

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT
FM14-21

Portugal

PT-ACTIVECITIZENS Civil Society

2018

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the Active Citizens Fund is to strengthen Portuguese civil society and active citizenship and to empower vulnerable groups. In line with the objectives of the EEA Grants the Programme aims to contribute to reducing economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthening the bilateral cooperation with the Donor States. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, in consortium with the Bissaya Barreto Foundation, has been selected as the Fund Operator for the new civil society programme called Active Citizens Fund in Portugal, following a tender launched for that purpose. Programme Implementation Agreement (PIA) was signed on 9 July 2018.

The Programme has a total budget of 11 million euros, with its implementation period spanning until the end of 2024. Active Citizens Fund represents an opportunity for Portuguese NGOs to join efforts, to strengthen their voice and delivery capacities and to mobilise civil society and each citizen to a more committed and active participation in community, promoting tolerance, social justice, and transparency in public affairs.

Active Citizens Fund in Portugal has four Outcomes:

1. Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness;
2. Increased support for human rights;
3. Vulnerable groups are empowered;
4. Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society.

The launch event of the Active Citizens Fund in Portugal took place on September 14th in Lisbon and was attended by around three hundred people. This session was also livestreamed to reach more people. In the launch participated, apart from the President of the Bissaya Barreto Foundation and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Marta Pardavi from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee as keynote speaker, Paivi Anttila from the FMO, the Norway Ambassador in Portugal, the EEA Grants National Focal Point and the ACF Programme Director. In the afternoon, there was a round table with NGO representatives to discuss some central issues related with the main areas of the Programme. Calls were opened on July 11th, even before the launch event in order to give enough time to the NGOs to prepare and present proposals to the calls and subsequent outreach events were held throughout the country during July and September engaging approximately 1 100 people. Project applications could be submitted up to October 31st.

The open calls covered all the four outcomes of the programme, with a total appropriation of €3 620 000. 165 out of 187 received applications were deemed admissible under the rules of the Programme, and their evaluation process was carried out until January 2019. Overall, requested support under the scope of these calls was four times the amount made available. No projects were approved as of December 31st, as the evaluation process was only completed in January 2019, a mere six months after the Programme Implementation Agreement was signed and the calls were opened and just three months after the calls were closed.

Received applications namely concerned economic participation of vulnerable groups, empowerment of vulnerable groups and outreach to youth at risk of social exclusion as well as civic awareness raising and engagement and advocacy work on human rights.

The results of the evaluation process are outside the scope of this report as it was completed in January 2019. It is expected that the selected projects will initiate implementation starting in March 2019, as originally planned.

The tender to implement the pre-defined project “Education for Citizenship” was launched on 30 November and the evaluation process to select the project promoter is to be completed by mid-February 2019.

Bilateral cooperation was a significant component of the year’s activities as well. The European Wergeland Center cooperated in the preparation of the “Education for Citizenship” project. The call for Bilateral Cooperation Initiatives was opened in July at the same time with the first round of calls and the first applications were received before the end of the year. Evaluation of these applications was completed in January 2019. The call for Bilateral Cooperation Initiatives is ongoing with the total allocation of € 90 000.

Several measures were taken in order to address the country-specific concerns defined in the PIA. All calls for applications mandated that each supported project either includes a capacity building component or is a dedicated capacity building project (i.e., those under Outcome “Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society”).

Outreach to under-served geographic areas and target groups was carried out through presentation sessions and technical workshops in 9 cities all over the country, as well as through individual support on project preparation provided on demand to applicants located outside the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Porto and/or organisations created and managed by under-served target groups. Additional measures are being considered in this regard, as detailed in the “Lessons learned” section.