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COVID-19 Solidarity Program in the Eastern Partnership countries

A Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 Emergencies Threatening Civil Society Organizations in Eastern Partnership countries

About the Program

AFEW International has launched in September 2020 the regional **“COVID-19 Solidarity Program in the Eastern Partnership countries”** with the financial support of the European Union. This project will support community based organizations (CBOs) to respond to the immediate and longer term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the **Eastern Partnership** countries. ***AFEW International*** together with the **Netherlands Helsinki Committee** is part of the consortium led by **People in Need**. The consortium has the goal of enhancing the capacities of CSOs to effectively respond to short- and medium-term needs and influence longer-term policy reforms that support vulnerable groups and those disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than a year after the start of the pandemic, the world is enduring a challenging spring. COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths are rising in many countries as the continent grapples with a more infectious variant, a shortage of vaccines and public weariness and lockdowns. The latest pandemic surge triggered by the spread of various variants of the virus is often called a “third wave”. COVID-19 is still a moving target: it’s a new virus, much is still unknown about its epidemiology, spread, and risk factors.

Countries from the Eastern Partnership host many large factories where remote work has not been possible, and this time round, governments have been reluctant to quickly impose a lockdown, fearing another blow to the economies after last year’s recession.

COVID-19 as a disease may have consequences linked to its pathophysiology for those with a health condition such as people living with HIV (PLWH), people with (history of) tuberculosis or with viral hepatitis, or other health conditions. The impact of COVID-19 on their individual medical condition is not likely to be different in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) than elsewhere in the world. However, the epidemiology of some of the risk factors in EECA is such, that they are likely to have a substantial impact on certain populations, e.g. because of the relatively high burden of tuberculosis, especially drug-resistance TB.

Marginalized groups of people, including **Key Populations** have poor access to health services, in particular in the Eastern Partnership countries. Hence, it is commonly believed that marginalized groups are more likely to also have hindered access to COVID-19 related services. This can be influenced also by the stigma and discrimination



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Since March 2020, it has been clear that CSOs in the Eastern Partnership countries have been struggling to adapt to the new COVID-work environment with extreme limits in movement, reduction of interaction with target beneficiaries and the transition to online/remote management and mobilization. COVID-19 Solidarity Program in Eastern Partnerships countries strives to address these challenges by providing support to CSOs in order to adapt and manage these changes. It is necessary to support local CSOs **adapting to the COVID work environment** to both respond to the COVID-related socio-economic needs and continue their regular support to the Key Populations. *AFEW International* seeks to provide **small grants** to CSOs on immediate material needs to CBOs working with Key Populations arising from COVID-19 related measures, such as PPE and IT/communication equipment.

Eligible costs

The Call aims to support CSOs that have been struggling to adapt to the new COVID-work environment with extreme limits in movement, reduction of interaction with target beneficiaries and the transition to online/remote management and mobilization. To address these challenges, AFEW International will provide support to CSOs in order to adapt and manage these changes.

- Purchase of equipment for meetings and office rooms to facilitate distance/remote work;
- Purchase of IT equipment to be able to facilitate communication with the clients;
- Purchase of COVID-19 personal protection materials (masks, gloves, sanitizers, soap) for organizational and clients use;
- Purchase of other sanitary equipment and materials for use in the office and/or when meeting clients on outcalls.

Please note: If the applicant expresses the necessity to purchase other material needs, when submitting the proposal rationale must be provided.

Funding available

In order to reach the overall goal, *AFEW International* aims at supporting **multiple organizations** from the Eastern Partnership countries¹ with small grants. The maximum amount per grant is **€ 3.500**.

Please note: By initial deadline April 30, 2021 we have received 46 proposals, 36 of which came from Ukraine. It was decided to extend the deadline for the small grants' applications for organisations from 5 other countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova – until May 17, 2021.

Assessment of Applications

Call for application to promote the COVID-19 Solidarity Program for the Eastern Partnership countries is distributed on *AFEW International's* channels and through associated partners in the region.

¹ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine



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Applications meeting the eligibility criteria will be scored based on the selection criteria. Applications will be assessed after the **deadline (17 May 2021 at 17:00 CET Amsterdam time)**. Decisions will be made within 3 weeks. We aim to initiate transfer of the funds within **14 days** after a positive decision.

How can CBOs apply

In order to apply, please follow these simple steps:

1. Fill out the application form. An application shall be submitted in English or Russian. The deadline for submitting the form is on **17 May 2021 at 17:00 CET (Amsterdam time)**. All proposals submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed!
2. Send this form to the following email address: covid19@afew.nl. Once submitted, you will receive an automated notification.
3. Wait for the decision of the Selection Commission regarding your application. The review of the applications will be done within **3 weeks** after the deadline. The decisions will be announced on **7 June 2021**.
4. If you have questions, please refer them to the above-mentioned email address or to **Valeria Fulga: valeria_fulga@afew.nl**.

The Application Form consists of two parts. Part 1 refers to the content of the proposal. Part 2 refers to organizational and banking details. Both parts need to be submitted at once.

Eligibility Criteria for COVID-19 Emergency Grants

Eligibility criteria for the applicant

- Applicant is a **Community based organization (CBO)** or represents the interests and needs of the following groups:
 - Sex workers
 - LGBTQI
 - Men who have sex with men (MSM)
 - Women vulnerable to HIV
 - Migrants
 - Adolescents at risk
 - People using drugs
 - People living with HIV (PLHIV)
- Applicant is based in **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova**.
- Applicant is a registered CBO or - if not registered - provides references from partner organisations. COVID-19 Solidary Program for Eastern Partnership countries operational team shall be able to receive sufficient information about an applicant and can request information about applicant's capacities from mentioned partners. An applicant can be a national or regional network. Proposals by individuals will not be taken into consideration for funding. Unregistered



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initiatives and groups if awarded a grant, need to find a reliable fiscal partner which can receive the grant money through an international transfer.

Eligibility criteria for the application

- Projects address the immediate COVID-19 impact towards the new work environment as to enable CSOs to continue supporting their usual constituents.
- Activities respond to a situation that threatens the health, and/or the physical or juridical safety of one or more people from the above target groups or threatens the financial and/or legal situation of an NGO/CBO.
- The activities to relieve an emergency will be immediately implemented and will last no longer than **6 months**.
- The proposal is submitted in **English or Russian**.
- The proposal is submitted through the provided email before the deadline.

Organizational information is collected with care and delicacy. Information will be stored in a secured database.

Selection Criteria for Emergency Grants

After an application is found to be eligible, the application will be assessed by the Operational Team based on the selection criteria for COVID-19 Emergency Grants.

Selection criteria

1. Clear analysis on the material needs of CSOs related to COVID-19. The situation is qualified as **emergent** according to provided background information.
2. There's a good plan for provision of COVID-19 related materials for CSOs to counter effects of COVID-19. **Relevance** of proposed activities: Are the proposed activities in the given context relevant for solving the emergency situation?
3. **Budget** is clear and reasonable and the demonstrated need for items is clearly indicated, and is within the limit of 3.500 EUR.
4. **Capacity** to implement the proposed activities. Does the applicant have sufficient capacity to implement proposed activities?

Each criterion is scored from 1 to 5. Only applications with an average score higher than **3.5** will be considered for funding.

Reviewing the applications, we will keep the following in mind:

- We will prioritize activities which are not (easily) fundable through other means.
- We will prioritize smaller community based organizations that are carrying their work in smaller cities.



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- In the portfolio of grants, we strive to have all mentioned key populations represented and all countries represented.

Selection Committee

AFEW International has established an internal selection committee consisting of three experts working with key population groups in Eastern Europe.

Due diligence

As part of selection process, the Operational Team may want to assess governance and accountability structures of the applicant, and may to that extent request from applicant additional information on organizational structures; (financial) management and leadership; demonstrated capacity to implement the proposed activities (track record); funding history or recommendation letters (where available); and the meaningful involvement of key populations. This is to ensure that a sufficient level of organizational capacity is guaranteed. For selected grantees, a short organizational assessment will be conducted.