

OPEN CALL FOR PROSALS
ON THE SUPPORT OF INNOVATION AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND SMES PROGRAMME

Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

1. BASIC INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

The goal of the open call is to support enterprises in their development of innovative green technologies, processes, solutions, products or services; in greening their business operations and in innovation of ambient assisted living and welfare technologies, solutions, processes.

Date of call launching:	17 June 2021
Date of call closure:	17 September 2021 23:59 CEST
Call code:	BIN 01
Programme outcome:	Increased competitiveness of Slovak enterprises within the focus areas: a) Green Industry Innovation (GII) and b) Welfare Technology and Ambient Assisted Living Technologies (WT/AAL).
Programme output/s:	Enterprises supported to: 1. Develop innovative green technologies, processes, solutions, products or services, 2. Green their business operations, 3. Innovate welfare and ambient assisted living technologies, solutions and processes.
Maximum grant to be applied for:	2 000 000 Eur
Minimum grant to be applied for:	200 000 Eur
Co-financing:	At least 10% for public sector entities, non-governmental organisations ¹ , social partners ^{2,3} and other legal entities.

¹ For the purposes of the call “Non-governmental organization” (hereinafter referred to as NGO) is defined as a non-profit organization established as a legal entity, having a non-commercial purpose, independent off local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organizations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered NGOs.

² For the purposes of the call “Social partners” are defined as representatives of employers’ organizations and trade unions.

³ In case of NGOs and social partners, in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work may constitute up to 50% of the co-financing.

	At least 20% for private sector entities.			
Grant rate:	Project grant rate shall be calculated as a percentage share of the total grant requested to the total eligible expenditures of the project. The grant rate may vary from 25% to 90% depending on the type of entity participating in the project implementation, type of activity implemented and the type of state aid awarded. Project grant rate will be determined as follows:			
	Maximal project grant rate under the state aid scheme SA.61867			
	Type of activity	Size category of enterprise:		
		Small enterprise ⁴	Medium enterprise ⁴	Large enterprise
	Initial investment in Western Slovakia ⁵	45%	35%	25%
	Initial investment in Eastern or Central Slovakia ⁵	55%	45%	35%
	Industrial research ^{6*}	70%	60%	50%
	Experimental development ^{6*}	45%	35%	25%
	Maximal project grant rate under the de minimis aid scheme DM-14/2020			
	70%			
Maximal grant rate awarded to project partner (partners) not covered by any of the aid schemes relevant to this Call				
90%				
<p>* The project grant rate under the state aid scheme SA.61867 for industrial research and / or experimental development enterprises may be increased by an additional 15 percentage points (up to a maximum of 80% of total eligible costs) if one of these conditions is met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - between undertakings, at least one of which is a SME, or takes place in at least two EU Member States, or in one Member State and in a 				

⁴ A micro, small or medium-sized enterprise as defined in Annex I to Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market pursuant to Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0651>.

⁵ Projects focused on application of innovative technologies, processes or solutions under the focus areas GII or WT/AAL, the entire territory of the Slovak Republic is eligible for project implementation apart from the Bratislava Self-governing Region. Applied article 14, Regional Investment Aid, of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market pursuant to Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0651>.

⁶ Projects focused on development of innovative technologies, processes or solutions under the focus areas GII or WT/AAL, the entire territory of the Slovak Republic is eligible for project implementation. Applied article 25, Aid for Research and Development Projects, of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market pursuant to Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0651>.

	<p>Contracting Party to the EEA Agreement, no undertaking individually bearing more than 70% of the eligible costs, or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - between the undertaking and one or more organizations implementing research or dissemination of knowledge, which shall bear at least 10% of the eligible costs and shall have the right to publish the results of their own research.
Total allocation:	<p>11 578 235 Eur, of which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 567 882 Eur for Green Industry Innovation and - 4 010 353 Eur for Welfare Technology and Ambient Assisted Living Technologies
Announced by:	Research Agency
Eligible applicants⁷:	SMEs and large enterprises with less than 25% public ownership established as legal persons in Slovakia ⁸ . The eligible applicants must have been established for at least three fiscal years at the deadline for submission of this call for project proposals ⁹ .
Eligible partners⁴:	Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations, established as a legal person either in Norway or in Slovakia or any international organisation or body or agency thereof, actively involved in, and effectively contributing to the implementation of a project.
Further conditions:	<p>Mandatory conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The eligible applicant may submit only 1 project application under this call for proposals. In case of submitting more than 1 project application by the same applicant, the second submitted application shall be automatically rejected. 2. If the project is to be implemented in partnership, the applicant may have a maximum of three partners. 3. Project implementation is maximum 24 months and must be completed by latest April 30, 2024. 4. Costs on infrastructure (investment costs)¹⁰ must not exceed 40% of total eligible project costs (EPC), out of which upto 30% of EPC can be set aside

⁷ Please note that the applicant and the partner shall be registered in the Register of partners for public sector pursuant to Act no. 315/2016 on the Register of partners for public sector and on amendments to certain acts, as amended before the signing of the Project Agreement. The condition of registration does not apply to those legal entities which, even after the entry into force of the Project Agreement, would not be public sector partner according to § 2 of Act no. 315/2016 Coll. on the Register of partners for public sector and on the amendment to certain acts, as amended.

⁸ The share of public law entities (defined in § 261, par. 3-5 of the Commercial Code) individually or jointly in the registered capital and voting rights of the Beneficiary must be less than 25% and at the same time:

- a) the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the administrative, management or supervisory body of the Recipient does not belong to the body or bodies governed by public law;
- b) the body or bodies under public law do not have the right to exercise dominant influence over the Beneficiary on the basis of a contract concluded with this company or on the basis of a provision in its articles of association or articles of association;
- c) the body or bodies governed by public law which are shareholders of the Beneficiary do not control, by contract with other shareholders of that undertaking or members of that undertaking, a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or members in that undertaking.

⁹ Legal entities registered in the Commercial Register of SR pursuant to § 2 para. 2 letter a) of the Commercial Code, at least three fiscal years before the deadline for submission of this call for project proposals.

¹⁰ For the purposes of this call, infrastructure (investment costs) is defined as any activities that involve the reconstruction or renovation of existing infrastructure for the installation of new technologies, machinery and equipment; modernization or

	<p>for reconstruction and/or renovation works and upto 10% of EPC for purchase of real estate and/or land.</p> <p>5. Projects will be implemented in accordance with valid State aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (SA.61867) and/or De minimis aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (DM-14/2020).</p>
Mandatory attachments:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed Partnership Statement (Annex 4 of the call), letter of intent or other similar document proving the partner's interest in participating in the project (relevant if the project is implemented in partnership). 2. Approved financial statements of the applicant and Slovak partner from the previous economic/calendar year, in case they are not published in the Register of financial statements (applicable for the applicant and partner requesting aid under the State aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (SA.61867)). 3. Signed Declaration of the Applicant and each Partner (Annex 5 of this call). 4. Filled in and signed Declaration of the Applicant and each Partner for de minimis aid granted (applicable for the applicant and partner requesting the granting of minimum aid under the De minimis aid scheme to supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (DM-14/2020)) (Annex 6 of this call). 5. Filled in and signed Declaration determining the size category of the undertaking (of the applicant and each partner) requesting aid under the State aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (SA.61867) and/or De minimis aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (DM-14/2020)) (Annex 8 of this call).
Geographical area:	All regions of the Slovak Republic are eligible ¹¹
Funding sources:	Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the State Budget of the Slovak Republic

2. EXPECTATIONS AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The call is aiming at supporting small, medium and large enterprises in two focus areas:

- 1) **Green Industry Innovation and**
- 2) **Welfare Technologies and Ambient Assisted Living.**

The wide range of needs within these areas is the reason that the Call does not have pre-defined specific project themes. Funding will be provided for projects that contribute to the development and establishment of innovative technologies, processes and products, create synergies and bring various

improvement of existing infrastructure or require a building permit/a building announcement or purchase of building or estates.

¹¹ With the exception of the Bratislava Self-governing Region in the provision of the aid which will be in accordance with the State aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation amended by Addendum No. 1 under Art 14 of Commission Regulation no. 651/2014 (SA.61867).

benefits, e.g. employment growth, reduction of CO₂ emissions and waste production, use of new materials, intelligent construction solutions, innovations in transport etc. In the area of welfare technologies establishment of products and services that help people with various disabilities, systems for vital functions monitoring and technologies for medical care suitable for households, intelligent textiles and houses, can be supported.

Projects supported within this Programme will contribute to the Programme objective „*Increased value creation and sustainable growth*“.

Projects supported within this Call will contribute to the Programme outcome defined as „*Increased competitiveness of Slovak enterprises within two focus areas: Green Industry Innovation and Welfare and Ambient Assisted Living Technologies*“.

Projects supported within this Call will contribute to achievement of Programme outputs, which are defined as:

- Output 1.1 Enterprises supported to develop innovative green technologies, processes, solutions, products or services*
- Output 1.2 Enterprises supported to green their business operations*
- Output 1.3 Enterprises supported to innovate welfare and ambient assisted living technologies, solutions and processes.*

In the project application, the applicants are obliged to set target values for the following **two mandatory Programme indicators**:

1. Estimated annual growth in turnover¹²
2. Estimated annual growth in net operational profit¹³

In the project application, the applicants shall choose and set target values for at least two of the following **optional Programme indicators**:

- a) Number of submitted applications for protection of intellectual property rights (copyrights, trademarks, patents)
- b) Number of applied innovative technologies/ processes/ solutions¹⁴ (new in the enterprise) (disaggregated according to sectors)
- c) Number of developed innovative technologies/ processes/ solutions¹⁵ (disaggregated according to sectors)

¹² Definition of „turnover“: Enterprise’s net revenue for a fiscal year (after deduction of VAT, trade reductions and other indirect taxes)

¹³ Definition of „profit“: Difference between operating income and operating expenses.

¹⁴ This indicator measures innovative technologies / processes / solutions in the green sector and the sector of assisted ambient living. Definition of „green technologies“: the only technology, the only technology that is less harmful to the environment than the technology used today and involving pollution control technologies and processes (i.e. air / water / soil pollution control, waste management) and more efficient use of resources. Definition of „applied technology“: The company uses solutions / technology / product that are already developed / available on the market and adapts them to their own needs. These types of projects will often include research and development component (R&D) relating to material treatment, process, etc. according to the needs of the applicant / enterprise.

¹⁵ This indicator measures innovative technologies/ processes /solutions in green sector and in the sector of ambient assisted living. Definition of „innovation“: Enterprises introducing a new or significantly improved product (goods or services) or process, a new marketing method or a new organizational method in a business practice, workplace organization or external relationship. Innovation can be on enterprise, sector, national or international level. Definition of „developed“: Projects in which the main activities are user-oriented research and development, i. j. validation or demonstration of technologies in the

- d) Number of commercialized products or services¹⁶ (new to the market) (disaggregated according to sectors)
- e) Number of jobs created (disaggregated by gender, age)
- f) Estimated annual CO2 emission reductions (in tons)
- g) Share of enterprises' staff who declares better skills/competencies in their field
- h) Estimated re-use of waste for other production processes (in tons)*
- i) Estimated annual decrease of energy consumption (in MWh)
- j) Estimated annual collection of waste from production and operational processes for re-use or recycling (in tons)*

* For indicators marked with an*, the applicants shall set the target values and baseline values. Baseline values of the other indicators are not required, as they should all be automatically set as zero values.

It is important to choose the indicators that are relevant, measurable and achievable and according to the chosen area of support. The full Programme result framework is listed in Annex 1 of the Program Agreement concluded between Slovakia and Norway and published at ([link](#)).

3. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Under this Call will be supported innovative projects, the activities of which shall focused on:

1. Application, development and commercialization of green technologies, processes and solutions within the enterprises;
2. Greening business operations; and
3. Application, development and commercialization of ambient assisted living/welfare technologies, processes and solutions.

whereby

- applications of innovative technologies/solutions/processes that are already developed, available on the market and adapts them to their own needs. These types of projects will often include research and development related to e.g. with modification of material, process, etc.
- development of innovative technologies/solutions/processes in which the main activities are user-oriented research and development, i.e. validation or demonstration of technologies in the relevant environment, prototypes demonstrated in the operational environment, complex and qualified system.
- commercialization of innovative products or services, i.e. the process by which a new product or service is introduced in the general market.

relevant (industrial) environment, prototypes demonstrated in the operational environment, complete and qualified system. In other words, Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 5-8 (European Commission scale used to describe technology readiness). Typical types of projects will include cooperation between the company and the research institution and the like.

¹⁶ This indicator measures products and services in green sector and in the sector of ambient assisted living. Definition of „green“ products and services: products and services that have less impact on the environment (less polluting and less resource intensive), or less impact on human health than traditional equivalents and that are economically viable. Definition of „commercialization“: the process by which a new product or service is placed on the general market. The process is divided into phases, from the initial introduction of the product through its mass production and acceptance. It takes into account the production, distribution, marketing, sales and customer support needed to achieve commercial success.

Support of Green Industry Innovation can include areas such as:

- circular economy;
- green ICT;
- new innovative products/technologies/services, which will reduce the environmental impact thanks to lower raw material / energy consumption or lower emissions during production;
- smart society;
- clean/renewable energy;
- new smart construction technologies/solutions and innovations.

Support of Welfare Technologies and Ambient Assisted Living can be in the areas such as:

- telemedicine,
- biotechnologies,
- robotics and automated technologies,
- development of products and innovations that help people with various disabilities,
- products for monitoring life functions suitable for households,
- systems for the medical care of chronically ill persons or people with various disabilities used in households,
- technologies for smart houses,
- smart textiles or ICT systems, etc.

4. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Except for the so-called “excluded expenditures” listed in Article 8.7 of the Regulation on the Implementation of the Norwegian 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 and 8.5 of the Regulation.

The budget template is a part of the Project application form in the e-grant system.

Inclusion of an expenditure item in the project budget template approved by the Programme Operator within the selection process, 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.“

Eligible project expenditures are those which were actually incurred within the project, meeting the following criteria:

- (a) they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract;
- (b) they are connected with the subject of the project contract and are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
- (c) they are proportionate and necessary for the project implementation;
- (d) they must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- (e) they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the Project Promoter and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the Project Promoter and/or project partner is established and according to generally accepted accounting principles; and;
- (f) they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in case of services and works). Exceptionally, costs in respect of which an invoice has been issued in the final month of eligibility are also deemed to be incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid within 30 days of the final date for eligibility. Overheads and depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred when they are recorded on the accounts of the Project Promoter and/or project partner.

Where new or second hand equipment is purchased, only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be considered eligible expenditure.

Costs on infrastructure (investment costs)¹⁰ must not exceed 40% of total eligible project costs (EPC), whereas upto 30% of EPC can be set aside for reconstruction and/or renovation works and upto 10% of EPC costs for purchase of real estate and/or land.

The Project Promoter's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Project partners, such as international organisations or bodies or agencies thereof and 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 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 of the Regulation, be eligible;
 - d) purchase of land and real estate under the conditions set in Article 8.6 of the Regulation;
 - e) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
 - f) 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; and
 - g) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project.

Where the entire purchase price of equipment is eligible in accordance with point (c), the Project Promoter shall:

- 1. keeps the equipment in its ownership for a period of at least five years following the completion of the project and continues to use that equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period;
- 2. keeps the equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft or other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least five years following the completion of the project; and
- 3. sets aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the equipment for at least five years following the completion of the project.

The specific means for the implementation of this obligation shall be specified in the project contract. The Programme Operator may release any Project Promoter from the above obligations with respect to any specifically identified equipment where the Programme Operator is satisfied that, having regard to all relevant circumstances, continued use of that equipment for the overall objectives of the project would serve no useful economic purpose.

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 may identify their indirect costs according to one of the following methods:

- i. based on actual indirect costs for those Project Promoters and project partners that have an analytical accounting system to identify their indirect costs as indicated above;
- ii. a flat rate of up to 25% of total direct eligible costs, excluding direct eligible costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the Project Promoter or project partner;
- iii. a flat rate of up to 15% of direct eligible staff costs without there being a requirement for the Programme Operator to perform a calculation to determine the applicable rate; or
- iv. a flat rate applied to direct eligible costs based on existing methods and corresponding rates applicable in European Union policies for similar types of project and Project Promoter;

- v. in the case of Project Promoters or project partners that are international organisations or bodies or agencies thereof, indirect costs may, in line with specific provisions in the programme agreement, be identified in accordance with the relevant rules established by such organisations.

The application of the method described in point ii. is subject to the calculation of the rate on the basis of a fair, equitable and verifiable calculation method or a method applied under schemes for grants funded entirely by the Beneficiary State for similar types of Project and Project Promoter.

The method of calculating the indirect costs and their maximum amount shall be determined in the project contract. The method of calculation of indirect costs of a project partner shall be stipulated in the partnership agreement between the Project Promoter and the project partner.

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	17 September 2021
Project contract signing	May 2022
Completion of the project	30 April 2024

According to the time schedule above, the selection process will take approximately 6-8 months.

6. PARTNERSHIP

Partner is a legal entity actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project. Project partner shares with the applicant a common economic or social goal which is to be realised through the implementation of that project.

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.

Partnership based on exchange of experience and know-how, organisation of stays, expert seminars, etc. can be marked as a suitable example of partnership cooperation. Partnerships should not be formal or based only service providing. There can be no business relationship between the applicant and the partner within this call. Project partner should actively contribute to project application development with clear description of its role during the project implementation.

If the project is to be implemented in a partnership, partnership statement (Annex 4 of the call), letter of intent or other similar documents proving the partner's interest in participating in the project should be submitted along with the Project Application. The document should be signed and submitted as a scanned version.

After the Project Application is approved, draft partnership agreement shall be submitted. The draft agreement is subject to the Programme Operator's screening 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 shall be seen as sufficient expression of interest of the applicant and its partner to jointly implement the project.

Applicant can have a **maximum of 3 partners**.

Partnership with entities from Norway

One of the two main objectives of the Norway Grants is to support the cooperation with entities from Norway. For this purpose, the Program Operator has opened the possibility to apply for a contribution to search and develop partnerships between entities from Slovakia and Norway. These activities can be supported from the Programme's Fund for Bilateral Relations which will provide contributions related mainly to searching and developing of partnerships.

Please be aware that:

- it is necessary to apply for the travel grant/initiative before the expenditure is incurred,
- the approved contribution will be paid in the form of refundation.

More information on the calls supported by the Fund for Bilateral Relations is published on the [Programme Operator's website](#).

When searching for a suitable partner in 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 Partner (DPP) Innovation Norway.
2. Contact Innovation Norway directly at <https://www.innovasjon Norge.no/en/start-page/eea-norway-grants/partners/>.

7. SPECIAL PROVISION RELATED TO BUILDINGS

Upon the signature of the Project Contract, the Project Promoters will be obliged to:

- Keep any buildings purchased, constructed, renovated or reconstructed under the project in their ownership for a period of at least 5 years following the completion of the project and continue to use such buildings for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period;
- Keep any buildings purchased, constructed, renovated or reconstructed under the project properly insured against losses such as fire, theft and other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least 5 years following the completion of the project; and
- Set aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of any buildings purchased, constructed, renovated or reconstructed under the project for at least 5 years following the completion of the project. The specific means for implementation of this obligation shall be specified in the project contract.

Buildings that are constructed, reconstructed or renovated from the Project Grant, cannot be sold, rented, or mortgaged within five years of the completion of the project (i.e. the approval of the Final Project Report), or longer if stipulated in the Project Contract. Further details can be found in Article 8.6 of the Regulation.

8. SELECTION PROCESS AND PRIORITIZED PROJECTS

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 Donor Programme Partner shall be voting member of the Selection Committee (Innovation Norway). The Financial Mechanism Office (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 time to appeal that decision¹⁷.

Each project application that meets the administrative 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 used.

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 cases the average score of the two closest scores shall be used for the ranking of the project applications.

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

¹⁷ For more information about appealing the rejected applications see chapter B. Project Assessment, point 2. Administrative compliance and eligibility of the Guideline for Applicant.

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 publicise the results.

Priority will be given to

- projects aiming at young¹⁸ entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs¹⁹,
- projects implemented in the less developed geographical areas²⁰,
- projects implemented with partners from Norway,
- projects in which the applicant is small and medium enterprise (SME)¹

The involvement of the above mentioned priority target groups in the project implementation and location of the project implementation, will be reflected in the evaluation criteria.

The selection criteria are listed in the Annex 2 of this call.

9. FINANCING AND REPORTING

Payments 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 level 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 ²¹	Advance payment	1 st Interim payment	2 nd Interim payment	3 rd Interim payment	Final payment ²²

¹⁸ Young entrepreneur- an applicant whose statutory representative, owner or majority co-owner (shareholder or partner having a share in the registered capital of the applicant exceeding 50%) is a natural person who is less than 29 years old on the date of submission of the project application

¹⁹ Female entrepreneur - an applicant whose statutory representative, owner or majority co-owner (shareholder or partner having a share in the registered capital of the applicant exceeding 50%) is a woman.

²⁰ Less developed regions in SR where GDP per capita is less than 75% of the EU average (NUTS 2 regions)

²¹ 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.

²² Retention may be applied at the end of the implementation or pro rata from each advance and interim payments.

< 24 months	20%	40%	30%	-	10%
24 – 36 months	15%	30%	25%	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.

10. STATE AID

The Programme Operator shall, in line with Article 8.16 of the Regulation, ensure that any public support under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 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 (project grant) under this call represents state aid under the [State aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 \(SA.61867\)](#) (hereinafter referred to as “State Aid Scheme”) and/or de minimis aid under the [De minimis aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 \(DM-14/2020\)](#) (hereinafter referred to as “De minimis Aid Scheme”), depending on the type, resp. the scope of activities.

For this call, the following state aid articles will be applicable:

1. **Regional Investment Aid in accordance of Article 14** of the Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of June 17 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty („the GBER“) **for realisation of the intitial investment within both focus areas (GII or WT/AAL)**

or

2. **Aid for Research and Development Projects in accordance with Article 25** of the Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of June 17 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty **for realisation of experimental development and industrial research within both focus areas (GII or WT/AAL).**

The Applicant shall choose one article of the State Aid Scheme (either article 14 or 25) for implementation of the project activity.

If the provision of the project grant, or part of it, constitutes aid which is not covered by the state aid, may be granted as de minimis aid provided that the conditions in the De minimis Aid Scheme are met.

As state aid is a complex set of rules and processes, it is desirable that the applicants familiarize themselves with the GBER and the relevant State Aid Scheme and De minimis Aid Scheme in advance. The GBER contains several provision that may have an impact on the project implementation.

According to the information provided in the project application and its annexes, the Programme Operator shall assess whether the provision of support to the partner, resp. partners is the provision of state and/or de minimis aid or not and whether it meets the conditions set out in the above mentioned State Aid Scheme and/or de minimis Aid Scheme.

The State Aid Scheme is published in the Commercial Journal and entered into force on 08.06.2021 and De minimis Aid Scheme DM-14/2020 is published in the Commercial Journal and entered into force on 08.06. 2021. Both aid schemes are published at the Program Operator ´s website ([link](#)).

11. PROJECT APPLICATIONS SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION

Project Application shall be prepared in English language and submitted electronically via egrant application accessible at vyskumnaagentura.egrant.sk by the date and time of the call closure, i.e. by 17 September 2021. The Project application form (for reading) is Annex 1 of this call.

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

1. Signed Partnership Statement (Annex 4 of the call), letter of intent or other similar document proving the partner's interest in participating in the project (relevant if the project is implemented in partnership).
2. Approved financial statement of the applicant and Slovak partner from the previous calendar/economic year, if it's not published in the Register of financial statements (applicable for the applicant and partner requesting aid under the State aid scheme for supporting the business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (SA.61867)).

Applicant, or partner, if relevant, who is a parent entity that is not required to prepare consolidated financial statement in accordance with applicable legislation, or it is a member of a consolidated group whose parent entity is not required to prepare consolidated financial statement in accordance with applicable legislation, is required to prepare consolidated financial statements or to ensure its preparation by the parent entity²³.

3. Signed Declaration of the Applicant and each Partner (Annex 5 of the call).
1. Filled in and signed Declaration of the Applicant and each Partner for de minimis aid granted. (applicable for the applicant and partner requesting the granting of of minimum aid under the De minimis aid Scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (DM-14/2020)) (Annex 6 of this call).

²³ The consolidated financial statement shall be prepared in accordance with the methods and principles laid down in the Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1126/2008 of 3 November 2008, which adopts certain international accounting standards (OJ EU L 320, 29.11.2008), as amended, in accordance with the Regulation (EC) No. 1606/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 July 2002. An applicant who is part of an enterprise group with a common source of control that does not represent a consolidated group or is wider than the consolidated group, is required to prepare reliable aggregated financial data for the enterprise group.

2. Filled in and signed Declaration determining the size category of the undertaking (of the applicant and each partner) requesting aid under the State aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (SA.61867) and/or De minimis Aid Scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (DM-14/2020)) (Annex 8 of this call).

Applicants are reminded to verify accuracy of the data in the lists/registers before submitting the project application and, in case of incorrect data, to take the relevant steps to correct them before submitting the application.

The date and time of the submission of the Project Application is identical to the date on and time of its receipt by the electronic application egrant.

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

Annexes to the Project Application should be submitted as PDF files to prevent accidental loss of data. The size of one (1) annex within the egrant system is a maximum of 60 MB. The number of annexes is not limited.

12. FURTHER INFORMATION

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

There is no legal entitlement to the Project 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 Guide for Applicant.

Before and during the preparation of the Project Application the applicant is strongly advised to comply with the [following documents](#), as amended:

- Guideline for Applicant (only in Slovak version)
- Guideline for Project Promoter and Project Partner
- State aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (Scheme SA.61867)
- De minimis aid scheme for supporting business development and innovation as amended by Addendum No. 1 (Scheme DM-14/2020)
- Project Contract template including attachments

Further recommended documents are:

- [Programme Agreement for the financing of the Programme “Business Development, Innovation and SMEs”](#);
- [Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021](#);
- Guidelines, instructions and other documents published by the Financial Mechanism Office, National Focal Point, the Programme Operator and Ministry of Finance of the SR.

These documents are published on the websites <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 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 01; questions received by e-mail will be responded within 10 working days);
- phone: +421 210 13 809 or mobile: +421 918 328 488.

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.

13. CALL ANNEXES

- Annex 1 Project Application form including the budget (only read in PDF format)
- Annex 2 Selection Criteria
- Annex 3 Selection Committee Statutes and Rules of Procedure
- Annex 4 Partnership Statement
- Annex 5 Declaration of the Applicant/Partner
- Annex 6 Declaration of the Applicant/Partner for de minimis aid granted
- Annex 7 Privacy statement
- Annex 8 Declaration determining the size category of the undertaking of the Applicant/Partner