

FLEXIBLE RESPONSE MECHANISM

GUIDELINES – March 2023

HOW TO APPLY

Before applying to the New Democracy Fund, Flexible Response Mechanism (FR), please read the following guidelines. For organisations in exile, please contact the administration directly at FRM@newdemocracyfund.org.

The application form can be downloaded on www.newdemocracyfund.org/we-support and is to be submitted to FRM@newdemocracyfund.org in English. The [application form](#) provides guiding questions regarding the details to be included in the application and is to be submitted with an [Activity-based budget](#) and a [work plan](#). Templates can be found on the website.

All applicants can receive technical advice in English in the writing process by contacting the administration by e-mail. Once the application is complete it should be sent to the FR e-mail address.

If the project is supported, the administration will, where relevant, make a capacity assessment of the grantee organisation.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Flexible Response Mechanism is that civil society actors from the Eastern Neighbourhood Countries (ENC) – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine - are increasing their capability to engage in democratic organisation and dialogue, taking advantage of positive political developments and/or protecting their work in case of shrinking civic space.

This will be achieved if CSOs, media or individual journalists, trade unions, human rights defenders and other activists under threat or in difficult life/work circumstances are provided with rapid, critical financial resources and capacity development support.

The New Democracy Fund focuses on five thematic areas: youth, media, culture, labour market, and just and green transition. These areas are enforced by a cross-cutting emphasis on gender, inclusion and human rights.

The FR will prioritise its resources to activities that support the achievement of the general purposes of the New Democracy Fund, falls within its five thematic priority areas, and are supportive of the ongoing activities of partners of Danish civil society actors and institutions in the ENC.

REQUIREMENTS

Target group

Through the FR, the NDF reaches out to civil society actors, organisations consisting of human rights defenders (including women human rights defenders and LGBT+ activists), artists, journalists and documentarists in emergencies, conflict, and serious political or legislative change in all the ENC. Some examples of situations where we provide support are in case of:

- Emergencies, e.g., conflict.
- Drastic change in political or legislative context (positive or negative), e.g., a peace agreement, new windows of opportunity, end of a repressive regime, deterioration of legislative framework and protection of rights, sudden political tension, or polarisation.
- Rapidly closing space and/or fundamental human rights under threat.
- Early warning – either worrying trends, e.g., restrictions to freedoms of association, assembly, or expression.

Eligible applicants

Civil society actors in the ENC or temporarily in exile with a previous or existing partnership with a Danish organisation can apply for funding on a rolling basis from the Flexible Response Mechanism. The support from FR shall be channelled through the Danish partner. Only in exceptional cases, support can be channelled directly to an organisation without a Danish partner and should then be justified as indicated in the application form. The application can also be submitted by the Danish partner. When applying without a Danish partner it is a requirement to submit a justification note together with the application.

All applicants can receive technical advice in English from NDF administration before and throughout the application process. During the implementation of the project, it is possible to receive relevant advice from the consortium partners with relevant technical and thematic expertise.

If an action aims at supporting individuals, this support must be channelled through a CSO. Individuals/human rights defenders are defined as anyone who individually or in association with others promotes and protects human rights. This includes all actors working on issues within a broad human rights issue spectrum.

Consortium member organisations can be a partner in a project supported by the FR.

Organisations that do not live up to the obligations in a current contract with the NDF cannot apply until the defaults are remedied. Organisations that have previously not lived up to the requirements of the NDF will undergo a capacity assessment before entering into a new contract.

Eligible actions

The Flexible Response Mechanism supports civil society actors in the ENC with rapid, critical financial resources to

- a) counter restrictions and human rights abuses, to overcome risks and emergencies and reclaim civic space
- b) use new windows of opportunity and new political openings
- c) provide emergency assistance funds to individuals of all genders and groups under threat

The Flexible Response Mechanism prioritises its resources to activities that support the achievement of the overall objective of the New Democracy Fund, falls within its five thematic priority areas, and are supportive of the on-going activities of partners of Danish civil society organisations and institutions in the ENC. The five thematic areas are youth, media, culture, labour market, and just and green transition. These areas are enforced by a crosscutting emphasis on gender, inclusion, and human rights.

The amount needed for the activities must be clearly outlined in a budget showing the individual costs. The grant amount applied should not exceed DKK 400,000. Co-financing is allowed if needed. The FR reserves the right to reduce the amount granted to individual applications, taking the limited funds available as well as other relevant factors into account. The total yearly budget for FR is DKK 5,000,000.

The timeframe for the suggested intervention(s) should strive to not exceed one year unless circumstances demand it such as a court case or other processes.

All granted activities from the NDF shall be in any case be concluded before the end of 2026.

A) Grants to locally-led activities to collectively counter restrictions to civic space

Criteria: Restrictions to freedoms of association, assembly or expression (civic space) or other human rights violations e.g. crackdown on artistic and cultural expression, the rights of children or youth, filmmakers or journalists exercising their freedom of expression, trade union members organising their workplace, environmental activists etcetera have occurred or seem likely to occur and will be addressed collectively through activities by more than one thematic civil society group.

A variety of activities can be supported depending on what local actors deem most relevant in the specific context. They can include:

- Advocacy and campaigns against restrictive laws.
- Research and documentation.
- Roundtable dialogues.
- Support to domestic litigation and technical assistance to strategic litigation.
- Other relevant activities identified by the applicant.

B) Grants to locally-led activities aiming proactively to use new windows of opportunity

Criteria: Proactive initiatives to improve the enabling environment and work within the five themes of the New Democracy Fund and gender equality and human rights as cross-cutting elements. Securing engagement of civil society in potential changes, creating dialogue and coordination between civil society actors, and advocacy campaigns, collecting evidence of civil rights abuse in transition periods, support to

independent media, and securing the presence of a diverse output of cultural expressions.

To increase local-led collective actions, the Consortium will encourage applicants to build alliances – when relevant – among civil society organisations with an aim of cross-thematic involvement. Outreach to other stakeholders can be supported and could happen in the following ways:

- The grantee reaches out to other civil society actors and groups working across different thematic areas to ensure strong alliance building.
- Coordination with other international efforts is encouraged.
- Danish actors can be invited to take part in the activities by the applicant to provide their expertise is seen as beneficial.

C) Emergency assistance funds to individuals and groups under threat

Criteria: A group or an individual must have experienced war, threats, attacks, extra bureaucratic hurdles, legal barriers, dismissal, prosecution, imprisonment, torture, defamation, harassment, stigmatization, discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, displacement etc. due to their work.

Provision of emergency assistance funds: provided to civil society actors or groups under threat or intimidation who preferably are partners of one or more Danish CSOs or embassies. The type of activities/equipment that can be supported are:

- Temporary relocation of individuals at immediate risk.
- Support to temporarily relocated individuals enabling them to continue their human rights work or studies.
- Legal support to individuals and groups facing prosecution concerning their human rights and development work.
- Replacement of ICT and assets confiscated or damaged by the authorities.
- Other relevant activities identified by the applicant.

The Danish grantee organisation

The funds of FR must be channelled through a Danish organisation. The Danish organisation will be the contract holder to the New Democracy Fund and will be responsible for following the requirements set up by the fund and listed in the contract, including requirements for financial management, reporting on the project to the fund's administration and audit report. The Danish organisation is responsible to enter into a cooperation agreement with the ENC partners that reflects a mutual understanding of the partnership. Costs occurred for the Danish organisation cannot be included in the budget.

PROCESS FOR APPLYING

Applications are handled on a rolling basis for eligible applicants. The Flexible Response Mechanism (FR) ensures that the application meets the eligibility criteria and assesses the application based on the assessment criteria.

In processing applications, it shall always be explicitly clarified if the applicant is a partner of one of the Consortium members. Where this happens, this should be clearly flagged to the Selection Committee, who will then decide whether there is a need to change the procedure for how such an application is handled.

The FR recommends a decision on the application based on the above examination, assessment criteria, and insight into ongoing development in the ENC.

The processing time of the applications is from four to six weeks and counts from the moment the application meets all requirements of the FR. During Danish holiday periods, the processing time may be extended.

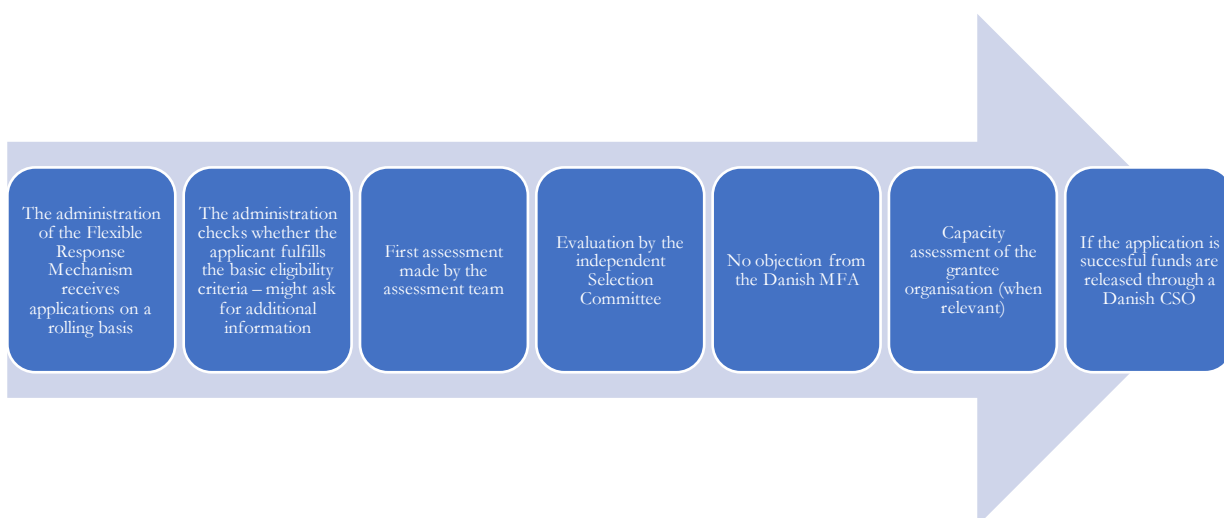
Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria are as follows:

- The need and urgency of the action to the country-specific context.
- Action recognized by the defined target groups as relevant.
- The applicant team's experience within the relevant themes (youth, media, culture, labour market, just and green transition).
- Integration of human rights-based approach, gender aspects, inclusion, etc.
- Coherence of intervention logic.
- Additionality and relevance to other similar interventions and avoidance of duplication.
- Risk assessment including safety.
- Additionality and relevance to other similar interventions and avoidance of duplication.
- Prospects of sustainability if possible.
- Experience of applicant team.
- Budget transparency – including clear transparency on rates, salaries, etc.

The final decision and prioritisation of applications are decided by a Selection Committee consisting of five independent professionals with experience from the region, from the thematic priority areas (youth, media, culture, labour market, as well as just and green transition) and civil society partnerships in the ENC.

Please find the process scheme of the workflow below.



If approved by the Selection Committee, the application is sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark for a no-objection procedure and funds are then released through the Danish grantee.

SMALLER APPLICATIONS

For applications for grants below DKK 50,000, the Selection Committee appoints two representatives on a revolving basis. The Selection Committee ensures that the representatives are replaced at least every third month or within a shorter timeframe. These two members of the Selection Committee must decide whether the application will be granted.

Both rejected and granted applicants will receive the assessment of their application.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Applicants can submit a complaint in situations where they consider that an error has been made in the administration or a factual error in the assessment of the application, or if the assessment of the application otherwise has been inconsistent with the guidelines.

Applicants must submit their complaints to the Steering Committee of the New Democracy Fund. The complaint must include the full application and the answer from the Secretariat. Further, the applicant must disclose a written statement to the Steering Committee with a concrete explanation of why the complaint has been filed.

The Steering Committee will assess the complaint as fast as possible. If the Steering Committee decides that the complaint is valid, the application will undergo a revised assessment. The Selection Committee will then decide if the applicant should receive a grant.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Persons and/or Consortium partners taking part in the assessment team, the Selection Committee or otherwise involved in the process are responsible for informing the Administration of any existing or potential conflicts of interest related to their involvement in the selection process.

A conflict of interest may exist

- Where a person or someone involved in the assessment team, Selection Committee or otherwise has a direct, indirect, personal, financial, or business interest in the decision made.
- Where a person or a Consortium partner involved in the assessment team, Selection Committee or otherwise involved has a direct personal, financial, or business interest in the decision made.
- Where other relevant reasons for any of the above persons make it clear that a vested interest may exist.

The Administration assesses each case to determine whether a conflict of interest exists. This assessment by the Administration must be based on transparent criteria. The conclusion of this assessment by the Administration must be made in written form and filed (ex. via minutes from a meeting).

If the Administration determines that a conflict of interest exists, then the person and/or the Consortium partner will not be able to participate in any decisions regarding the specified applicants, whose application has given rise to the conflict of interest.

IMPLEMENTATION

Leading up to and during the implementation of the action, grantees can receive advice from all member organisations of the Consortium if needed. The consortium will extract learnings from the implementation and share them publicly when relevant.

Reporting requirements

The following reporting should be provided in English:

- Interim financial and narrative reports, depending on the amount and length of the intervention.
- Final financial and narrative report – with results disaggregated by gender.
- Audited accounts for projects receiving support above DKK 200,000.
- One-pager learning brief

If some of the action includes persons or organisations that could be endangered by being connected to the Consortium and/or the New Democracy Fund, this will be discussed before the narrative report is submitted.

The organisation of the Flexible Response Mechanism

The Administration of the NDF develops external and internal guidelines for FR. This includes composing and approval of the Selection Committee. Grant administration is provided by International Media Support.

The partners behind the New Democracy Fund

Confederation of Danish Industry (DI), Danish Cultural Institute (DCI), Danish Youth Council (DUF), International Media Support (IMS), and United Federation of Workers in Denmark (3F), have formed a consortium that is managing the Flexible Response Mechanism as part of the New Democracy Fund (NDF).

The overall goal of the NDF is to support the strengthening of a democratically organised civil society and to promote the people-to-people exchange of experience and regional networks. The focus of the fund is directed to the ENC consisting of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The thematic priority areas of the NDF are youth, media, culture, labour market, as well as environment and climate. The NDF is complementary to the Danish Neighbourhood Programme and seeks to contribute to a more peaceful and stable Europe with freedom and progress through the development of democratic societies with accountable governments, an active civil society, free media, and well-functioning markets.

The expected outcome is that CSOs in the ENC are strengthened to act as democratic organisations fostering people-to-people cooperation in the areas of youth, media, culture, labour market, as well as environment and climate; that sustainable networks between CSOs in the ENC and Denmark lead to increased understanding and dialogue; and that the Danish public is informed about the developments in our neighbouring countries to the East. The outcome is further expected to be that the consortium will be able to assist Danish CSOs in establishing new and innovative partnerships and that flexible response can be provided to civil society groups, human rights defenders and journalists to act in situations where rapid support is required.

Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) is Denmark's largest, most representative and most influential employers' and business membership organisation (EBMO), covering manufacturing and construction as well as service industries across sectors such as transport, energy, IT, health, trade and professional services.

Danish Cultural Institute (DCI) is a self-governing institution. Since 1940 DCI has been engaged in creating mutual understanding between people. DCI believes that the arts and culture are among Denmark's most important assets. Together with partners, DCI develops international activities that push boundaries and create opportunities, which provide mutual value and inspire. Especially when it comes to equal rights, education, sustainable development, democracy, and active citizenship. Important values in the world and in Denmark.

Danish Youth Council (DUF) is an umbrella organisation founded in 1940, representing 80 children and youth organisations and more than 600,000 Danish children and youth. The member organizations of DUF range from scouts to political youth organizations, voluntary social organizations, cultural organizations, environmental organizations, organizations for youth with disabilities and many more.

International Media Support (IMS) support public-interest journalism in conflict affected, fragile and transitional states has benefitted over 60 countries. With more than 500 national partnerships established, IMS's approach centres on three areas: participating in and building international and regional coalitions; linking local impact and knowledge from its country or regional programmes to global policy and standards development; and ensuring knowledge transfer and sustained local partner involvement in global discussions.

United Federation of Workers in Denmark (3F) is Denmark's largest trade union federation with approximately 270,000 members. For more than three decades 3F has carried out development- and solidarity work by supporting trade unions in developing countries and Central and Eastern Europe. 3F work for the international labour rights as set out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and for a just and well-regulated labour market with better working and living conditions for all workers in the world.