

Guidelines for Neighbourhood Fund

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CISU CIVIL SOCIETY IN
DEVELOPMENT



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1. Introduction to the Civil Society Fund

1.1. Purpose

The Neighbourhood Fund adheres to the Civil Society Fund (CSF), which has the purpose to support capacity strengthening of civil society actors.

By supporting such actors, the CSF aims to increase citizen participation in governance and development processes. This helps give voice to marginalised groups and holds governments accountable, and address pressing social issues like poverty, inequality, discrimination, and lack of access to services. The CSF contributes to a robust and pluralistic civil society by supporting a wide range of formal and informal organisations, movements, and initiatives. This diversity is crucial for a well-functioning democracy.

Civil society actors can pilot innovative approaches, reach marginalised groups, and advocate for policy reforms, thereby allowing citizens to actively participate in social, economic and political life, contributing to more inclusive and just societies.

The CSF supports partnerships between civil society actors in the Global South and Denmark. Global partnerships built on mutual trust and respect are valuable as they bring together actors with different capacities and perspectives to reach common goals.

The Global South partners are closer to the problems than the Danish partners, and they are best situated to develop solutions. Therefore, the development and implementation of interventions funded by the CSF must be led by the Global South partners, who in turn must be anchored in and accountable towards the communities wherein they work.¹

The Danish partners typically contribute with experience, perspectives, technical inputs, and network, as well as access to decision makers and funds from institutional donors and private foundations in Denmark and Europe. Moreover, the Danish partners might be strong allies with potential to advocate for marginalised people in the Global South by addressing issues that requires political or practical action in Denmark, as well as cross-border solidarity work.

The partnerships must be meaningful and relevant to all partners, and the work done must be valuable for the communities benefitting hereof. This is ensured by giving local communities a voice to express needs and power in deciding the solutions addressing those needs.

CIVIL SOCIETY

is a term for groups, movements, and activists in the society that belong neither to the public nor the private sector

The role of civil society is diverse. Civil society is often the framework for people fighting collectively for rights, improved living conditions, and a fair distribution of the resources of society. Civil society is an important counterbalance to the authority of the state and the private sector as civil society holds both the state and the market accountable for their actions and priorities. At the same time, civil society is also a key partner and contributor in relation to the state and market in the pursuit of solutions to challenges in society.

‘GLOBAL SOUTH’

is generally referring to a grouping of countries and people that experience economic marginalisation within the global system and have elements of a shared history of colonisation and exploitation

The six countries specified for the Neighbourhood Fund - Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan - are, compared to Denmark, geographically not located south but rather east and thus referred to as the Eastern Neighbourhood Countries. Yet, and in very general terms, they all share some of the same characteristics as those countries grouped under the label “Global South” and for the sake of applying uniform terms throughout the CSF, the six concerned countries thus refer to the Global South label.

LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT

is an ongoing development process where local actors have agency in framing, design, delivery (including control over resources), and accountability, with or without the support of international development cooperation.

² The definition of locally led development is inspired by the DAC paper and the DAC working group meeting on Measuring progress on locally led development from 2 May 2024. In CISUs understanding “Locally” does not necessarily mean a community level, but relevant and legit actors in specific geographical locations.

Sustainability of the work supported by the CSF is enhanced when local communities are the principal change agents in interventions and when the CSF is not the only contribution of resources. Communities and partners can contribute to the work themselves e.g. by hosting meetings in the community hall free of charge or supplementing agricultural inputs to a farming project with seeds gathered from local farmers. These community contributions are resources contributed by communities or local partners. All interventions supported by the CSF are expected to include community contributions. However, it is only a requirement for Medium and Large Programme grants to contribute with financial resources.

The CSF supports a variety of work by organisations and movements; from short-term projects with a tight focus on a specific task, to longer development processes that all require long-term strategies and flexibility to react to opportunities as they present themselves. The CSF recognises different approaches and strategies can be applied to achieve sustainable changes, which varies depending on context, priorities, experiences and position.

The CSF does not prioritise specific development issues over others but is guided by a human rights-based approach.

All projects and programmes financed through the CSF address one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.2. Principles

All applications for grants must comply with the following principles. Additional resources related to each of the principles are available at www.cisu.dk.

Human Rights

Applicants must demonstrate how the intervention uses a human rights-based approach to work with rights holders and/or duty bearers to promote the situation of the rights holders.

Fundamental human rights must be respected, protected and fulfilled. A human rights-based approach focuses on enabling people to demand their rights and hold duty-bearers accountable.

The approach focuses on eliminating unequal power relations and unequal distribution of resources, for example in relation to gender. A human rights-based approach rests on four fundamental principles: Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, and Transparency (PANT). It is expected that the affected rightsholders are adequately involved in the entire development cycle. In the case of Tribal and Indigenous Peoples and according to their collective human rights, this requires a process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Do no harm

Applicants must demonstrate extensive knowledge of the context and understanding of how their involvement has consequences for the affected people. Applicants must also demonstrate readiness to adjust an intervention if the context changes.

It is important to be aware of the effect that any involvement has on others, and as such it is necessary to analyse relations, consequences, and risks in the context in which an intervention takes place. Actors working with people living in poverty and marginalisation must be aware of the position or role they play in each context and acknowledge their own biases. The aim is to minimise any negative impact and increase the positive impact on the situation.

Poverty orientation

Applicants must demonstrate knowledge of the target groups and describe the form of poverty they face and how the intervention addresses this.

The CSF supports work that directly or indirectly secures the participation, interests, and rights of people living in poverty. Poverty has several dimensions and is not only about income but also personal security, access to resources such as education and jobs, health and access to natural resources, including land and water, and the possibility to influence decisionmakers. Many people are trapped in one or more forms of poverty in different ways, and often various types of poverty affect each other.

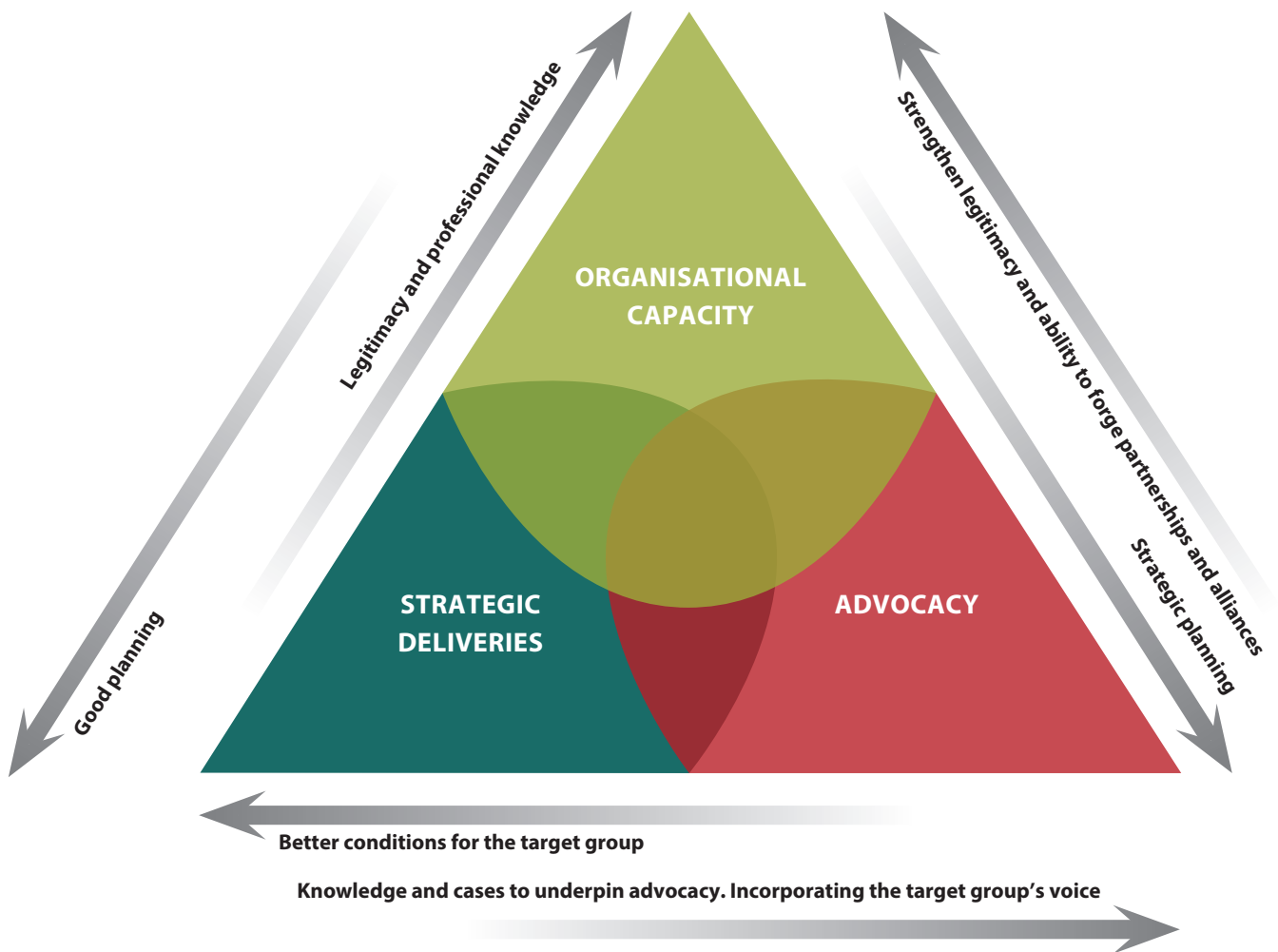
Sustainability

Applicants must demonstrate how the intervention contributes to a more sustainable situation for the community, partners, and wider environment.

Sustainability in interventions should encompass a holistic approach that ensures interventions not only achieve their immediate objectives but also foster long-term benefits for the beneficiaries, environment, and partnering organisations. This means supporting interventions and organisations that remain viable and impactful even after their completion, thereby contributing to ongoing sustainability efforts.

Continuation in partnerships with several project and programme modalities requires solid sustainability strategies and results in relation to sustainability. Interventions should thus be designed with a focus on organisational sustainability, ensuring financial feasibility and alignment with the values and goals of the partnering organisations, social sustainability promoting equity, and environmental sustainability minimising ecological footprints and preserving natural resources.

The Development Triangle



1.3. The Development Triangle

The development triangle is a framework to describe the different elements in a development intervention. The triangle illustrates how three core elements of development interventions effects one another and their potential synergies showing how they can address fundamental causes of deprivation of human rights.

The three elements together are considered fundamental to good development processes but the balance between them can vary, depending on the context and the capacities and experiences in the partnership. It is not a requirement to include all elements in an intervention, but it must be explained why some elements are chosen over others to reach the goals.

- **Capacity building** refers to strengthening the capacity of partners and other actors, networks, and/or target groups. Capacity can include strategic and organisational capacity, technical and thematical capacity to conduct projects and programmes, and capacity to work in networks and alliances with other actors. Capacity building is often a prerequisite for making sustainable change and can form the basis for engaging in advocacy.
- **Strategic deliveries** are tangible inputs such as goods and services that the partners contribute with towards the primary target group. The strategic deliveries must never be an end in itself but be used as a strategic means that strengthens or better allow working with the two other elements of the triangle. Strategic deliveries can thus be necessary but will never in themselves create lasting and sustainable change.
- **Advocacy** is the planned action to influence formal or informal decision-makers and the public to bring about lasting improvements for poor or marginalised groups. Advocacy can be directed at duty bearers such as local authorities, community stakeholders, private sector, or national and international authorities. Advocacy can be based upon the knowledge and experience among the civil society actors, for instance based on learnings from strategic deliveries. Advocacy actions should take point of departure in the legitimacy, access, and capacity of the civil society actors.

2. Who can apply

The CSF supports partnerships between civil society actors and movements in the Global South and Denmark. There are different requirements to the partners although there must be a clear division of roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the intervention. This division must be jointly agreed upon and clear to partners as well as the target groups of the intervention.

2.1. Requirements for Danish partner organisation

The CSF accepts applications from Danish civil society organisations that meet the following minimum requirements for support laid down by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Responsibility

The applicant organisation's governing body must be able to take on full responsibility for the application and for any subsequent grant.

If several Danish organisations apply jointly, there must always be one lead organisation which holds the administrative and legal responsibility for the grant and contract with CISU. Only the lead organisation needs to live up to the above requirement.

If the lead organisation is an umbrella organisation, at least one of its member organisations must fulfil the above requirement.

Grant Administration Guide

More information about the governing body's responsibility is available in the Grant Administration Guide available at www.cisu.dk.

REQUIREMENTS TO THE DANISH PARTNER

- The organisation needs to be private, and it must have legal domicile as well as activities in Denmark.
- The chairperson or most members of its governing body must be Danish citizens or foreigners with permanent residency in Denmark unless the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark grants an exemption.
- The organisation must have an approved set of statutes.
- The accounts of the organisation, including the annual accounts, must be subject to auditing.
- The organisation must have a minimum of 25 paying Danish contributors for applications up to DKK 500,000, and a minimum of 50 paying Danish contributors for applications more than DKK 500,000. The Danish contributors may be members, volunteers in the association or financial contributors. The contributions must have been given in the current financial year. There are no requirements to the size of the contribution.
- For umbrella organisations, at least one of its member organisations must satisfy the above requirements.
- If the organisation has existed less than one year, it may only apply for a maximum of DKK 500,000.

INELIGIBILITY

- The CSF is unable to support interventions eligible for support from other organisations or institutions funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark such as the Centre for Church-Based Development (CKU), the Danish Youth Council (DUF), Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD), the Danish Refugee Council's Diaspora Programme and the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD).
- The CSF does not accept applications from organisations that have signed a strategic partnership agreement, fund agreement, or similar agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.
- The CSF does not accept applications from foundations engaged in commercial activity, consulting firms, educational establishments or entities set up by law, including folk high schools (højskoler).

2.2. Requirements Global South partners

2.2.1. The Global South partner(s)

The Global South partner(s) must be capable of taking on the necessary administrative and financial responsibility of the grant as described in the application and in CISU's Grant Administration Guide.

If a partner is an indigenous or tribal authority without legal recognition or an informal organisation (e.g., a social movement, or is by some means prevented from being able to receive and administer funds according to CISU's requirements for financial management), then another organisation – even one that does not belong to civil society or is based in a DAC country, if this can be justified – may act as fiscal and legal agent, a link between the Danish organisation and the Global South partner(s) and beneficiaries. This other organisation must be able to administer the funds according to CISU's requirements for financial management. This could be the case, for instance, in countries where civil society organisations in general or certain groups are subject to legislation that restricts their right to organise or access to international funding, or organisations that are forced to work underground.

2.2.2. Other actors as part of an intervention

Interventions may include cooperation with other actors such as authorities, research institutes and educational establishments, or the private sector. They may play a part in, for example, activities, assignments, training, capacity building, and advocacy that have specific relevance to and advance the purpose of the CSF and of an intervention.

For instance, interventions aimed at economic development may include relevant private businesses or social enterprises as

actors as long as this does not conflict with the rules on state subsidies. Activities with public institutions may also feature in the intervention if they are included strategically to ensure the rights of target groups. Cooperation with research institutes and educational establishments can support the accumulation of knowledge and documentation for the purpose of supporting interventions and advocacy with evidence-based knowledge.

It is also possible to cooperate with authorities that are duty bearers and who are key to succeed in an intervention and bring about sustainable change. However, civil society must play a primary role in the cooperation, implementation and realisation of the purpose of the intervention.

2.2.3. Several interventions in the partnership

The purpose of the CSF is to strengthen civil societies. Strong, independent, and sustainable civil society actors in the Global South are central, and although CSF supports long-lasting cooperation between the same partners, partnerships must work towards the long-term objective that all partners are able to be self-sustaining or secure additional funding from other sources.

If an intervention is an extension of previous cooperation, it will be assessed based on the following:

- It does not merely repeat a former intervention. A new intervention must build on results and experiences and contain new desired changes, a new or adjusted strategy or a new or extended target group.
- The expectations of learning, reflection, and positive changes and results are increasing with each extension.

REQUIREMENTS TO THE GLOBAL SOUTH PARTNERS	INELIGIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Global South Partners must form part of civil society in the country where activities will be implemented. ■ The partner's senior management and governing body must be locally anchored. If the partner has a governing body, the chairperson and the majority of members of its governing body must be citizens or foreigners with their permanent residence in the country concerned and none of them affiliated with the Danish partner. If governed differently, similar anchoring must be shown in the application. ■ If the Global South partners are locally based chapters of international civil society organisations, including those to which the Danish organisation is affiliated, the partners must be registered in the country concerned and have its own governing body as described above. 	<p>The Global South Partner cannot be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Individuals and families. ■ The local, regional, or national government or political parties. ■ Public authorities or bodies. ■ Private businesses. ■ On the UN's or EU's list of terrorist organisations. The Danish organisation is responsible for checking this.



3. Introduction to the Neighbourhood Fund

The Neighbourhood Fund supports civil society interventions in the six Eastern neighbourhood region countries: Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The countries face challenges to democracy, and there is an overarching need to strengthen civil society, democratic institutions, and citizen participation in the neighbourhood region. Moreover, there is an urgent and long-term need to support democratic development efforts in Ukraine.

3.1. Background of the fund

The Neighbourhood Fund aims to contribute towards democratic development and enhance civil society's capacity to work towards a strong and diverse society in the Eastern neighbourhood region. The Fund supports interventions that ensure better protection of both social and economic, as well as civil and political rights, along with mobilising citizens to take a rights-based approach to engage in democratic dialogue with local and central authorities. The Fund may also contribute to promote citizens' critical media literacy to resist disinformation and influence campaigns. Finally, the Fund places a particular emphasis on the democratic development of Ukraine by ensuring dialogue and civil society involvement in the long-term development of democracy and anti-corruption mechanisms.

3.2. Context for the fund

The six Eastern neighbourhood countries differ widely, each facing its own set of challenges. Nevertheless, they share several contextual and historical features. Over 30 years ago, when the six Eastern neighbourhood countries regained their independence and had to (re)consolidate themselves, they had to acquire the formal competencies and institutions characteristic of modern independent states. A process not without its challenges.

Their territorial sovereignty and stability have been threatened by Russia, and their transition to a market economy has been widely marred by arbitrary legislation and hasty privatisation of state-owned companies and other common goods, leading to increased inequality, corruption, and concentration of power among oligarchs. The inequalities and oligarchical systems that have evolved in many of these countries continue to pose significant challenges, hindering the development of democratic institutions.

Inequalities and oligarchic systems have affected democratic development differently from country to country although democracy is still under pressure in all the countries. The war with Russia has suspended the constitution and electoral processes in Ukraine, while trust in political institutions in

Armenia is declining. Belarus and Azerbaijan are experiencing democratic stagnation and are simultaneously among the most undemocratic countries globally according to the V-Dem Institute (Democracy Report 2023). This creates very different starting points for working on democratic developments.

The centre of attention in the war in Ukraine has thus far (November 2024) been the eastern part of the country, but the entire country is affected, facing missile attacks and drone strikes from Russia. The situation can escalate rapidly, putting more areas of Ukraine under additional military pressure. The hope is, of course, that the conflict de-escalates, and a peaceful solution is found. However, as the situation stands now, the eastern part of Ukraine, near the frontline, is particularly vulnerable, while the western part is considered relatively safe, prompting internally displaced persons (IDPs) to seek refuge in that area.

3.2.1. Opportunities and Challenges for Civil Society

Civil society is a cornerstone in a democratic society and can help bring about change, innovative thinking, and community developments. A strong and well-functioning civil society, through its local roots, reaches deep into society and is crucial for the development of an actively citizen-driven democracy – overseeing and encouraging authorities and businesses to uphold and promote respect for human rights and to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). An active civil society can also help stabilise the region and make it more resilient to antidemocratic influences.

The opportunities for civil society to make a positive difference fundamentally depend on the context. In the aftermath of the neighbourhood countries' independence, the organisation of civil society has been on the rise, significantly contributing towards democratic developments, advancing the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups, and holding authorities accountable. In the current situation in Ukraine, civil society has played a key role in addressing the humanitarian crisis and in providing psychosocial support to internally displaced individuals.

In particular Georgia, Belarus and Azerbaijan face challenges due to deficient or restrictive legislation and a lack of state recognition of civil society organisations. The political space for civil society action is limited by the state, leading many civil society actors to work in exile. Thus, civic space differs across the six neighbourhood countries, from being classified as "closed" in Belarus and Azerbaijan, to being "restricted" in Ukraine due to the war with Russia, and "constrained" in Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia (CIVICUS Monitor, Global Findings 2023). Therefore, the challenges faced by civil society vary from country to country.



PHOTO: KIM JENSEN, CISU

The fragile and volatile situation in several of the neighbourhood countries complicates formal organisation of civil society. In many situations, it is social movements and informal organisations that drive efforts for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. The Neighbourhood Fund may support both formal and more informal or loosely organised actors within civil society.

In several neighbourhood countries, civil society organisations enjoy a high level of trust among the population and play an important role in championing the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. The Neighbourhood Fund acknowledges how context and national challenges affect the possibilities for organising civil society interventions but also recognise that the democratic practices of civil society actors enhance their clout and legitimacy, when they represent and work with vulnerable and marginalised groups. It is therefore essential that interventions also focus on developing the partner's own democratic practices and popular participation, so as to ensure that the work supported by the Neighbourhood Fund is seen by the target groups as valid and legitimate.

Many civil society organisations are struggling to secure stable and independent financing and sustainability. Ukraine has attracted greater international attention and hence a significant rise in donor funding of civil society interventions. This raises the need for oversight, coordination, and synergy between civil society interventions - also to lessen the risk of corruption and parallel interventions targeting the same group and/or theme. The significant social needs and limited available financial resources also lead to the establishment of many new civil society organisations. This places greater demands on partnerships in terms of quality assurance, oversight, transparency, and do-no-harm safeguards.

3.2.2. Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine

Civil society plays a crucial role in the democratic development of Ukraine, with a clear focus on establishing and reinforcing democratic accountability structures. The democratic development of Ukraine calls for cooperation between authorities, businesses, and an active civil society to ensure citizen participation at both national and local levels to take the role of watchdog. In this manner, the Neighbourhood Fund may play a part in the democratic development of Ukraine in a democratic, accountable, and sustainable manner.

Working in a country at war is challenging and risky. Progress made within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and in the transition from humanitarian work and long-term development can be unpredictable and demands flexibility and the ability to quickly adjust interventions. The ongoing war means that stress and security levels vary from one area to another and can change on very short notice.

The Neighbourhood Fund supports interventions that can both strengthen the resilience of individual citizens, as well as the capacity of civil society organisations to provide support to vulnerable groups. The Neighbourhood Fund also supports interventions that strengthen democratic development and citizen involvement that create a framework and space for dialogue between rights holders and authorities, and that civil society organizations can also act as a critical watchdog towards authorities.

4. Support Modalities

The overall guidelines of the CSF are also applicable to the Neighbourhood Fund. Interventions under the Neighbourhood Fund should address specific challenges in the context through partnerships between Danish organisations and civil society actors from the neighbourhood countries. It is a prerequisite for support that all work is based on local needs, and rights holders and duty bearers are included and involved as much as possible in the intervention.

The extraordinarily fragile and volatile situation in several of the neighbourhood countries call for special attention to the safety and organisational approaches. This situation also imposes special requirements for oversight, integrity and transparency, which partnerships and interventions must also consider.

In addition to funding interventions in each of the six Eastern neighbourhood countries, the Neighbourhood Fund may also support interventions with a regional perspective, involving activities in multiple of the six countries.

Civil society actors in exile

In cases where it is impossible to work in and with civil society within the national borders, for example, due to the oppression of authoritarian regimes, the Neighbourhood fund may support work involving civil society actors in exile.

4.1. Support modalities, amounts and assessment criteria

The Neighbourhood Fund offers four types of support modalities:

- **Small-scale Intervention up to DKK 200,000.**
- **Citizen Participation Intervention up to DKK 500,000.**
- **Development Intervention up to DKK 4.5 million.**
- **Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine, which may fund interventions up to DKK 4.5 million.**

Applications will be assessed according to the assessment criteria for the support modality concerned, and whether the purpose of the intervention aligns with the overall purpose of the CSF.

Applications for interventions in the six Eastern neighbourhood countries should be submitted using the application forms for the Neighbourhood Fund for either Small-scale Intervention, Citizen Participation Intervention, Development Intervention or Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine.

4.2. The project modalities Small-scale Intervention, Citizen Participation Intervention, and Development Intervention

The different project modalities enable the strengthening of organisations and partnerships for the benefit of local communities. This can for example include support to organisations to:

- Build partnerships
- Strengthen organisational capacities
- Try out new approaches
- Expand on impactful approaches
- Foster popular engagement.

The projects should be defined by a set of goals that can be realised within a specified timeframe. Project goals should be used to guide implementation and show whether the approach is successful, or changes are required. Projects must contribute to improving the lives of people living in poverty and marginalisation in the communities wherein the project activities take place, as reflected in the purpose statement of the CSF.

4.3. The project modality Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has created a special need for supporting resilience and democratic development. With its broad-based underpinnings and diversity in competences and areas of interest, civil society is well positioned to provide support and care for vulnerable groups, and at the same time participate in the long-term democratic development of Ukraine and act as a democratic watchdog at both local and national level.

The Neighbourhood Fund contributes to democratic development by promoting diverse participation, transparency, democratic control, and accountability in the use of funds and implementation of plans for long-term development.

This may be achieved through interventions that establish accountability structures or enhance citizens' ability to monitor the work of governmental, private, and other actors. Interventions may also strengthen the framework for civil society in a future Ukraine. Interventions can also address acute social needs by supporting the resilience of vulnerable groups or the establishment of critical democratic functions and institutions that can stabilize the situation at local and national level and thus contribute to a more responsible and sustainable society.

4.3.1. Definitions: Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine

Democratic development: The Neighbourhood Fund supports the development of critical societal functions and interventions that can stabilise the situation locally and nationally. The support is targeted at strengthening civil society's role and contribution towards a democratic development with emphasis on accountability, transparency, and popular participation.

Resilience: In the very fragile context currently in Ukraine, it is vulnerable groups such as e.g. internally displaced persons, children, women and people with disabilities, who are particularly vulnerable due to the war. It is important to ensure their support and protection of fundamental rights. It can, among other things, include the protection of children and women through counselling and their capacity to organize. It can also include ensuring veterans and people with disabilities access to support, guidance and services.

Support for buildings, etc.: Support cannot be granted substantially to fund infrastructure and building constructions. Minor investment in, for instance, equipment, renovation of facilities, or purchase of digital solutions can be eligible for support if necessary for implementation of the intervention. See section the "The Development Triangle" in the Guidelines for the CSF on how to ensure coherence between investment/ strategic service deliveries, organisational capacity-building, and advocacy.

Fragility: The higher the degree of fragility in the context where the intervention is implemented, the greater the flexibility to include strategic services, provided they have a strategic aim contributing to democratic development. Furthermore, more funds can be allocated for safety and protection of partners and target group during implementation. For interventions implemented in a highly fragile context, it may be difficult or impossible to engage in advocacy, and it will be sufficient for the intervention to address the potential for future advocacy.

Local needs: All interventions must be driven by local needs and locally anchored within the Ukrainian partner. When Danish and local actors join forces, they bring tools and knowledge into play that benefit development and help to Ukraine being built into something even better.

Other sources of funding: The Neighbourhood Fund may be used for co-funding of interventions that receive grants from companies or other funding mechanisms.

4.4. Assessment criteria

Each project modality has a set of assessment criteria. In addition to the assessment criteria for each project modality indicated in the tables on the following pages, the assessment of each application is guided by these three principles: 1) There is no rigid formula* 2) adaptability of requirements, and 3) flexibility when working in fragile contexts.

There is no rigid formula means that with the purpose of the fund in mind, the assessment committee can undertake an integrated assessment of an application that considers the overall picture of the context and project described in the application.

Adaptability of requirements means that the larger the budget, the stricter the requirements regarding the capacity of the organisations involved and the desired changes of the intervention. There are also higher requirements for organisations that have longer experience and more grants from CISU and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark compared to organisations that have less experience and have received fewer grants.

Flexibility when working in fragile contexts means that the assessment of the interventions considers the context, risks analysis and strategy and allows for greater flexibility in terms of cost types (e.g., for security measures or flexible funds) and balancing of the development triangle (e.g., a higher level of strategic services or less advocacy).

* In Danish: *Skøn under regel*.

4.4.1 Assessment Criteria for Small-Scale Intervention, Citizen Participation Intervention, Development Intervention

Criteria	Small-Scale Intervention	Citizen Participation Intervention	Development Intervention
Purpose and relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of the intervention falls within the purpose and principles of the CSF. The intervention is relevant in the context in which it is to take place and is based on local needs. 		
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant partners have experience, capacity and resources to implement the intervention and have planned it together. 		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The intervention will strengthen the partners and/or the relationship between them. 	
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partners have knowledge of the target group and understand the needs of the target group. 		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The target group will be involved in the planning and ongoing adaptation of the intervention. 	
Description of the intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The activities of the intervention have a clear connection to the desired change of the intervention. The results expected from the intervention must be clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy of the intervention shows a clear connection between the desired change of the intervention, expected results, activities and indicators. The results expected from the intervention must be clear. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An intervention that is an extension of a former intervention, builds on results and experiences of the former and contains a new desired change, a new or adjusted strategy or a new or extended target group. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The responsibilities and professional contributions of partners and other actors are clear and relevant. 		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a balance between the elements in the Development Triangle, and the ways in which advocacy will be conducted are clear. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Development Interventions must include advocacy as part of the activities of the intervention. The opportunities will be very different depending on the specific context in which the intervention takes place. The strategy of the intervention considers the conditions and risks that may prevent or delay the fulfilment of the objectives of the intervention.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The intervention contributes to sustainable improvements for the target group. 		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The approach to monitoring clearly shows the ways of examining and following up on whether the intervention meets the expected results. 	
Cost level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost level of the intervention and the total budget are well-founded and measure up to the activities and expected results of the intervention. 		

4.4.2 Assessment Criteria for Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine

Criteria	Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine
Purpose, relevance and Context analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the intervention aligns with the purpose and principles of the CSF. • The intervention is relevant to the context in which it takes place and is based on local needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An intervention that is an extension of a previous intervention, builds on results and experiences of the latter, and incorporates new or adjusted objectives, strategies, or expanded target groups. • The context analysis addresses how the war impacts on the intervention, and how to ensure that the intervention is complementary and properly coordinated with other organisations working with the same target groups and/or the same theme.
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant partners have the experience, capacity and resources required to implement the intervention, and they have planned it together. • The intervention strengthens partners and/or their relationship, including their own democratic practices as regards their clout and legitimacy when representing and working with target groups.
Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size and composition of the target group matter, and it is clear how the target group is to be mobilised as part of the intervention. • The target group is involved in the planning and ongoing adjustment of the intervention.
Description of the intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intervention strategy demonstrates clear coherence between objectives, outputs, activities, and outcome-level indicators. It must be clear what results the intervention is expected to achieve. • There is a balance between the elements in the Development Triangle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For interventions implemented in a context characterised by high fragility, it is sufficient if the intervention addresses the potential for future advocacy. • For interventions with budgets below DKK 500,000, advocacy is not a requirement. • The approach to monitoring and evaluation clearly sets out procedures for examining and following up on the expected results of an intervention. • The areas of responsibility and professional contributions defined for respective partners and other actors are clear and relevant. • The intervention contributes to bringing lasting and sustainable improvements for the target group. • The risk analysis includes a specific assessment of potential risks, and the intervention strategy considers factors and risks that may hinder or delay the achievement of the expected results.
Cost level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intervention's cost level and total budget are well-founded and reasonable in view of the activities and expected results.

Flexible funds

The support modality Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine permits the allocation of up to 25% of the activity budget to “flexible funds” if the activities contribute to supporting the goal of the project. This means that funds can cover activity costs and ideas that arise locally during implementation of the intervention. You do not need to describe what the money will be used for in your application, but you must describe the decision-making process with your partner and target group, how these flexible funds are to be spent. No pre-approval from CISU is required before spending flexible activity funds, but you must describe how they were spent in the final report.

4.5. Examples of Interventions under the Neighbourhood Fund

Example 1: SMALL-SCALE INTERVENTION

Sustainability and UN Sustainable Development Goals in Moldova

A Danish volunteer-based organisation has been supporting an organisation in Moldova dedicated to improving learning in primary schools for several years.

The Moldovan partner and the pupils at the schools have long desired more focus on sustainability. The new intervention aims to unfold this through various activities.

By training the teachers at three schools, vegetable gardens are to be established for the pupils to take care of. This will increase awareness among pupils and teachers about locally grown, sustainable foods and healthy nutrition.

Moreover, a series of artistic workshops will be conducted where pupils explore sustainability and the UN Sustainable Development Goals through poetry, rap music, and art made from recycled materials. By emphasising hands-on initiatives and participation, the intervention demonstrates the scope for action, while connecting local efforts with global goals.

- **Budget:** DKK 150,000, which covers expenses for establishing school vegetable gardens and organisation of nine workshops.
- **Duration:** 12 months.

Example 2: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION INTERVENTION

Empowering Democratic Movements in and outside Belarus

Several Belarusian pro-democracy advocates have been forced to operate from exile. A Danish pro-democracy organisation supports efforts to strengthen networking among democracy advocates both inside and outside Belarus. A key element involves capacity-building to enhance these people's strategic and operational work for democracy and bolster their digital security.

The intervention aims to strengthen exiled Belarusian advocates' ties both to one another and to other movements and opinion leaders fighting for democracy in authoritarian states.

- **Budget:** DKK 425,000, which covers expenses for network meetings and preparation of messages and materials on the internet.
- **Duration:** 18 months.

Example 3: DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION

Youth Democratic Engagement in Georgia

For several years, a Danish organisation working with young people has focused on youth civic participation in the EU's neighbouring countries to the east and the south.

Many young people in Georgia are enthusiastic about their country joining the EU and aspire to push for further implementation of democratic reforms to meet the formal requirements for EU membership.

The Georgian partner is well-established in youth work in Georgia but seeks additional tools and capacity to reach a broader audience of young people.

The intervention involves the establishment of digital solutions and youth platforms where young people can connect, share ideas, and exchange experiences related to this work

- **Budget:** DKK 1,900,000, which covers expenses for capacity-building, experience exchange, establishing a network, and conducting an information campaign with the development of messages and materials.
- **Duration:** 24 months.

Example 4: RESILIENCE AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT UKRAINE

Strengthening resilient local communities in Ukraine

The Ukrainian partner works to strengthen local communities' ability to resist and recover from the war. The project includes a number of initiatives, including training and psychosocial support, all of which aims to improve the population's resilience.

An important part of the project is the building of local networks, which can offer support and resources in times of crisis. In addition, the project focuses on promoting mental health through counselling and support groups, which helps individuals to deal with stress and trauma. Entrepreneurship is also a component as it contributes to economic stability and self-sufficiency in local communities.

The project works closely with local authorities and organisations to ensure that the effort is sustainable and adapted to the specific needs of those affected areas.

- **Budget:** DKK 2,850,000, which covers expenses for capacity building, training, security, salaries, and operating costs.
- **Duration:** 36 months.

5. Application and Assessment

Interventions with budgets up to DKK 1 million are exempt from prioritisation, meaning that all approved applications under DKK 1 million will be awarded a grant.

Applications exceeding DKK 1 million are scored 1-5 using the LEADS scoring and prioritised, allowing for selection by CISU if there are insufficient funds for all applications worthy of support.

If there are insufficient funds to award a grant to every intervention found worthy of support, those with the highest scores will be given priority. In cases where several applications share “the lowest score” and not all can be awarded a grant, priority will be given to applications with the lowest requested amount.

Grants from the Neighbourhood Fund are included in the CSF’s annual grant ceiling of DKK 5 million. However, grants through the special support modality Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine are exempt from this limit.

CISU programme organisations may apply under the Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine support modality.

5.1. Deadlines

For the funding modalities Small Scale Intervention and Citizen Participation Intervention, there are three deadlines a year. For the funding modalities Development Intervention and Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine, there are two deadlines a year

All deadlines are at 12:00 (noon) Danish time, and the exact dates are available at www.cisu.dk.

MODALITY	# OF DEADLINES
■ Small Scale Intervention	3 times per year
■ Citizen Participation Intervention	3 times per year
■ Development Intervention	2 times per year
■ Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine	2 times per year

LEADS SCORING

LEADS STANDS FOR	SCORE	THE SCORE IS GIVEN WHEN THERE IS
L Little action/evidence	1	Weak indication that supports the criteria
E Some evidence	2	Some indication that supports the criteria
A Action taken	3	Indication that supports the criteria
D Developed	4	Solid indication that supports the criteria
S Sustainable	5	Comprehensive indication of implementation and /or indication of an established approach/system in supporting the criteria

5.2. How to apply

All applications are submitted via the online grant management system 'Vores CISU' (Our CISU) before the given deadline. For modalities with application deadlines, the system will be open for applications two weeks prior to the given deadline.

Formats

For each modality, there are formats for the application and the budget, as well as any required annexes.

See www.cisu.dk/en/funding/funding-materials/.

5.3. Screening and assessment

CISU will initially screen applications to ensure that they live up to all formal requirements. The lists used for screening is available at www.cisu.dk. If an application does not meet all formal requirements, it will be administratively rejected.

When an application fulfils all formal requirements, it is forwarded to an assessment consultant and an assessment committee member. The consultant assesses each application based on the criteria set for the modality and submits a recommendation to the assessment committee indicating whether the application should be approved or rejected. The assessment committee makes the final decision.

Each applicant will receive an assessment note, explaining the reasons for either approval or rejection. This note is useful to guide a potential re-application, as it provides comments on what is deemed critical and thus what can be improved.

The assessment of an application will take 6 weeks to complete. Note that the assessment process for all modalities will be prolonged if the deadline collides with holiday periods in Denmark (summer, Christmas, Easter, fall, and winter breaks).

5.4. Principles for administration and grant approval

Transparency and openness in the administration. This means, among other things:

- All assessment criteria and processes are explicit and available to all applicants.
- All applicants receive a written response explaining the reasons for the approval or rejection.
- All approved applications are publicly available (anonymity can be requested if reasoned).

Orderly administration applying the highest standards of administrative conduct (e.g., ensuring impartiality, making decisions on an informed basis, writing in an understandable manner, complying with deadlines, and stating the reasons for decisions as detailed in the legal principles of CISU that are outlined in CISU's Code of Conduct).

Clear separation between the advisory process/the advisers and the assessment process/assessment system. Accordingly, CISU's advisers and the rest of CISU's secretariat are not in any way involved in the process from the moment the application is submitted until the grant decision is made.

Feedback and complaints

CISU's procedures for feedback and complaints are set out in CISU's Code of Conduct.

More information is available at:
www.cisu.dk/en/about-cisu/how-to-file-a-complaint

PHOTO: KIM JENSEN, CISU



CISU – Civilsamfund i udvikling
Klosterport 4x, 3. sal | 8000 Aarhus C | Tel: +45 86 12 03 42
Alle hverdage 10-15 | cisu@cisudk | www.cisudk



CISU CIVIL SOCIETY IN
DEVELOPMENT