

CALL FOR PROPOSALS – SMALL GRANT SCHEME
INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, UPPER-SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND
PRIVATE SECTOR

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND SMES PROGRAMME

EEA GRANTS 2014 – 2021

SLOVAKIA

1. BASIC DATA AND CONDITIONS

The objective of this Call is to encourage international mobility between higher education institutions (HEIs), upper-secondary schools and enterprises in Slovakia and the Donor states (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) to enhance both the quality and relevance of education and training in Slovakia, mainly in the focus areas of *Green Industry Innovation* and *Welfare and Ambient Assisted Living technologies*. The objective of the Programme area “Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship” is enhanced human capital and knowledge base in Slovakia.

Date of Call launching	13 April 2022
Date of Call closure:	30 June 2022, 23:59 CEST
Call Code:	BIN SGS03
Programme outcome:	Education and Employment potential enhanced in Slovakia in Green Industry Innovation and Welfare and Ambient Assisted Living Technologies
Programme output:	International mobility supported
Total allocation:	1 058 824 €
Maximum grant to be applied for:	EUR 200 000
Minimum grant to be applied for:	EUR 5 000
Co-financing:	The grant will cover up to 100% of eligible project expenses. Co-financing is not required.
Announced by:	Research Agency
Donor Programme Partners (DPPs):	Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills/HK-dir (Norway) (<i>till 30 June 2021 known as Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education/DIKU</i>), National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA, Liechtenstein), Innovation Norway (IN, Norway)
Eligible applicants:	Higher education institutions ¹ and upper-secondary schools ² in Slovakia.
Eligible partners:	1. Higher education institutions and upper-secondary schools in Slovakia, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway. For the purpose of this Call, Liechtenstein

¹ Higher education institution (in Slovakia) – legal person established according to Act No. 131/2002 and about modification and amendment of respective acts (§ 2, par. 2, a), b), c)).

² Upper-secondary school (in Slovakia) – legal person established according to Act No. 245/2008 on Upbringing and Education and about modification and amendment of respective acts (§ 32). The eligible applicants have to be enlisted in the official school registry of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

	<p>can be represented also by VET institutions in Switzerland with a specific cooperation agreement with Liechtenstein.</p> <p>2. Private enterprises established as legal persons in Slovakia or in the Donor States are eligible partners, however they cannot receive any financial contribution from the Programme.</p>
Further conditions:	<p><u>Mandatory conditions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant shall select at least one indicator from outcome indicators and two indicators from output indicators listed in Article 2 of this Call. • The applicant must have at least one and max. three project partners • . At least one partner must come from the Donor states. • Project implementation shall not exceed 16 months and must be completed by latest April 30, 2024. The mobility within the project shall not exceed 12 months. <p><u>Mandatory attachments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed Partnership statement (Annex III of this Call), letter of intent or other similar document proving the partner's interest in participating in the project. The document should be signed and submitted as a scanned version. • Signed Declaration of the Applicant (Annex VI of the Call), • Signed Declaration of the Partner³ (Annex VII of the Call), • Copy of the cooperation agreement with Liechtenstein if the partner is a VET institution from Switzerland.
Geographical area	All regions of the Slovak Republic are eligible.
Funding source(s):	EEA Financial Mechanism (EEA FM) and State Budget of the Slovak Republic.

2. EXPECTATIONS AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Projects are expected to strengthen the bilateral cooperation between Slovakia and the Donor states using international mobility as a tool for increasing skills and knowledge building and improving the general quality of education in Slovakia, mainly in the focus areas of *Green Industry Innovation* and *Welfare and Ambient Assisted Living technologies*. Higher number of people who remain employed in the focus areas after the mobility or apprenticeships, better skills, higher number of education institutions offering new courses and improved curricula in the focus areas of the Programme is expected to be achieved.

Projects may enhance students work-related skills and thus assist HEIs/upper secondary schools in becoming more responsive to the needs of the labour market and offer teachers, trainers and administrative staff an opportunity for professional development in an international context. Projects can enhance the quality and attractiveness of education in the focus areas (green industry innovation, welfare and ambient assisted living) for example by inclusion of experts from the non-academic sphere in the teaching process, creating closer connections between HEIs and the private sector, increasing the relevance of curricula to ensure a closer relationship between the educational offer and the world of work and career development of researchers in higher education.

Projects shall contribute to the Programme's objective *Increased value creation and sustainable growth* and to Programme Outcome 2 defined as *Education and Employment potential enhanced in Slovakia in Green Industry Innovation and Welfare Technology and Ambient Assisted Living Technologies*. The project shall target the Programme Output 2.1 - *International mobility supported*.

³ Relevant for partner/s with financial participation.

The applicants shall choose and set target values for **at least one indicator from outcome indicators and two indicators from output indicators from the list below:**

Outcome level:

1. Number of education institutions offering new courses/modules in environmental technologies,
2. Number of people who remain working in the chosen sector after mobility (disaggregated by gender, level of education, sector),
3. Percentage of participants who declare improved skills and competencies.

Output level:

4. Number of apprenticeships supported between Donor states and Slovakia in SMEs⁴ or other businesses (disaggregated by gender),
5. Number of staff from Slovakia in exchanges (disaggregated by donor state, gender and type of exchange),
6. Number of staff from Donor states in exchanges (disaggregated by donor state, gender and type of exchange),
7. Number of students from Slovakia in exchanges (disaggregated by donor state, gender and type of exchange),
8. Number of students from Donor states in exchanges (disaggregated by donor states, gender type of exchange).

The full Results Framework of the Programme is listed in the [Annex I to the Programme Agreement](#) concluded between Slovakia and the Donor States. It is important to select indicators that are relevant with regard to the activities of the project, to Programme focus areas and to set target values that are attainable.

3. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The Programme targets both individuals and institutions, including learners, trainers and teachers of upper-secondary schools and administrative staff, learners and PhD. students and young scientists from higher education institutions. Learners and/or staff with special needs (i.e. with disabilities) can have support of accompanying person in mobility activity in order to ensure their protection. There is a special financial support for accompanying persons and assistance.

International mobility between higher education institutions, upper-secondary schools and enterprises in Slovakia and Donor states may take the form of:

- new forms of mobility such as virtual mobility, distance and blended learning,
- mobility projects that include on-line lectures of teachers and professionals from Slovakia and the Donor States on certain topics;
- virtual or augmented reality (VR/AR) powered solutions to enrich learning experiences and innovate learning content generation,
- gamification, game-based learning applications and other solutions,
- online capacity-building and trainings for learners, academic and administrative staff,
- mobility projects that include (virtual) apprenticeships activities in VET SMEs/large enterprises,
- mobility of teachers, trainers and administrative staff,
- student mobility for work placements (traineeships),
- study and research visits at partner HEIs and SMEs/enterprises,
- mobility of PhD. students for research at partner HEIs and SMEs/enterprises,
- mobility of academic and administrative staff with the aim of professional development and exchange of expertise and experience.

⁴ Small-medium sized enterprises

All initiatives under this Call can take place in person as well as online.

Duration of mobility activities is indicated in table below⁵:

Eligible applicant	Participant	Duration of mobility (min. - max.)
Upper-secondary institution	learners/students	up to 12 months
	staff and professionals	up to 60 days
Higher education institution	learners/students	1 month – 12 months
	staff and professionals	up to 4 weeks

4. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Except for the so-called “excluded expenditures” listed in Article 8.7 of the Regulation on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (the Regulation), all types of expenditures can be eligible, provided that they meet the conditions listed in this Call and in Article 8.2, 8.3, 8.5 and 8.9 of the Regulation.

In line with the Article 8.4 of the Regulation, the project grant may take the form of the standard scales of unit costs and this form may be used by both applicant and **partner/s**. Standard scales of unit costs may be used to cover travel costs, linguistic support, individual support for learners/staff and professionals, exceptional costs and special needs support for participants with special needs as indicated in Annex 3 of the Guideline for Educational Programmes and in the Guide for Applicant and in the Guideline for Applicant and Project Partner. The PO shall ensure that indirect costs are not eligible in conjunction with standard scales of unit costs where this would entail double financing (Annex 3 of the Guideline for Educational Programmes). Further description of financial provisions can be found in the Annex 3 of the Guideline for Educational Programmes, see [here](#).

The eligible direct expenditures for a project are those expenditures which are identified by the Project Promoter and/or the project partner, in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules, as specific expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly. The following direct expenditures are eligible provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in Article 8.2 of the Regulation:

- a) the cost of staff assigned to the project, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that this corresponds to the Project Promoter’s and project partner’s usual policy on remuneration. The corresponding salary costs of staff of national administrations are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken
- b) travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project. Having regard to the principle of proportionality, travel costs, including subsistence allowance, may be calculated as a lump sum, on the basis of defined rules approved by the Programme Operator,
- c) cost of new or second hand equipment. In case the Programme Operator determines that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of that equipment may, by way of exception from the rule contained in paragraph 4 of Article 8.2, be eligible
- d) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project.
- e) costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a Project Promoter for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement and the Regulation,
- f) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project.

⁵ Further details can be found in Annex 3 of Guideline for Educational Programmes.

Inclusion of an expenditure item in the project budget template approved by the PO cannot be considered as confirmation of eligibility of that expenditure item. The eligibility of expenditure will be demonstrated by the applicant at the time of implementation in accordance with the currently valid Guideline for Project Promoter and Project Partner.

Unless a later date is provided in the project contract, expenditures are eligible as of the date on which the Programme Operator decides to award the project grant. The Programme Operator shall in the same decision fix the final date of eligibility which shall be no later than either one year after the scheduled completion of the project or the date referred to in paragraph 3 Article 8.13 (currently 30 April 2024) of the Regulation, whichever is earlier.

Indirect costs are all eligible costs that cannot be identified by the Project Promoter and/or the project partner as being directly attributed to the project but which can be identified and justified by its accounting system as being incurred in direct relationship with the eligible direct costs attributed to the project. They may not include any eligible direct costs. Indirect costs of the project shall represent a fair apportionment of the overall overheads of the Project Promoter or the project partner. Project promoters and project partners has to identify their indirect costs according to one of the methods listed in Article 8.5 of the Regulation.

For the purpose of this Call, equipment shall be considered costs of tangible and intangible assets (either a separate or a component of another recognized asset) or expensed in the hands of the Project Promoter according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the applicant and/or project partner is established and according to generally accepted accounting principles. In case of an intangible asset and an exception from general rule in article 8.3.1. (c) of the Regulation is granted, and the asset will be exclusively used in the project, then the maintenance requirement will have to be complied with. If an intangible item is not classified as an asset, its costs may be still eligible as it falls under the scope of article 8.3.1. (e) of the Regulation.

No expenditures incurred before and after the dates set in the Grant Offer Letter shall be eligible. Project partners whose primary location is outside Slovakia, may opt to submit proof of expenditure by way of an independent audit report. For further information, see Article 8.12 of the Regulation.

The period of minimum post-completion operation of projects is three years after the PO's approval of project final report given that project outcomes and outputs are being used for the purpose of the project as described in the project contract. In case Art 8.3.2 of the Regulation is applied, based on Art. 8.14.2 the PO may change this period to five years.

Applicable national and European Union law on public procurement shall be complied with at any level in the implementation of projects. The highest ethical standards, as well as the avoidance of any conflict of interests, shall be observed during the procurement and execution of contracts. The procurement should procedures should be in line with Article 8.15 of the Regulation.

5. RECOMMENDED MILESTONES AND TIME SCHEDULE

The Programme Operator highly recommends that projects comply to the following time schedule:

Event/Milestone	Expected schedule
Call closure	30 June 2022
Project contract signing	December 2022
Completion of the project	30 April 2024

According to the time schedule above, the selection process will take approximately 5-6 months.

6. PARTNERSHIP

A partner is a legal entity actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project. It shares with the applicant a common economic or social goal which is to be realized through the implementation of the project. In a working partnership, the partner has its own budget and activities that is responsible to meet. However, it is important to emphasize that the applicant is responsible for all commitments and irregularities of the partner in relation to the Programme Operator.

Partnership based on exchange of experience and know-how, organization of stays, expert seminars, joint elaboration of studies and development of processes, etc., can be given as a suitable example of partnership cooperation between institutions from Slovakia and the Donor states. Partnerships should not be formal or based only service providing. No business relationship between the applicant and the partner within this Call is allowed. The project partner should actively contribute to project application development with clear description of its role during the project implementation.

The applicant shall submit either a **partnership statement** (Annex III of this Call), **letter of intent** or **other similar document** proving the partner's interest in participating in the project along with the Project Application. The document should be signed and submitted as a scanned version.

After the Project Application is approved, a draft **partnership agreement** shall be submitted. The draft agreement is subject to the Programme Operator's review before it is concluded. **It is neither necessary nor recommended to enter into the partnership agreement before the project is approved.** Signed partnership statement, letter of intent or other similar document as stated above shall be seen as sufficient expression of interest to jointly implement the project.

The applicant must have at least one and max. three project partners. **At least one partner has to come from one of the Donor states.**

Partnership with entities from the Donor States

One of the two main objectives of the EEA Grants is to support the cooperation with entities from the Donor States. When searching for a suitable partner in Iceland, Liechtenstein, or Norway the applicant may use one of the following tools:

1. Sending an inquiry with short description of the project to norskegranty@vyskumnaagentura.sk, request will be shared with the Donor Programme Partners - Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) and/or National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA).
2. Contact directly HK-dir at <https://diku.no/en/resources-and-tools/eea-and-norway-grants> and/or at eeanorwaygrants@hkdir.no and /or AIBA at <https://www.eeagrants-li.com/>.

The applicant can also apply for a contribution from the Fund for Bilateral Relations ([Call BIN BF02](#)) in order to cover costs connected with the search and establishment of a partnership between institutions from the Donor States and Slovakia. More information on this Call is published on the [Programme Operator's website](#).

7. SELECTION PROCEDURES

The project evaluation and award of grants shall be in accordance with Article 7.4 of the Regulation.

The Programme Operator shall be responsible for project evaluation and for the award of grants.

The Programme Operator shall establish a Selection Committee that shall recommend the projects to be funded within the Programme. The Selection Committee shall consist of at least three persons possessing the relevant expertise. At least one of them shall be external to the Programme Operator and its partners. The DPPs shall be

voting member of the Selection Committee (for the Outcome 2 – HK-dir and/or AIBA). The FMO and representatives from the Donors, including Embassies, and the National Focal Point shall be invited to participate in the meetings of the Selection Committee as observers.

The Programme Operator shall review the applications for compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria. Applicants whose applications are rejected at this stage shall be informed and given a reasonable time⁶ to appeal that decision.

Each application that meets the administrative compliance and eligibility criteria shall be reviewed by two experts appointed by the Programme Operator, who shall be impartial and independent of applicants, the Programme Operator and the Selection Committee.

The experts shall separately score the project according to the selection criteria published with the Call for proposals. For the purposes of ranking the project applications, the average of the scores awarded by the experts shall be used⁷. If the difference between the scores given by the two experts is more than 30 % of the higher score, a third expert shall be commissioned by the Programme Operator to score the project independently. In such case, the average score of the two closest scores shall be used for the ranking of the application.

The Programme Operator shall provide the Selection Committee with a list of the ranked projects. The Selection Committee shall review the ranked list of projects. It may modify the ranking of the projects in justified cases. The justification for the modifications shall be detailed in the minutes of the meeting of the Selection Committee. If such a modification results in project's rejection, the affected applicant shall be informed in writing of the justification for the modification. The Selection Committee shall submit the list of recommended projects, together with a reserve list, to the Programme Operator.

The Programme Operator shall verify that the selection process has been conducted in accordance with the Regulation and that the recommendations from the Selection Committee comply with the rules and objectives of the Programme. Following such verification, the Programme Operator shall, based on the recommendation of the Selection Committee, make a decision on which projects shall be supported. Prior to making such decision, an on the spot visit may be carried out by the Programme Operator when construction works or purchase of special equipment are foreseen in the project.

The Programme Operator shall notify the applicants about the results of the selection process within a reasonable time and publicize the results.

⁶ The Applicant can appeal the Programme Operators' decision within a specified period of time from receiving the rejection letter. The appeal must be submitted to Programme Operators' by email or post.

⁷ The maximum achievable total score is 100. The projects with less than 60 points (in average) will not be supported.

Priority will be given to:

1. projects implemented in the less developed geographical areas⁸,
2. projects addressing gender disparities⁹ in education and training,
3. projects addressing inclusive education¹⁰.

The involvement of the above mentioned priority target groups in the project implementation and location of the project implementation will be reflected in the selection criteria. The selection criteria are listed in the Annex II of this Call.

8. FINANCING AND REPORTING

The payment of the Project Grant shall take the form of advance payment, interim payments and a final payment. The advance payment shall be calculated as a percentage of the total grant awarded to the project and its amount shall be set out in the Project Contract. The maximum level of advance payment and the total amount of interim payments shall be as follows:

Project Implementation Duration ¹¹	Advance payment	1 st Interim Payment	2 nd Interim Payment	3 rd Interim Payment	4 th Interim Payment	Final Payment ¹²
Less than 12 months	80%	10%	-	-	-	10%
More than or equal to 12 months	70%	20%	-	-	-	10%

The advance payment shall be paid following the signature of the Project Contract. Subsequent payments shall be paid after the approval of project interim reports. The final payment will be paid after approval of the final report. An advance payment, if any, of a percentage of the total grant amount shall be paid within 15 working days from the submission of a request or within the period set in the Project Contract. The interim payments shall be paid within one month after the approval of project interim reports.

Upon approval of the final project report a final balance payment, if applicable, shall be made within one month. The approval of project interim and final reports shall take place within three months from the submission of the required information.

9. STATE AID

The activities eligible under this Call will not be of **economic nature**, i.e. they do not consist of an offer of goods and/or services and will not have impact on competition. In view of the above, **the provision of state aid is not expected under this Call**. The applicant and the partner/s shall submit together with the Project application a

⁸ Less developed regions in SR where GDP per capita is less than 75% of the EU average (NUTS 2 regions), i.e. all regions in Slovakia except the Bratislava region.

⁹ Differences in women's and men's access to resources, status and well-being, which usually favor men and are often institutionalized through law, justice and social norms (European Institute for Gender Equality).

¹⁰ A process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education (UNICEF).

¹¹ The project contract may set suspensive conditions related to advance, interim and /or final payments. In justified cases, at the Programme Operator's discretion, a project promoter may receive extraordinary payments to ensure sufficient funds for the projects during the implementation so as to avoid any liquidity problems, provided that the Programme Operator has sufficient capacity proceed with these payments.

¹² Retention may be applied at the end of the implementation or pro rata from each advance and interim payments.

Declaration (Annex VI and VII to the Call) stating that the activities carried out under the project will not be considered as economic activities due to their nature.

The PO strongly recommends applicants to read carefully *Methodological guideline - Cases not subject to State aid rules* (in Slovak only, see Chapter 11 of this Call) issued by Antimonopoly Office of the Slovak Republic. The guideline explains what shall be understood as activities of non-economic nature and lists number of practical examples.

If the applicant (or partner, if relevant) is an organization carrying out economic activities, the organization shall ensure that the commercial and non-commercial activities shall be kept financially separated. The separation shall be proven by separate accounting. At the same time the organization shall ensure that all incomes related to the project outputs shall be re-used for financing non-commercial activities.

Before approving a project application, the Programme Operator will carry out a state aid test.

10. PROJECT APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The Project Application shall be prepared in English and submitted electronically via application form accessible at vyskumnaagentura.egrant.sk by the date and time of the Call closure specified in Chapter 1 of this Call (Basic Data and Conditions).

The following mandatory attachments shall be submitted along with Project Application:

- Signed Partnership statement (Annex III of this Call), letter of intent or other similar document proving the partner's interest in participating in the project. The document should be signed and submitted as a scanned version.
- Signed Declaration of the Applicant (Annex VI of the Call),
- Signed Declaration of the Partner³ (Annex VII of the Call),
- Copy of the cooperation agreement with Liechtenstein if the partner is a VET institution from Switzerland.

The date and time of the submission of the Project Application is identical to the date and time of its receipt by the electronic application ([egrant](#)). Annexes to the Project Application should be submitted as PDF files to prevent accidental loss of data.

The Project Application does not need to be signed. Signature shall be required prior to the conclusion of the Project Contract.

11. FURTHER INFORMATION

Please note that all applicants are required to disclose any **consultant** (external or internal) involved in the preparation of the Project Application.

There is no legal entitlement to the Grant.

Link to the website of the National Focal Point with information on how to submit a complaint is at [complaints](#).

Project should also include information and communication activities in accordance with Annex 3 of the Regulation. Information related to communication activities is given in the Guideline for Applicant and Project Partner.

Before and during preparation of a Project Application the applicant is strongly advised to comply with the following documents, as amended:

- Guideline for Applicant and Project Partner,
- Guideline for Project Promoter,
- Project Contract template including attachments,
- Partnership Agreement template.

Further recommended documents:

- [Programme Agreement for the financing of the Programme “Business Development, Innovation and SMEs”](#),
- [Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Grants 2014 - 2021](#),
- [Guideline for Educational Programmes](#),
- [Methodological guideline - Cases not subject to State aid rules](#) (in Slovak only)
- [Communication and Design Manual EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021](#),
- Guidelines, instructions and other documents published by the Financial Mechanism Office, National Focal Point and Ministry of Finance of the SR (Certifying Authority). These documents are published on the <http://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/en/programme-eea-norway-grants>, www.eeagrants.sk and/or www.eeagrants.org.

The Programme Operator may also introduce the FAQ section, if relevant.

The PO is entitled to change the conditions of the Call or cancel the Call only after consultations with the Financial Mechanism Office and after the approval of the National Focal Point.

Applicants are recommended to follow the [website of the Programme Operator](#), where updated information related to the announced Call will be published according to their relevance.

The Programme Operator can be contacted for queries by:

- e-mail: norskegranty@vyskumnaagentura.sk (the request needs to be linked to the call – by call code BIN SGS03; questions received by e-mail will be responded within 10 working days);
- phone: +421 210 13 823 or mobile: +421 907487913.

12. CALL ANNEXES

Annex I	Project Application Form including budget template (only read in PDF sample)
Annex II	Selection Criteria
Annex III	Partnership Statement
Annex IV	Selection Committee Statutes and Rules of Procedure
Annex V	Privacy Statement
Annex VI	Declaration of the Applicant
Annex VII	Declaration of the Partner