

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR BILATERAL INITIATIVES UNDER THE EDUCATION COMPONENT

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND SMEs PROGRAMME FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021

SLOVAKIA

1. BASIC DATA AND CONDITIONS

The objective of the Call for proposals for **Bilateral Initiatives under the Education Component** (hereinafter referred to as “Call”) is to set-up a flexible and easy tool for searching of donor project partners (**Measure A - Donor Project Partner search**) for calls within the educational component¹ and further strengthening of partnerships between the entities from the Donor states² and Slovakia (**Measure B – Small scale bilateral initiatives**) within the educational component of the **Business Development, Innovation and SMEs Programme** (hereinafter referred to as “Programme”).

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

Call launch:	22 November 2021
Grant Application submission deadline:	<u>Measure A:</u> deadline 30 days prior to the date closure of the calls BIN SGS02 ¹ and/or BIN SGS03 ¹ , or until the total allocation is used whichever occurs earlier. <u>Measure B:</u> applications under this measure will be supported till 31 December 2023, 23:59 CET, or until the total allocation is used whichever occurs earlier.
Call code:	BIN BF02
Maximum grant to be applied for:	Measure A: EUR 3 000 Measure B: EUR 10 000
Minimum grant to be applied for:	N/A
Co-financing:	No co-financing is requested by the applicant under this Call.
Total allocation³:	EUR 50 000, out of which EUR 20 000 is allocated for the Measure A and EUR 30 000 for the Measure B.

¹ Call for proposals: Institutional Cooperation between higher education institutions, upper-secondary schools and private sector (BIN SGS02) and International mobility between higher education institutions, upper-secondary schools and private sector (BIN SGS03). More information about the calls can be found at <http://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/en/calls/basic-information>

² Donor states are: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway.

³ The Programme Operator reserves the rights to reallocate the unused funds from Measure A to Measure B if not spent entirely at the time of closure of the Calls BIN SGS02 and BIN SGS03.

Announced by the Programme Operator (PO):	Research Agency
Donor Programme Partners (DPPs):	National Agency of International Affairs in Education/AIBA (Liechtenstein), 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>), Innovation Norway/IN (Norway).
Geographical area:	The Call covers the whole territory of the Slovak Republic, the Donor states and Switzerland ⁴ .
Eligible applicants and partners:	<p>Under the Measure A:</p> <p>In the case the initiative is linked to Call BIN SGS02 (financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism/NFM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education institutions and upper-secondary schools established in Slovakia or in <u>Norway</u>, private enterprises (SMEs⁵/large enterprises)⁶ established as legal persons in Slovakia or in <u>Norway</u>. <p>In the case the initiative is linked to Call BIN SGS03 (financed by the EEA Financial Mechanism/EEA FM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> higher education institutions and upper-secondary schools established in Slovakia or in the <u>Donor states</u>, VET institution in Switzerland with a specific cooperation agreement with Liechtenstein, private enterprises (SMEs⁵/large enterprises)⁶ established as legal persons in Slovakia or in the <u>Donor states</u>. <p>Under the Measure B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education institutions and upper-secondary schools established in Slovakia or in the <u>Donor states</u>, private enterprises (SMEs⁵/large enterprises)⁶ established as legal persons in Slovakia or in the <u>Donor states</u>.
Further conditions:	<p>Mandatory conditions:</p> <p>The applicant shall choose only one measure (Measure A or Measure B) within one Grant Application.</p> <p>Measure A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each applicant from Slovakia shall have at least one partner from the Donor states and vice versa; or has to document the clear bilateral context of the initiative otherwise (e.g. in the case of the participation at match-making or networking events); Maximum number of eligible partners is 3; The applicant shall select at least 2 indicators listed in this Call; Only applicant is entitled for financial support. If travel is implemented, it shall be completed within 5 days including two travel days.

⁴ Vocational, educational and training institutions (VET) in Switzerland with specific cooperation agreement with Liechtenstein are eligible.

⁵ NOTE! SME as defined in Annex I of the Commission Regulation (EU) 651/2014 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L.2014.187.01.0001.01.ENG>

⁶ If the applicant is a private enterprise, at least one partner shall be HEI or upper-secondary school.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation of the initiative should be completed prior to the date closure indicated in the Calls BIN SGS02 and/or BIN SGS03 <p>Measure B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each applicant from Slovakia shall have at least one partner from the Donor states and vice versa; Maximum number of eligible partners is 3; The applicant shall select at least 2 indicators listed in this Call; The implementation of the initiative should not last more than 6 months. <p>Mandatory attachments (for both measures):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signed Partnership statement⁷ (Annex III of the Call), letter of intent or other similar document (such as invitation, e-mail correspondence, event agenda) proving the partner's interest in participating in the initiative; Signed Declaration of the Applicant (Annex IV of the Call); Signed Declaration of the Partner (Annex V of the Call), relevant only for Measure B; Copy of the cooperation agreement with Liechtenstein if the Applicant or Partner is a VET institution from Switzerland, if relevant; 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.
Funding source(s):	EEA Financial Mechanism - 48,541114% and Norwegian Financial Mechanism - 51,458886%

Business Development, Innovation and SMEs Programme (hereinafter referred to as "Programme") contributes to general objectives of the EEA and Norway Financial Mechanisms 2014 - 2021 to reduce economic and social disparities in European Economic Area (hereinafter referred to as "EEA") and to strengthen bilateral relations among the Beneficiary state and the Donor states.

The Programme shall support the outcome **Education and Employment potential enhanced in Slovakia within the programme focus areas:**

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

The Programme will support facilitation of donor partnership projects and strengthening of bilateral relations between educational institutions and private sector in Slovakia and the Donor states.

2. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Generally, the initiatives shall have a clear bilateral profile and serve the purpose of establishing and strengthening bilateral relations between Slovakia and the Donors states in the above mentioned programme focus areas. The Fund for Bilateral Relations shall support well-balanced partnerships (bilateral or multilateral) where all parties benefit from the cooperation.

⁷ The Partnership Statement 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. Should the partner request financial contribution, a Partnership Agreement shall be concluded after the approval of the initiative, but prior to its actual implementation.

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

Measure A – Donor Project Partner search

The Call is aiming at searching for potential project partners from the Donor states who are interested in active participation in a project implementation that can be submitted under the Call BIN SGS02 or Call BIN SGS03. The search for partners prior or during the preparation of a joint project application can be realized through participation on consultation visits and meetings, match-making or networking events organized by the PO, DPP and other relevant entities.

Initiatives under this measure can include activities such as:

- participation in match-making or networking events and webinars (events organized in order to support establishment of partnerships),
- participation in consultation meetings and visits (e.g. meetings with potential partner(s) in order to consult and/or prepare project application prior to its submission).

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

Measure B – Small scale bilateral initiatives

Under this measure longer-term initiatives will be supported, including any initiatives leading to strengthening bilateral relations, enhancing cooperation and improving overall quality of education and training on upper-secondary and higher education level in Slovakia, improving mutual knowledge and understanding between Slovakia and the Donor states in the above mentioned programme focus areas, provided that both the final beneficiary and the partner(s) are actively involved in planning of the initiative and its implementation.

Initiatives under this measure can include activities such as:

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

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

The applicants shall under both measures choose **at least 2 indicators from the following indicators:**

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

The above mentioned indicators, including their descriptions and sources of verification, are listed in Annex 4 of the Bilateral Fund Guide.

Implementation of the initiative under the Measure B must have a tangible result that both partners contributed to. It can be in form of a video, online presentation, study, analysis, strategy, online publication or others. Taking into account that many activities will take place in virtual space, the publicity requirements stated in the chapter 35 of the Bilateral Fund Guide are vital. 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.

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 that initiative.

In a working partnership, the partner has its own budget and/or activities he is responsible to meet. However, it is very important to realise 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:

One of the two main objectives of the EEA and Norway 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 for donor project partner search
 - a. in the field of education, with short description of the project to bilateralnyfond@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).
 - b. for a private enterprise, with short description of the project to bilateralnyfond@vyskumnaagentura.sk, request will be shared with the Donor Programme Partners – Innovation Norway.
2. Contact HK-dir, AIBA and/or Innovation Norway directly at <https://diku.no/en/resources-and-tools/eea-and-norway-grants> and/or at eeanorwaygrants@hkdir.no and/or at <https://www.eegrants-li.com/> and/or at <https://www.innovasjonorge.no/en/start-page/eea-norway-grants/partners/>.

4. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Under this Call only expenditures falling under Article 8.8.1 point a) - c) of the Regulations⁸ are eligible. Except for the expenditures listed in Article 8.7 of the Regulations, 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.

In the case of activities under the **Measure A**, for the purpose of establishing potential project partner(s), the types of expenditures are as follows:

- travel costs from applicant's place of location to activity venue and return⁹,
- subsistence costs/allowances as lump sum covering accommodation, meals, travel insurance, local travel and other necessary extra expenses¹⁰,
- costs related to activities in virtual space (e.g. rental of equipment),
- participation fees.

Under this measure, only applicant is entitled for financial support and only expenditures of up to 3 persons can be reimbursed.

In case of **Measure B**, for the purpose of 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 return¹⁰,
- subsistence costs/allowances as lump sum covering accommodation, meals, travel insurance, local travel and other necessary extra expenses¹⁰,
- costs related to activities in virtual space (e.g. rent of virtual rooms, moderator, expert fees, licences, rental of equipment, etc.),
- costs related to providing lectures, trainings, creating publications, analyses and studies,
- costs related to development of videos and other types of communication materials,
- costs of staff assigned to the initiative,

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

⁸ Regulation on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (<http://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/en/programme-eea-norway-grants/basic-documents>)

⁹ Having regard to principle of proportionality, allowances are calculated as a lump sum. Contribution to travel costs for preparatory visit 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/en/programs/fund-for-bilateral-relations/documents/>).

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.

6. FINANCING AND REPORTING

No advanced payment will be provided under this Call. The funding system will be 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 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.

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 the development of bilateral relations in the area of business and education, 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 (PO) 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 provision of the support is not subject to de minimis aid, together with the Grant Application shall be submitted the signed Declaration stating that the activities carried out under the initiative 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 and will be used only for non-economic purposes¹⁰ (Annex VI of the Call).

¹⁰ 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](#)

8. GRANT APPLICATION SUBMISSION

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

- Signed Partnership statement⁸ (Annex III of the 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 initiative;
- Signed Declaration of the Applicant (Annex IV of the Call);
- Signed Declaration of the Partner (Annex V of the Call), relevant only for Measure B;
- Copy of the cooperation agreement with Liechtenstein if the applicant or partner is a VET institution from Switzerland; if relevant;
- 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 *egrad*. 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 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:

- [Information about the Calls BIN SGS02 and BIN SGS03](#);
- [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 the [Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 - 2021](#);

[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.

- 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 <http://www.vyskumnaagentura.sk/en/programme-eea-norway-grants> and at www.eeagrants.sk and/or www.eeagrants.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 for Education Component (BIN BF02). Questions received by e-mail will be responded within 10 working days.

10. CALL ANNEXES

- 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