



Central Europe – Building Resilience in Civil Society (CEBRICS)

A Project of the German Marshall Fund
of the United States

Year in Review 2023



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The “Central Europe – Building Resilience in Civil Society” (CEBRICS) program of The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) combines grantmaking, capacity building, policy analysis, and advocacy on behalf of democratic resilience against illiberal and authoritarian tendencies in Central Europe.

Generously supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), CEBRICS supports civil society organizations (CSOs) and initiatives in the three Central European countries most impacted by shrinking space and democratic demise: Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland.

In the implementation of CEBRICS, GMF is supported by:

- The Bulgarian Institute for Legal Initiatives
- Hungarian Helsinki Committee
- Power of Humanity Foundation (Hungary),
- Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
- Shipyard Foundation (Poland).

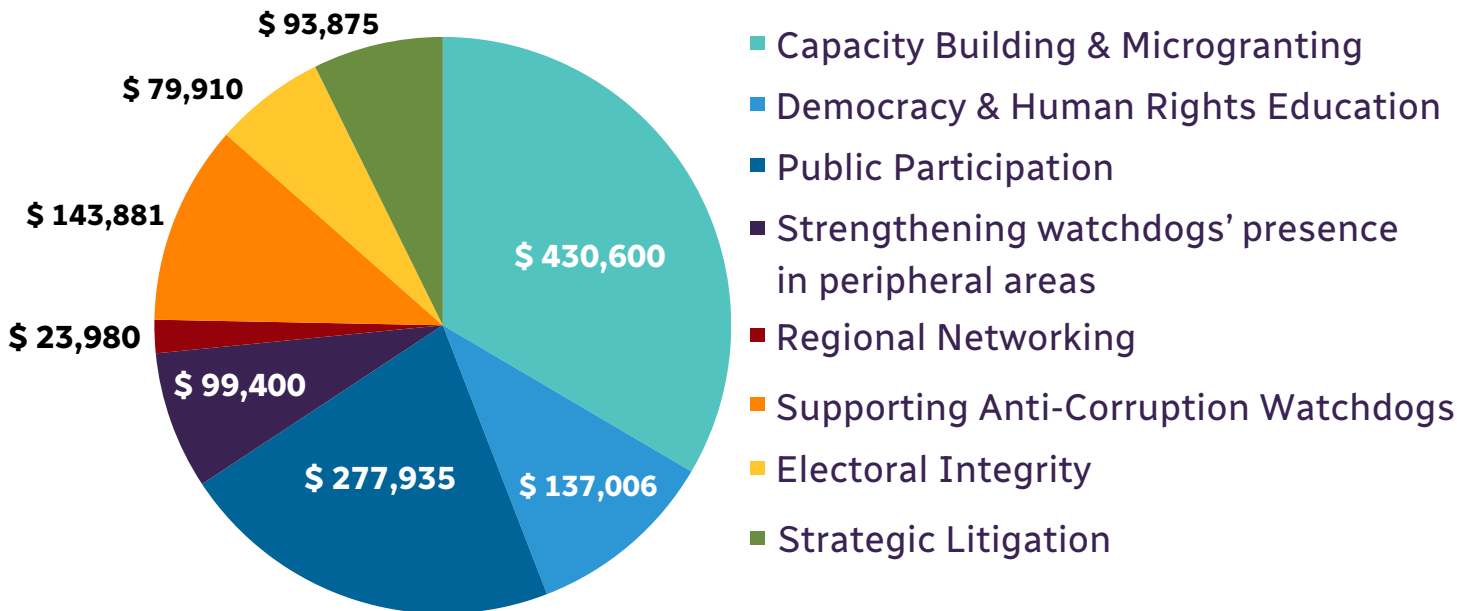


Grantmaking during 2023

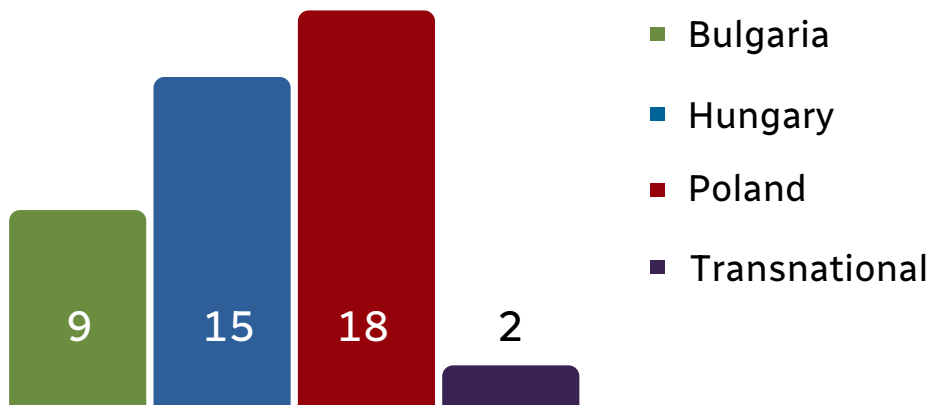
During 2023, 159 grant applications were submitted in response to CEBRICS calls for proposals and CEBRICS funding was granted for 44 projects with \$1,286,587 total funding. Grant awards ranged from \$10,000 to \$24,975.



Grant Listed by Theme



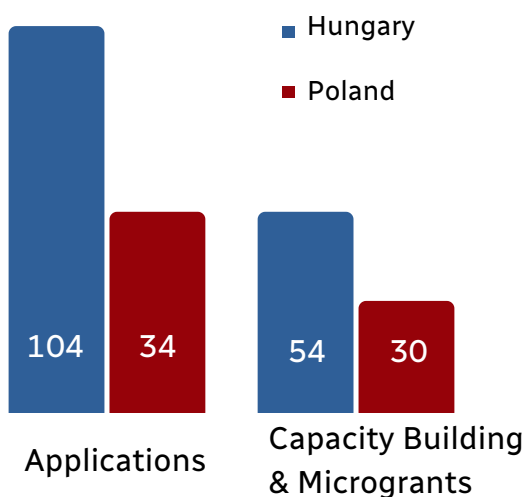
Number of Grants issued in



Capacity Building

CEBRICS programing has been particularly impactful in the field of providing capacity building and microgranting support for small or new CSOs and informal civic initiatives in peripheral and rural areas. CEBRICS microgranting and capacity building enabled 64 small CSOs and informal groups from peripheral and rural areas (34 from Hungary and 30 from Poland) to enhance their skills at the fields of fundraising, project and organization management, constituency building and communication as well as to implement their first ever grant projects under the mentoring of GMF implementation partners. Through the strengthening of Hungarian and Polish civil society in peripheral and rural areas, CEBRICS contributed to democratic resilience in Poland and enhanced the chances of potential future re-democratization in Hungary.

CSOs supported by Capacity Building & Microgrants



Map shows all locations where capacity building trainings were held in Poland

Fighting Corruption

CEBRICS grants (totaling \$143,881) made a crucial contribution to combating high-level, political corruption in Bulgaria and Hungary, especially in the field of strengthening freedom of information (FOI) litigation, providing CSOs, journalists, and citizens access to important public information and shaping both court practices and the behavior of public institutions and publicly contracted companies through lawsuits. CEBRICS grantmaking successfully balanced the legal approach of FOI litigation with corruption-related quantitative and qualitative research projects, and ultimately effectively contributed to the US government objectives of combating kleptocracy and countering corruption in allied countries with significant exposure to Russia and China.

Legal Aid was provided in
195 FOI cases

FOI cases won:
Bulgaria: 11
Hungary: 4

The thematic areas of electoral integrity and strategic litigation are particularly relevant within CEBRICS, as no comparable European resources are available for CSOs in the region, underlying the strategic importance of public US funding and USAID civil society support.

Electoral Integrity

In the field of electoral integrity, CEBRICS programing focused on the most pivotal and politically consequential election in the project countries in 2023: Poland's parliamentary election in October. The funded projects (four grants with a total value of \$79,910) contributed both to a higher level of electoral mobilization and to increased awareness and control of election irregularities. Hence, CEBRICS contributed to the democratic outcome of these watershed elections and to the opportunity they created for Poland to re-establish liberal constitutionalism, the rule of law, and pluralist democracy.

Center for Citizenship Education's "Electoral Lighthouse" App was used by 5.6 million citizens to match their electoral preferences with party programs and reached 1 million downloads in the first 24 hours following the app's launch.

The 'Political Accountability Foundation' created a gamified mobilization campaign "Election Superhero" which was played by 125,000 users online



Strategic Litigation

CEBRICS strategic litigation grants (totaling \$93,875) played an important role in strengthening human rights protection via court cases in the project countries, especially in Bulgaria and Hungary. While in Bulgaria activities were mainly focused on the equal treatment of vulnerable groups, in

Hungary they supported impact litigation projects, developed strong public relations and advocacy components, and played a crucial role in enforcing the rights to political protest and social dissent without criminal punishment or direct existential consequences for critical Hungarian citizens. Keeping the option of unpunished protest alive is an important prerequisite

of any peaceful re-democratization process in Hungary. Hence, the activities of key watchdogs supported and CEBRICS programming in general go far beyond human rights protection; they protect the last safeguard against a de facto dictatorship—the opportunity to protest and express dissent without being punished.

Provided legal aid for 100 teachers protesting against the education policy of the Hungarian regime

Prevented the illegal and forced eviction of Romas from Sofia's Orlandovtsi district (Bulgaria) through an interim measure of the European Court of Human Rights

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee initiated legal proceedings against the radical-right party "Bulgarian National Movement" (VMRO-BND) to compel the removal of racist and anti-Roma content from its website.

