

Montenegro 2026

From Commitment to Delivery

Working Session IV - Pipeline Development

Pipeline 6: Governance, Democracy, Citizenship & Inclusion, and Fiscal Reform

Bozina Stesevic *Program Manager, ADP-Zid*

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The political backdrop - why this pipeline is timely

Two EU strategies adopted on 12 November 2025 reset the funding environment for everything in this pipeline.

POLICY 01

European Democracy Shield

Adopted 12 November 2025

Strategic framework to safeguard and strengthen democracy across the EU. Three pillars: (1) integrity of the information space; (2) free and fair elections, free and independent media; (3) societal resilience, citizens' participation and engagement.

FUNDING CONSEQUENCE

Drives the design of CERV calls, Cluster 2 democracy topics and Digital Europe information-integrity actions in 2026-2027.

POLICY 02

EU Strategy for Civil Society

COM(2025) 790 final - 12 November 2025

First EU-wide strategy explicitly aimed at strengthening civil society as a partner in EU policymaking. Recognises CSOs as essential to democratic life and as delivery actors for the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

FUNDING CONSEQUENCE

Reinforces direct funding to CSOs through CERV, IPA-CSF and Cluster 2 - and signals a stronger role for civil society in the next MFF.

EU funding instruments for governance, democracy, citizenship, inclusion and rights have just been re-anchored. The 2026-2027 calls are the first cycle to fully reflect this.

Four EU-managed channels for this pipeline

All directly accessible to Montenegrin actors today. We use them together, not as alternatives.

01 CERV	02 Horizon Europe Cluster 2	03 IPA III - CSF & Media	04 ESF+ / EaSI + Erasmus+
<p><i>Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values</i></p> <p>WHAT IT FUNDS</p> <p>Citizens' engagement, equality, rights, EU values, fight against violence.</p> <p>WHO APPLIES</p> <p>CSOs, municipalities, equality bodies, public authorities.</p>	<p><i>Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society (R&I)</i></p> <p>WHAT IT FUNDS</p> <p>Research-and-policy projects on democracy, governance, inclusion.</p> <p>WHO APPLIES</p> <p>Universities, policy institutes, ministries, NGOs as partners.</p>	<p><i>EU Civil Society Facility & Media Programme</i></p> <p>WHAT IT FUNDS</p> <p>Direct support to CSOs and independent media on rule of law, rights, democracy.</p> <p>WHO APPLIES</p> <p>CSOs (incl. ADP-ZID, CGO, MANS, CeMI, CEDEM), media outlets.</p>	<p><i>Employment & Social Innovation; Erasmus+ for civic learning</i></p> <p>WHAT IT FUNDS</p> <p>Inclusion, social innovation, citizenship education, youth participation.</p> <p>WHO APPLIES</p> <p>Ministry of Labour, Employment Agency, schools, universities, social-economy NGOs.</p>

Each channel covers a distinct slice of this pipeline. The pipeline works only when we use them together.

01. CERV - Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values

Work programme 2026-2027 (C(2025) 8076): 12 calls, ~ EUR 305 m. The 2026 round is the first to fully reflect the European Democracy Shield.

Priority 2026 calls for our pipeline

Civil Dialogue - citizens' engagement and participation (CERV-2026-CITIZENS-CIV)

Open - deadline 29 April 2026 (the day after this conference) - Total budget EUR 30 m. Three priorities: free, fair, inclusive elections; democratic participation in policymaking; countering disinformation/FIMI. Min. grant EUR 75 000.

Networks of Towns (CERV-2026-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT)

Open - call published 17 Dec 2025 - Total budget EUR 12 m. Min. grant EUR 100 000. Town twinning, civic events, European remembrance.

Promote gender equality (CERV-2026-GE)

Open - deadline 28 April 2026 - Total budget EUR 23 m. Work-life balance, pay transparency, women in decision-making, GBV response.

Daphne - fight gender-based violence and violence against children (CERV-2026-DAPHNE)

Forthcoming - H1 2026 - Approx. EUR 21 m in 2026 - the largest single CERV envelope. Direct CSO entry point.

Promote equality, fight racism, xenophobia, discrimination (CERV-2026-EQUAL)

Forthcoming - 2026 window - Anti-racism, LGBTIQ rights, Roma inclusion, diversity at work.

Rights of the child (CERV-2026-CHILD)

Forthcoming - 2026 window - Child participation in democratic life, child protection systems.

Realistic Montenegro role

Lead our own consortia. Daphne, Civil Dialogue, gender equality - Montenegrin CSOs apply as coordinators with at least one EU partner.

Anchor pool already in place. ADP-ZID, CGO, Juventas, CeMI, CEDEM, MANS, AYDM, plus municipalities (Kotor, Niksic).

Funding rate. Up to 90% (lump sum). Transnational projects of 2+ partners.

Why CERV is the centrepiece. It is the only EU programme designed end-to-end for citizens, equality, rights and democracy - with CSOs as the primary applicants.

02. Horizon Europe Cluster 2 - Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance

All 2026 democracy topics relevant to our pipeline. Single call opens 12 May 2026, deadline 23 Sep 2026. Total 2026 budget for the Democracy destination: ~ EUR 112.5 m.

DEMOCRACY destination - HORIZON-CL2-2026-01 (call opens 12 May, deadline 23 September 2026)

Tackling gender-based violence against politically active women and LGBTIQ people

DEMOCRACY-01 RIA - EUR 12 m - 3 projects

Direct CSO entry. Aligns with Daphne (CERV) and Equality strategies.

Sustainable paths to media viability

DEMOCRACY-04 IA - EUR 12 m - 3 projects

Independent media + research consortium.

Supporting post-conflict democracy and reconstruction

DEMOCRACY-07 RIA - EUR 12 m - 3 projects

Strong Western Balkans regional case-study angle.

Citizenship education as part of lifelong learning

DEMOCRACY-09 RIA - EUR 16 m - 4 projects

Education ministry, schools, CSOs. Largest envelope.

Government in transition - civil service of the future

DEMOCRACY-03 RIA - EUR 8 m - 2 projects

Direct fit with Public Administration Reform.

Research and Innovation Network for a Union of Equality

DEMOCRACY-05 CSA - EUR 4.5 m - 1 project

Smaller, easier entry. Networks academia + public bodies + CSOs.

Electoral integrity in the digital context

DEMOCRACY-08 RIA - EUR 12 m - 3 projects

Election observation, civic-tech, FIMI countering.

Digital and media literacy for democratic and civic resilience

DEMOCRACY-10 RIA - EUR 12 m - 3 projects

Aligns directly with European Democracy Shield.

Montenegro role: case-study country, regional partner in EU-led consortia. Anchors: UoM (Faculty of Law, Political Sciences), UDG, ISSP, Pan-European Union, ministries, leading CSOs.

Pipeline 7 | Governance, Democracy, Citizenship & Inclusion, Fiscal Reform | B. Stesevic, ADP-ZID

02. Horizon Europe Cluster 2 - Transformations, Partnership, 2027 outlook

Inclusion-focused TRANSFO topics, the Cluster 2 Partnership Co-fund (strategic anchor), and the 2027 round already programmed.

TRANSFO 2026 - inclusion topics

Tackling child poverty - access to ECEC

HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-03

Inclusion of disadvantaged children.

Implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-08

Inclusion, integration, health.

Long-term care policy and demographic shifts

HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-09

Social protection reform.

Strengthen Europe's social model and competitiveness

HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-02

Open topic - flexible scope.

Cluster 2 Partnership Co-fund

Co-funded European Partnership for Social Transformations and Resilience

HORIZON-CL2-2026-02-TRANSFO-01

Strategic anchor for 2026-2027.

EUR 60 m, single project, 7-year SSH agenda.

Deadline: 13 October 2026.

Format: co-funded partnership with EU Member States and associated countries (incl. Montenegro). Long-term agenda on social cohesion, inequality, transformations.

Why anchor: any project across this pipeline benefits from being able to point to a 7-year partnership commitment.

2027 round - already programmed

Advisory network on radicalisation, extremism, hate speech, polarisation

HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-01

CSA - EUR 3.5 m - 1 project. Smaller entry; regional CSO consortium fits.

Women's, LGBTIQ and minority rights - autocracy, conflict, geopolitical shifts

HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-02

RIA - EUR 12 m - 3 projects.

Student and family engagement for democratic/civic participation

HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-03

RIA - EUR 12 m - 3 projects.

Timing: 2026 single-stage submissions deadline 23 Sep 2026; partnership co-fund 13 Oct 2026; 2027 round opens 13 May 2027 with deadline 23 Sep 2027.

03. IPA III - Civil Society Facility & Media + Reform and Growth Facility

Multi-annual action plan for the Western Balkans 2026-2027 adopted on 24 July 2025. Designed for direct CSO and reform delivery in our region.

Civil Society Facility & Media Programme 2026-2027

Window 1 - Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights, Democracy.

Direct calls and sub-granting through intermediaries (incl. European Endowment for Democracy).

Window 2 - Good Governance, EU acquis alignment.

Public administration reform, statistics, anti-corruption track record.

Thematic priorities: good governance and anti-corruption; human rights and anti-discrimination; media freedom and counter-disinformation; Roma inclusion; gender equality; civic participation.

Format: regional CSO consortia across the six Western Balkans IPA beneficiaries, with sub-granting to grassroots level.

Anchor applicants: Leading CSOs - and regional partners.

Reform delivery framework - the fiscal-reform corridor

A

Reform and Growth Facility (2024-2027)

EUR 6 bn for the Western Balkans, conditional on the Reform Agenda. PFM, statistics, anti-corruption and rule of law are explicit conditions for disbursement - a delivery framework, not a call to apply.

B

SIGMA - EU4 Good Governance

Joint OECD-EU technical assistance for public administration reform. Direct support to ministries; CSOs and think tanks contribute as monitoring partners.

C

TAIEX & EU Integration Facility

Demand-driven peer assistance - short missions, study visits, workshops. Useful for early reform piloting and link-up with EU peer institutions.

04. ESF+/EaSI and Erasmus+

Inclusion, social innovation and civic learning - both directly accessible to Montenegrin actors today.

ESF+ / EaSI strand (direct EU management)

EaSI 2026 priorities

Social innovation for fair green and digital transition. Long-term unemployment - transfer of proven schemes. EURES cross-border mobility. Social-economy ecosystem development. Multi-annual support to social NGO networks at EU level.

ESF+ Social Innovation+ *(managed by ESFA, Lithuania)*

Transnational transfer and scaling of proven social innovations. Recent grants: EUR 1-3 m per project, 36 months. Open to non-EU IPA beneficiaries as partners.

Montenegrin track record: Modest in volume - but a real applicant base exists.

Erasmus+ 2026 (annual call cycle)

Why it matters here. Erasmus+ 2026 explicitly prioritises **Participation in democratic life** - civic engagement, media literacy, EU values - across all Key Actions.

Most relevant lines for this pipeline:

Jean Monnet Actions - EU studies, citizenship education, dialogue with civil society. Annual cycle (2027 round in Q1).

KA2 Cooperation Partnerships - cross-border projects on civic engagement, inclusion, media literacy.

KA3 European Youth Together - youth-led civic and democratic participation, focusing on under-represented groups.

Anchors: UoM, UDG (Jean Monnet); youth NGOs (KA3); CSOs and schools (KA2).

05. Digital Europe and LIFE - Montenegro is associated to both

Two further EU-managed programmes with topic-level fits for this pipeline. Information integrity (Democracy Shield deliverable) and inclusion adjacencies in LIFE.

Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)

Montenegro associated since 30 June 2023. Existing track: MONTEDIH.

DIGITAL-2026-BESTUSE-AWARENESS

Common Research Framework on Information Integrity

Open 21 Apr 2026 - deadline 1 Oct 2026. EUR 6 m, single proposal, 100% funding rate, 24-30 months. At least 60% of grant must be re-distributed via cascade funding to third parties. **Direct deliverable of the European Democracy Shield.**

DIGITAL-2026-BESTUSE-TECH-EDMO-09-HUBS

European Digital Media Observatory hubs

Total EUR 6 m, max EUR 750 000 per project, 18 months. Fact-checkers, researchers, media-literacy experts.

Targets: research institutions, civil society, fact-checking, technology providers, independent media.

LIFE Programme - Clean Energy Transition strand

Montenegro associated since 15 May 2025. LIFE 2026 budget EUR 601.5 m.

Adjacent topics for our pipeline

LIFE Governance sub-strands are environmental governance (not democracy/governance). The genuine adjacencies for this pipeline are in the Clean Energy Transition (CET) strand:

LIFE-2026-CET-ENERPOV

Alleviating household energy poverty in Europe. Capacity building for national, regional and local authorities and societal intermediaries to set up cross-sectoral coordination structures (energy, social, health, housing) - directly relevant for inclusion of vulnerable groups.

LIFE-2026-CET-ENERCOM

Facilitating cooperation among energy communities. Citizen engagement and participation in the clean-energy transition.

Multilevel climate and energy dialogue

Multi-stakeholder dialogues to deliver the Governance Regulation and post-2030 framework - citizen and stakeholder participation.

All deadlines: 22 September 2026.

Calendar of priority calls - the next 12 months

What is genuinely actionable between now and Q3 2027. Verify exact deadlines on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

When	Programme	Call / Topic	Best-fit Montenegro role	Status
28 Apr 2026	CERV	Promote gender equality (CERV-2026-GE)	Lead small consortium / partner in EU consortia	Open
29 Apr 2026	CERV	Civil Dialogue - citizens' engagement (CERV-2026-CITIZENS-CIV)	CSO lead - Civil Dialogue is our flagship 2026 entry	Open
12 May 2026	Horizon Europe Cluster 2	Single call opens - Democracy, Heritage, Transformations	Case-study country, partner in EU-led consortia	Opens
Sep 2026	CERV	Daphne (gender-based violence and violence against children)	CSO lead - large CERV envelope (~ EUR 21 m)	Forthcoming
H1 2026	CERV	Networks of Towns (CERV-2026-CITIZENS-TOWN-NT)	Municipalities lead - town twinning, civic events	Open
H2 2026	CERV	Equality (anti-racism, LGBTIQ, Roma); Rights of the Child	CSO partner or lead	Forthcoming
2026 (annual)	ESF+ / EaSI	Social Innovation, Long-term unemployment, EURES	Partner in EU consortia; ADP-ZID anchor	Recurring
22 Sep 2026	LIFE - CET strand	ENERPOV (energy poverty), ENERCOM (energy communities)	Municipalities, social NGOs, energy actors as partners	Deadline
23 Sep 2026	Horizon Europe Cluster 2	Single-stage submissions (DEMOCRACY, TRANSFO, HERITAGE)	Submit as partner in EU-led consortia	Deadline
1 Oct 2026	Digital Europe	BESTUSE-AWARENESS (info integrity); EDMO Hubs	Research/CSO/media partner; cascade-funding beneficiary	Deadline
13 Oct 2026	Horizon Europe Cluster 2	Partnership co-fund TRANSFO-01 (~ EUR 60 m)	Partner in 7-year SSH partnership	Deadline
2026-27 rolling	IPA III - CSF & Media	Regional CSO networks and Media Programme	Lead applicant - regional consortium	Programmed
Q1 2027	Erasmus+	Jean Monnet Actions; KA3 European Youth Together (annual)	UoM, UDG lead Jean Monnet; CSOs partner in KA3	Forthcoming
23 Sep 2027	Horizon Europe Cluster 2	2027 Democracy package (opens 13 May 2027)	Stronger consortia after 2026 case-studies	Forthcoming

Sources: Funding & Tenders Portal; EACEA; REA; CINEA; HaDEA; DG NEAR multi-annual action plan 2026-2027 (24 Jul 2025); CERV WP 2026-2027 (C(2025) 8076); LIFE WP (C(2025) 955).

Cornerstones to secure - for the follow-up

Four asks to leave the room with - so this pipeline can move into proposals after the conference.

1

Confirm the priority call set

CERV (Civil Dialogue, Daphne, Gender Equality, Networks of Towns); Cluster 2 DEMOCRACY-03/04/09/10 and TRANSFO-01; IPA-CSF regional networks; EaSI social innovation; Erasmus+ Jean Monnet.

2

Nominate anchor actors per pathway

One named lead institution per pathway. Without an owner, a pipeline is a brochure.

3

Confirm the first participant pool

Ministries, agencies, CSOs, universities, media, municipalities - actors already absorbing EU funds today.

4

Match calls to deadlines

29 April (CERV Civil Dialogue), 12 May (Cluster 2 opens), 23 Sep and 13 Oct 2026 (Cluster 2 deadlines). Eight follow-up workshops convert this map into proposals.

Path to action.