

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR BILATERAL INITIATIVES

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND SMEs PROGRAMME

FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021

SLOVAKIA

1. BASIC DATA AND CONDITIONS

One of the two main objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants is to support the cooperation between the entities from the Donor and the beneficiary states.

The objective of the Call for Proposals for Bilateral Initiatives (hereinafter referred to as the “Call”) under the Fund for Bilateral Relations within the Business Development, Innovation and SMEs programme is to set-up a flexible and easy tool to develop and strengthen business partnerships between the entities from Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway (hereinafter referred to as the “Donor states”) and Slovakia.

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

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| Call launch: | 15 February 2023 |
| Grant Application submission deadline: | 30 June 2024, 23:59 CEST or until the total allocation is used. |
| Call code: | BIN BF04 |
| Maximum grant to be applied for: | EUR 10 000 |
| Minimum grant to be applied for: | EUR 1 000 The amount of minimum grant is not limited only in the case of initiatives (such as networking events, B2B events etc.) organized by the DPP or PO. |
| Co-financing: | No co-financing is requested by the applicant under this Call. |
| Total allocation: | EUR 70 000 |
| Announced by the Programme Operator (PO): | Research Agency |
| Donor Programme Partner (DPP): | Innovation Norway (IN) |
| Geographical area: | The Call covers the whole territory of the Slovak Republic and the Donor states ¹ . |
| Eligible applicants and partners: | Any public, private entities, commercial or non-commercial, as well as NGOs established as legal persons in Slovakia and the Donor states. |
| Further conditions: | <u>Mandatory conditions:</u> |

¹ In the case of initiatives (such as networking events, B2B events, etc.) organized by the DPP or PO, the Call also applies to other beneficiary states of the EEA and Norway Grants. For the list of all beneficiary states click [here](#).

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Slovak applicant shall have at least one partner from the Donor states and vice versa²; • No more than two eligible partners can participate in the implementation of the initiative²; • The applicant shall select at least 2 indicators listed in the Article 2 of this Call; • The implementation of the initiative should not last more than 6 months and should be finished by 31 December 2024. |
| Funding source(s): | EEA Financial Mechanism: 48,541114% and Norwegian Financial Mechanism: 51,458886% |

Business Development, Innovation and SMEs Programme aims to reduce economic and social disparities in European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations between Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Slovakia.

The Programme shall support the outcome ***Increased competitiveness of Slovak enterprises within the programme focus areas:***

- ***Green Industry Innovation and***
- ***Welfare Technology and Ambient Assisted Living technologies.***

The Programme supports enterprises that develop, apply and commercialize innovative green technologies, processes, solutions, products or services; green their business operations; develop and innovate welfare and ambient assisted living technologies, solutions and processes.

2. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Generally, supported initiatives shall have a clear bilateral profile and serve the purpose of developing and strengthening well-balanced bilateral business partnerships. The activities should increase cooperation, mutual knowledge and understanding between Slovakia and the Donor states in the above-mentioned programme focus areas. In all initiatives, except those organized by the DPP or PO, both the final beneficiary and the partner(s), are actively involved in planning of the initiative and its implementation.

All activities within the initiative under this Call can be carried out online and / or in person.

Initiatives can include activities such as:

- participation in and organisations of
 - webinars, workshops, conferences, visits, joint meeting and seminars of common interests in the above mentioned programme focus areas,
 - networking events, B2B events, round tables and discussions with experts from Slovakia and the Donor states,
 - trainings, counselling, capacity buildings activities,
- sharing and transfer of knowledge, experience and best practice among the bilateral partners,
- exchanges, stays, short-term secondments, working visits and lectures of experts/ professionals from Slovakia and the Donor states,
- collection of information and data, development, translation or publishing of joint reports, studies, information materials, publications.

² Not relevant in the case of the participation at networking events, B2B events etc. organized by the DPP or PO.

This list is non-exhaustive and is meant just as an example of possible activities.

The applicants shall choose **at least 2 indicators from the following list of indicators:**

1. Number of participants from Slovakia in bilateral events/activities,
2. Number of participants from the Donor states in bilateral events/activities,
3. Number of created joint results, such as studies, analyses, reports etc.,
4. Number of promotional/information activities,
5. Number of joint bilateral events/activities carried out.

The PO urges the applicant to read carefully the description of the indicators and their source of verification listed in [Annex 4](#) of the Bilateral Fund Guide.

The Beneficiary shall inform about the results of the Initiative at its website or social media in case the Beneficiary has no website. The Beneficiary shall keep photo documentation related to the implementation of the initiative, including, but not limited to, photo documentation from study trip, seminar, meeting, workshop and conference and provide it upon request the PO. The publicity requirements stated in the [chapter 35 of the Bilateral Fund Guide](#) should be met for all initiatives. Non-compliance with these rules may lead to a reduction of the approved project grant.

Unless otherwise agreed by the Programme Operator, the initiative needs to be financially completed within one month from the last day of eligibility of expenditures stated in the Grant Offer Letter and the Final Report should be submitted no later than two months from the substantive completion of the initiative. The Programme Operator reserves the right not to reimburse the grant or its part in case the above mentioned was not complied with.

3. PARTNERSHIP

In general, a partner shall be understood as a legal person who will be actively involved in, and effectively contributing to the planning and/or implementation of the initiative. It shares with the applicant a common economic or social goal which is to be realised through the implementation of the initiative.

In a working partnership, the partner has its own budget and/or activities for which the partner is responsible. However, it is very important to emphasize that the applicant is responsible for all commitments and irregularities of the partner in relation to the Programme Operator. Partnerships should not be formal or based only on service providing.

Partnership 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:

- Search for a partner through the website: [Home - The Explorer](#).
- Sending an inquiry to bilateralnyfond@vyskumnaagentura.sk with a short description of the initiative. The request will be shared with the Donor Programme Partner - Innovation Norway.

Should the partner request financial contribution, a Partnership Agreement shall be concluded after the approval of the initiative, but prior to its actual implementation.

4. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Under this Call only expenditures falling under Article 8.8.1 point a) and c) of the Regulations³ are eligible. Except for expenditures listed in Articles 8.7 of the Regulations (“Excluded costs”), all types of expenditures can be eligible provided that they meet the conditions listed in this Call and are connected to the activities listed in the Article 2. of this Call and in Article 8.2 of the Regulations.

For the purpose of developing and strengthening bilateral relations, the most common types of expenditures are as follows:

- travel costs from applicant’s and partner’s place of location to activity venue and return⁴,
- subsistence costs/allowances as lump sum covering accommodation, meals, travel insurance, local travel and other necessary extra expenses⁴,
- costs related to activities in virtual space (e.g. rental of virtual rooms, moderator, expert fees, licences, rental of equipment, etc.),
- costs related to providing lectures, trainings, creating publications and studies,
- costs related to development of video and other kind of communication material and media costs,
- costs of staff assigned to the initiative,
- participation fees.

This list is non-exhaustive and is meant just as an example of possible expenditures.

No expenditures incurred before and after the dates set in the Grant Offer Letter shall be eligible. While there are no limitations regarding the types of expenditures (salaries, travel costs, purchase of equipment etc.), the past experience shows that the general principles on the eligibility of expenditures contained in Article 8.2 of the Regulations need to be considered. This is especially relevant as far as the proportionality and necessity of expenditures is concerned. As an example, purchase of equipment or consumables such as PCs, laptops, furniture might not be considered proportionate. Expenditures on wages that would be incurred irrespective of the implementation of the initiative might also be considered unnecessary (and thus not eligible). Further details can be found in the Bilateral Fund Guide.

5. SELECTION PROCEDURES

The Grant Applications shall be evaluated in the order they are received (FIFO principle), which means the applications are being assessed in the exact same order in which they were submitted.

The Selection criteria are attached to this Call (Annex II of the Call), where the detailed information on the selection procedures can be found.

Applicant shall take into account that evaluation of the submitted initiative may take up to 6 weeks.

³ Regulation on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and Regulation on the Implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021.

⁴ Having regard to principle of proportionality, allowances are calculated as a lump sum. Contribution to travel costs is calculated as unit costs based on the distances. Further description of special rules for allowances and travel costs can be found in the Annex 5 of the Bilateral Fund Guide (http://www.eeagrants.sk/site/assets/files/1129/annex_5_methods_for_calculating_the_subsistence_costs_and_travel_cost-update_00000002.pdf).

6. FINANCING AND REPORTING

No advanced payment will be provided under this Call. The funding is based on reimbursement of already incurred costs. The reimbursement is based on the approval of the Final Report submitted by the beneficiary within two months after the completion of substantive implementation.

The Programme Operator reserves the right not to reimburse the grant or its part in case the above mentioned was not complied with.

7. STATE AID

The Programme Operator shall, in line with Article 8.16 of the Regulations, ensure that any public support under the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021 complies with the procedural and substantive state aid rules applicable at the time when the public support is granted.

The provision of support under this Call is awarded as de minimis aid under the De minimis aid scheme for supporting bilateral relations in the area of business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (DM-2/2020) (hereinafter referred to as “the Scheme”). The Scheme is published in the Commercial Journal and at the Program Operator’s [website](#). The Scheme has entered into force on 16 August, 2021.

Before approving the Grant Application, the Programme Operator will carry out a state aid test. In the case the Programme Operator establishes that the provision of the contribution would constitute de minimis aid, the PO shall assess its compatibility with the conditions set out in the Scheme.

If the activities will not be economic in nature and therefore the provision of support is not subject to de minimis aid, together with the Grant Application shall be submitted the signed Declaration of non-economic activities⁵ (Annex VI of the Call).

8. GRANT APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The Grant Application **shall be written in English and submitted via electronic system [egrant](#) along with these mandatory attachments:**

- Signed Partnership Statement (Annex III of this Call) or Letter of Intent or other similar document (such as invitation, e-mail correspondence, event agenda) proving the partner’s interest in participating in the initiative⁶, or
in case of participating at the networking events, B2B events, etc. organized by the PO or DPP, invitation, agenda, confirmation of registration or other similar document shall be attached to the application.
- Signed Declaration of the Applicant (Annex IV of the Call).
- Signed Declaration of the Partner (Annex V of the Call)^{2,7}.

⁵ The PO recommends applicants to read carefully [Methodological guideline – Cases not subject to State aid rules](#), issued by Antimonopoly Office of the Slovak Republic (in Slovak only) and [Commission Notice on the notion of State aid as referred to in Article 107\(1\) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#). Both documents explain what shall be understood as activities of non-economic nature.

⁶ The Partnership Statement, Letter of Intent or other similar document proving the partner’s interest in participating in the initiative can be signed by any person representing the organization with the power to declare interest of the organization to enter into such partnership. Scanned signed version is sufficient.

⁷ Relevant for project partner with financial contribution.

- Filled and signed Annex 1 of De minimis aid scheme for supporting the development of bilateral relations in the area of business and education as amended by Addendum No. 1 (DM-2/2020) by the Applicant and the Partner(s), if relevant

Mandatory attachments should be submitted as PDF files to prevent accidental loss of data.

The date and time of the submission of the Grant Application is identical to the date and time of its receipt by the electronic system egrant. The Application does not need to be signed. Signature shall be required prior to the conclusion of the Contract.

The Grant Application should be received in due time prior to its scheduled start of the implementation of the initiative. When drafting the timetable, applicants shall take into consideration that the whole evaluation may take up to six weeks and therefore it is recommended to plan the activity in an appropriate time. The Programme Operator reserves the right to reject applications not meeting this deadline.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Please note that all applicants are required to disclose any consultant involved in the preparation of the Grant Application.

There is no legal entitlement to the Grant.

Before and during preparation of Grant Application it is recommended to become familiar with the following documents, as amended:

- [Bilateral Fund Guide](#) issued by the National Focal Point;
- [Bilateral Guideline](#) issued by Financial Mechanism Office;
- Regulations on the Implementation of the [EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021](#) and [Norwegian Financial Mechanism 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);
- [De minimis aid scheme](#) for supporting the development of bilateral relations in the area of business and education as amended by Addendum No. 1 (DM-2/2020)
- [Communication and Design Manual EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021](#).

These documents are published on the PO's website www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/sk/granty-ehp-a-norska-sk and on www.eegrants.sk and/or www.eegrants.org. The Programme Operator may also introduce the FAQ section, if relevant.

The Programme Operator can be contacted for queries at bilateralnyfond@vyskumnaagentura.sk. The request needs to be linked to the respective Call for Proposals for Bilateral Initiatives (BIN BF04). Questions received by e-mail will be responded within 10 working days.

10. CALL ANNEXES

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| Annex I | Grant Application Form (only read in PDF sample) |
| Annex II | Selection Criteria and Selection Procedure |
| Annex III | Partnership Statement |
| Annex IV | Declaration of the Applicant |
| Annex V | Declaration of the Partner |
| Annex VI | Declaration of non-economic activities |