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Call for proposal for CSO networks protecting EU values

Name of the organization and project:	Centre for Democracy and Law Miko Tripalo: Voice of Civil Society for the Rule of Law: A Platform for Promoting and Safeguarding EU Fundamental Values
Name of the informal network:	Informal Network for the Rule of Law
Contact:	Vanja Mladineo, centar@tripalo.hr
Partnering organizations:	Human Rights House Zagreb; www.kucaljudskihprava.hr ; kontakt@kucaljudskihprava.hr Croatian Journalists' Association; https://www.hnd.hr/ ; hnd@hnd.hr
Contribution to the I4V2.0 programme result:	Civil society strengthened and EU values promoted
Approved funds:	60.000 EUR
Project duration:	24 months 01.10.2025. – 30.09.2027.

Project summary:

The project addresses the problem of insufficient use of the EU Rule of Law Mechanism in Croatia, despite its importance for strengthening democracy and protecting the fundamental values of the EU. Civil society organizations (CSOs) still lack the knowledge and capacity to use it systematically for monitoring institutions and engaging in dialogue with them. At the same time, the recommendations of the European Commission are rarely translated into public debates or concrete political decisions. Citizens, media, and especially young people are not well informed about its significance, which reduces public pressure for reforms and slows progress in areas such as the judiciary, anti-corruption efforts, and media freedom.

To bridge this gap, the project strengthens the capacities of CSOs and connects them into a more coordinated and effective Informal Network for the Rule of Law. The network uses the EU Rule of Law Mechanism as a key tool for advocating change, raising awareness, and holding institutions accountable. It systematically builds a common voice and capacity of the network and coalition of CSOs, acting as a united actor in dialogue with national institutions and international bodies, including the European Commission.

Building on a previous successful initiative, the project expands the existing coalition, enabling it to prepare joint contributions to the European Commission, organize public discussions, and carry out advocacy activities with Croatian institutions. Through education, networking, and structured dialogue, the project contributes to more effective monitoring and improvement of rule of law standards in Croatia.

Project objectives:

- Raise awareness of the problems and challenges Croatia faces in the area of the rule of law.

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- Promote public debates on recommendations and solutions for improving the rule of law, and raise awareness among young people about the importance of the rule of law, alongside human rights and democracy as fundamental values of the EU and its Member States.
- Strengthen advocacy and watchdog capacities of the network of civil society organizations in Croatia in protecting, promoting, and advancing the rule of law as one of the EU's core values.

Key project activities include:

- Facilitating the work of the informal coalition of CSOs: Coordination of the Informal Rule of Law Network, including regular meetings and joint planning for at least 15 CSOs, strengthening collaboration and joint action, and establishing a basic network structure and website.
- Preparation of joint CSO contributions: Preparation and submission of a joint CSO contribution to the European Commission Rule of Law Report (2026 and 2027), including new areas such as youth rights, rights of persons with disabilities, and social rights, as well as dissemination of submissions for further advocacy activities.
- Public debates: Organization of public debates on the findings of the EU Rule of Law Report, involving representatives of institutions, CSOs, the academic community, and media, focusing on identifying solutions and promoting public dialogue on the rule of law.
- Advocacy towards decision-makers: Conducting meetings with institutions and promoting thematic sessions in the Croatian Parliament to open dialogue, propose solutions, and strengthen cooperation between CSOs and public authorities.
- Capacity building for CSOs: Workshops and training for CSOs on the use of EU mechanisms, including one online regional exchange of experiences and development of competencies for effective advocacy.
- Work with youth: Organization of informative and educational events at universities (Zagreb, Osijek, Rijeka) and implementation of an online social media campaign to raise students' awareness of the rule of law and European values.

Expected impact:

The project will contribute to the joint action of civil society organizations in safeguarding the rule of law as one of the European Union's fundamental values by ensuring continuous watchdog activities, encouraging the further expansion of the CSO network, and supporting the development of CSO capacities for advocacy, the promotion of rule of law, fundamental rights, and democratic standards in Croatia.

Expected project results:

1. 13 CSOs have established sustainable mechanisms of cooperation and joint advocacy, increasing visibility and effectiveness in monitoring the implementation of rule of law

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standards: An informal network of CSOs working on the rule of law has strengthened its structure, expanded its membership, and become a relevant interlocutor in European and national processes related to the drafting and monitoring of the European Commission's Rule of Law reports.

2. Increased relevance and visibility of rule of law findings among institutions, academia, and young people: Young people develop greater awareness of and engagement with rule of law issues.
3. Strengthened capacities of CSOs to use the EU Rule of Law Mechanism in advocacy work: CSOs in Croatia have enhanced their knowledge and skills to apply the rule of law framework in advocacy, including in underrepresented areas. Through experience exchange and good practice sharing with organizations from other countries, they contribute to joint proposals for improving the European Rule of Law Mechanism, thus strengthening the international visibility and credibility of the network.

Target groups and final beneficiaries:

Primary target groups of the project are civil society organizations (CSOs, members of the Informal Network for the Rule of Law, including those working on human rights, youth, women's rights, and media freedom) and young people, engaged through university workshops and a campaign, where their issues will be mapped and advocated for. Secondary target groups are decision-makers at the national and EU level (ministries, European Commission) and the media, serving as a channel to disseminate campaign messages and foster discussions. Final beneficiaries of the project are all citizens of Croatia, particularly vulnerable groups (youth, women, minorities), who will benefit from stronger rule of law, better implementation of EU recommendations, and the protection of fundamental rights through systemic changes.