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

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria through the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Montenegro announces a procedure for the acceptance and selection of proposals for projectsto be implemented with a grant through the Official Development Assistance of the Republic of Bulgaria, with an initial implementation period in 2025.

**Priority Areas for Project Implementation on the territory of Montenegro:**

*- Providing inclusive and quality education and improving school infrastructure;*

*- Protection and guarantee of human rights with special attention to women, children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups;*

*- Sustainable economic development and support for sustainable employment;*

*- Sustainable management of natural resources, nature protection and mitigation of the effects of climate change;*

*- Providing universal health coverage and access to quality health services.*

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

*- Supporting innovative teaching methods and educational approaches, modernization of schools and centres for daily care for children and youth, centres for children with disabilities and disadvantaged children –* ***Goal 4: Quality Education and Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions****;*

*- Implementation of good European practices for protection of the rights of children with disabilities and disadvantaged children -* ***Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions****;*

*- Protection and guarantee of human rights with special attention to women, children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups –* ***Goal 5: Gender Equality and Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions****;*

*- Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all –* ***Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities****;*

*- Conservation of biodiversity, air and nature, water and waste management, innovative clean technologies, construction of treatment plants, waste processing plants and financing of activities related to the fulfilment of the criteria under Chapter 27 – Environment –* ***Goal 13: Climate Action****;*

*- Improving the infrastructure and preparedness of medical institutions in Montenegro to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic –* ***Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being****.*

**2.  Target Groups:**

*- state institutions;*

*- municipalities;*

*- hospitals, polyclinics, health centers and their employees;*

*- NGOs;*

*- educational institutions;*

*- pupils and students (including people with special needs and disadvantaged people);*

*- teachers and administrative staff of schools and universities;*

*- employees of the state and local administration;*

*- people with disabilities, disadvantaged people or representatives of other vulnerable groups.*

**3. Outputs/Results:**

*- improving socio-economic development and good governance, leading to sustainable and inclusive economic growth;*

*- improving the well-being and health of people;*

*- providing quality education;*

*- protection of human rights;*

*- improving administrative capacity;*

*- affirmation of the reputation and international prestige of the Republic of Bulgaria.*

**4. Eligible Project Budget:**

4.1. Minimal amount of the project is **20 000 BGN (10 000 EUR).**

4.2. Recommended maximum amount of the project is:

* for projects with main purpose to deliver goods and /or services - **up to 70 000 BGN (35 790 EUR);**
* for projects with main purpose to carry out repairs and /or construction activities - **up to 120 000 BGN (61 355 EUR);**
* for projects with main purpose to carry out so called “soft components of ODA: /conferences, seminars, study visits, colloquiums and so on/ - **up to 30 000 BGN (15 000 ЕUR) and term – up to 9 months.**

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

4.4 Project proposals envisaging joint activities with Bulgarian institutions /ministries, schools, higher education institutions, institutes, research centers, etc./ will also be considered with priority.

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

5.1. Project proposals must include an **indicative start date for project implementation after January 15, 2025 and no later than November 30, 2025.**

5.2. **Projects must be completed no later than December 31, 2027.**

**6. Eligible Candidates:**

* Primary and secondary budget spenders - legal entities of Montenegro;
* International and local non-governmental organizations;
* Municipalities and their associations;
* Educational, health and social institutions;
* International humanitarian organisations;
* Other organizations or entities who do not hold political aims or have political participation and are not commercial by nature.

**As ineligible candidates in the procedure for 2024 will be considered:**

* Individuals and legal entities for whom there are circumstances under Art. 23, para. 3-8 of Resolution No. 234 of the Council of Ministers of 01.08.2011 on the policy of the Republic of Bulgaria on participation in international development cooperation / **see Annex 1 below/**
* Beneficiaries whose projects from previous years have not been completed within the term of the contract/annex and without final reports approved by the MFA **by 30 JUNE 2024.**

*In the event that a candidate under the current procedure for 2025 implements a project under a previous financial cycle of the Development Cooperation Program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria,* ***a condition for consideration of the project proposal will be the successful completion of the project within the term of the contract/annex, but not later than 30 JUNE 2024 and approval of the final reports by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.***

* Beneficiaries **who have not submitted interim reports** on projects from previous years within the term of the contract/annex.
* Current beneficiaries **who have not reimbursed due funds from previous projects financed** under the Development Cooperation Program.
* Applicants **without a sustainable project history of less than 2 years.**
* Applicants **with a registration period of less than 2 years.**
* **Applicants who have received first payment in the end of 2022 and still carrying out the project in 2024 and have no approved an interim report till the announce of the company for receiving the project proposals for 2025.**

**Applicants may not submit more than one project proposal under this call for proposals. In the event that an applicant submits more than one project proposal, all of their submitted project proposals will be excluded from subsequent evaluation.**

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

**7.1** **Eligible Activities**

• Development of new/updating existing training modules

• Capacity building activities /organizing and conducting trainings in areas of interest of the administration/institutions of the partner country

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

• Organization and holding of seminars, forums, conferences

• Research and strategy development

• Activities to raise awareness of citizens' rights

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

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

• Activities related to improving the quality of social infrastructure (educational/health) ex.: Delivery of equipment and materials for state or municipal property - schools, hospitals, kindergardens, homes for elderly, etc.; Construction and repair works to improve the condition of state or municipal property - schools, hospitals, kindergartens, homes for elderly, etc.

**7.1.2.** **Compulsory Activities to be provided in the Project:**

* provision of **an audit report issued by an independent financial auditor**
* **activities to ensure publicity and visibility of the financial assistance provided, in accordance with the Publicity and Visibility Guidelines of the Bulgarian Development Aid**, worth 3 to 5% from the total value of the grant for the project, but not exceeding 5 000 BGN.

**7.2. Eligible and ineligible expenses**

**7.2. 1 Eligible expenses**

**The costs of project implementation must meet all of the conditions below:**

* to be spent within the terms specified in the agreement for targeted grant funding after the start and before the end of the project implementation period
* be lawful and comply with the principles of responsibility, economy, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency
* be executed only against the necessary supporting documents - invoices or other documents of equivalent probative value, testifying the expenditures incurred
* be within the budget limits of the project
* not be covered by another project, program or any other financial scheme, related to or originating from the national budget, the EU budget or any other donor.
* the selection of a supplier of goods and services has been made in accordance with the current applicable national legislation
* organization and management costs / **project manager/coordinator costs**/ **to be up to 10% of the total allowable costs for the individual project**
* **expenses for translation of the project documents in section “Expenses for project management”**

**7.2.2. Ineligible expenses**

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

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

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

• Refundable VAT

• Costs that are covered by other sources

• Fines, penalties and costs of legal proceedings

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

**7.2.3. Cost estimates**

The **completed cost estimate is an integral part of the project proposal**, with which the grant application is submitted under the announced competitive procedure.

The estimate **should contain specific and clear information about the planned costs of activities in accordance with those planned in the project proposal.**

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

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

**8. Required Documents for Application:**

An Application Form is available on the following website in Bulgarian and English:

<https://www.mfa.bg/bg/3866>

All parts of the application form should be duly completed in Bulgarian and / or English. In case of any deficiencies that hinder the evaluation of the project proposal, the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Montenegro may require additional information within a short period of time. Failure to provide such information within the deadline shall be considered a ground for rejection of the proposal.

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

*Project proposals will be accepted* ***until 31 July 2024 (inclusive)*** *at the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria to Montenegro e-mail address:* [*Embassy.Podgorica@mfa.bg*](mailto:Embassy.Podgorica@mfa.bg) *(****both******in PDF and MS Word*** *- .doc, .docx) and should also be sent in original signed and stamped to: Podgorica, bul. Ivana Crnojevica 99/2.*

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

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

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

• The deadlines for implementation and the duration of the project correspond to those indicated in the call for project proposals

• The objectives and scope of the project proposal correspond to the priority areas and sectors of ODA set out in the call for project proposals

• The project proposal is in line with **the Sustainable Development Goals** and the priority goals of the Mid-term Programme for Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2020-2024.

• The target groups of the project proposal correspond to those indicated in the call for project proposals

• Project activities are eligible under the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee Guidelines for Activities Counting as ODA

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

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

**11. Funding cycle**

Payments for the approved project proposals are made in 3 stages

**First payment** - in the amount of 50% of the amount of approved funds under the project

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

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

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

**12. Additional Information:**

Applicants **shall be informed of the results of the procedure for evaluation**, selection and approval of the project proposals within 14 working days of the completion of the individual stages of the procedure. The Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Montenegro **has no obligation to inform applicants about the grounds for approval or rejection of the submitted project proposals**.

**Annex 1**

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

**Article 23**(**3**) **A legal person seeking to apply for the provision of development aid must not**:

1. be declared bankrupt;
2. be in liquidation proceedings or in a similar procedure under the national laws and regulations;
3. be in open insolvency proceedings or must not have entered into an out-of-court settlement with its creditors within the meaning of Article 740 of the Commerce Act, and if the applicant is a non-resident – it must not be in a similar procedure under the national laws and regulations, including if its activities are under the court's control or it has ceased its activities;
4. be disqualified from practicing a particular profession or activity under the law of the State in which the offense was committed;
5. have any monetary debts owed to the State or a municipality within the meaning of Article 162, paragraph 2 of the Tax and Social Insurance Procedure Code established by an act of a competent authority which has entered into force, unless rescheduling or deferral of the debts has been allowed, or monetary debts relating to the payment of social insurance contributions or taxes under the legal provisions of the State in which it is established;
6. have any outstanding private debts owed to the State listed in Article 3, paragraph 7 of the National Revenue Agency Act.

**(4) A legal person seeking to apply for the provision of development aid must not have a member of the management body that**:

1. has been convicted by a final sentence for indictable offense;
2. has not fulfilled his/her/its obligations relating to the payment of social insurance contributions or taxes in accordance with the applicable law;
3. has provided deliberately false documents when providing information requested as a condition for financing development aid activities or has not provided such information;
4. has been disqualified from practicing a particular profession or activity under the law of the State in which the offense was committed;
5. is a legal person for which any of the circumstances under paragraph 3 exist;
6. has any outstanding private debts owed to the State listed in Article 3, paragraph 7 of the National Revenue Agency Act.

**(6) Where the members of the management bodies are legal persons, the requirements of paragraph 5 shall apply to their representatives in the relevant management bodies.**

**(7) Persons seeking to apply for the provision of development aid must not**:

1. have a member of a management or supervisory body, as well as such person ad interim, including a procurator or a commercial agent who has “close links”, within the meaning of § 1, item 1 of the Supplementary Provision of the Conflict of Interest Prevention and Ascertainment Act, with the agency administering the relevant project or with senior employees in his/her organisation;
2. have entered into a contract with a person under Article 21 or 22 of the Conflict of Interest Prevention and Ascertainment Act.