The Active Citizens Fund supports civil society by strengthening its role in promoting democratic participation, supporting active citizenship and protecting human rights.

In several of the Beneficiary States, the EEA Grants is one of the most important contributors to civil society.

The programme will be implemented through:

- 15 Beneficiary States
- EEA Grants
- Open calls for proposals
- Independent Fund Operators

Why support civil society in Europe?

A strong civil society is a fundamental building block in a vibrant, well-functioning democracy. Non-governmental organisations play a vital role in promoting democratic values and human rights, as well as fostering civic participation. They keep citizens engaged and often give voice to groups that would otherwise not be heard in political decision-making processes. Civil society is a partner for governments as well as a watchdog.

What is supported?

Through direct support to civil society organisations in 15 EU member states, the Active Citizens Fund will support initiatives that seek to:

- Increase citizen participation in civic activities
- Support consultation between public institutions and civil society organisations in decision-making processes
- Raise citizens’ awareness of human rights, including gender equality
- Empower vulnerable groups
- Create more effective, accountable and sustainable civil society organisations
- Strengthen regional cooperation within civil society

Cooperation

Partnerships between non-governmental organisations in the Beneficiary States and bodies in the three Donor States are widely encouraged. Seed money is available to support networking and partner searches.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre facilitate contact and cooperation between NGOs in the Beneficiary States and Norway and Iceland.

Information and updates about the Active Citizens Fund and related calls for proposals are shared on websites of the Active Citizens Fund in each Beneficiary State, as well as on the EEA and Norway Grants’ website www.eeagrants.org

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Key achievements from the 2009-2014 funding period

Over 500,000 people have benefitted from improved access to welfare services

26,800 people have benefitted from human rights support

3,940 NGOs have reported strengthened capacity

335 laws, policies and practices have been changed or improved in line with the values of the Grants

350 networks for joint action created, enabling civil society to collaborate for greater impact

About the EEA and Norway Grants

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway provide funding to:

- Reducing disparities in Europe
- Strengthening bilateral relations

Areas of support

- Innovation, research, education and competitiveness
- Social inclusion, youth employment and poverty reduction
- Environment, energy, climate change and low carbon economy
- Culture, civil society, good governance and fundamental rights and freedoms
- Justice and home affairs

* EEA Grants are jointly financed by Iceland (3%), Liechtenstein (1%) and Norway (96%) **Norway Grants are solely financed by Norway