



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Thematic Fund Partnership and Expert
Fund – Partnership Block Grant

Summary Report 1st Round of Call for Proposals and Recommendations for Applicants of the 2nd Round

March 2014

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1 Overview Partnership Block Grant

The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme (SRCP) is part of the non-refundable aid offered by the Swiss Federal Council to 12 European member states who joined EU between 2004 and 2007. Switzerland's support is an expression of solidarity with new EU member states and puts the ground work for stable economic and political connections with these countries.

The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme aims to:

- contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities between Romania and more advanced countries of the enlarged European Union, and
- contribute within Romania to the reduction of economic and social disparities between the dynamic urban centers and the structurally weak peripheral regions.

Under this Programme different financing instruments have been set up, including Thematic Funds.

In 2011, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) selected a consortium formed by KEK-CDC Consultants (www.kek.ch), Civil Society Development Foundation (www.fdsc.ro) and Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation (www.repf.ro) as the Swiss Intermediate Body (SIB) for managing and administrating two Thematic Funds within the SRCP, respectively Civil Society Participation and Partnership & Expert Fund.

The Partnership Block Grant is an instrument within the Thematic Fund Partnership and Expert Fund (TF PF&EF) for financing projects between Swiss and Romanian partners.

Financial allocation for the Call for Proposals

For the Partnership Block Grant, the initial total allocation of CHF 5,000,000 was supplemented by CHF 1,000,000 through a reallocation from the Expert Fund. Therefore, a total of CHF 6,000,000 is available for projects under the Partnership Block Grant, with CHF 3,000,000 for the 1st round and CHF 3,000,000 for the 2nd round of Call for Proposals.

Two types of grants are envisaged, respectively:

- small grants: between CHF 10,000 and CHF 100,000 (project duration between 18 and 36 months¹)
- large grants: between CHF 100,001 and CHF 250,000 (project duration between 18 and 36 months)

The grant amount shall cover a maximum of 85% (if the applicant is a public institution/authority/territorial entity), respectively 90% (if the applicant is a NGO/social partner), of total eligible costs borne in Swiss Francs.

Moreover, out of the total grant amount, a percentage of minimum 51% must be allocated to the Romanian party (applicant and, if the case, Romanian partner/s).

¹ In exceptional cases projects between 12 and 36 months were also possible for the first round of Call for Proposals

2 Launching and Promoting the 1st round of the Call for Proposals

The date of opening the Call for Proposals: May 21st, 2012

Deadline for submitting the applications: August 23rd, 2012, 17:00 at CSDF office

Starting with May 2012 until the deadline, an extensive information campaign was carried out including a launching conference, 8 information sessions (Bucharest, Brasov, Iasi, Craiova, Cluj-Napoca, Calarasi, Timisoara, Galati), press releases, posts on the SIB members' websites, but also on the portal www.stiriong.ro. CSDF established a help desk providing important information to all interested organizations, both in writing (by e-mail), on the phone or during face-to-face meetings. During this period, the team members answered approximately 300 questions and the most relevant ones were published in the FAQ list on the websites of CSDF and REPF.

Based on the experiences of the 1st round, please find below a few recommendations to be followed during the 2nd round of Call for Proposals:

Recommendations for applicants of the 2nd round:

- Visit the SIB members' websites www.fdsc.ro, www.repf.ro, www.kek.ch or www.stiriong.ro for having access to the news related to the 2nd round of the programme, download the Guidelines for Applicants and check the locations for the information sessions as well as the FAQ.
- Attend the information session to get informed about the 2nd round and receive answers to your questions. They could also be an opportunity of discovering new potential partner/s for your projects.
- In case of misunderstandings or if you need additional information, do not hesitate to contact the help desk (by e-mail or phone) within the deadline imposed by the Guidelines for Applicants. There is also the possibility to establish a meeting for clarifying aspects related to the Guidelines for Applicants and the specific requirements for submitting an application.

3 Receiving and Registering the Project Proposals

Number of applications received within the deadline: 116 (14 for small grants and 102 for large grants)

Number of applications received after the deadline: none

Opening sessions were organized, where each application received a reference number. The applicants were subsequently informed via e-mail with regard to the registration number of their project.

With regard to the type of the Romanian applicant, 11 projects came from public bodies (territorial entities, public authorities, universities) and 105 from NGOs.

Recommendations for applicants of the 2nd round:

- Prepare the application dossier with great attention to the requirements mentioned in the Guidelines for Applicants and put each copy in separate folders, mentioning if it is the original or a copy.
- Do not miss the deadline mentioned in the Guidelines for Applicants. A project delivered after the deadline will not be taken into consideration, no matter the reasons of the delay.
- Check if the requested information is specified on the envelope, as mentioned in the Guidelines for Applicants.
- Check if the contact information specified in the application dossier is correct, since these contact details will be used for further correspondence.
- Keep in mind that the reference number received for the application after the opening sessions is the one to be used in further correspondence (if the case).

4 Evaluation Process and Results

All applications received within the deadline, entered in the evaluation process consisting of two stages:

A: Administrative compliance and eligibility verification;

B: Technical and financial evaluation.

A Grant Evaluation Committee (GEC), comprising of 3 independent evaluators was in charge of the evaluation process. The results of the entire process were documented in an evaluation report which was approved by the Selection Committee of the TF PF&EF on January 25th, 2013.

A: Administrative compliance and eligibility verification

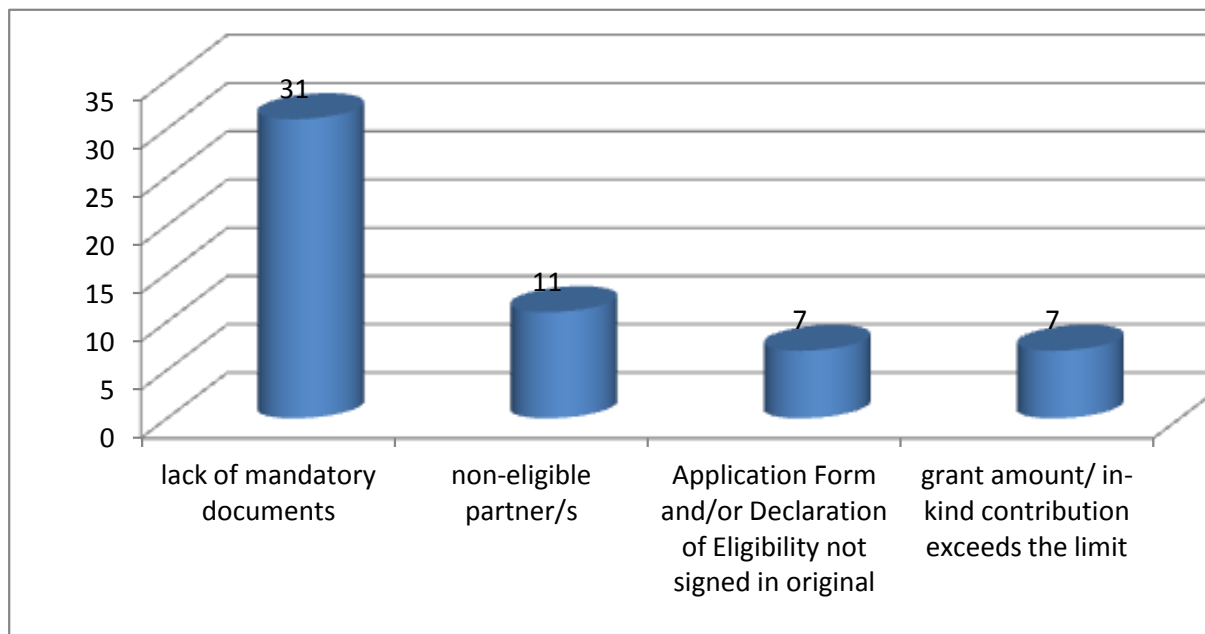
This phase consisted in checking whether each applicant and its partner/s meet the imposed conditions and requirements specified in the grid published in the Guidelines for Applicants. Only the applications that fulfilled all administrative and eligibility criteria entered into the next phase of the evaluation.

In 27 cases (23 %), the GEC decided to request clarifications as the provided documents were not sufficient for establishing the eligibility of the applicant and/or partner/s.

48 applications (meaning 41%) did not meet all the criteria set in the Guidelines for Applicants and were therefore excluded. The most common reasons were:

- lack of mandatory documents (statutory documents, annual report, partnership agreement etc.);
- ineligibility of partner/s (business companies, public institutions without legal personality, Swiss partner/s who do not comply with all eligibility criteria, etc.);
- the Application Form and/or the Declaration of Eligibility were not stamped and signed in the original, as required;
- the grant amount requested and/or the in-kind contribution exceeded the imposed limits (limit grant amount: 85%, respectively 90%, from the total budget; limit in-kind contribution: 5% from the total budget).

Most common reasons for exclusion during 1st stage of evaluation:



Recommendations for applicants of the 2nd round:

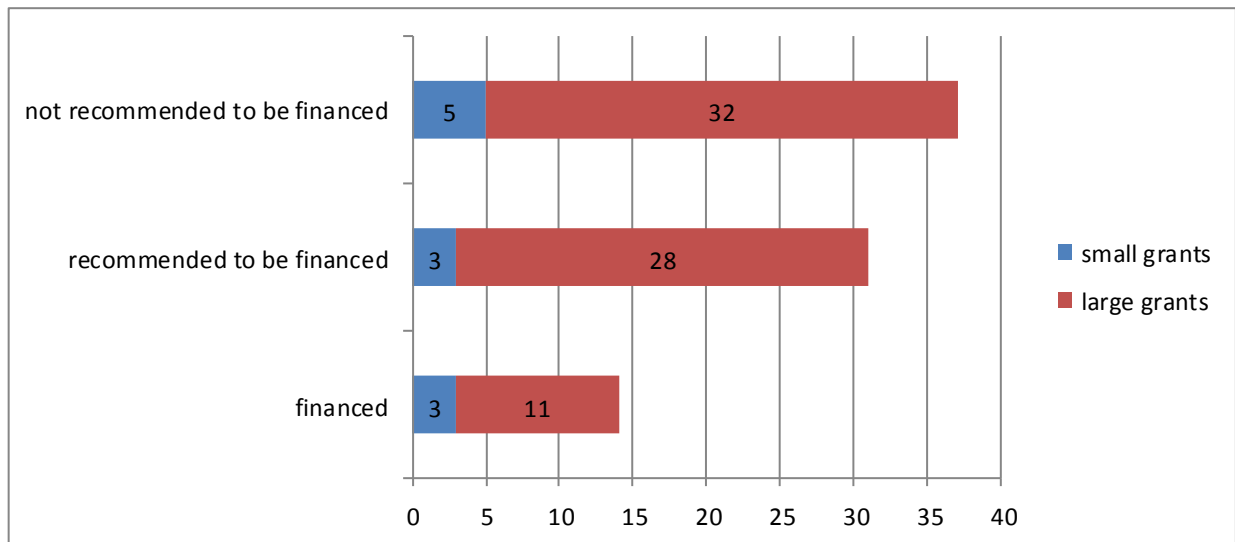
- Check carefully the list of the required documents and do not forget to attach the original copy to the application.
- Do not forget to include the CVs of the key members of the project team.
- Check if the documents are signed and stamped in the original, whenever is required.
- Read carefully the eligibility criteria for the partner/s and assure that you will receive in due time all the needed documents from the partner/s, especially from the Swiss ones. Do not hesitate to consult the SIB for questions regarding the eligibility of the partner organization/s.
- Plan the budget carefully. All the amounts in the budget are preferred to be calculated with two decimals, for you to have a better control of those percentage and amount

limits. Plan the budget for the total value of the project (not only for the grant amount) and make sure that you have the same amounts both in the Application and in the Budget Form. Pay attention to fill in all the worksheets of the Budget Form.

B: Technical and financial evaluation

68 applications (59%) entered into this phase of evaluation, with 8 projects for small grants and 60 projects for large grants. The evaluation process resulted in 14 projects recommended to be financed (3 small and 11 large grants). The Selection Committee, formed by representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSO), the Swiss Contribution Office (SCO) and the National Coordination Unit (NCU) committed 2,816,358 Swiss Francs for financing these projects. Yet, over 20 good proposals are still on the reserve list.

Evaluation Results 1st Call for Proposal:



The list with the financed projects is available on the following websites: <http://www.kek.ch/en/launching>, www.fdsc.ro, www.repf.ro, www.stiriong.ro, www.swiss-contribution.admin.ch/Romania, www.swiss-contribution.ro.

The scores received by the projects during the technical and financial evaluation phase ranged from 17.5 to 92.0, having the following distribution among small and large grant schemes:

Small grants:

3 projects recommended to be financed, with scores between 89.50 and 82

5 projects not recommended to be financed, with scores between 79 and 65.50

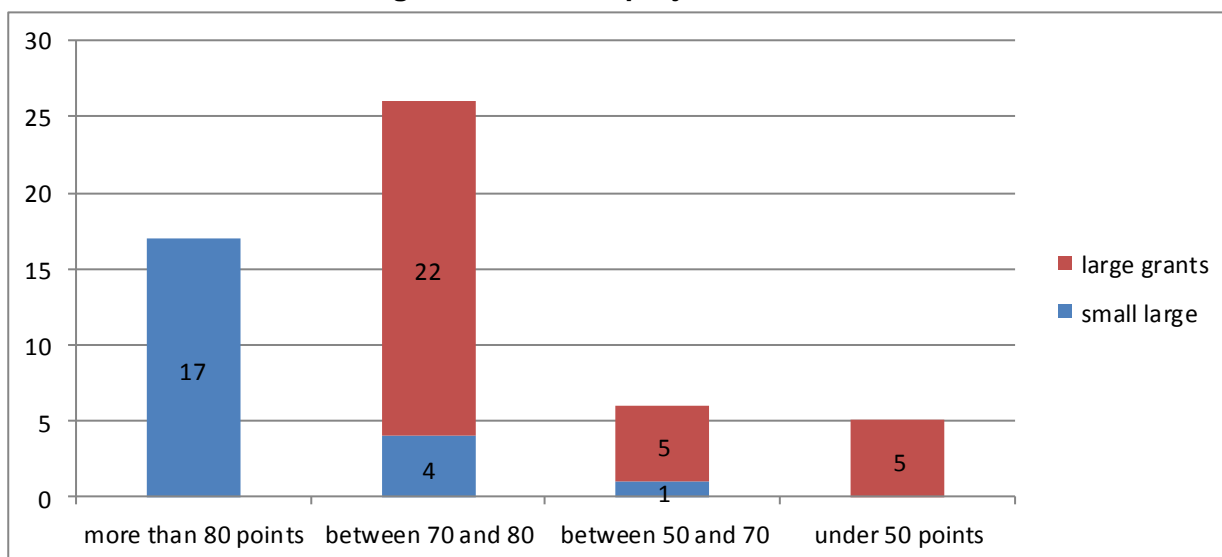
Large grants:

- 28 projects recommended to be financed, with scores between 92 and 81.50
- 32 projects not recommended to be financed, with scores between 79 and 17.50 (5 projects did not meet the minimum level of 20 points for the relevance criteria)

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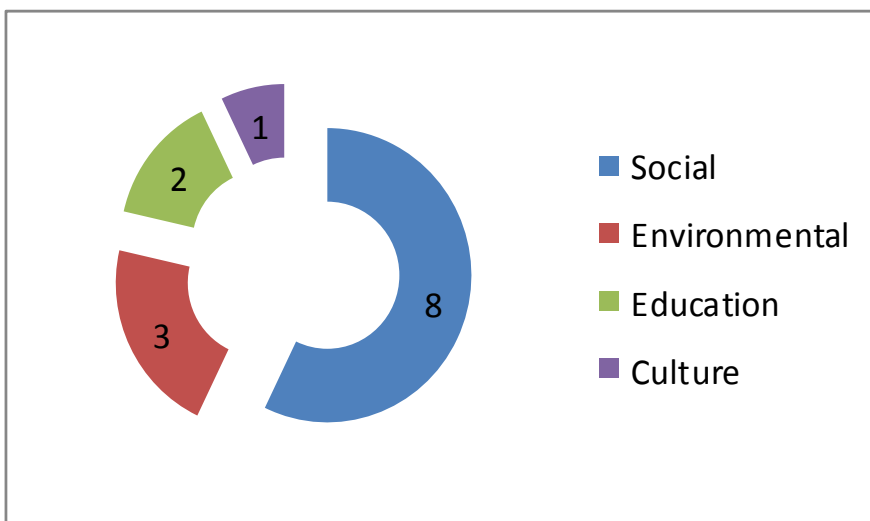
The projects not recommended to be financed had average scores of less than 79 points.

Average scores of the projects not financed:



Information regarding the financed projects within the 1st round of Call for Proposals

Although there was not set a thematic focus for the projects within the Partnership Block Grant, the financed projects can be classified into the following areas:

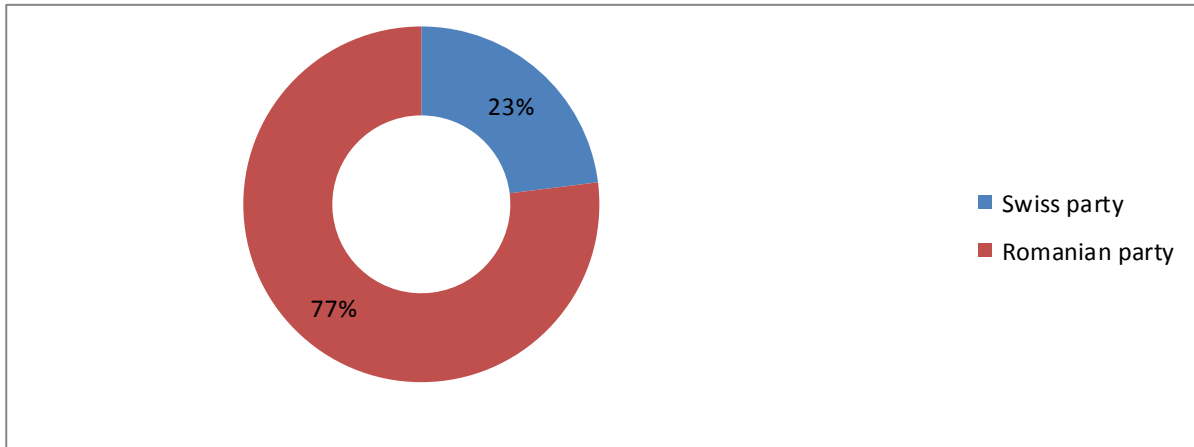


16 Swiss organisations are involved as partners in the financed projects. Furthermore, 4 financed projects came additionally in partnership with Romanian organisations, even this was not compulsory. The partner organizations are NGOs, educational institutions and medical institutions.

The average distribution of the grant amount between the Romanian and Swiss party is as follows:

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Grant allocation between Romanian and Swiss parties:



The below table shows the financed projects and the region where the headquarters of the Romanian applicant organization is located:



Following the financial and technical evaluation phase, the next phase – called the pre-contracting phase - was initiated. During this period the applicants, which were proposed to be financed, were informed of the general and specific conditions imposed by the GEC (if the case).

Recommendations for applicants of the 2nd round:

- Carefully write your application while checking the evaluation grid in order to fully respond to the aspects evaluated and take into consideration the following:
 - the project needs to be designed in a way for giving a clear picture of the

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- intervention proposed and for convincing the evaluators about its relevance and necessity;
- the project must meet the objectives of the financing programme (grant scheme); the objectives of the project must be in close relation with its activities and estimated results;
 - the identified problem and the proposed approach must be real and sustained by specific and relevant information (for example research, SWOT analysis etc.);
 - the proposed activities of the project should either solve, or significantly contribute to solving the identified problem/s;
 - the activities must be designed in a logic manner, must be realistic (taking into account the organizational capacity, its resources and the external factors), efficient and linked to the objectives of the project, results and the proposed budget allocation;
 - both quantitative and qualitative measurable indicators need to be included;
 - the applicant is recommended to provide practical solutions for the project sustainability; otherwise a project is susceptible to be a singular and isolated initiative;
- Plan the budget carefully, in full accordance with the activities foreseen in the project. Be aware that all the costs included in the Budget Form must be justified and fully needed for the development of project activities. In this regard, please take into account the following:
 - It is recommended to plan the budget after the rest of the project has been designed in detail;
 - the budget has to be correlated with all activities and the results foreseen in the project; each cost must be duly justified;
 - the budget must be realistic, taking into account the prices on the local market;
 - the budgetary chapters are recommended to be well-balanced in accordance with the planned activities, the results and the impact of the project;
 - When writing the application, do not miss any of the sections included in the Application Form and take into account the following:
 - information regarding the applicant and partner/s expertise in project management is important to be provided;
 - information about the partner/s is important to be provided, stressing not only their role in the project, but also their experience and knowledge in the field approached, and the need for their involvement in the project;
 - the organizational set-up, team and management of the project need to be efficiently dimensioned and in very close relation to the project activities; it is also recommended to mention the workload for each position.