

Some Frequently Asked Questions about the Balkan Incentive Fund for Culture

What does the BIFC mean by ‘cultural’?

A cultural project can be a variety of things: we support the creation of artistic work, media projects or cultural policy development as well as capacity building of cultural operators or international collaboration of arts managers, et cetera. We like to see projects that are involving people with different backgrounds (ethnic, religious, national or otherwise), but they should also relate strongly to artistic/cultural expression (theatre, visual arts, literature, et cetera).

What does the BIFC mean by ‘cooperation’?

Collaboration/Cooperation for us should be something that goes beyond merely the hosting of foreign work, a project partner’s attendance at an event, or a financial contribution to the project. We are looking for projects which involve different cultural organisations working together in the planning, development and realization of the project. The collaboration aspect is one of the most important factors on which projects are being selected.

Are there any forms of cooperation which the BIFC is not likely to support?

We do not usually support bilateral projects based primarily on well-established patterns of collaboration. National institutions are frequently active in this field.

BIFC does not support the operating costs or regular activities of cultural organisations, but only specific actions that can be considered a project.

Events that are focused only on the presentation of culture are not very likely to be supported.

See also our list of project categories that are not eligible for support.

What does the BIFC mean by ‘Balkan’?

The Balkan Incentive Fund for Culture is specifically aimed at cultural cooperation projects by organisations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo/a, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Of course cooperation with organisations outside these countries will not be excluded. As the BIFC aims to improve the cultural infrastructure in the Balkan region specifically, we think this will be accomplished in the best way when non-Balkan partners are included as partners, and one of the Balkan organisations will be the main applicant. In exceptional cases organisations from other European countries can also be supported, when the project would greatly benefit cultural development in the above mentioned countries.

Can local or regional projects with no official partners be eligible if the projects are relevant to the BIFC’s interests?

No – this would only occur if the local funding situation was so extreme that it prohibited any development in the cultural sector. Even in such cases, priority would be given to projects that reflect at least some kind of cooperation with organisations or individuals from neighbouring regions.

How many different countries should be represented in each project?

There is no specific requirement regarding the number of countries that should be represented. What we like to see is evidence of genuine cross-border collaboration in all stages of the project – planning, development and implementation. We are not interested in superficial consortia built for fundraising purposes.

Regional and smaller-scale projects are as welcome as pan-European collaborations. However, we will not usually award grants to local or bilateral projects that could be supported through national or regional funds.

Can an applicant apply more than once per deadline?

Applicants can only apply once as leading applicant and once as partner organisation in another project. This means that one applicant may be involved in two different projects per deadline.

If BIFC has supported a project of my organisation already, can I apply for another one?

Usually we do not support the same organisations more than once in a period of 18 months. Before you apply with a new project, make sure the previous one has been finalised administratively by the Grants department (meaning that the final reports have been processed).

Are pan-European collaborations of interest to the BIFC?

Definitely, as long as they are developed through a bottom-up approach and are based on genuine, mutually beneficial partnerships. But for projects with a scope reaching far beyond the Balkan region it would probably be more appropriate to apply for the ECF Grants Programme.

Do we give priority to any particular discipline or art form?

No, as long as the project fits in with our eligibility criteria and corresponds to all requirements listed in the Grants Guidelines, we are open to most disciplines and art forms. However, we are particularly interested in cross-disciplinary projects and the breaking down of traditional or specialist 'ghettos'. Please look at our website gallery and lists of projects supported for examples of grants awarded in recent years.

What is this rhiz.eu website and how this it relate to BIFC?

Rhiz.eu is an intercultural meeting place developed to give its members an easy and fun environment for communicating and collaborating with each other. It was created by the ECF, one of the founders of the BIFC. Rhiz.eu is a trans-European project that aims to be an interesting artistic project in itself while acting as a bridge between communities. We expect to gather loads of profiles, stories, project info – and to have vivid discussions.

Some tips when filling out the application form

General

The form we use is meant for a wide variety of projects, which means that not all questions are equally relevant for all categories. For example, not all projects can expect to have a big political impact, and the distinction between target group and audience is not always applicable. But please take every question seriously, and think about how it relates to the project you are proposing.

Partners

Like we mentioned in the FAQ, partnership for BIFC is about genuine cooperation in the execution of the project. Please only mention partners that are involved in the execution; cofinancers can be mentioned in the budget section. If you have more than three partners, please mention the three most important ones in section 1.e, the other ones can be brought up in section 6.b.

Summary

Use this space to explain clearly what you will actually be doing, and don't only express the good intentions you have. It may sound silly, but we actually see a lot of application forms where people forget to mention what the actions of the project really consist of, losing themselves in descriptions of goals, intentions and other more or less abstract notions. There is plenty of opportunity for this in other sections of the application form.

Expertise

We like to see who the key people of the execution of the project are, and why they are suited for the job (experience, training, expertise). Just mentioning that the people involved in the project are good is not sufficient: we like to understand why you think so.

Budget

1. Expenditure

- Make sure that you show what you based the figures mentioned on. For example, if you mention travel costs, show how the estimated cost relates to the expected number of people travelling and the expected cost per person.
- Of course the costs mentioned have to relate to the activities you are going to undertake. Just using the categories of costs we mention in the form with some abstract numbers is not sufficient, we really want to gain insight in how you plan to spend the money.
- We want to see the expenditure for the entire project, not only the amount you would like BIFC to contribute.
- If the complexity of the project can not be expressed in the simple budget format we use in the form, please fill in a simplified version of the expenditure in the application form following our format and contact the grants administrator how to transfer the detailed budgetary information.

2. Income

- Make sure the total amount of funding you expect equals the total expenditure you have mentioned.
- Indicate clearly for each funding source whether it has been secured already (the funder has agreed to contribute) or whether it is requested only (the decision on the funding request is not yet taken).
- We think it is very important that each project shows a certain level of local commitment (be it financial or in-kind support), and is not solely dependent on international sources.