



SWISS–BULGARIAN Cooperation Programme

Open call for a Programme Operator of the Swiss-Bulgarian Civic Engagement and Transparency Facility (CETF)

The purpose of this call is to invite tenderers from Bulgaria (non-governmental organisations and/or consortia) to submit a proposal for the set-up, management, monitoring and reporting of the Swiss-Bulgarian Civic Engagement and Transparency Facility. The total amount of CETF is CHF 10 million for a period of 5 years.

The scope of this mandate is defined by the Framework Agreement between Switzerland and Bulgaria signed on 20 September 2022:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/bulgaria/en/home/schweizer-beitrag/second-swiss-contribution/bilaterales-rahmenabkommen.html>).

Detailed information about the mandate and the requirements to be fulfilled by the tenderer is described in the Tender dossier for selection of Programme operator.

Eligibility: Interested non-governmental organisations registered in Bulgaria and/or consortia with a Bulgarian leading organisation are eligible to participate in this tender and will receive the Tender dossier individually upon **submission of a Letter of interest** to thomas.stauffer@eda.admin.ch. Subject of the e-mail: **Programme Operator for the CETF**.

The selection process includes the following stages:

1. Formal requirements
2. Eligibility check and award criteria
3. Evaluation of bids
4. Committee decision
5. Awarding the mandate (Conclusion of Support measure agreement)

The timeline of the tender procedure is as follows:

- Publication of tender: 17 October 2023
- Questions on the Tender dossier due by: 05.11.2023
- Respond to the questions by e-mail closing date: 15.11.2023
- Deadline for submission of tenders: 18.12.2023
- Check of formal and eligibility criteria, followed by evaluation of bids according to the award criteria: December 2023– February 2024
- Presentations and interviews shortlisted bidders: February 2024
- Award decision and publication: March 2024
- Programme finalisation in the framework of the preparatory stage: March – April 2024
- Conclusion of contract subject to final funding decision on 2nd stage approval: May 2024

The CETF operation is provisioned for 5 years starting in June 2024 and finishing on 31 May 2029.

Context

The second Swiss Contribution to selected EU member states is a key part of Switzerland's European policy. Through its contribution Switzerland is helping to foster cohesion and stability in Europe as well as to consolidate and develop bilateral relations with partner countries. The CHF 1.302 billion contribution runs until 2029 and will be used to support the states that joined the EU after 2004 (the EU-13) or countries facing major migration flows. The second Swiss contribution aims at reducing economic and social disparities in Europe and promote measures to manage migration. The total contribution to Bulgaria is CHF 92,5 million.

In Bulgaria, the second Swiss Contribution is implemented through the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme (SBCP). The SBCP is based on a Framework Agreement signed on 20 September 2022 between the Swiss Federal Council and the Bulgarian Council of Ministers. Its overall objective is to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities within Bulgaria and compared to other European states. The SBCP shall encourage partnerships and the exchange of expertise between actors from the two countries, will respect social inclusion and ensure environmental sustainability. Among others, all programmes (also called Support Measures) are to be in line with national priorities and fifty percent of the contribution shall be allocated to less-favoured regions. As a general rule, the preparation and implementation of Support Measures is in the purview of the Bulgarian authorities. The Civic Engagement & Transparency Facility is a Programme of the SBCP defined in the country-specific set-up annexed to the Framework Agreement.

The CETF is the only Support Measure selected and pre-defined in the Civic engagement and transparency thematic area of the SBCP. Switzerland has committed 10 Million CHF for this Programme; no co-financing by the Bulgarian government is foreseen. As an exception, it has been agreed that the Programme Operator (PO) will be contracted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) based on an open call for a Bulgarian (lead) organisation.

Objective of CETF

The CETF will support Bulgarian civil society organisations and initiatives in becoming more effective, representative, and sustainable. The overall objective of the facility is to have more Bulgarian citizens who are actively engaged and participate in a more transparent and inclusive public debate regarding decisions that affect them.

The CETF will include three components: a) two to three light house projects, b) a grants fund and c) advocacy support and capacity building. The three components shall be set-up to mutually re-inforce each other and with a view to realise synergies. The lighthouse projects will aim at reaching impact at national level. The Grants Fund will foster and support civic engagement with focus on less-developed regions. The capacity building component will contribute to the organisational development of CSOs and to the consolidation of the civil society in Bulgaria.