



## **SELDI Small Grants Programme**

### **“Financial Support for Grassroots and Youth CSOs with Outreach to Citizens”**

under the Project

Civil Society for Good Governance and Anti-Corruption in  
Southeast Europe: Capacity Building for Evidence-Based  
Advocacy, Policy Impact and Citizen Engagement  
(SELDI.net)

### **Guidelines for grant applicants**

Call for proposals no. 10-46/1-2024

Deadline for submission of concept note: **01 August 2024, 16.00  
CET**

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## 1. Background of the Call

### 1.1 About the Project “Civil Society for Good Governance and Anti-Corruption in Southeast Europe: Capacity Building for Evidence-Based Advocacy, Policy Impact and Citizen Engagement (SELDI.net)”

The project builds on SELDI’s excellence for networking, diagnostics and advocacy in anti-corruption and good governance in the Western Balkans as well as its members’ national and regional reputation and experience in this field. As an established anti-corruption leader in the region, through the current action SELDI is seeking to integrate regional anti-corruption action, citizens and grass-roots empowerment with international support and policy-maker engagement to deliver impact in this highly sensitive area at a time of global geopolitical upheaval. The project presents a consolidation and upgrade of the previous SELDI efforts and activities in the Western Balkans which were undertaken in the past decade<sup>1</sup>.

**The Project seeks to strengthen participatory democracy and the EU approximation process through consolidating and enhancing the impact of civil society engagement in the policy making and reform processes in the Western Balkan region in the area of anti-corruption, the rule of law and good governance.** The Project strives to achieve: 1. Strengthened CSO’s capacities and engagement opportunities for enhanced regional cooperation, at national and grassroots level, in anti-corruption policy and decision making; 2. Encouraged and mobilized citizens’ engagement and grassroots activism to peacefully pressure governments for continued anti-corruption reforms; 3. Established professional working dialogue with policy makers at national, regional, and EU level. Achieved policy reforms and societal innovation in the area of anti-corruption through evidence-based advocacy, policy engagement and awareness raising; 4. Improved outreach and engagement through enhanced use of social media; 5. Identified and leveraged tipping points for tackling common challenges in the field of corruption prevention and prosecution by calling leaders and institutions to account and monitoring corruption victimization and state capture vulnerabilities; 6. Intensified regional CSO cooperation, dialogue and synergies across thematic networks for achieving a more holistic impact on political and judicial corruption in the region.

The impact of the Project is based on three interlinked pillars: (i) CSO’s capacity building for professionalisation, (ii) data-based advocacy for accountability, and (iii) citizens engagement and outreach.

**Target group(s) of the SELDI Initiative:** Grassroots CSOs in the Western Balkans, national and regional CSO networks, citizens, media, regional and national public bodies and policy-makers, business organization, youth forums. Specific focus on gender dimension and disadvantaged groups.

**Final beneficiaries of the SELDI Initiative:** Western Balkan citizens, CSOs (including grassroots and net-works), media, policy makers and public bodies engaged in anti-corruption, European, regional and international anti-corruption institutions, the business community, activists and researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> More information on [Home - SELDI](#)

The project is funded by the European Union<sup>2</sup>, and the implementation period is 01.01.2023-31.12.2026.

**Responding to the specific needs of the region:** The Western Balkans remain committed to European Union integration. For this purpose, the WB6 have undertaken to implement the EU acquis, in which process Chapters 23 and 24 of the EU's negotiating framework will be a significant factor. Hence, the primary focus of states is to advance their democratic institutions, strengthen the rule of law, and demonstrate an uncompromising fight against corruption. CSOs could play a critical role in this respect if they develop further their capacity to triangulate reforms by engaging with international partners, reformist minded politicians at home, citizens and media to demand further rule of law improvements.

The 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy clearly stated that the enlargement countries will have to act with determination to implement the necessary reforms and make tangible and irreversible progress, starting with the fundamentals of the EU accession process. The rule of law, in particular the independence and functioning of the judiciary and the fight against corruption, fundamental rights, the economy, the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reform continue to be the cornerstones of the enlargement policy. Moreover, the fight against corruption remains a priority for governments in the enlargement countries<sup>3</sup>.

The anti-corruption agenda in the Western Balkans has been pursued as somehow separate from the need for a general improvement of the quality of governance; in other words, no linkage has been demonstrated between anti-corruption progress and improved public services. According to the latest SELDI Regional Anticorruption Report<sup>4</sup> a number of outstanding challenges remain, critical among which is the integrity of public governance. The matter of implementation of the rule of law in general and anti-corruption policies in particular continues to be an issue. The administrative corruption in the region is a mass phenomenon and should be regarded as a specific risk for the operation of public institutions. Latest SELDI Corruption Monitoring System data show that there have been certain improvements in 2023 in some countries compared to the 2021 levels.

SELDI's pilot diagnostic assessment of state capture carried out in the Western Balkans in 2019/2020<sup>5</sup> has shown that although none of the countries is close to full state capture, they exhibit critical impairments in democratic and economic checks and balances. This is manifested in the electoral process, the monopolisation of certain sectors of the economy, procurement concentration, legislative capture, and corruption in the judiciary. State capture in the region is now a mechanism through which the drafting, adoption and enforcement of government rules and regulations in some important domains of government functioning is warped in favour of a small number of captors at the expense of society and business at large. To address state capture elements and the eroding trust in governments, the region's CSOs need to concentrate their efforts on confronting higher level political and judicial corruption, and on strengthening democratic institutional mechanisms that will address such corruption. This requires genuine grass-roots civic action, while preserving the engagement on institutional level. In addition, as anti-corruption efforts and institutions have attained some maturity in the past, efforts would need

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<sup>2</sup> Call for proposals reference 174154, Support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations; Small scale projects in support of good neighbourly relations between Serbia and Kosovo\*; Regional CSOs networks promoting media freedom and freedom of expression; and Quality Journalism initiative

<sup>3</sup> [COM\\_2023\\_690 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy and Annex.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Geopolitics, State Capture and Peak Corruption. What is Next for Anticorruption in the Western Balkans? - SELDI](#)

<sup>5</sup> [SELDI Policy Brief 10: State Capture Assessment Diagnostics in the Western Balkans 2020: Risks and Policy Options - SELDI](#)

to concentrate on more specific issues and aim to consolidate achievements, while breaking new ground. Hence, this Project aims to consolidate SELDI's focus on citizens and grass-roots engagement in policy impact.

Good governance is not a technical exercise, but requires a national climate of trust, civic and political responsibility – precisely the issues where CSOs have the most to contribute. Hence, there is the need to increase the capabilities of the CSOs to serve as watchdogs and to jointly engage government in anti-corruption reforms. This includes the ability to collect and collate primary information on the operation of government institutions, enhance CSOs skills in aggregating and empirically measuring the actual corruption situation, and through data analysis, engage in institutional evaluation and the formulation of policy reports<sup>6</sup>. Formal mechanisms for engaging civil society on the part of the national governments in the region have been established in some of the countries, but they are still to become effective channels of civic contribution to the formation of the governments' anticorruption agenda. This precludes citizens of making their voice heard in anti-corruption. Through the action the core target group CSOs, including grassroots and youth and citizens active against corruption will increase their professional capacity to fight corruption and hold leaders and institutions accountable through evidence-based advocacy and engagement.

The civil society organizations can play a key role in the fight against corruption if they further develop their capacities to strengthen reforms and involve citizens, media, businesses and international partners to insist on their consistent application of the rule of law.

### **Information for the SELDI Consortium**

All SELDI members (applicant, co-applicants and associated partners) have substantial technical experience and are leaders in the field of good governance and anti-corruption in their respective countries. SELDI pools resources of its CSO members (1 coordinator and 6 co-applicants and 8 associates) turning it into a representative group of the regional CSO community on anti-corruption and good governance.

**Project partners:** Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC), North Macedonia, Lead Applicant and Coordinator; Co-applicants: The Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD), Bulgaria, Knowledge Center and Methodological Coordinator; The Albanian Center for Economic Research (ACER), Albania; Centers for Civic Initiatives (CCI), Bosnia and Herzegovina; Centre for Contemporary Politics (CCP), Serbia; Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMi), Montenegro, and Organization for Democracy, Anti-corruption and Dignity – ÇOHU, Kosovo\*.

**Associate partners:** Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" (IDSCS), North Macedonia; Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), Montenegro; RIINVEST Institute, Kosovo; European Policy Center (CEP) Serbia; The Moldovan Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), Moldova; The Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI); Centre for Analysis and Prevention of Corruption (CAPS), Moldova; Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), Türkiye; BiH Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and the Coordination of the Fight Against Corruption; Montenegro Anti-corruption Agency; Macedonian State Commission for Preventing Corruption; Albanian High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interest and Kosovo Anti-Corruption Agency.

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<sup>6</sup> Please consult SELDI non-paper: Fostering sustainable civil society cooperation for better governance in South East Europe: What's Next? available at: <https://seldi.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Non-paper.pdf>

**The Macedonian Center for International Cooperation shall act as Contracting Authority for this Call.**

### **1.2 About the Capacity Building and Mentorship Programme**

The Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, in cooperation with the SELDI project partners will develop and implement Capacity Building and Mentorship Programme tailored for SELDI grantees.

- **Mentoring of selected SELDI grantees through the process of implementation of the grants and their involvement in the activities of the SELDI Project activities**

The Macedonian Center for International Cooperation will appoint a Capacity Building and Grants Manager that will be responsible for the overall coordination, support and communication with the selected Grantees through the process of implementation of the awarded sub-actions. In addition, SELDI partners from the WB will allocate sufficient time and resources to support and monitor the grantees from their respective countries. The appointed Capacity Building and Grants Manager will be responsible for the overall coordination of the mentorship process based on the needs of the grantees and liaison with other project team members.

SELDI Grantees will be continuously involved in the implementation of the SELDI project by co-authoring of policy briefs/notes, facilitation/presentation at national and regional events and briefings, awareness raising campaigns etc. In addition, all grantees, and especially youth organisations, will be offered the possibility to appoint their staff members for the SELDI Internship Programme, and be involved in the different sets of general and thematic training. The Grantees will be continuously guided through the process of project implementation, supporting them to successfully carry out the activities foreseen and comply with the necessary contract requirements especially in terms of financial management and reporting. On demand, individual training and coaching sessions may be organised. In addition, SELDI will ensure networking of the CSOs enabling them to connect, support each other, create synergies and possible joint actions.

- **Series of general and thematic training activities for SELDI grantees**

SELDI will involve SELDI grantees into general and thematic-led trainings as described below:

- **General trainings:** A general trainings consisted of 5 training modules will be delivered to all grants awarded under the Small Grants Programme: Project management, including financial and operational aspects; EU visibility and communication requirements; Communication with media; Networking and partnership; and Mobilization of resources/ financial sustainability.
- **Thematic-led trainings:** Based on training-needs analysis through feedback questionnaires, SELDI partners will develop and implement a set of thematic trainings. General trainings will be held in person as part of three-days kick-off and networking meeting that will be organised by MCIC and held in Skopje with selected grantees while the thematic-led trainings will be held on the Zoom Platform. During the implementation of the Small Grants Programme at least 5 thematic trainings will be held.

The development of the training programmes will be entrusted to experienced partner organisations' experts and trainers. The possibility for participation in the thematic part of the training programme will also be offered to non-selected applicants.

Mentoring and trainings will be held in English language.



## 1.2 About THE SELDI Small Grants Programme “Financial support for grassroots and youth CSOs with outreach to citizens”

The SELDI Small Grants Programme seeks to strengthen the contribution of civil society organisations from the target countries to anticorruption efforts and their inclusion in the SELDI policy advocacy and impact cycle, by financially prioritizing CSOs, including grassroots and youth, active against corruption.

### 1.2.1 Objectives of the programme and priority issues

The **Overall objective of this call for proposals** is to provide support to local CSOs in pursuing the EU and regional anti-corruption agenda in the target countries, and in line with issues identified by the SELDI Regional Anti-corruption Report (RAR), SELDI Policy Documents and latest Enlargement package reports for the target countries<sup>7</sup>.

**Specific Objective of this Call for Proposals:** Engaging CSOs and citizens in the SELDI action and providing synergies across the region by enhancing CSOs professional capacities and skills to fight corruption and hold leaders and institutions accountable through evidence-based advocacy and engagement, to measure and expose corruption and state capture, and to formulate policy outputs.

It will aim at improved understanding and/or evaluation of policies, raised awareness, updated policy agendas, adopted and/or enforced relevant laws, and increased multi-sectoral dialogue and collaboration with the media.

The SELDI Small Grants Programme will provide financial support to civil society organizations for the implementation of innovative ideas for increasing public awareness and interaction with the general public, advocacy and media campaigns, preparation of policy briefs, case studies, presentation of positive practices for anticorruption advocacy and activities in local communities that address corruption at the grassroots level. Additionally, the grant scheme will enhance the anticorruption capacities, cooperation, and integration of civil society organizations into national and regional networks and initiatives. By the capacity building, mentoring and monitoring program, the SELDI will seek to improve the skills and abilities of civil society organizations, enabling them to actively participate in the fight against corruption and promote good governance.

### 1.2.2 Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority

Indicative allocated amount for the Small Grants Programme: EUR 292,500.

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts, and represent a SELDI contribution falling between the following minimum and maximum percentages of the total eligible costs of the project:

Minimum grant amount: EUR 7,000; Maximum grant amount: EUR 10,000.

Minimum SELDI contribution: 70% of total eligible costs of the project; Maximum SELDI contribution 90% of the total eligible costs of the project.

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<sup>7</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia (reports available at: [Strategy and Reports - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eu-anti-corruption/strategy-reports))

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the project and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union or the European Development Fund<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. Eligibility criteria

### 2.1 Eligibility of applicants (lead applicant and co-applicant)<sup>9</sup>

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

- Be non-profit making,
- Be a Civil Society Organisation in line with the different legal requirements for registration in the target countries,
- Have legal personality and be active in the area of rule of law, anti-corruption, transparency and good governance,
- Be established and active in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>10\*</sup>, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia),
- Be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project with the co-applicant (if any) not acting as an intermediary.

The lead applicant may act with maximum one co-applicant as specified hereafter. The Lead Applicant and the Co-Applicant shall implement activities in the countries of their establishment and activity respectively.

#### Co-applicant

- Co-applicant participates in designing and implementing the project, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant.
- Co-applicant must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself.

If awarded the grant contract, the co-applicant (if any) will become beneficiary in the project (together with the coordinator).

Grassroots and youth organizations are explicitly encouraged to apply.

### 2.2 Eligibility of Projects

#### Types of projects

A project is composed of set of activities. The projects to be financed under this call may cover sectors or themes falling under the following core areas:

- (i) Corruption and state capture levels in SEE;
- (ii) Anticorruption policies and regulatory environment;
- (iii) Institutional practices and enforcement of the law;
- (iv) The judiciary in anticorruption;
- (v) Corruption and the hidden economy;
- (vi) Civil society in anticorruption / Countering CSO capture;
- (vii) Media freedom and media capture;

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<sup>8</sup> Where a grant is financed by the European Development Fund, any mention of European Union financing must be understood as referring to European Development Fund financing.

<sup>9</sup> SELDI partners and associates are not eligible to apply under this Call

<sup>10</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence



(viii) International and regional cooperation and outreach in the anti-corruption.

The following types of projects **are ineligible**:

- projects concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- projects concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- projects concerned only or mainly with “one-off” conferences, and similar events;
- projects linked to political parties or of political/partisan or religious nature;
- projects that fall within the general activities of competent state institutions or state administration services, including local government;
- projects in relation to: the tobacco industry (CAEN code 16), production of alcoholic distilled beverages (CAEN code 1591), arms and munitions (CAEN code 296);
- purchase of equipment and capital investments.

All applicants are encouraged to pay due attention to gender issues, by ensuring that proposals integrate gender perspective through foreseen activities and specific indicators as relevant.

### Duration

The initial planned duration of a project may fall between 9 to 12 months.

### Types of activity

The SELDI Small Grants Programme will support activities that will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Call and the Overall SELDI Project, that is, activities aimed at addressing needs and challenges related to corruption. Types of activities that may be financed under this call include (the list is not exhaustive):

- In-depth case studies of state capture/strategic corruption with focus on judicial and political corruption, including success stories of anticorruption advocacy, review of laws, strategies, policies and effectiveness of institutions;
- Research and data mining;
- Education, public awareness and communication campaigns (incl. social media campaigns);
- Implementation of innovative ideas to increase public awareness and interaction with the public and citizens' engagement;
- Activities aimed at ensuring outreach towards grassroots and other types of local non-governmental organisations, citizens and volunteers;
- Monitoring and watchdog actions relating to the implementation of relevant laws, policies and strategies;
- Monitoring of international commitments, publication of monitoring and shadow reports;
- Participation in the reform and policy making process;

- Participation in the reform and policy making process, provision of policy advice at local level;
- Advocacy for the revision of existing legislation and adoption of new legislation in accordance with EU standards and requirements;
- Promotion of the implementation of adopted laws and regulations;
- Dissemination of best practices;
- Facilitation of dialogue and contacts, consultations and discussions between different stakeholders,
- Networking and coalition building, and information/expertize/experience/knowledge sharing activities, encouraging a collective and coordinated approach;
- Engagement with regional/international bodies;
- Synergies with the SELDI activities;
- Organisation of conferences, roundtables, workshops and seminars (a limited and well justified number of days and events per proposed project);
- Cooperation with public bodies of relevance for the thematic areas in focus;
- Training and capacity development actions, study visits, field trips;
- Concrete activities to respond to needs of targeted stakeholder groups;
- Promoting principles of good governance, transparency and accountability through different initiatives;
- Initiatives for informing, educating and involving young and vulnerable communities;
- Youth-led initiatives for active participation.

The organizations should not focus on only one type of activity. The project may involve a coherent set of activities with clearly defined objectives and planned outcomes. Adequate activities not mentioned above, but clearly related to the objectives of the call, will be taken into account.

**Note**

The awarded grantees shall get involved in other activities that are part of the SELDI Project as a whole, and are organized and implemented by the SELDI partners, such as:

- To take part in the Three-Days Kick-off and Networking Meeting in Skopje, tentatively to take place in October/ November 2024 (costs will be covered by the Contracting Authority);
- To take part in Mentoring and Capacity Building Programme;
- To take part in regular bilateral and joint networking meetings with the SELDI partners and awarded grantees;
- To take part in joint events for the promotion of the outcomes from the implemented grants;
- To provide input in drafting joint policy documents and reports;
- To take part in networking events, conferences and workshops;
- To join the SELDI Anti-Corruption Lab (to be established tentatively in the second half of 2024).

### Location

Projects must take place in one or more of the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

### Financial support to third parties

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties (sub-granting).

### Visibility

Awarded grantees must take all necessary steps to publicize the fact that the European Union and SELDI.net has financed or co-financed the action. As far as possible, projects that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must incorporate information and communication activities designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the project and the EU support for the project in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

Awarded grantees must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing (see the Requirements for Visibility Communication for EU external actions specified and published by the European Commission at [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/comm-visibility-requirements\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/comm-visibility-requirements_en)).

The grantees must also contribute to the communication and outreach activities of the SELDI network in terms of achieving improved outreach and engagement through enhanced use of social media.

### Number of applications and grants per applicants

- The lead applicant may not submit more than one application(s) under this call for proposals.
- The lead applicant may not be awarded more than one grant under this call for proposals.
- The lead applicant may not be a co-applicant in another application at the same time.
- A co-applicant may not be a co-applicant in more than one application under this call for proposals.
- A co-applicant may not be awarded more than one grant under this call for proposals.

### **2.3 Eligibility of Costs: costs that can be included**

The Contracting Authority contribution under this call for proposals shall be based on reimbursement of eligible costs in the form of actual costs incurred by the beneficiaries. Eligible costs shall meet the following criteria:

- They are incurred during the implementation of the project;
- They are indicated in the estimated overall project budget;
- They are necessary for the implementation of the project;
- They are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary(ies) and determined according to the accounting standards and the usual cost accounting practices;
- They comply with the requirements of the national tax and social legislation;

- They are reasonable, justifiable and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

Only 'eligible costs' can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for 'eligible costs'.

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant contract do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the contracting authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant or the percentage of co-financing as a result of these corrections.

It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

#### Eligible direct costs

- gross salary costs for the staff involved in the implementation of the project;
- costs of travel related to the activities in the project, including local and international travel costs;
- direct costs incurred during the implementation phase of the proposed activities (including costs for research and publications, organisation of conferences/ seminars, costs for external persons/experts who will be requested to provide professional support, etc.);
- project office costs that are relevant to the proposed activities.

#### Contingency reserve

N/A

#### Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the project may be eligible for flat rate funding, but the total must not exceed 7 % of the estimated total eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the special conditions of the grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

If any of the applicants is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU, it may not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the project.

#### Contributions in kind

N/A

#### Ineligible costs

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or donor;
- purchases of land or buildings
- reconstruction and renovation of buildings

- purchasing vehicles, furniture and IT equipment
- currency exchange losses;
- credit to third parties;
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations.

#### 2.4 Ethics clauses and code of conduct

The beneficiaries must comply with the following principles and clauses:

- Absence of conflict of interest;
- Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards;
- Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment;
- Anti-corruption and anti-bribery;
- Absence of unusual commercial expenses;
- Absence of breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud.

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if breaches of the ethics clauses and code of conduct of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract.

### 3. How to apply and the procedures to follow

#### 3.1 Application

The Concept Notes and Applications for this call shall be submitted electronically. It is two-steps application, that is, submission of concept notes in the first phase and full applications in the second phase.

For the purpose of applying on the Call, Applicants need to create user profile on the platform:

- <https://grants.mk/applicant/en/>

Upon user profile creation, applicants need to search and apply for the specific call SELDI Small Grants Programme “Financial support for grassroots and youth CSOs with outreach to citizens”, Reference No. 10-46/1-2024.

Organisations that will act as co-applicants will also need to register on the platform. During the application process the Lead Applicant will add the registered co-applicant in the required field. With the registration, the applicants/co-applicants will need to provide required data and attach the Registration Certificate issued by competent authority within their country.

Applicants must apply in English. Hand-written concept notes and full applications will not be accepted.

#### 3.2 Concept Note content

The submission of the Concept Notes includes completing and submission of the following documents on the platform:

- Concept Note;
- Declaration by the Applicant (signed and stamped or signed with certified electronic signature PDF document);
- Mandate by Co-applicant, if applicable (signed and stamped or signed with certified electronic signature PDF document)

Applicants can download the templates of the required documents on the platform.

Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the requested information in the concept note. In the concept note, applicants must only provide an estimate of the requested contribution as well as an indicative percentage of that contribution in relation to the eligible costs of the project. A detailed budget is to be submitted only by the lead applicants invited to submit a full application in the second phase. The elements outlined in the concept note may not be substantially changed in the full application. An explanation/justification of the relevant replacements/adjustments shall be included in the Full Application. Should the explanation/justification not be accepted by the evaluation committee, the proposal may be rejected on that sole basis.

Only the concept note form will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that this document contains ALL relevant information concerning the project. No additional annexes should be sent.

Please complete the concept note form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly. Any error or major discrepancy related to the concept note instructions may lead to the rejection of the concept note.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

Applicants will be required to express interest for coaching for the process of preparation of the Full Application, in the Concept Note Form. The manner of delivering coaching will be decided once information on the interest of potential applicants is analyzed.

Participation in the coaching sessions by applicants will not affect by any means the process of evaluation of the full application proposals.

### 3.3 Deadline for submission of concept notes

The deadline for the submission of concept notes is **1 August 2024, until 16.00 (CET/ Skopje time)**. Upon successful submission of consent notes, the status of the application on the platform will be changed into 'submitted'.

**The lead applicant is strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit** its concept note, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The Contracting Authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

The Platform will automatically disable submission of concept notes once the deadline is reached.

### 3.4 Questions and answers

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than **9 July 2024** to the address given below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals ([10-46/1-2024](#)):

E-mail address: [seldigrants@mcms.mk](mailto:seldigrants@mcms.mk)

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than **19 July 2024**.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, an action or specific activities.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure, will be published on the following websites:

<http://mcms.mk/> and [www.seldi.net/](http://www.seldi.net/)

### 3.5 Information session

Online Information session for this call for proposals will be held on **28 June 2024 at 11.00 CET** on ZOOM ([LINK for the information session](#)). Organisations, interested in attending the information session, can register their participation at this [LINK](#).

### 3.6 Full Applications

Pre-selected applicants, based on evaluation of concept notes, will be invited to submit full application.

The submission of the Full Application for this call includes completing and attaching the following documents to grants.mk:

- **Full Application Form;**
- **Project Budget** (in Excel format);
- **Indicative Work Plan;**
- Legal Entity Form duly completed and signed by the lead applicant and co-applicant (if any);
- Financial identification form of the lead applicant, duly completed and signed, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made if contract is being awarded<sup>11</sup>.

Applicants can download the templates of the required documents on the platform.

Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order. Please complete the full application form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

Any error or any major inconsistency in the full application (e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

Please note that the budget submitted in a full application phase should not differ more than 10% in relation to the amount presented in the Concept note.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is unclear and thus prevents the contracting authority from conducting an objective assessment.

The application form and the budget will be transmitted to the Evaluation Committee Members. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the project.

**Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected.**

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<sup>11</sup> Applicants residing in North Macedonia shall provide details for a bank account in MKD currency, while applicants coming from the other target countries shall provide details for a bank account in EUR currency.



### **3.7 Deadline for submission of full applications**

The deadline for the submission of full applications will be indicated in the letter sent to the lead applicants whose application has been pre-selected. The Letter will be sent to the contact e-mail address identified by the Applicant.

Upon successful submission of full applications, the status of the application on the platform will be changed into 'submitted'.

Lead applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their full applications, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The Contacting Authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

The Platform will automatically disable submission of full applications once the deadline is reached.

### **3.8 Questions and answers**

Questions may be sent by e-mail to the address given below, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals ([10-46/1-2024](mailto:seldigrants@mcms.mk)):

E-mail address: [seldigrants@mcms.mk](mailto:seldigrants@mcms.mk)

The deadline for submission of questions and timeline for providing replies by the contracting authority will be set in the letters sent to applicant whose application has been pre-selected.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, an action or specific activities.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure, will be published on the following websites:

<http://mcms.mk/> and [www.seldi.net/](http://www.seldi.net/)

## **4 Evaluation of project proposals**

Proposals will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee against "best impact and value for money" criteria, which include administrative and content criteria (compliance with the SELDI Strategy, policy relevance, project coherence, stakeholders and media engagement, geographic coverage, applicant capacities/past performance record).

The Evaluation Committee and the Contracting Authority will also take into consideration obtaining reasonable distribution of grants in the six target countries.

The evaluation of the projects will take place in two stages: administrative check and eligibility check and quality evaluation.

### **4.1 Administrative checks and concept note evaluation**

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the applicant fulfils eligibility criteria.
- If the applicant has provided supporting documents (registration certificate, declaration by the applicant and mandate by co-applicant (if any)).

- If the concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in these Guidelines and the Concept Note Form. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The concept notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed project.

The concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

<b>1. Relevance of the project</b>	Sub-score	<b>20</b>
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and other specific requirements and guidance stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the project aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants?	5x2**	
1.2 How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country?	5	
1.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5	
<b>2. Design of the project</b>	Sub-score	<b>30</b>
2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the project? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the project and how the expected results will be achieved?	5x2**	
2.2 Does the design reflect analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5	
2.3 Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)?	5	
2.4 Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic?	5	
2.5 To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of	5	

gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth, outreach to grassroots and citizens?		
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>50</b>

**\*\*this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance**

Once all concept notes have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

Firstly, only the concept notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the number of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal or close to 150% of the available budget for this call for proposals.

Lead applicants will receive a letter indicating the reference number of their application and the respective results. The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications.

#### 4.2 Evaluation of full application

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

- If the submission deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will automatically be rejected.
- If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in these Guidelines for Applicants and the Full Application Form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The full applications that pass this check: they will be further evaluated on their quality, using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

**The selection criteria** help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s operational capacity and are used to verify that they:

- have the project management capacities and technical expertise required to successfully complete the proposed action.

**The award criteria** help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

*Scoring:* The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

**Evaluation grid**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Maximum Score</b>
<b>1. Operational capacity</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Do the applicants have sufficient in-house experience of project management?	5
1.2 Do the applicants have sufficient in-house technical expertise? (especially knowledge and experience of the issues to be addressed)	5
<b>2. Relevance</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation</i>	20
<b>3. Design of the action</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1 How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved and how? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)?	5x2**
3.2 Does the full application defines clearly defined indicators for measuring the achievements?	5
3.3 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5
<b>4. Implementation approach</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic?	5x2**
4.2 Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation system?	5
4.3 Is the co-applicant's level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	5
<b>5. Sustainability of the action</b>	<b>10</b>
5.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	5

5.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including experience and knowledge sharing?	5
<b>6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action</b>	<b>20</b>
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	5x2**
6.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory?	5x2**
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>100</b>

**\*\*:** this scores are multiplied by 2 because of its importance

If the lead applicant applies without co-applicant or affiliated entities the score for point 4.3 shall be 5.

Full applications with a score of at least 60 will be considered for selection.

Provisional selection

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

#### 4.3 Notification of the Contracting Authority's decision and signature of contract

After completing the evaluation and verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants. The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the contracting authority's decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. This letter will be sent by e-mail.

Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure. Communication will be conducted in English language.

Selected applicants will be invited for contract signature.

#### 4.4 Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME
1. Publication of the Call for proposals	17/06/2024	
1. Information meeting (if any)	28/06/2024	11.00 CET
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	09/07/2024	-

<b>3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority</b>	19/07/2024	-
<b>4. Deadline for submission of concept notes</b>	01/08/2024	16.00 CET
<b>5. Information to lead applicants on opening, administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)</b>	August/ September 2024	-
<b>6. Invitations to submit full applications</b>	August/ September 2024	-
<b>7. Coaching Session</b>	September 2024	
<b>8. Deadline for submission of full applications</b>	October/ November 2024	-
<b>9. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)</b>	November/ December 2024	-
<b>10. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)</b>	November/ December 2024	-
<b>11. Contract signature</b>	December 2024	-
<b>12. Start of contract implementation</b>	January 2025	-

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site where the call was published (MCIC and SELDI).