects including partnerships will be awarded additional points by experts during the process of proposals assessment. To ensure good quality of the partnership and the project (bringing added

⁵ International organizations are understood as intergovernmental organisations as defined by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. They must thus be established by a treaty or other instrument governed by public international law. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs), as legal persons established by an instrument of internal law with a non-profit-making aim of international utility and carrying out their activities in at least two States, may be eligible project partners only if they are established as a legal person in the Donor States, Beneficiary States or a country outside the European Economic Area that has a common border with the Beneficiary State.

value to both sides), experts will evaluate not only the sole fact of establishing a partnership, but the value and capacity of such partnership.

More information on the entities eligible for becoming Partners and partnership requirements are available in the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects* (Chapters 4.3 and 4.4.).

Partnerships with Donor State entities

Organisations who will prepare projects in partnership with entities from Iceland, Liechtenstein and/or Norway may apply for additional funds (additional to the basic grant amount) to cover the costs of Partner participation and bilateral cooperation in the project. This additional amount is not dependent on the number of Partners from Donor States and may amount to 15% of the basic grant amount, *i.e.* up to EUR 2,250.

More information on eligible expenditures within funds for bilateral cooperation is available in Chapter 6 of the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects*.

ATTENTION: The above-mentioned limits for additional funds for bilateral cooperation (the 15% limit) do not exclude the possibility of financing more bilateral cooperation activities from the basic grant amount.

The Donor States contact points:

- Iceland: Icelandic Human Rights Centre, <https://www.humanrights.is/en>,
- Norway: Norwegian Helsinki Committee, <https://www.nhc.no>).

CO-FINANCING

Project Promoters (successful Applicants) are not required to provide co-financing.

Owing to aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Financial Mechanism Office and the Operator decided on lifting the co-financing requirement.

However, if the Applicant declares co-financing, then it can be made as a contribution in kind (only in the form of voluntary work) or a financial contribution – irrespective of the grant amount.

ATTENTION: The project grant rate applies equally to all expenditure. It means that the co-financing should be specified proportionally for all budget lines. At the same time, the ACF Regional grant cannot be used to co-finance other projects.

TIMELINE OF INTERVENTION PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION

Project activities may begin on the calendar day following the announcement of the selection procedure results at the earliest, but no earlier than on November 1st, 2021, and should commence at the latest within 2 (two) months from the date of publication of the information on awarding an intervention grant. The condition for the eligibility of costs is the signing of the grant agreement.

The timeline for intervention projects must fall within 3 (minimum) and 8 (maximum) months. In exceptional, well-founded cases, it is possible to prolong project duration during project

implementation, within the Programme's timeframe. Such an extension requires the consent of the Operator and the signing of an annex to the grant agreement. All projects must be completed by 30 April 2024 at latest.

LIMITS ON THE NUMBER OF SUBMITTED AND IMPLEMENTED INTERVENTION PROJECTS

In the intervention grant competition of the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme, each eligible entity may:

- submit one application independently or as leader (if submitting an application with partner(s));
- apply as Partner to one project submitted by another leader, if submitting an application of its own or as leader of a partner application;
- apply as Partner to any number of projects, on condition that it does not submit an application of its own and is not a leader of a partner application;
- submit one application independently or as leader (if submitting an application with partner(s)), on condition that the final report on the implementation of the last ad-hoc (intervention) project funded under this call has been approved.

ATTENTION: At the same time, the maximum number of grants available to one organisation as a project promoter for thematic and/or intervention projects is **three**, and this limit applies to the entire duration of the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

Applicants are required to provide the following attachments to applications submitted via the EGAMS:

- Communication Plan (in PDF, RTF, MS Word or Open Office format). A CP template is available in Attachment 4 (also on the Programme website: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/konkurs-interwencyjny/>).

More information on CP-related requirements is available in the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects* (Chapter 8.1).

- Scanned Partner declarations (in PDF, PNG, JPG or JPEG format) which specify Partner role and tasks in the project. Declarations must be signed by authorised representatives of the Partner(s). This point applies only if a given project will be carried out in partnership with other entities. If a project involves more than one Partner, we require a separate declaration for each Partner. A Partner declaration template is available in Attachments 11 and 12 (also on the Programme website: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/konkurs-interwencyjny/>). If the Partner(s) are based in Donor States, the declaration must be made in English.

COST ELIGIBILITY

Eligible costs

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred by the project promoter or the project partner, which meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract;
- they are directly connected with the subject of the project contract and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
- they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
- they are used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the project promoter and determined according to the applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles; and
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in case of services and works).

Project Promoters and Partners' (whether Partners use grant funds or provide co-financing) internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Please bear in mind that entering a cost into the budget presented in the project application is not sufficient to recognise that cost as an eligible cost. In the course of project implementation, budgeted and anticipated costs must be verified in terms of their principles of economy (minimising the cost of resources used or required), efficiency (the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them), and effectiveness (the relationship between the intended and actual results of spending).

Excluded costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
- charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except project implementation costs related to bank accounts;
- costs related to purchase of land or real estate;
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- exchange losses;
- recoverable VAT;
- costs that are covered by other sources;
- costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project; and
- fines and penalties,
- excessive or reckless expenditure.

Excluded costs also include costs of such barred actions as:

- transferring monies or in-kind benefits to natural or legal persons (except for in-kind prizes and gifts, incl. gift vouchers and cards for the purchase of such in-kind prizes and gifts, whose value does not exceed PLN 200 per person),
- regranting, i.e. disbursing funds to third parties under a separate grant procedure,
- actions consisting in financing religious practices or religious cults (including proselytising and spreading faith), political party activity and election campaigns,
- actions pursued as part of business activity or for-profit public benefit activity.

ATTENTION: It is not permitted to charge any fees from participants or target audiences under the funded projects.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT COSTS

Direct costs

Direct costs encompass all eligible costs incurred as a result of implementing the actions listed in the application, incl. costs of any partnerships (if applicable).

The following constitute direct costs:

a) **personnel costs**, i.e. wages of the personnel assigned to the project and employed pursuant to the Polish Labour Code or under civil-law contracts pursuant to the Polish Civil Code, on condition that these costs comply with the remuneration rules and rates applied by the Applicant (and its Partner(s)). Personnel costs include i.e. the social and health insurance contributions paid by the employer, Labour Fund contributions, advance payments towards tax and, if applicable, payments towards the Guaranteed Employment Benefit Fund (FGŚP) and Employee Capital Plans (PPK).

Costs of wages of individuals hired under civil-law agreements who perform one-off short-term tasks in the project (e.g. hold workshops or training sessions, render graphic design services for specific project materials) fall within the category of 'costs of purchasing materials, goods, and services, incl. subcontracting' (discussed in point c). Only individuals who render services of this type and have a long-term relationship with the Project Promoter, e.g. are members of that association, constitute an exception to this rule. In such cases, costs of such services should be reported as personnel costs.

b) **costs of project-related trips and daily allowances for personnel and volunteers** involved in project implementation, provided that they comply with the Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 29 January 2013 on Business Trip Allowance Amounts and Calculation for Employees of State and Local Government Budget Units, arise from signed agreements and/or adhere to the internal regulations of the Project Promoter as defined in its accounting policy, payroll regulations, employment contracts or other internal documents, and are not higher than those specified in the above Regulation; it is standard practice to travel second class or economy.

Costs of travel, accommodation, and catering incurred by participants, contractors and trainers in connection with project-related training sessions, workshops, and other events fall within the category of 'costs of purchasing materials, goods, and services, incl. subcontracting'.

c) **costs of purchasing materials, goods, and services, incl. subcontracting**

This category comprises mainly purchases of any materials (e.g. materials for the participants of events funded from the grant), small equipment (which is not classed as fixed assets), as well as purchases of services indispensable to performing a planned action (rental of event space, catering, participant accommodation and travel, workshop hosting).

This category also encompasses outsourced expert services (based on a contract) to individuals, companies or other entities, for the purpose of performing a large part of a project action;

d) costs of real property renovation – up to 50% of eligible direct costs;

e) costs of purchased tangible and intangible assets must be categorised in line with the following rules:

- depreciation write-offs and write-downs on fixed assets/intangible assets can be categorised as direct costs, in whole or in part, proportionately to the usage of those assets for project implementation during project duration;
- depreciation value for different groups of tangible and intangible assets is subject to the rates presented in Appendix 1 to the Corporate Income Tax Act of 15 February 1992;
- direct costs may include all costs of purchasing tangible and/or intangible assets, if such assets are deemed by the FO to be an integral element of the project, and to be indispensable to project implementation and are of vital significance to achieving the planned outcomes (must be purchased at an initial project stage), will be insured (applies to fixed assets), and will be used throughout project duration and for five years after the date of project completion, and will not be used to conduct business activity, and will not be sold for profit; such costs can be categorised as eligible costs if a given tangible or intangible asset is specified in the grant agreement.

f) costs arising directly from project implementation requirements

Project implementation gives rise to costs which the Applicants must bear: creating a project website/subpage/social media profile to promote the project, travel costs, incl. costs of travel to events organised by the Operator as defined in Chapter 11 of the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters*, and – if applicable – costs of opening a separate bank account/sub account or project-related bank operations. These costs can be carried in the budget.

Indirect costs

Indirect costs are all eligible costs that cannot be identified by the project promoter and/or the project partner as being directly attributed to the project but which can be identified and justified by its accounting system as being incurred in direct relationship with the eligible direct costs attributed to the project. They may not include any eligible direct costs.

When calculating indirect costs, please apply the flat rate of up to 15% of direct eligible personnel costs assigned to the project.

In particular, the following could be considered indirect costs:

- management board costs (wages of persons authorised to represent a given entity and other costs connected with that entity's governing body functioning),

- costs of assisting personnel (e.g. payroll specialist, accountant, legal and administrative services, secretariat - that cannot be properly attributed to the project direct costs),
- costs of office space, e.g. rent, lease, depreciation, security services, cleaning services, including cleaning products, electricity, heating, gas and water payments, and transmission and wastewater removal fees,
- costs of office supplies and equipment connected with office use, e.g. purchase, maintenance and depreciation,
- costs of postal, messenger, telephone and internet services, etc.,
- costs of asset insurance and public liability insurance.

To include indirect costs in project settlement, please indicate a flat rate in the project budget in the EGAMS and demonstrate that the applied flat rate represents a fair apportionment of the overall overheads of the project promoter or the project partner by presenting the calculation method which provides the grounds for applying the adopted flat rate. The indirect costs which will be financed within the admissible limit cannot exceed the costs defined in accordance with the organisation's principles for calculating indirect project costs.

Applicants need to calculate the flat rate on their own. Please round this rate up to a full percent in your application.

Project Promoters who decide on including indirect costs in the settlement of their project must provide an adequate calculation of those indirect costs. These are examples of methods which can be used to calculate the flat rate of indirect costs:

- a) percentage share of project personnel costs in programme personnel costs of the organisation;
- b) percentage share of project costs in organisation's overall budget;
- c) proportionately to administrative costs for a given project;
- d) or any other clearly established method.

The flat rate is determined once for the whole project implementation period.

The Project Promoter and the Partner(s) agree on the division of indirect costs, e.g. calculate the rate proportionally to the organisation's share in the project budget or the involvement of employees in project implementation.

PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE

When purchasing goods or services whose value exceeds EUR 5,000 (approx. PLN 21,000), the Project Promoter must collect at least three offers (market research). The Project Promoter must select the best offer in terms of value for money or lowest price. The selection procedure must be documented. This rule also applies to the Partner, if the Partner makes such purchases. These principles aim to guarantee transparency, equal treatment, and fair competition.

Offers collected for market research purposes must be made for goods or services whose parameters are similar to those specified in the application. Offers may be collected in different forms, e.g. published price lists or replies to price inquiries. Collected offers do not have to be binding as defined in the Polish Civil Code. The Project Promoter and/or the Partner(s) must store documents confirming the collection of at least three offers together with the project's financial documentation.

Collecting offers is not required for: costs connected with hiring personnel, purchasing municipal services, fuels, electricity, and costs capped by valid legal regulations, e.g. daily allowances, lump-sum allowances for transportation services, accommodation).

If a project is implemented in partnership with a Polish entity who is legally obligated to comply with the Polish Public Procurement Law, the Partner must also comply with that act of law when using grant funds. If a project is implemented in partnership with a foreign entity, the Partner must comply with the public procurement regulations valid in the Partner's country.

PROCEDURE OF APPLICATION EVALUATION

Applications will be subjected to the administrative, eligibility and content-related evaluation.

Administrative and eligibility evaluation of applications

When evaluating administrative compliance and eligibility of applications, we check whether the Applicant:

- is an entity eligible for a grant, incl. whether the Applicant's name and registry/identification number complies with the numbers actually entered into the relevant registers;
- did not submit more applications and is not a partner to more applications (if the Applicant has submitted an application itself) than the Programme and/or call for intervention projects permit;
- the Applicant has not yet received 3 (three) thematic and/or quick response (intervention) grants under the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme;
- completed all form fields correctly;
- enclosed a communication plan;
- enclosed the declaration(s) of its Partner(s) which outline(s) Partner roles and tasks in project implementation (if the project will be implemented in a partnership) and which is signed by authorised representatives of the Partner(s) (scan of handwritten signature or electronic signature);
- the Partner(s) are eligible for participating in the project in keeping with Programme rules (if the project is a partnership).

Applicant eligibility will be determined based on the declarations enclosed to the application. A template of the administrative and eligibility evaluation sheet is available in Attachment 6 (also on the Programme website: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/konkurs-1/>).

If the Applicant makes one of the following errors when completing the form:

- incorrect data is entered into application fields A1 to A12 or B1 to B7,
- the Partner(s) fail(s) to sign the partnership declaration,
- an empty partnership declaration and/or communication plan file is enclosed,
- the format of the attached file is correct, but the file won't open,

the Applicant may correct the Application within 3 (three) working days from receiving the Operator's e-mail notification about an error.

Failure to correct such errors results in application rejection.

Applications which fail to fulfil any of the above-listed criteria, including the time granted to correct the above-mentioned errors, will be rejected at the administrative and eligibility evaluation state./

Appeals against administrative and eligibility evaluation results

The Operator will notify Applicants via e-mail if their applications are rejected on administrative and eligibility grounds. After receiving the Operator's notification about application rejection, the Applicant may appeal the decision within 3 (three) working days from notification dispatch. The Applicant may lodge an appeal via e-mail (scan of signed document) using the dedicated address: odwolania.aofr@frdl.org.pl. Appeals delivered upon the lapse of the three-day period will not be examined. The Operator will examine appeals against rejection decisions within 10 working days from appeal receipt. Decisions on accepting or rejecting appeals against administrative and eligibility evaluation results are taken by the Programme Director. Once the administrative and eligibility evaluation is complete, we will publish lists of all applications accepted for content-related evaluation.

Content-related evaluation of applications

The process of content-related evaluation involves:

- independent experts,
- the Selection Committee composed of two representatives of the Operator and three independent experts,
- the Executive Board composed of presidents of consortium organisations.

The content-related evaluation consists in:

- independent experts evaluating each application, and then discussing evaluation results at a meeting of experts who assessed applications in each thematic area,
- an analysis and discussion of the Selection Committee on the ranking lists created on the basis of independent expert evaluations, followed by formulating lists of recommended applications for the Programme Board,
- an analysis and discussion on the Selection Committee's recommendations, followed by the Executive Board's approval of the lists of accepted applications.

Applications will be evaluated by two independent experts and by thematic area. Ranking lists will be based on the average score awarded by the experts, provided that both evaluating experts consider a given application congruent with Programme objectives and thematic area assumptions, and find that the project meets the criterion of being an intervention project. If one expert assesses an application as non-compliant with Programme goals, thematic area assumptions or the requirement of being an intervention project, but the other expert adopts a contrary opinion, or if the difference in expert opinions exceeds 30% of the higher score and, at the same time, at least one score exceeds 75% of the maximum score, the application will be subjected to additional evaluation by a third expert. In such cases, the ranking position will be based on the average of the two nearest scores or – if the difference between the scores is as indicated above – the two higher scores.

Application evaluation is a multi-stage procedure.

At first, projects are evaluated by independent experts who analyse application content and formulate initial evaluations. Next, once the individual expert evaluation of applications is complete, meetings are held to bring together experts evaluating applications in particular thematic areas. At

the meetings, experts discuss all applications submitted for a given thematic area to assess the feasibility of achieving the planned Programme outcomes.

During the meetings, the experts formulate final application evaluations which form the basis for ranking lists. The ranking lists, which are based on expert evaluations, and the minutes of expert meetings on applications in a given thematic area, are put forth to the Selection Committee, which reviews them and decides which applications it recommends and does not recommend for a grant.

Another issue experts take into account when creating lists of projects recommended for funding is the division of funds between three thematic outcomes, taking into consideration special focus groups and areas.

Detailed information on funds division is available in Chapter 3.8 of the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects*.

Only applications whose average expert score is at least **75%** of the total possible score will be entered into the list of applications recommended for a grant. The Board may introduce modifications to the ranking of individual applications, on condition that it justifies such a decision in the minutes of its deliberations on a given decision. The Selection Committee may recommend that the grant be decreased for applications where barred actions, ineligible costs or overestimated budgets have been identified. Each decision of the Selection Committee should be justified. The Selection Committee may also create a back-up list of applications recommended for a grant. The reserve list is intended only for applications where the average expert score is at least 75% of the total possible score and which did not win the Selection Committee's recommendation.

Representatives of the following institutions are invited to participate in Selection Committee meetings in the capacity of observers: Financial Mechanism Office in Brussels, Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (National Focal Point), Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway, and the Operator of Active Citizens Fund – National programme.

Decisions on awarding grants are taken by the Executive Board. Grant-awarding decisions are based on the lists of recommended applications prepared by the Selection Committee. The Executive Board checks whether application evaluation was performed in compliance with Programme procedures. In justified cases, the Executive Board can introduce changes to the list of recommended applications prepared by the Selection Committee, provided that it presents the grounds for such a decision in the minutes of its deliberations.

Criteria of content-related evaluation

The criteria and rating scale used by experts are also presented in the content-related evaluation sheet, available in Attachment 6 (also on the Programme website: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/konkurs-interwencyjny/>).

Criteria	Score
Compliance with Programme	

Compliance with Programme aims and assumptions adopted for a given support area selected by the Applicant <i>NOTE: Meeting the above-mentioned criterion of compliance with the Programme aims and the assumptions for the given support area selected by the Applicant is a prerequisite for the project to be evaluated further.</i>	YES/NO
Compliance with the adopted definition of intervention project <i>NOTE: Meeting the above-mentioned criterion of compliance with the adopted definition of intervention project is a prerequisite for the project to be evaluated further.</i>	YES/NO
Assessment of the project scope and involvement of partners	
Project alignment with a special focus area	0 or 3
Tackling priority themes – implementing at least one Programme priority, <i>i.e.</i> : - engaging youth, - protecting the natural environment, and counteracting climate change, - counteracting the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.	0-1
Project implemented in partnership (with an entity from Poland, a Donor State entity, a Beneficiary State, a neighbouring state, and/or an international organisation) – is Partner selection well-founded, is the Partner's role in the project vital for achieving the planned outcomes?	0-2
Applicant's experience, competences and resources in selected thematic area	
Competences	0-2
Experience	0-2
Resources	0-2
Need for action	
Quality of needs assessment	0-3
Severity of the problem – at local/regional/supra-regional level, respectively	0-2
Outcomes and products – their quality and adequacy in terms of diagnosed problems and planned actions	0-4
Target groups – suitable selection in terms of diagnosed problem	0-2
Planned actions – do they respond to diagnosed problems, are they well-planned for the specified target groups, and do they enable achieving the planned outcomes?	0-8
Communication plan	0-2
Budget – is it economical, realistic, transparent and reliable, has it been drafted	0-5

in line with Programme requirements	
Risk and project management are defined and planned	0-2
TOTAL:	40

Appeals against content-related evaluation results

Applicants may not appeal content-related evaluation results nor Executive Board decisions.

Complaint procedure

In the cases described in the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters* (Chapter 16), *i.e.*

- encountering any breaches of good governance principles (openness, transparency, accountability, zero tolerance for corruption) in the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme,
 - encountering any failures to hold onto the Programme's guiding values (respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human and minority rights),
 - noticing any irregularities in the implementation of projects funded under the Programme or the use of Programme funding,
- you may file a complaint with the Operator.

When lodging your complaint, please provide the following information:

- description of the reported violation (please be as accurate as possible),
- the best way to contact you about the case (e-mail, phone).

The address for reporting violations is skargi.aofr@frdl.org.pl. The Fund Operator will reply to your complaint within 30 days from the date of its receipt. If the author of the complaint finds the reply of the Fund Operator unsatisfactory, a further complaint can be made to the Complaints Committee which will review it within the next 30 days.

GRANT DISBURSEMENT

Grants will be disbursed in tranches (advance payments, interim payments, and final payment) in compliance with the following rules:

- 3-to-6-month projects:
 - initial payment: not more than 95% of grant amount after agreement conclusion,
 - if the initial payment corresponds to less than 95%, at least one interim payment upon approval of interim report and spending at least 70% of received funds,
 - final payment: at least 5% of grant upon approval of final report;
- 6-to-8-month projects:
 - initial payment: not more than 70% of grant amount after agreement conclusion,
 - one interim payment upon approval of interim report and spending at least 70% of already received funds,
 - final payment: at least 5% of grant upon approval of final report.

In keeping with the above rules, the number and amounts of payments are defined individually for each Project Promoter and specified in the agreement. Payment number and amounts depend on:

- awarded grant amount,
- planned project timeline,
- Project Promoter experience.

The final amount of the final payment corresponds to the difference between the sum of total eligible costs actually incurred and approved by the Operator as eligible for being covered from Grant funds, and the sum of all disbursed initial and interim payments. This amount will be decreased by any interest accumulated in the Project Promoter's bank account or sub-account where the funds were deposited. The programme will also not cover negative interest. If the Project Promoter provides co-financing, and the actual value of that co-financing is lower than that presented in the application, the awarded grant amount will not be altered.

In justified cases (e.g. delays in project implementation, untimely or erroneous reports), the Operator may increase payment number and decrease payment amounts during project implementation. Such changes require an annex to the agreement.

Initial payments will be made within 15 working days from the date of placing the last signature on the agreement and submitting a blank promissory note with a promissory note declaration. Interim payments will be made within 15 working days from the date of the Operator's approval of interim reports. The final payment will be made within 15 working days from the Operator's receipt of a print-out of an approved final report signed by the Project Promoter's authorised representatives.

Upon project completion, the Project Promoter must return the unused portion of the grant within 14 working days from the date of final report approval to the bank account indicated by the Operator.

Payments will be made to the Project Promoter's separate PLN bank account or sub-account used solely for bank operations related to project implementation.

SUPPORT FOR APPLICANTS

The Operator will provide Applicants with additional support in the form of *i.a.*:

- information meetings,
- a webinar and consultations on the specifics of intervention projects,
- webinar recordings and materials on support areas, special focus areas, international cooperation in projects, communication, and most frequent errors made when submitting applications, which have been prepared for the first thematic call,
- a webinar on crisis communication,
- tutorial videos on using the EGAMS and creating project budgets,

The *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects* and other useful documents are available at <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/konkurs-interwencyjny/>. Materials on application submission include: a guide to using the EGAMS, application forms with instructions, suggested budgeting tools (MS Excel), document templates, recordings of webinars and the Programme's opening conference, as well as fragments of the *Guidelines* concerning Applicants.

CONTACT

If you have questions or doubts concerning applying for a grant, please contact us at <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/kontakt/>. Our consultants provide answers to questions about the Programme: rules for applying for grants and the formal preparation of an application.

We will publish answers to most frequently asked questions on the Programme website (<https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/faq/>).

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS (available in Polish)

1. Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for Intervention Projects
2. Project Outline Form, with Guidelines for quick response (intervention) grants
3. Instructions for use of EGAMS
4. Communication plan outline form with guidelines
5. Project Outline Administrative and Eligibility Evaluation Sheet for quick response (intervention) grants
6. Project Outline Content-related Evaluation Sheet for quick response (intervention) grants
7. Project Contract Template
8. Requirements for a Partnership Agreement between a Project Promoter and Partner
9. Partnership Contract Template - Polish legal entities (PL)
10. Partnership Contract Template - international legal entities (ENG)
11. Declaration of Partnership Template (PL)
12. Declaration of Partnership Template (ENG)
13. Programme logotypes
14. EGAMS address: <https://generator.aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/>
15. Budget planning tool
16. ACFR Results Framework