

DG REGIO – OECD call for proposals on citizen participation in cohesion policy: information webinar and FAQ

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and the OECD are seeking proposals by public authorities and civil society organizations, interested to strengthen citizen participation in cohesion policy through collaborative innovative solutions.

On March 24th, the OECD and DG REGIO held a webinar to provide more information about the call for proposals. The recording of this webinar is available online [here](#), and the slides used during the presentation are accessible [here](#).

Participants raised important questions that can be of interest for all potential applicants, which are summarised below.

Who can apply under this call?

The Call for expression of interest is open to public authorities responsible for managing or implementing ERDF, CF or JTF either as managing authorities, intermediate bodies or beneficiaries, which are defined in [Regulation](#) (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021, jointly with civil society organisations (CSOs). A CSO is a non-profit organisation (private or public). Natural persons are not eligible.

I am managing a project that engages not only citizens but also stakeholders; would it qualify for this call for applications?

Citizens are individuals, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations; whereas stakeholders are any interested and/or affected party, including: institutions and organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, from civil society, academia, the media or the private sector.

The focus for this call for expressions of interest is on citizens. The purpose of the call is primarily to engage citizens, considering that stakeholders are already regularly consulted for the distribution of cohesion policy funds, as suggested by [our findings during our earlier collaboration](#). Of course, the nature of citizen participation projects could also imply stakeholder engagement, but the focus must clearly remain on involving citizens.

Does my project need explicit political support from national authorities?

Not necessarily. The level of political support should be in accordance to the scope of your project. For instance, if your project were to be carried out at the regional level, the support

would have to come from regional authorities. In every case, we ask for political commitment from the most direct political leaders and authorities relevant to your specific project.

I believe my project proposal would be important and relevant to this call; however, political support is hard to get in my context, should I still apply?

Political support from the relevant public authorities is vital for the success of the project and is indeed an important criterion for eligibility. As suggested by [the findings of the previous collaboration between the OECD and DG REGIO](#), one of the necessary preconditions for impactful citizen engagement is genuine political commitment. In the application form, you have to explain the involvement of relevant political leadership.

Due to local legislation, my organisation is an NGO, meaning we are a managing authority even though we are not a public authority, are we eligible to apply?

Yes. All managing authorities and intermediate bodies, independently from their legal status are eligible, provided that their role is defined in the management and control system of the Member State.

The citizen participation project we would like to put forward has either already started or would definitely go beyond the period during which the OECD could provide technical assistance. Is it still eligible?

Yes. We understand that projects may go beyond the proposed period of technical assistance. This has been the case previously and does not pose a problem as long as support requested focuses on testing and assessing the application of innovative citizens participation approaches. Assistance to projects cannot exclusively refer to the preparatory phase.

Can I submit a proposal regarding citizen engagement in the monitoring of the implementation of an ongoing cohesion policy programme?

Yes. As long as there is a specific moment in the policy cycle [*1) identifying policy priorities 2) drafting the actual policy document, 3) policy implementation or 4) monitoring implementation and evaluation of the policy's impacts*] in which citizens can actively contribute, it is eligible for this call. Refer to [Annex I](#) for more details on the policy cycle and where citizen participation can play a role.

If you accept our proposal, will you provide us with funding?

No. Neither the European Commission nor the OECD will provide funding for these projects. We will only provide expertise and technical assistance. We encourage public authorities,

whenever possible, to provide funding for CSOs throughout the project by using available funds for technical assistance.

Is there a specific application form that we must fill out?

Yes, you can find the specific form [here](#), under Call for expression of interest: Innovative implementation of the Partnership Principle in Cohesion Policy (Deadline: 30/04/2022), right after the call for expression of interest.

Do you have any general tips regarding the scope of the projects you would like to see?

One thing to keep in mind would be that we are seeking to go beyond traditional citizen participation, which has typically taken the form of public consultations. As explained in [Annex I](#), we would like to encourage citizen engagement processes (see definition below). Nevertheless, we remain very open regarding the scope of the project, the participatory methodology, and the moment in which citizens will participate. Since you are the organisations and authorities directly on the ground, we trust you and are ready to listen to your experience regarding your needs in your own context.

Citizen engagement: when citizens and stakeholders are given the opportunity and the necessary resources (e.g. information, data and digital tools) to collaborate during all phases of the policy-cycle and in the service design and delivery. It acknowledges equal standing for citizens in setting the agenda, proposing project or policy options and shaping the dialogue – although the responsibility for the final decision or policy formulation in many cases rests with the investor or other authorities.