



CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

WESTERN BALKANS FUND

implemented within the EU/WBF Joint Action “Support to the promotion of Civil Society regional actions in the Western Balkans” (Phase III) CN 2025/488-479, co-funded by the European Union under the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme (IPA III)

EMPOWERING REGIONAL COOPERATION
ERC

2ND EDITION · CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Guidelines for Applicants

Deadline for submission of full applications

26 October 2026, 13:59 hrs CET

via OGMS: www.wbfportal.org/applicant

Table of Contents

1. The EU/WBF Joint Action — Phase III and the ERC Grant Scheme

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Objective and outcome of the CfP
- 1.3 Areas of intervention
- 1.4 Financial allocation provided by the Contracting Authority
- 1.5 Size of grants
- 1.6 Duration

2. Rules for this Call for Proposals

- 2.1 Eligibility of applicants
- 2.2 Eligibility of partnership
- 2.3 Eligibility of costs
- 2.4 Eligibility of activities
- 2.5 Visibility
- 2.6 How to apply and the procedures to follow
- 2.7 Evaluation and selection of project proposals
- 2.8 Notification of the Contracting Authority's decision
- 2.9 Conditions for implementation after the award decision

1. The EU/WBF Joint Action — Phase III and the ERC Grant Scheme

1.1 Background

The Western Balkans Six (WB6) Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, share a common European perspective and a strategic commitment to regional cooperation as a cornerstone of stability, democratic transformation and EU integration. Despite progress achieved, persistent societal divisions, uneven civil society capacities and limited structured regional collaboration continue to constrain the impact and sustainability of bottom-up cooperation initiatives.

Within this context, the Empowering Regional Cooperation (ERC) 2nd Edition Grant Scheme is a dedicated, larger-scale regional grant scheme of the Western Balkans Fund (WBF), implemented under Work Package 1 of the EU/WBF Joint Action — Phase III, “Support to the promotion of Civil Society regional actions in the Western Balkans” (CN 2025/488-479), co-funded by the European Union through the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme (IPA III) and building directly on the achievements of Phases I and II and of the ERC 1st Edition, piloted in 2024.

ERC is specifically designed to support higher-impact, multi-partner regional initiatives led by well-established Civil Society Organisations, with a clear focus on strengthening regional cooperation, regional CSO partnership and EU aligned priorities, thereby contributing to increased trust, reconciliation and good neighborly relations in the Western Balkans. ERC funded projects should demonstrate potential for regional policy influence rather than focusing solely on local outputs; proposals are expected to incorporate innovative approaches and provide evidence of scalable or transferable impact and will be assessed on their ability to contribute to broader regional policy, advocacy, knowledge or best practice sharing.

Building on the results and lessons learned from the 1st Edition, 12 regional projects, 52 partnerships and 64 Lead and Partner organisations supported, 67% of which were first-time WBF applicants, the ERC 2nd Edition strengthens the scale, ambition and strategic orientation of regional civil society cooperation. It promotes structured partnerships involving a minimum of four organisations from different WBF Contracting Parties, fostering joint responses to shared regional challenges.

This Guideline sets out the rules of the ERC 2nd Edition Call for Proposals (CfP) and helps potential applicants prepare and submit a full, competitive application.

1.2 Objective and outcomes of the CfP

The overall objective of the ERC 2nd Edition is to enhance the role and contribution of Civil Society Organisations in advancing regional cooperation and the EU integration process in the Western Balkans through strengthened organisational capacities, cooperation and increased recognition of their impact.

Expected outcomes for ERC 2nd Edition

- Enhanced capacity of CSOs to implement large, sustainable and regionally coordinated initiatives.
- Strengthened cooperation and trust among civil society actors across WB6.
- Increased visibility and recognition of CSO contributions to regional cooperation and EU integration.

*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.

Contribution to EU integration

ERC serves the overall aim of Western Balkans' EU accession pathway, translating EU priorities into bottom-up regional actions. According to the RCC Balkan Barometer 2025, 82% of citizens in the region consider regional cooperation better for their economies and 87% of WBF beneficiaries view regional cooperation as a crucial driver of EU integration the evidence base that underpins the ERC's regional impact requirement. Applicants are expected to make this contribution explicit in their proposals: every ERC project must show how it advances EU-aligned reforms, good-neighbourly relations and people-to-people links, and “EU Integration” is one of the mandatory cross-cutting issues scored under this Call (see Section 2.4).

1.3 Areas of intervention

Consistent with the WBF's strategic areas of intervention under the Joint Action Phase III, ERC 2nd Edition proposals must fall within one (or a combination) of the following:

Cultural cooperation

Supporting organizations that empower, advocate and influence policy decisions related to cultural regional cooperation.

Education and scientific exchanges

Supporting organizations in education, science and the importance of active participation in democracy through civic education programs, workshops, and public awareness campaigns.

Sustainable development

Supporting organisations in inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships advocating for policies and developing regional initiatives that are key to social progress and reflect sustainable development issues of economic, environmental, and social development.

Activities supported under each of the above Areas of Intervention should act as strategic accelerators for regional cooperation, institutional innovation and EU integration.

Target groups are all non-State and non-profit-making organisations through which people are organised to pursue shared objectives and ideals, be they cultural, educational, social or economic (see Section 2.1). Final beneficiaries include, but are not limited to, communities across the WB6 who will experience improved neighbourly relations, harmony and regional cooperation on the path towards EU integration. Key stakeholders include WBF founders and Secretariat, CSOs, local governments/authorities, international donor organisations, media and the communities themselves.

1.4 Financial allocation provided by the Contracting Authority

The overall indicative amount made available under this Call for Proposals is **EUR 300,000**.

The EU/WBF Joint Action shall respect and ensure a balanced distribution of funds across each Contracting Party of the Western Balkans Fund (WB6).

Note: The Contracting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds, or to cancel the Call, should the quality or number of proposals received be insufficient.

1.5 Size of grants

The Contracting Authority (WBF) will fund, up to a max. grant per project of **EUR 25,000** and min. **EUR 20,000**.

- The grant shall not exceed 80% of the total eligible costs of the action.
- Co-financing² committed by the applicant must not fall below 20% of the total eligible costs of the action.

Projects with higher co-financing levels may be prioritised for funding due to their greater potential for impact. A minimum of EUR 6,250 is required as co-financing if requesting the maximum (EUR 25,000) grant amount.

80% or Max. grant from WBF (EUR 25,000) + minimum 20% co-financing from the Applicant (EUR 6,250) = Total eligible costs (EUR 31,250)

1.6 Duration

Project duration may not be lower than 6 (six) months nor exceed 10 (ten) months, including the reporting period (the last 30 calendar days within the above implementation timeframe).

2. Rules for this Call for Proposals

2.1 Eligibility of applicants

To be eligible to apply for an ERC grant, the lead applicant must be:

- a legal entity (individuals and/or registered entities are not eligible); and
- established in one of the WBF Contracting Parties; and
- non-profit making; and

...belonging to one of the following categories:

- A Civil Society Organisation^{3 4}(CSO/NGO);
- A business association, such as an association of enterprises, an agriculture association, a chamber of commerce, a tourism association, etc.;
- A media association, such as an organisation working with media, journalism and freedom of expression;
- An educational association, such as an association of cultural institutions, a sports association, etc.

Number of applications and grants per applicant

Under this Call for Proposals, an applicant may apply multiple times as Lead Applicant or as partner in several applications; however, it may be awarded only one (1) grant (highest scored) as Lead Applicant and/or one (1) grant (highest scored) as Project Partner.

² Being this CfP supported by the WBF and European Union, the co-financing amount may not come from other European Union and/or WBF funds.

³ An organisation's must be established under the national law and its seat is in one of WBF contracting parties.

⁴ Civil society is highly heterogeneous and encompasses a wide range of actors and aims. The EU considers civil society organisations to embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not for-profit, independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic or related to health [...] They include, but are not limited to: Non-governmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, women's and youth organisations, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations, the not-for-profit media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations.

The lead applicant shall remain committed to successfully implementing the action and shall be financially engaged, providing a financial contribution (co-financing) to the project. The lead applicant may share expenditures with the project partners; however, the lead applicant remains solely responsible, as contract signatory with WBF, for the sound implementation, expenditure of funds and reporting under this Call.

The lead applicant **MUST** provide (through experience cards in the online application form) experience track record in implementing donor-funded regional project/s in the last three (3) years.

Note: Organisations that cannot demonstrate the minimum requirement of regional donor funded projects in the last three years cannot apply as Lead Applicant under this specific Call for Proposals; they may, however, be part of the consortium as Partners. Such organisations wishing to lead a regional project should instead consider the WBF Grants for Grassroots Initiatives (GGI) Call.

2.2 Eligibility of partnership

Partnerships are required to apply for the ERC Call for Proposals and must be composed of organisations as described under Section 2.1. These partnerships must align with the following:

- **Diverse representation:** partnerships must include participants from at least four (4) different WBF Contracting Parties.
- **Partnership structure:** each partnership must have one (1) lead applicant and at least three (3) project partners from different WBF Contracting Parties, ensuring diversity and effectiveness in tackling regional challenges.
- **Lead applicant's role:** the lead applicant is responsible for submitting the project proposal, signing the Declaration by the Lead Applicant, signing the grant agreement with WBF, and representing the partnership.

Partnerships formed from more than four (4) Contracting Parties are encouraged to apply and may be prioritised during evaluation.

Associated Partner/s

Associated Partner/s consisting of EU Civil Society Organisations (used for peer learning, experience and knowledge sharing) and WB6 regional institutions (e.g. state agencies, ministries, museums, universities/academia and other public institutions), may be involved in the project, not as part of the partnership consortia. Such partner/s may play an actual role in implementing activities but must not have any financial or other interest in the project, other than reimbursement of travel and subsistence directly linked to project activities. They do not sign the Partnership Agreement, and they are not subject to the eligibility restrictions applicable to Lead Applicants and Project Partners. The role of the Associate Partner/s is required to be specified in the Application Form, however it is not mandatory if you have not identified one.

Inclusion of Associate Partner/s is not part of Eligibility Criteria however, if included, their relevance will be scored.

Note: Profit-making companies, political parties, organization dealing mostly or only with political or religious activities, and central government entities are not eligible under this Call for Proposals, neither as Lead Applicant nor as Project Partner. Applications not complying with all the above requirements will not be eligible. Central and Local Government Entities/Units/Directorates, Government funded organisations/entities (Museums, Universities, etc.); are not eligible under this specific call for proposals, neither as Lead Applicant nor as Project Partner, however they may participate as Associated institutions in accordance with the provision above. Application which does not comply with all above-described requirements will not be eligible.

2.3 Eligibility of costs

Eligible costs will be reimbursed based on actual expenses incurred, as outlined in the budget. The budget must be well-planned, simple and realistic, using market rates for cost estimations in EUR. Only costs listed in the budget will be financed; applicants must provide detailed justifications for project costs and financing sources in the online application under the Budget menu.

Exclusion criteria

Applicants must comply with WBF requirements and avoid any legal or financial issues that could disqualify them from participating in or receiving grants. Exclusion criteria are specified in Annex C: Declaration by the Lead Applicant (which can be found in the Online Application Form in OGMS), which must be signed and stamped by the lead applicant, confirming that neither it nor its project partners meet any exclusion criteria.

Financial principles: funding adheres to WBF's Financial Regulation, emphasising co-financing, the prohibition of double financing, and the non-profit rule grants must not lead to profit for beneficiaries and must maintain transparency and responsibility in financial allocations.

Eligible costs

- Total human resources costs must not exceed 20% of the total amount granted by WBF (e.g. if the max. grant is EUR 25,000 HR costs up to EUR 5,000).
- Expertise costs must not exceed 20% of the total amount granted by WBF (e.g. up to EUR 5,000 on EUR 25,000 grant). Experts engaged under the project must be independent and external to the partnership and may not be employees of any partner organisation.
- Indirect costs must not exceed 7% of the subtotal direct eligible costs.
- Costs must be incurred by the Lead Applicant and/or Project Partners for the implementation of the project, and within the project's implementation timeframe.

Eligible cost categories are:

1. Human resource costs (up to 20% of the total amount granted by WBF): gross salaries of dedicated project personnel, including social security charges and other related costs, excluding bonuses; costs shall not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies), unless justified as essential to the action.
2. Travel and accommodation (including board) costs: for staff and other participants, provided they do not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies); indicatively, accommodation up to EUR 80/night, accommodation and full board up to EUR 120/night; travel must be justified as the most cost-effective option; use of a personal vehicle is allowed only if properly justified and calculated at EUR 0.3/km.
3. Other direct costs and services: rent of premises and related technical services; renting costs for equipment and supplies dedicated to the action; costs of services and supplies purchased for the action's purposes; financial service costs (bank charges, bank guarantees); expertise costs up to 20% of the total amount granted.

Eligible indirect costs

Indirect costs may be eligible for flat-rate funding up to 7% of the estimated total eligible direct costs (e.g. accountancy, running expenses, unforeseen costs not already covered elsewhere). They are eligible only if not already assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract and are related to the project's implementation. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the requested percentage before contract signature; once the flat rate is fixed in the special conditions of the grant contract, no further supporting documents are required unless the Contracting Authority deems it necessary during reporting.

Ineligible costs

The following costs cannot be covered by the WBF grant: costs incurred before contract signature; debts and debt-service charges; provisions for losses or potential future liabilities; profit-making activities; activities affiliated with political or religious agendas; costs already financed by another EU-funded action; purchase of equipment, land or buildings; currency exchange losses; credits to third parties (unless specified in the special conditions); bonuses, customs and import duties or similar charges; fines, financial penalties and litigation expenses; taxes including VAT (except where non-recoverable under national legislation and declared accordingly); individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences or congresses; alcohol and tobacco costs; and stand-alone visibility costs (visibility must be ensured with no expenditure beyond the costs of implementing the action's activities).

Note: Contributions in kind are not eligible under this Call for Proposals.

2.4 Eligibility of activities

The project shall encompass a range of activities aimed at achieving its objectives and maximising impact, regional events, awareness-raising campaigns, networking and advocacy/policy efforts that mobilise stakeholders and communicate the project's mission.

Eligible type of activities

- **Capacity Building Activities:** Activities aimed at strengthening the knowledge, skills, organisational capacities and practical competencies of CSOs and their stakeholders in the areas of Cultural Cooperation, Education and Scientific Exchange, and Sustainable Development. These may include training, workshops, peer learning, mentoring, knowledge exchange and other capacity-development formats that enable civil society actors to cooperate more effectively at regional level, improve the quality and sustainability of their work, and contribute to reforms and processes relevant to EU Integration in the Western Balkans.
- **Advocacy Activities:** Activities designed to strengthen the voice, visibility and influence of civil society in promoting positive change and contributing to policy dialogue in the areas of Cultural Cooperation, Education and Scientific Exchange, and Sustainable Development. These may include awareness-raising campaigns, policy dialogue, consultations, research-based advocacy, public events and engagement with relevant institutions and stakeholders, particularly where they promote regional perspectives, shared Western Balkan priorities, European values and EU integration-related processes.
- **Networking Activities:** Activities that create, strengthen or expand sustainable cooperation and connections among CSOs and other relevant stakeholders across the Western Balkans in the areas of Cultural Cooperation, Education and Scientific Exchange, and Sustainable Development. These may include networking events, regional exchanges, thematic forums, partnership-building initiatives and joint platforms that facilitate knowledge sharing, development of new partnerships and coordinated regional action, thereby strengthening civil society's contribution to regional cooperation and the EU integration process.

Note: All activities MUST ensure regional balance and non-discriminatory participation.

Project proposals must mainstream cross-cutting issues; at least three *including EU Integration* of the following are mandatory:

EU Integration	Regional Outreach	Gender Sensitive	Conflict Sensitivity	Knowledge Sharing
Promotion of Marginalised Groups	Freedom of Expression	Green Agenda	Reconciliation	Innovation and Digitalisation

Mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues is scored in the evaluation methodology of this Call (see Section 2.7).

Indicative activities (non-exhaustive)

Cultural cooperation:

- Capacity-building activities strengthening CSOs' skills in cultural cooperation, cultural management, audience development and alignment with relevant EU practices and standards.
- Regional peer-learning and networking initiatives enabling CSOs and cultural actors from the Western Balkans to exchange expertise, good practices and European experiences.
- Advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives promoting cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, reconciliation and European values across the Western Balkans.
- Regional networking and partnership-building activities strengthening sustainable cooperation among CSOs, cultural institutions and other relevant stakeholders.
- Advocacy and dialogue initiatives strengthening the recognition and contribution of civil society and cultural actors to regional cooperation and the EU integration process.

Education and scientific exchanges:

- Regional networking activities creating sustainable partnerships between CSOs, educational institutions, research organisations and other stakeholders across the Western Balkans.
- Capacity-building activities strengthening CSOs' knowledge and competencies in inclusive education, lifelong learning, research cooperation and relevant EU education and research frameworks.
- Advocacy and dialogue initiatives strengthening civil society participation and recognition in education, research and innovation processes relevant to regional cooperation and EU integration.
- Regional peer-learning and networking initiatives facilitating exchange of knowledge, methodologies and good practices among CSOs, educators, researchers and other relevant stakeholders.

Sustainable development:

- Regional peer-learning and networking initiatives facilitating the exchange of knowledge, expertise and good practices on shared sustainable-development challenges.
- Advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives promoting environmental responsibility, climate resilience and implementation of European sustainability principles across the Western Balkans.
- Regional networking activities connecting CSOs, experts, communities and other stakeholders to develop sustainable cooperation around common environmental and development priorities.
- Capacity-building activities strengthening CSOs' capacities in environmental protection, climate action, green transition, circular economy and relevant EU environmental standards.
- Advocacy and dialogue initiatives strengthening civil society participation and recognition in the green transition, the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and the broader EU integration process.

Location: activities should take place in the Western Balkans Six (WB6) region.

Ineligible activities: activities concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorship for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences or congresses; and activities concerned only or mainly with religious and/or political agendas.

Financial support to third parties

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties, in other words, sub-granting is not allowed under this Call for Proposals.

Ethics clauses and code of conduct

- **No conflict of interest:** applicants must not have any conflict of interest with other applicants or parties involved. Attempts to obtain confidential information or influence the evaluation process will lead to rejection and penalties.
- **Human rights and environmental compliance:** applicants must comply with human rights, environmental legislation and core labour standards. Zero tolerance for abuse, harassment and exploitation.
- **Anti-corruption and anti-bribery:** project financing may be suspended or cancelled if corrupt practices are discovered.
- **Unusual commercial expenses:** applications will be rejected, or contracts terminated, if unexplained commissions or payments to front companies are found.
- **Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud:** the Contracting Authority may suspend or cancel procedures or contracts where these are discovered.

2.5 Visibility

The beneficiaries must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed the action. As far as possible, actions that are funded by the European Union must incorporate information designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the European Union support for the action in the contracting parties and regions concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

“The envisaged visibility must be ensured with no specific expenditures other than the costs related to the implementation of the Action Activities.” Simplified, no separate budget lines for visibility costs are accepted. For further information please refer to the 2022 Guidelines on EU visibility in External Actions.

Communication and visibility activities must be coordinated closely with the WBF Secretariat. WBF reserves the right to use project results for its own promotion.

Note: Failing to comply with the above requirement will result in a lower score for the relevant application under the Visibility criterion.

2.6 How to apply and the procedures to follow

Applicants must complete and submit a full Project Application through the Online Grant Management System (OGMS). Only applications that pass the evaluation threshold will be further evaluated.

Information sessions

Information sessions on this Call will be held in Belgrade, Podgorica, Prishtina, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tirana, and possibly other locations in the region. Please check the WBF website and social media pages for the exact schedule.

Partnership Platform

The Western Balkans Fund has created a new Web-based Partnership Platform to assist applicants to find suitable Project Partners in the context of the preparation of this Call for Applications.

Please register: <https://wbfpartnership.com/>

Where and how to send applications

Lead applicants are invited to submit the project application on behalf of the established partnership, in English, through OGMS: <https://wbfpportal.org/applicant/login.html>. The system provides detailed information on the annexes incorporated into it:

- Annex A — Application Form
- Annex B — Budget of the Action
- Annex C — Declaration by the Lead Applicant (signed and stamped)

Applications sent by other means (fax, mail or email) will be rejected. In case of a system breakdown, applicants will be notified of further instructions by the WBF Secretariat. Upon submission, lead applicants will receive a confirmation of receipt with a link to a short survey. If confirmation is not received within 7 days after the deadline, please contact WBF in writing at info@westernbalkansfund.org.

Note: Incomplete applications will be rejected automatically by the system. Hand-written applications will not be accepted. Clarifications will only be requested by WBF where the information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

Deadline for submission of applications

The deadline for submission of applications is **26 October 2026, 13:59 hrs CET**. Applicants are advised not to wait until the last day, since heavy internet traffic or connectivity issues could impede submission.

Additional information

Inquiries pertaining to this Call for Applications can be sent by e-mail no later than 15 days before the deadline to the following e-mail address:

info@westernbalkansfund.org

The WBF has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date. Only the questions sent in written will be answered (no phone inquiries). Replies will be summarized and publicized no later than 10 days before the deadline for submission of project applications at the WBF website. Please note that the replies to the questions asked during the Information Sessions will also be published at the WBF Website.

2.7 Evaluation and selection of project proposals

All applications will be evaluated according to the steps and criteria specified below. If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Step 1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis without undertaking further evaluation steps.

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the Contracting Authority (WBF) with the assistance of external assessors.

The List of the recommended projects is endorsed/approved by the WBF Governing Bodies.

According to WBF internal rules, winning applications must respect and ensure balanced distribution of funds between WBF CPs.

Step 1 — Opening, administrative and eligibility checks

The following will be assessed:

1. Whether the deadline has been met (otherwise automatically rejected).
2. Whether the proposal satisfies the eligibility criteria in Sections 1.4–1.6 and 2–2.4.
3. Whether the project has a minimum of 1 Lead Applicant and 3 Project Partners from four different WBF Contracting Parties.
4. Whether the application was submitted through OGMS.
5. Whether the Declaration by the Lead Applicant is completed, signed and stamped.
6. Whether the application is typed and written in English.
7. Whether the budget is completed in the requested format and stated in EUR.
8. Whether the action's duration is between 6 and 10 months.
9. Whether the requested WBF/EU contribution does not exceed EUR 25,000, nor is lower than EUR 20,000.
10. Whether the lead applicant and project partners are legal entities established in the WB6 and are non-profit organisations/associations.
11. Whether any requested information/document is missing or incorrect (grounds for rejection without further evaluation).

Step 2 — Evaluation of Applications

The project applications that pass the administrative and eligibility check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

Step 3 — Individual evaluation of full applications

Each full application is scored against the criteria below (100 points total):

Scoring section	What is assessed	Points
Partnerships	Diversity, complementary expertise and clarity of roles among the project partners. Relevant inclusion of Associated partners.	20
Regional added value and evidence-based needs analysis.	Quality of the context analysis; substantial regional relevance, collaboration and shared learning; innovation and added value.	20
Objective, Results and Activities	Coherence of the specific objective; alignment of expected results with objective and activities; clarity and feasibility of the activity timeline.	15
Capacity, Experience, Risk Management and Sustainability	Team capacity and relevant experience; viability of risk management; sustainability plan and continuation of impact after implementation.	15
Target Audience and cross-cutting issues	Clarity of target-group needs and expected benefits; incorporation of at least 3 mandatory cross-cutting issues (incl. EU Integration) and their relevance to the project.	10

Scoring section	What is assessed	Points
Visibility	Clarity and adequacy of the scenario for ensuring project and donor visibility.	5
Financial Envelope	Realism and cost-effectiveness of the budget; alignment of costs with activities; adequacy and source of co-financing.	15
TOTAL		100

As a rule, applications which obtain less than 55 points during evaluation will not be taken further into consideration.

Step 4 — Submission of supporting documents

Shortlisted applicants will be required to provide the following through OGMS, to allow WBF to verify the eligibility of the Lead Applicant and Project Partners:

1. Partnership Agreement (WBF format).
2. Scanned statute and registration certificate.
3. Proof of the lead applicant's bank account (e.g., a bank verification letter or a recent bank/account statement indicating the account name and IBAN/account number) and the latest available annual financial statements, audit report, or other equivalent financial documentation.
4. A Financial Capacity Form of the Lead Applicant (WBF format).

The declaration by the Lead Applicant will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis. Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application for that respective CP.

2.8 Notification of the Contracting Authority's decision

Content of the decision

The Lead Applicants will be informed in writing by the contracting authority's only on the status concerning their application "Approved or Rejected". The decision will be disseminated through WBF OGMS System.

WBF will publish the list of selected winners online. Within 10 days of the publication, any applicant who believes they have been adversely affected by an error or irregularity during the award process may submit a complaint to the Contracting Authority, which will make reasonable efforts to review and investigate the matter. WBF will collect all complaints and provide a response within 10 days following the end of the complaint submission period.

Indicative timetable

The grant contract shall preferably be signed within 1 month following notification of the award decision. Implementation shall begin on the day following signature of the Grant Contract, or in exceptional cases agreed with the Contracting Authority.

Milestone	Date	Time
1. Information Sessions(s) (if any)	1 st – 14 th of October 2026	Check WBF Web and social media

Milestone	Date	Time
2. Deadline for requesting clarifications from the Contracting Authority	12 th of October 2026	COB
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the Contracting Authority	16 th of October 2026	COB
4. Deadline for submission of full applications	26 October 2026	13:59 CET
5. Contract signature	December 26 - January 27	-

Note: all times are in the time zone of the relevant WBF Contracting Party. This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates and may be updated by the Contracting Authority; interested parties will be informed accordingly.

2.9 Conditions for implementation after the award decision

Monitoring and evaluation

The WBF grantees (all partners included) are expected to monitor project progress and evaluate its results, together with target groups as appropriate. Furthermore, project performance will be assessed on a regular basis by the designated WBF Project Coordinator (PC) and/or MEL Officer. Some of the key elements and approaches of WBF monitoring and evaluation processes are technical monitoring, financial monitoring, and performance monitoring. Monitoring visits will be carried out by WBF and will be organized at the WBF's discretion. The grantee shall be notified about the monitoring visit accordingly.

The WBF MEL Officer will act as depository of best practices to be proactively established, assembled, kept up to date and shared with grantees. For such to be effective, (i) the WBF Secretariat shall perform lessons report after each selection/assignment process and (ii) awarded grantees shall provide when required an assessment of their projects including lessons identified that the EU/WBF Joint Action shall consider for future processes.

Reporting

The WBF grantees are obliged to continuously update WBF for their activities and expenditures through OGMS. Grantees shall submit a final narrative report, financial report, deliverables and scanned invoices on the eligible expenditures along with other relevant documentation of the project at the end of the period of implementation of the project. The final draft narrative report shall be submitted not later than 30 calendar days within the period of implementation of the project activities. (i.e. Last activity is Reporting.)