



## **Common Challenges – Shared Solutions**

Call no. **2018-01** (Call ID)

**EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Regional Cooperation**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Publication date: 08.05.2018

## DISCLAIMER

These questions and answers are provided for clarification purposes and are not intended to constitute a corrigendum to the call for proposals or the concept note template.

Please note that in the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Fund Operator (FO) cannot give a prior opinion on eligibility, partnership composition and/or project description.

## ELIGIBILITY AND PARTNERSHIP

### 1. Can a lead partner be a beneficiary partner in another project consortium?

An eligible entity can be a member in only one consortium regardless of whether this entity participates as lead or beneficiary partner. Only expertise partners may participate in more than one consortium.

### 2. What will happen if an entity which is a beneficiary partner in one consortium at the same time submits a concept note as a member of another consortium?

A beneficiary partner may not participate in other project consortia under this call (cf the call for proposals). Please check this issue with the proposed partners in the consortium before submitting the concept note. If an entity has participated in more than one concept note (with the exception of expertise partners who can participate in more than one concept note), all concept notes involved will be rejected.

### 3. How should we interpret the information that projects shall involve entities from at least three countries, including at least two Beneficiary States?

The consortium must consist of minimum three countries. At least three eligible entities from three different eligible countries listed in the call for proposals shall be involved. Each consortium must include **one lead partner from a Beneficiary State** (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) and **at least two beneficiary partners of which at least one must be from a Beneficiary State. The other may be from a Beneficiary State or from one of the following countries:** Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

### 4. Is there a template for partnership agreements to be given by the Fund Operator or shall we create such an agreement by ourselves?

The template partnership agreement will be made available to the shortlisted applicants when the full proposal phase is opened. A declaration signed by all project partners is necessary in the concept note phase. The template of the 'declaration related to Project Consortium composition' is available in the EGREG system upon registration.

### 5. Is the Fund Operator or Financial Mechanism Office planning to help/assist applicants in finding a beneficiary partner and building a proper consortium?

The Fund Operator provides the applicants with an on-line partner search tool, available at the Fund Operator's website: <http://ecorys.pl/#eeagrants>

### 6. Is it correct to understand that an expertise partner can be an entity established only in a non-eligible EU Member State, Donor State or an international organisation? Does it mean that the expertise or good practise acquired in one of the Beneficiary States cannot be transferred to another Beneficiary State within this project (e.g. good practise in Hungary adapted and transferred to e.g. Poland or Estonia)?

It is correct that an expertise partner can only be an international organisation or an eligible entity established in a Donor State or in a non-eligible EU Member State. Transfer of know-how and good practice does not require the presence of an expertise partner. In the example cited, the Hungarian organisation may be a beneficiary or lead partner in the project.

**7. What is the definition of a non-eligible EU Member State?**

The non-eligible EU Member States are those EU Member States which are not Beneficiary States of the EEA and Norway Grants. These are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

**8. How we can be sure that the institution shall be recognised as a NGO in this call? Please provide us with a definition.**

Non-governmental organisation: a non-profit voluntary organisation established as a legal entity, having a non-commercial purpose, independent of local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organisations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered NGOs.

**9. What is the definition of a research organisations under this call?**

Research Organisation means an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer.

**10. In this call for proposal the same expertise partner may participate in multiple project consortia if it is an international organisation or a Donor State entity. In addition, by approval of the Financial Mechanism Committee (FMC), an entity established in a Donor State or an international organisation may have the role of lead partner provided that the other requirements in the call are satisfied. Can you please explain?**

Various consortia may benefit from one expertise partner's know-how. It is possible to select an international organisation or a partner from the Donor States as a leader of the consortium. Such consortium construction shall be deemed eligible only upon FMC's consent, and is only meant for exceptional cases. The purpose of the fund is to support regional cooperation among beneficiary states, with an opening also for including neighbouring countries. Therefore, the main rule, and what is encouraged, is that the lead partner should be an entity in a beneficiary state. As many project ideas are expected, few exceptions will most likely be made. Other requirements indicated above refer to the number and countries of consortium members.

**11. a) Our institution is a separate legal entity from our university, and we have separate VAT codes. All institutions at our university are separate legal entities with separate VAT. Can they apply as a separate legal entities under this call? Yes, see explanation below.**

**b) Our university is one institution with multiple different faculties where the different faculties all want to submit proposals to EEA grants as beneficiary partners or lead partners. As institution, the university has only one VAT number, but different faculties and one rector. Can we participate in more than one project as beneficiary partner or lead partner? No, see explanation below.**

**c) Can our faculty only submit one concept note as beneficiary partner or lead partner under this call? Yes, see explanation below.**

Each organisation/separate legal entity can only participate in one project consortium. Each organisation/separate legal entity can only submit one concept note as Beneficiary partner or Lead partner. There is an exception for expertise partners and international organisations, which can participate in multiple project consortia. The entity in question must prove that it constitutes a separate legal entity. As a minimum, it must be proved that the entity has separate legal personality (separate registration documents/charters/VAT numbers etc.).

**12. Are entities from Kosovo eligible for participation in this call for proposals?**

The list of eligible entities and countries is indicated in the call for proposals. The eligible countries are specified in the Call for Proposals and limited to land-bordering countries with the EEA and Norway Grants EU -Beneficiary States for 2014-2021. Kosovo is not among them. International organisations from Kosovo may participate as expertise partners by invitation from the consortium, but target groups cannot benefit or activities in Kosovo would not be eligible for funding or contributions from this Fund.

**13. Are the EEA and Norway Grants programmes 2014-2021 planning Calls for Proposals for Ukraine since this Fund in its Call for Proposals have Ukraine as a possible beneficiary partner?**

In the call for this Fund, Ukraine can participate as a beneficiary partner by invitation of the consortium, but the country is not among the Beneficiary partners of the EEA and Norway Grants Programmes for 2014-2021. For more information on the EEA and Norway Grants programmes or funds please visit the website: <https://eeagrants.org>.

**14. As per call for proposal independent experts from the Donor States may perform the role of expertise partners provided they are organised as a registered business owned by one individual where the owner is personally responsible for any debts or liabilities incurred by the business and pays personal income tax on the business profits. How should we understand this? Can we ask for a thorough explanation? Does it mean that those experts do not need to be a legal entity?**

All project partners including expertise partners need to have a legal personality. In the Donor States sole proprietorships are registered as a legal entity (cf call for proposals).

**15. Our non-profit organization based in Amsterdam, is an association uniting almost 400 entities in 45 countries;**

**a) Are we eligible to apply for the grant?** No, only entities in the 15 Beneficiary States of the EEA and Norway Grants may be lead partners and apply for funding. However, you may be eligible as an expertise partner in a project consortium.

**b) Can one of our members in an eligible country apply and included one of our entities in one of the EU Member States as expertise partner?** Yes, if your member is an eligible entity from a Beneficiary States of the EEA and Norway Grants they may apply for project funding as lead partner or beneficiary partner. Members from other EU Member States may be eligible as expertise partners.

The fund operator cannot give a prior opinion on eligibility, partnership composition and/or project description. The eligibility of entities is specified in the call for proposals. Additionally, entities belonging to the same association can individually participate in the same consortium with different partner status. Please see also answer to question 11.

**16. Can the trade unions apply in this call?**

It is expected that the Applicant is aware of its legal status. In this call trade unions are considered as a private entity and need to comply with the terms in the call.

**17. How is the term 'international organisation' to be understood in order to be eligible as expertise partners in this call?**

The reference to International organisations is generic and usually refer to an organisation with a transnational focus, membership or presence. As example it can be an International Non-Governmental organisation (INGO), Intergovernmental organisation (IGOs), international or regional Think Tank etc. It is the applicant/partner's responsibility to prove their status as international organisation. The FO may request the entities submitting the Concept Note as international organisations to provide documents that prove their status.

**18. In the Concept Note there is the field "b. Experience with European transnational or cross border programmes and/or EEA/Norway Grants: If applicable, list relevant transnational or regional programmes and/or EEA/Norway Grants programme(s)/project(s) and years of implementation" that applies both to the Lead**

**and the Beneficiary Partners. One of the co-owners of the best practice we want to replicate does not have relevant experience will this exclude our application?**

There are no requirements of previous experience with the EEA or Norway Grants in this call. The selection criteria are indicated in chapter 6 of the Call for Proposals.

- 19. As an international secretariat located in an EU Member State, our organisation is illegible for receiving funding from EEA and Norway Grants. However, as an intergovernmental agency with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland as Member States, and with Hungary and Ukraine as Observer States, we would like to participate as a lead partner or an expert partner facilitating in a multi-later project and ask if we in such a role are eligible for funding.**

The question is defined in the call text page 8 Article 2 Eligible consortia, bullet point 3. The FO may request the entities submitting the Concept Note as international organisation to provide documents that prove such status. In addition, all terms in the call need to be equally fulfilled. An intergovernmental agency can participate in the consortia as Expertise Partner, either as an international organisation or as an entity established in an EU member state (registered entity). As an intergovernmental agency the organisation might apply as Lead Partner provided that the other requirements for the consortia are satisfied. The exception as lead partner is for Donor State entities and international organisations and require an acceptance from FMC. We suggest including a subsidiary lead partner to be included in the Concept note to avoid decline due to non-acceptance by the Donors of the international organisation. The international organisation may be subsidiary included as expertise partner or beneficiary partner if all other criteria are met.

- 20. We have a consortium interested in participating in the call for proposals but due to their inexperience and lack of resources, they want to have a consultant company as coordinator in order to manage the project. Is this acceptable/eligible?**

According to the Call for Proposals "All project partners must be actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of the project, i.e. the partnership must be substantiated and sustainable within the consortium." Furthermore, "The nature of legal relationships between the lead partner and the other partners must not rest upon service provision only; i.e. the cooperation is not of a supplier-customer character and the consortium must not be of a commercial character." Therefore, a consultancy firm providing project management services cannot be included as a project partner. Please note that the project coordination is expected to be carried out by the lead partner, however this does not prevent the sub-contracting of specific tasks (cf section 2.2 of CfP).

- 21. We are a Beneficiary State of the EEA and Norway Grants and intend to submit a project proposal for a Data Protection awareness campaign and training to our police officers on the subject. Do this call cover such a project with the following components:**

- **Capacity Building to our local police officers on the new Data Protection Directive coming into force this month.**
- **Outreach materials**
- **Upgrade of our website**
- **Sharing of best practices with countries with data protection expertise**

The EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Regional Cooperation are asking for projects addressing common European challenges through regional cross-border and transnational cooperation across the priority sectors of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021. A project must consist of a consortium, be regional cross-border or transnational in nature and involve multiple partners and activities in at least three of the eligible countries listed in the call. There will not be given any prior evaluation of concept ideas. Any project must fulfil all application criteria and comply to the two-step process listed in the call.

**22. We are interested in applying to the EEA and Norway grants fund for regional cooperation as Expertise Partner, together with some of our members (lead partners and beneficiary partners) and would like to ask you some questions:**

**a) Could you confirm that we could benefit from the grant as Expertise Partner?** Please, in the interest of equal treatment of applicants the Fund Operator (FO) cannot give a prior opinion on eligibility, partnership composition or project description. It is expected of the applicants to make sure they meet the eligibility requirements set in the Call for Proposals.

**b) In which way does the Expertise Partner benefit from the grant?** Please take special note of section 2.1. in the call text regarding the role of expertise partners.

**c) We are a European federation composed of several national organisations. Would it be possible to be allowed by the FMC, as an exceptional case, to be lead Partner?** As for the role of lead partner it is possible to select an international organisation or a partner from the Donor States as a leader of the consortium if all other criteria in the call is met. Such consortium construction shall be deemed eligible only upon FMC's consent after the CN submission.

**23. What is the research priorities in this call, e.g. would a project focusing on health related to basic and applied research on breast cancer get priority by the Donors?**

In the interest of equal treatment of applicants, the Fund Operator (FO) cannot give a prior opinion on eligibility, partnership composition or project description. The EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Regional Cooperation are asking for projects addressing common European challenges through regional cross-border and transnational cooperation across all the priority sectors of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021. No specific priority area is announced in this call. There will not be given any prior evaluation of concept ideas. Any project must fulfil all application criteria and comply to the two-step process listed in the call.

## CONCEPT NOTE SUBMISSION

**1. If we decide to combine several priority sectors in our concept note, should we choose and indicate which one is the 'main one'?**

The applicants may combine several priority sectors in their concept note. If one of the sectors is considered by the applicant as the main one, this should be indicated in point 1.2 Project summary.

**2. What kind of activities are eligible under priority sector "Culture, civil society, good governance and fundamental rights"?**

Focus areas of these and remaining priority sectors are described in the annex to the call for proposals. Please also see *Priority sectors and programme areas EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021* referred to in the call text that is available here: <https://eeagrants.org/regionalcooperation>.

**3. In other grant programs which we know, Applicants, together with their grant applications, are required to submit financial documents such as the Applicant's balance sheet or profit and loss account. We cannot see such requirements in your Fund. Does it mean that the financial and economic situation of the Applicants shall not be verified?**

This application process has a two-step application procedure. For this first step, a concept note template is required to be submitted. When registered in the EGREG system, access to the template is given and the declarations related to project consortium composition can be filled in - no other documents are required at this stage.

Shortlisted applicants (through the Lead Partners) invited to submit a full proposal for the second step will have to provide full financial and legal documentation and information.

Fund operated by:



#### 4. Who will evaluate the concept proposals?

##### **Will external independent reviewers be included to review scientific aspects of the proposals?**

The Fund Operator is responsible for assessment against administrative and eligibility criteria. The Financial Mechanism Office is responsible for assessment against selection criteria. The Concept Notes shall be evaluated and decided internally by the Donors.

#### 5. Shortlisted applicants (through the Lead Partners) invited to submit a full proposal for the second step will have to provide full financial and legal documentation and information: How many years will be the requested?

The detail of information shall be disclosed to shortlisted applicants and the documentation requested may depend on the legal status of specific entities.

## PROJECT IDEA

#### 1. What is the maximum and minimum allowed project duration?

Expenditures incurred by the project partners shall be eligible as of the date on which the FMC decides to award the project grant, while the final date for eligibility of expenditures for projects is 30 April 2024 at the latest. The minimum duration should be reasonable and sufficient for implementation of the planned activities.

#### 2. Where are the evaluation grid and the scoring chart published?

**According to art. 7.3.2. (d) from EEA Regulation, the call for proposals "shall contain detailed selection criteria as well as a scoring chart" and we cannot identify this information in the published Call for proposal.**

The Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 does not apply to this Fund. The selection criteria for the concept note phase are described in the Call for Proposals (section 6.1).

## BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. Are there any limits regarding the budget per project partner, including expertise partners?

There is no limit set per project partner. The budget should be justified, reflect the amount/number of tasks the partner is involved in and consist of costs proportionate and necessary for the project implementation.

#### 2. The minimum grant amount is EUR 1 million but what is the maximum?

There is no maximum grant amount per project. However, please note that the total allocation for this call for proposals is 15 million EUR. In line with the requirements foreseen in the call for proposals, costs included under the indicative project budget should be proportionate and necessary as well as complying with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

#### 3. What is the payment model for selected projects?

The payment system under the Fund consist of two alternative ways: 1) reimbursement of costs incurred or 2) a model including an advance payment. Under point 2), the lead partner will be required to provide a corresponding financial guarantee that will cover the total amount of the advance payment. Templates of contractual documents will be available to shortlisted applicants before submission of the Full Proposal.

#### 4. a) Are investments (hard measures) at all eligible under the EEA and Norway Grants Regional Cooperation Fund in the current call?

Hard measures may be eligible. Project ideas need to be in alignment with the objectives and the criteria of the call and are further expected to contribute to knowledge sharing, development of best practice and capacity building addressing common European challenges.

The FO cannot give prior opinion on eligibility in the interest of equal treatment of applicants.

**b) If investments (hard measures) are eligible, would 60% of the total project budget dedicated to investments be acceptable?**

Please see question a) of this section. No prior opinion on eligibility can be given in the Q&A.

**5. Are costs for establishment and operation of a transnational financial instrument (equity instrument) eligible under the current call? If yes, under which eligible costs are they to be filed?**

Please note that neither financial instruments nor sub-granting are eligible under this call for proposals.

**6. Under focus area no. 3 - financial support/ scholarships offered to pupils under educational programs developed inside the project are considered eligible expense?**

Individual scholarship is to be considered not eligible, as it is related to financial support to third parties. Please see answer to Q5 above.

**7. Could you please clarify if in case of the project proposal submitted by trade unions, is the total own contribution 15%, or is it calculated separately for each partner? I am wondering if the expertise partners can cover its own contribution.**

According to rules specified in the call for proposals, the co-financing is calculated for each project partner separately, as the value of co-financing is dependent on the partner's status. The grant rate per project is calculated as average based on co-financing declared by project partners.

**8. The "Project co-financing" section of the guidelines says that the project grant rate for any expertise partners from the Donor States will be up to 100% of their eligible expenditures. What would be the project grant rate for expertise partners established in a non-eligible EU Member State or international organisations?**

The grant rate of expertise partners which are not established in a Donor State can be as follows:

- Expertise partners that have the status of non-governmental organisation: can have up to 90% of their eligible expenditures, and up to 50% of the required co-financing may take the form of in-kind contributions in the form of voluntary work;
- Expertise partners that have the status of universities or research organisations: can have up to 90% of their eligible expenditures;
- Expertise partners that have the status of neither NGOs, nor universities, nor research organisations: up to 85% of their eligible expenditures.

Please also see answer to Q7 above.

**9. Is renting of premises eligible?**

Renting a space necessary for the project implementation may be an eligible cost, however costs related to purchase of real estate shall not normally be considered eligible.

**We are three NGOs from Slovakia, Romania and Norway who are planning to apply for the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Regional Cooperation. In order to do so and to strengthen our common efforts, we would like to get financial support for a two days preparatory meeting that we plan to have either May or June. Our questions are:**

- can one of our organizations apply for such financial support?
- is an upper limit to access the funds?
- are travel costs included?
- if there is any template that we should use, can we get it?

Please note that such support is not foreseen at the concept note stage.



**10. May Norwegian research institutions (universities, colleges and research institutes) get 90 percent coverage of their eligible expenditures (s. 12, point 4.1)? Or is this only the case for the research institutions of the Beneficiary States? What is meant by "Any expertise partners from the Donor States: up to 100% of their eligible expenditures" (s. 12, point 4.1). Is this including Norwegian research institutions?**

As indicated in the call for proposals, section 4.1, an expertise partner from Donor States (i.e. Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), pending of its legal status, can request a grant amount of up to 100% of its eligible costs.

## FUND OPERATOR'S SUPPORT

### 1. Is there any Guidelines for applicants?

The Call for proposals – concept note phase is published here: <https://eeagrants.org/regionalcooperation>.

The applicants may access various tutorials published by the Fund Operator as well as a manual for filling in the Concept Note in the EGREG system under this link: <https://www.egregsystem.info/regionalcooperation/>. The offline template for the concept note is also available under the above indicated link. No further information and/or pre-acceptance or opinion on project proposals will be provided by the FO.

### 2. Can we ask for a face to face meeting with the FO's experts in one of the Information Units?

At the concept note phase, the FO does not provide the applicants with individual, face to face, consultations. Questions related to this call for proposals may be sent electronically by e-mail to [eeagrants@ecorys.com](mailto:eeagrants@ecorys.com) and answers will be published on the webpage of the Fund, <http://eeagrants.org/regionalcooperation>. Applicants may also call one of the three Hub Information Units, where basic information on the call for proposals is provided. To ensure equal treatment, all questions registered and answers will be published for the knowledge of any other applicants in this FAQ tool. No specific information on a specific topic will be provided in writing or verbally from the FO Hubs.

### 3. Who is responsible for all the answers: the Fund Operator or the Financial Mechanism Office?

All answers published on the Fund's website (<https://eeagrants.org/regionalcooperation>) are prepared jointly by the Fund Operator and the Financial Mechanism Office. The last up-date of Q&As is foreseen for 20th June 2018.

### 4. What is the timeframe for Fund Operator's support?

The Fund Operator shall answer the phone calls to info lines until Friday, 29th June 2018, by 4 p.m. All questions via e-mail should be submitted by Sunday, 10th June 2018. The FO cannot guarantee that questions asked later shall be provided with an answer. The IT support is available to applicants by Friday, 29th June 2018, end of business day. Please note that standard response time for EGREG helpdesk is 2 working days.

### 5. Is registration in the system mandatory?

Yes. It is required that all partners, regardless of their role assumed in the project (lead, beneficiary, expertise), are registered in EGREG system prior to submission of the Concept Note. Each entity (see 'Eligibility and Partnership') can be registered only once and with one contact person.

It is highly recommended that registration forms are completed by the partners before Wednesday, 20th June 2018, as the completion of registration requires Fund Operator's approval.