Announcement for open call

Fund for Bilateral Relations at National Level

Initiatives within the priority areas

OBJECT:

The EEA and Norway Grants are Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway's contribution to reducing economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to the strengthening of bilateral relations with the 15 Beneficiary States in Central and Southern Europe.

The purpose of the Bilateral Fund at National Level in Romania is to support various bilateral cooperation initiatives between Romanian entities and entities from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein (i.e. the Donor States). In addition, bilateral cooperation with the Council of Europe is possible. The total allocation for the 2009-2014 programming period amounts to *€1,529,750.*

The Fund is meant to finance complementary initiatives such as conferences, workshops, study tours, studies, consultancies, information activities, as well as preparatory activities in the programming phase setting the ground for future cooperation in programmes and projects.

A part of the Fund is reserved for pre-defined activities carried out by the National Focal Point in cooperation with Donor States entities; the other share will finance several open calls with various thematic focuses.

Cooperation financed by this Fund could provide a platform for increased political, cultural, professional and academic relations in a broad sense. Both donor state entities and relevant national stakeholders in Romania shall be able to access and benefit from the Fund for specific activities in the priority areas agreed between Romania and Donor States.

The priority areas agreed for funding are as follows:
- Justice and home affairs, judicial capacity building and Schengen Cooperation
- Health
- Cultural cooperation, diversity, cultural heritage and exchange
- Environment: green industry innovation, renewable energy (geothermal resources)
- Children and youth at risk

Additionally, the following general and horizontal priorities have been considered:

- Activities promoting knowledge and understanding of the EEA agreement
- Joint activities with Council of Europe

- Activities strengthening the cooperation with intergovernmental organizations such as the Nordic institutions, Nordic-Baltic institutions and regional institutions such as Nordic Council of Ministers, Council of Baltic Sea States, OSCE, WHO Europe
- Joint activities with relevant Directorate Generals of the European Commission
- Joint activities with Transparency International in line with the cooperation agreement on the EEA and Norway Grants
- Regional activities on topics of bilateral importance
- Activities of bilateral interest at the institutes at the universities in the Beneficiary States where Norwegian is taught
- Activities in the programme preparation phase to strengthen bilateral aspects of the programmes
- Participation at conferences related to the EEA and Norway Grants

In 2013 the amount available under calls for travel support and priority areas is *€250,000.*

FUND AVAILABILITY FOR 2013:

General/horizontal priorities • Activities that strengthen, contribute to and promote the development of democracy, human rights, good governance and rule of law • Specific priority given to the situation of the Roma minority • Joint initiatives and cooperation with Council of Europe, Transparency International, OECD and other inter-institutional organizations • Cross-regional and cross-sectorial approach is encouraged	70.000 €
Priority – Justice and Home Affairs, judicial capacity building and Schengen cooperation • Activities with thematic focus on issues of common European concern are encouraged. • Joint activities with the Council of Europe, Transparency International, OECD and other inter-institutional organizations • Specific priority is given to a regional conference on Justice and Home Affairs in 2013	70.000 €
Priority – Children and youth at risk • Joint initiatives with inter-institutional organizations such as the Council of Europe and WHO is encouraged. • Particular focus should be given to vulnerable groups such as the Roma minority. • Cooperation with civil society, between local and regional actors and with other beneficiary states	60.000 €

FINANCING RATE:
The grant rate will be 100%.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION SUBMISSION:

31st of March 2014/up to funds depletion.

ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS:

Beneficiaries of the Bilateral Fund are both Romanian and donor states entities, as follows:

- Programme Operators; the National Focal Point and other national institutions playing important role in establishment/ implementation of a particular programme included in the Memoranda of Understanding
- Donor Programme and Project Partners
- The donor states Embassies in Romania and the Embassies of Romania in the donor states
- Other national/international public/non-commercial bodies responsible for particular themes of interest within the priority areas
- As the fund will however not finance commercially oriented activities or larger projects, but rather events and shorter initiatives, the private commercial entities are encouraged to apply through associations such as the professional or employers association.

DATE OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE EXPENDITURES:

From the 21st of March 2012 until 30th of April 2014.
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ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES:

Eligible initiatives which can be covered from the Fund are short range initiatives falling within the priority areas, leading to strengthening bilateral relations between Romania and Donor states during the implementation of the Romanian Programme Areas.

The Fund is a flexible source, funding both entities from Donor states and from Romania.

Activities that can be carried out may include inter alia:

- conferences and seminars on topics of common interest
- joint side events at international meetings
- technical cooperation and exchange of experts
- capacity building and short term training
- study tours and visits
- joint participation in international network organizations
- reports and studies

Please note that specific activities that can be included under funds for bilateral relations at programme level will not be financed from the bilateral fund at national level until the depletion of the funds at programme level in case of Programme Operators, Donor Project Partners, project promoters and project partners for those activities that are linked to the specific programme area.
As per article 7.7 of the Regulation, the following categories of expenditure are eligible for funding:

a) Fees and travel costs for participation in conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops;
b) Travel costs for study trips;
c) Travel and salary costs for visits by experts;
d) Costs related to feasibility studies and preparation of financial and economic analysis;
e) Costs of conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops;
f) Promotional and information activities;
g) Purchase of data necessary for the preparation of the application
h) External consultancy fees.
i) Costs of the audit report

SELECTION PROCESS, DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE AND PAYMENT SYSTEM:

The applications shall be submitted, in English or Romanian, to the National Focal Point (NFP) until the deadline fixed in the announcement.

Documents required when applying:

- Application for funding (including the activity description and budget estimate).
- Government Decision, proof of registration in the register of associations and foundations, company statutes, legal documents issued in the country of origin to prove belonging to the type of eligible beneficiaries as appropriate
- Potential applicants should submit relevant documents to prove the connection or affiliation, from a professional perspective, the priority areas for which funding is requested. This kind of documentation is required for prospective beneficiaries that are not public institutions.
- Affidavit submitted that the project is not and has not been previously funded, partially or fully, from other public sources of funding, national budget or European.
- Declaration on honour

The application must be signed and submitted to the NFP (Ministry of European Funds - EEA Directorate) **at least 30 working days before start** of the planned initiative for which the funding is required in case of activities/initiatives for which advance payment system will be requested / applied. In case of requests for reimbursement for activities/events previously implemented this demand will not be applicable.

Application for funding will be assessed in terms of relevance of strengthening bilateral relations and fulfilling the Fund's objectives. The benefits of proposed initiatives for Romania in the field and their description are also evaluated.

Fulfilling of formal criteria is a necessary condition, i.e. eligibility of the applicant and initiatives proposed for funding, eligibility of expenditures and also there is a need to eliminate the possibility of duplication of funding including from the Fund for Bilateral Relations at the Programme level. It is highly recommended to consult this option with the relevant Programme Operator prior to submission of the Application for funding from the National Bilateral Fund.

The applicant shall be **notified of the application approval/ refusal.**

The notification of the award will be followed by conclusion of agreement/contract, advance payment, submission of the report (template elaborated by the NFP), verification by the NFP and reimbursement or offset against advance payment with all relevant documents/audit report attached.

Payments will be made in RON/EUR in accordance with Article 8.1 of the Regulation into the bank account notified by the beneficiary to the National Focal Point (using the format given in the annex)
The payments will be made subject to:

- The approval of the report describing the organizing of the event. The report must highlight the results achieved through the initiative/event, its impact in the media (if applicable) and the achievement of the indicators.
- Checking of the requested supporting documents as proof of expenditures (as per the annex) /submission of the audit report)

The payments will be done as follows:
Advance payment up to 90% from the grant value and final payment upon approval of the implementation report (offset against advance payment) – for the contracts using advance payment system
Reimbursement payment – for the contracts using reimbursement of costs already incurred by the applicants

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Please note that the proposed initiative must have a non-profit nature and contribute to the development of bilateral relations.

The Selection Process will follow the below pattern:

I. Formal and administrative criteria

The application has been completed according to the instructions, application form and all supporting documents are presented in English/Romanian and all mandatory documentation is attached to the application.

II. Eligibility

a) Applicant

- The applicant is constituted as a legal entity

- If the applicant has one or more partners, a partnership agreement defining the partners different roles and responsibilities has to be signed by all partners and attached to the application
- The applicant has been in operation for at least one full fiscal year and its main activities are closely related to the priority area for which an application is made (in case of NGOs)
- The applicant entity (and the partner(s)) and the legal representative signing the application have clean criminal and tax records (in case of NGOs).

b) Project

- The proposed project is relevant and within the focus priority area and has expected outcomes for each priority and its implementation period is no longer than the deadline for expenditure eligibility.
- No overlapping/double funding arises from the applications for the project from EU/EEA/international Financial Institution/bilateral at programme level/state budget or other sources (statement on own responsibility will be required).
- The project is in compliance with both EU and national legislation in Romania (in particular state aid, environment requirements and public procurement).

III Selection

Evaluation and selection process will be performed, on a rolling basis, by the selection committee.

The scoring will constitute a basis for an assessment profile, a tool for project prioritization.

The main technical & financial criteria are as follows:

- The entity/entities have the necessary human resources and the technical and financial capacity to implement the project and support its costs;
- The project is mature, i.e. technically viable and feasible in terms of time schedule, budget and value for money ;
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- If applicable, the division of tasks and responsibilities among partners is established and described and each partner has a significant contribution to the project activities;
- The project meets the expected outcome stipulated in the Call for Proposals for each priority area;
- The project is in compliance with relevant cross-cutting issues;
- The project contributes to the overall objectives of National Bilateral Fund: to strengthen the bilateral relations between donor states and Romania).

During the selection process the committee will use the following share of score:

- Relevance of the project for the addressed priority - 40 points
- Coherence of the documentation submitted - 10 points
- Methodology & expected results -30 points

- Budget and value for money - 20 points

The application that obtains a final score below 60 points will be excluded.

The financial grant of the application will depend also of the total amount of fund availability previously defined in the open call

Applications will be assessed and decided upon on a continuous basis.

A list of the awarded travel support will be published on the website www.eeagrants.ro

SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL:

Before applying we suggest you consult the information for Bilateral Relations Fund available at EEA Grants websites and the following documents:

Guideline for Strengthened Bilateral Relations;
Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014
Memoranda of understanding on the implementation of the 2009-2014 EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms in Romania

Applications must be submitted both electronically and in hard copy at the following addresses:

Contacts:

E-mail for information and calls submission:
bilateral.relations@fonduri-ue.ro

Address:
Ministry of European Funds
General Directorate for Non-reimbursable Financial Mechanism and Instruments
National Focal Point
44 Mircea Voda Boulevard, Entrance B, 030664, sector 3, Bucharest
Telephone: +4021 302 52 20
Fax: +4021 326 87 30