

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT
FM14-21

Portugal

PT-ACTIVECITIZENS Civil Society

2020

Fund operated by:



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION



BISSAYA BARRETO
FOUNDATION

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2020 was strongly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic which has conditioned people's life, the functioning of the organisations and the entire social and economic environment. The way of living and working was reshaped and digital usage was increased. The Active Citizens Fund Programme has quickly adapted to the lockdown constraints and, despite of the pandemic, managed to carry out almost all planned activities as scheduled. A closer monitoring of projects has been put in place to exchange information and to assist project promoters.

Because of the pandemic and anticipating the new "online normal", the Fund Operator began, in March, the preparation of 10 tutorial videos explaining the calls' rules, how to fill in the applications and all the issues usually addressed in face-to-face sessions. Those videos were published on the Programme website.

The launch event of the 2020 calls took place, as planned, on September 18th, in Lisbon, in a mixed session (presential and by Zoom), followed by 6 face-to-face workshops in several cities of the mainland and one webinar to reach the NGOs of Azores and Madeira.

The pandemic has impacted most projects, delaying activities and creating the need for innovative solutions. The Portuguese NGOs have had the capacity to adapt to the new reality and found different ways to reach their target groups, mainly transforming the previous face-to-face into online activities. However, most projects slowed down and needed more time and money to successfully be completed.

To face this situation, 16 applications requesting an additional grant have been approved under the Call #19 – *Mitigation measures for ongoing projects* opened in October because of the Covid-19, for projects under all outcomes of the Programme and having started before March 2020. The total grant amount awarded for these projects was € 86 541.

As a consequence of the pandemic, the pre-defined project "Education for Citizenship" got a time extension and an additional grant to allow for one more school year of work. Due to the atypical year of 2020, even if activities online have been implemented, the project needed more time to get effective results regarding the metric and the work done by the NGOs in schools. The Human Rights Platform, whose beginning was planned to September, was also delayed, and will start in practice in 2021.

As a result of the 2018 calls launched under the four Outcomes and the 2019 calls launched under Outcome 1 and 4, 68 projects were running and monitored in 2020 as well as the predefined project Education for Citizenship and the Human Rights Platform. The total grant amount awarded to those 70 projects is € 4 162 125.

The 2020 calls covered the 4 Outcomes, for large and institutional projects, with a total appropriation of € 3 960 000. Out of the 177 applications received (14.3 million of grant requested), 138 have been admitted and are now being evaluated by a panel of experts and the Fund Operator expects to have a final decision on the approvals in early March. It is noteworthy that 49.28% of the admitted applications are outside the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Porto, corresponding to 68 projects.

Only 23 small projects from 2018 calls under Outcome 4 have already been closed and as a result 23 Portuguese NGOs dispose now of a participative assessment of their organisational needs and an action plan to make the organisations stronger and more sustainable. Together with the assessment needs made through the capacity building components of other supported projects, 46 NGOs own now a strategic framework for their development.

Regarding all other expected results, only after completion and approval of final reports such data may be reported. However, Programme management is result-oriented and contracted targets are closely monitored. Several of those contracted targets have already exceeded the Programme targets and, for that reason, the area of citizenship education is not considered any longer a priority for new projects.

Bilateral cooperation was promoted over 2020 in the calls launch session and in all workshops around the country, as well as in the Programme's website, but also suffered from the pandemic. Only 3 new initiatives have been approved under the dedicated call for Bilateral Cooperation Initiatives. So far, 15 entities from the Donor Countries are involved as formal partners in projects approved under the 2018 and 2019 calls.

Cooperation with the other FOs has been fostered through the active participation in the ACF FOs Community for Action group where the Portuguese FO is responsible for a network regarding "Capacity building".

The website for the Active Citizens Fund in Portugal has been the most effective way of continuously ensuring visibility for donors, and has had, between January and December, a monthly average of 4.973 visitors. A total of 59.672 sessions and 188.289 page views have been reported. 2.384 copies of a new user-friendly Application Manual were downloaded until the calls closing dates of December;

The media partnership established with a national broadcast radio has also produced exclusive content in 2020 that strongly contributes to the visibility of the work carried out by the Programme and its supported projects, with weekly promos on air and news widely shared on social media. Podcasts and digital articles have been permanently available on the website of the ACF in Portugal.

The new measures approved by the Financial Mechanism Office to make the outreach to under-served geographic areas and target groups more effective came into force in the 2020 calls. As a lesson learned the Programme adopted individual coaching as a

new tool to help those entities to prepare better applications and increased the amounts of the eligibility ceilings to the facility. This increase also applies to the implementation support for projects approved under all calls.

The overall risk score of the Programme was increased from 1.41 to 2.45. This increase is associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and has even originated two new risks: a) Covid-19 and the Government's response to it can constrain project activities, target group's involvement and the PP's ability to reach the project results; b) Unavailability of evaluators due to Covid-19 may lead to delays in Programme implementation.