**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Democracy Central – Call for grant proposals**

*DISCLAIMER: The Central Europe Programme (CEP) Team provides information on available grants to assist potential applicants in identifying funding opportunities and understating the scope of the call for proposals. The responses to inquiries from potential applicants provided by CEP Team are purely informational and do not guarantee the success of any grant application. The selection process for grant proposals is made by external, independent experts, who evaluate the applications based on their assessment of the proposal's merits and alignment with the grant program's objectives.*

Eligibility criteria:

1. **We are a commercial entity, not an NGO, could we apply?**

As highlighted in the Application Guidelines all media outlets, independently of their structure, acting as non-profit or for-profit organizations, can apply for Democracy Central grants.

1. **The required turnover in the eligibility criteria is quite high for small media organizations (especially since the call is intended for independent media in not-very-rich EU countries as they often do not have a very high income). Our budget is just below the requirement, are we anyway eligible?**

We understand that some of the independent media are smaller than the adopted threshold. Therefore, in order to encourage media to apply, we decided to have a 10 % margin for the annual budget requirements. It would enable media that are just below the budgetary threshold to apply.

1. **In order to reach the budgetary threshold could we form a consortium with other media?**

Unfortunately at this stage we are not able to modify the selection criteria and to allow consortium partnerships. We hope to announce calls in the future enabling smaller, mostly regional media outlets to apply.

1. **We are a small media outlet. Our budget is mostly dependent on private company support, however we manage to maintain editorial independence. Could we apply?**

The answer depends on the type of the entity which provides the core funding (state-controlled or private), and the percentage of the funding in the overall budget (which is indication of financial dependence and sustainability). It also has to do with mechanisms for protection of editorial independence that you have put in place, which you have to explain. Therefore, we strongly encourage Applicants to explain, in the application, details of the mechanisms put in place in order to secure and maintain editorial independence.

1. **We have 5 member staff, but 2 are on maternity leave currently, can we apply?**

The eligibility criteria requires 5 full time member staff to be employed or to cooperate on a regular basis with the media outlet, independently of the nature of the cooperation contract. However, depending on the business model of the media outlet, regular contribution of part time staff in terms of daily working hours can be considered eligible, if their engagement is equal to the working hours of five full-time working staff. In order this to be accepted you need to provide substantial justification.

1. **Is there any flexibility when it comes to the minimum full-time staff members requirement?**

To ensure eligibility for the grant, we require that applying entities have a minimum of 5 full-time staff members, regardless of the form of engagement or type of contract.

1. **Are media organizations registered in other countries (e.g. Czech Republic) eligible to apply?**

To be considered for the grant, applying legal entities (for-profit or non-profit) must have a registered seat in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia, as well as produce content aimed at an audience in at least one of these four countries.

1. **Our organization depends on the yearly public funding for media content production by the Ministry of Culture, Municipality etc., does that automatically make us ineligible for this grant?**

In principle, dependence on state funding sources would disqualify you as a potential applicant. However you are welcome to argue that the state funding (a) does not compromise your editorial independence and that (b) your level of diversification of sources of income and the level of effort aimed at diversifying sources of income provides a reasonable balance to the state funding. Your argumentation will be then carefully scrutinized when accessing the eligibility criteria once the application is submitted.

1. **Can we apply if we do not have the financial statement for 2022 prepared yet?**

It will suffice if you provide us with the financial statements for the fiscal years of 2020 and 2021, along with an explanation in the Application form for the inability to provide the financial statement for the year 2022. If you have a draft of the statement or a provisional financial statement you can send it, along with an explanation on why this is not the final version.

1. **In Hungary, financial statements must be prepared in Hungarian language. Thus, we do not have them in English. Can we send the official financial statement in Hungarian?**

We would like to kindly request that you submit the official financial report in Hungarian, followed by a brief summary highlighting the key points in English.

1. **Can we apply for the grant, if we do not primarily operate as a digital-first media organisation?**

In principle yes, as long as your digital channels complement your core operation and you explain the connection between the legacy and the digital platforms in your proposal in the Application form.

1. **We are a radio station and our primary channel is therefore radio airing, but we also have a webpage. How would you measure if our webpage reach is enough considering our market niche and the type of our organization?**

As your primary channel is broadcasting, your web presence is supplementary and linked to the ratings of your radio program, as well as the specific nature of your niche audience in a given market. Therefore, if your radio station has substantial ratings in the local media market, a lower web presence may not be problematic.

1. **What tabs in the Project Budget Excel file am I supposed to fill out?**

With regards to the budget Excel file, it is necessary to complete only the “Budget” and “Organisation budget” tabs.

1. **Is the table “Global Budget of the Organisation in 2022” in the “Organisation Budget” tab about the project particularly or does it refer to our organisation in general?**

For the "Global Budget of the Organisation in 2022" please fill out the sources of your organisation’s funding according to the listed categories, the amounts and the percentage of the total funding in the year 2022.

1. **What should I fill out in the point 6 of the “Budget” tab “Institutional support during the reporting period”?**

This budget line is there to give you the opportunity to receive some capacity building support for your organization. However, this should be used only in exceptional and well argued cases. Otherwise, please try to include all your costs in the budget items 1 to 5.

1. **Do we need to display other costs of the project that will not be covered by the grant?**

If part of the costs is covered from other sources, please indicate this in the comment section for the relevant budget items.

Project design:

1. **Can we lodge an application to ensure the ongoing operation of our media outlet? Or should we design a separate project?**

According to the Application Guidelines, the designed grants will be awarded to well-defined projects that aim to enhance competitiveness and sustainability and improve the ability of the applicants to serve their audiences. We are looking to support projects that address important organizational needs and challenges or are exploiting available opportunities for growth and organizational improvement. For example, proposals that demonstrate a clear plan for strategically improving revenue streams, expanding audiences, or upgrading content quality will have a greater chance to be selected. Part of the forecasted budget can be designed to cover operational costs, especially if they link to the planned project aim.

1. **Could we apply for funding for a number of articles or video productions on a given topic?**

As mentioned in the guidelines the project could aim at developing a business model, increase engagement with the audience, build a subscription scheme or experiment with new avenues of communication (etc.). Part of the project activities could consist of content production, however the Applicants would need to demonstrate that the produced content would contribute to greater audience engagement and/or enhance the development of new avenues of communication.

1. **Does the call fund new activities or can existing activities/jobs be part of the project if they are aimed at raising resources?**

The projects submitted can either focus on the development of new activities or the enhancement of existing ones.

1. **Do the activities have to be journalistic (media content production) or can they be "organisational"?**

The projects can either concentrate on content production or on organizational improvements, based on the applicant's strategic priorities for the organization. As such, the activities proposed can be of any nature, be it journalistic or organizational, provided they are of strategic importance and contribute to the sustainability of the organization.

1. **What is the financial structure of the grant if we get it? Is the funding 100% and are the amounts lump sums or does each activity need to be evidenced with smaller outputs?**

The grant provided can cover up to 100% of the project costs. However, in order to ensure transparency and accountability, we require a detailed breakdown of the specific costs that will be incurred during the project implementation phase. We encourage you to provide us with this information in your application form.

1. **Shall we fill sheet 3 and 4 of the budget template?**

No. Sheet number 3 would be filled once the grant is provided and the project starts to operate. Sheet number 4 is an exemplary budget, which you can use as reference in designing your own budget.