

**OPEN CALL FOR BILATERAL INITIATIVES
BETWEEN SLOVAKIA AND DONOR STATES**
under the
**FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITHIN THE PROGRAMME
GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION**
EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021
SLOVAKIA

1. BASIC DATA AND CONDITIONS

The Fund for Bilateral Relations within the programme Good Governance and Cross-border Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as “the Bilateral fund GGC”) was established to enhance cooperation and improve mutual knowledge and understanding between Slovakia and the Donor States – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway in the area of transparency, good governance and accountable institutions.

Call launch:	15 th March 2023
Call closure:	30 th December 2023 or until its total allocation is used
Call number:	GGCBF02
Area of Support:	Strengthening bilateral relations between Donor states and Slovakia in the area of transparency, good governance and accountable institutions
Maximum grant to be applied for:	EUR 30,000
Minimum grant to be applied for:	N/A
Co-financing:	No co-financing is requested by the applicants
Total allocation:	EUR 106,287.19
Announced by:	Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic – the Programme Operator for the programme Good Governance and Cross-border cooperation
Eligible applicants and partners:	All legal entities established in Slovakia or in one of the Donor States ¹ are eligible to apply.
Further eligibility limitations:	The Programme Operators of the Programmes within the EEA and Norway Grants 2014 – 2021 and the Norwegian Barents Secretariat as the Donor Programme Partner for the programme Good Governance and Cross-Border Cooperation in Slovakia are not eligible to apply.
Further conditions:	1. Each Slovak applicant must have at least one partner from a Donor state and vice versa. No more than two partners may participate in the implementation of an initiative. 2. The implementation of the initiative shall not be planned to last more than 12 months and should be finished until 31 st May 2024.

¹ Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein

	3. Signed Partnership Statement, Letter of Intent or other similar document proving the interest of the applicant and its partner/s to jointly implement the initiative is mandatory ² .
Funding source(s):	EEA Financial Mechanism (EEA Grants) - 48,54 % Norwegian Financial Mechanism (Norway Grants) - 51,46 %

2. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The range of activities eligible for support under the Bilateral fund GGC is broad, including any initiatives leading to strengthening bilateral relations, enhancing cooperation and improving mutual knowledge and understanding between Slovakia and the Donor states in area of transparency, good governance and accountable institutions, provided that both the beneficiary and the partner(s) are actively involved in planning of the initiative and its implementation. The Bilateral fund GGC shall support well-balanced partnerships (bilateral or multilateral) where all parties benefit from the cooperation.

The initiatives shall have a clear bilateral profile and serve the purpose of strengthening bilateral relations between Slovakia and Donor states in the Area of Support. Taking into account the unpredictable situation with COVID-19, it is mandatory to plan an online alternative for the activities within the initiative, therefore it is necessary to describe a mitigation plan for the possibility that the face-to-face activities could not be realized. The mitigation plan has to describe an eventual virtual fall-back option.

This call generally supports complex and longer-term initiatives instead of one-off activities. Taking into account principles of proportionality and the grant amount provided under this Call, complex initiatives consisting of interconnected activities combining various bilateral activities are expected. Welcomed are series of cooperation activities with a particular result, including round tables or discussions that will be logically planned and interconnected. An application focused solely on one-day workshops or an organisation of only one conference/discussion has lower likelihood to receive support under this Call.

Examples of activities that can be carried out under the Bilateral fund GGC:

- trainings and capacity building;
- conferences and smaller bilateral cooperation;
- workshops, meetings, visits and seminars on topic of common interest in the above mentioned Area of Support;
- development and/or translation of information material;
- networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, experience and best practice between Slovakia and donor states

² The Partnership Statement, Letter of Intent or other similar document proving the interest of the applicant and its partner/s to jointly implement 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. Should the partner request financial contribution, a Partnership Agreement shall be concluded after approval of the initiative, but prior to its implementation.

- studies with participants and/or inputs from Donor states and Slovakia;
- discussions and/ or visits between leading Slovak, Norwegian, Icelandic and Liechtenstein experts/professionals in the above mentioned Area of Support;
- lectures of leading (academic) experts/professionals from Slovakia and Donor States on the topics within the above mentioned Area of Support;
- creating of new ways of on-line management;
- round tables between students, NGOs, representatives of minorities or any other groups;
- campaigns, exhibitions and promotional materials;
- data collection;
- publishing of joint reports, studies and publications (virtual and/or physical).

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

Initiatives may not generate profit. If an initiative generates income as a part of its operation, the use of this income shall be described in the Grant Application.

The Applicant shall select at least 3 indicators listed in the Annex IV to the Bilateral Fund Guide. Implementation of the initiative must have a tangible result that both partners contributed to. It can be in form of a video, presentation, study, analysis, strategy, publication or others. 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. The Final Report should be submitted no later than two months following the practical completion of the activity. The Programme Operator reserves the right not to reimburse the grant or its part in case the above mentioned was not complied with.

3. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Under this Call, only expenditures falling under Article 8.8, point a) and c) of the Regulations³ are eligible. Eligible expenditures therefore are those related to:

- activities aiming at strengthening bilateral relations between the Donor States and Slovakia;
- networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice between entities in Slovakia and entities in the Donor States and/or international organisations.

Except for the so-called “excluded 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 in Article 8.2 of the Regulations.

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

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 given the short time-span of the initiative implementation. 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, issued by the National Focal Point.

In relation to the nature of this Call, the most common types of expenditures are salary costs and fees, rental of virtual rooms and/or premises, rental of equipment, travel and accommodation, costs of providing quality lecturers, moderators, costs of creating publications, development of videos and other kinds of communication materials, preparation of studies and monographs, or purchase of advertising or other media coverage costs.

4. GRANT APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION

All the Grant Applications shall be prepared in English and submitted electronically at eeagrants@mirri.gov.sk along with the following mandatory attachment:

- a) Signed Partnership Statement, Letter of Intent or other similar document proving the interest of the applicant and its partner/s to jointly implement the initiative². A recommended template for a statement can be found in the Bilateral Fund Guide (Annex 10).

The date and time of the submission of the Grant Application is identical to the date and time of its receipt by the server of the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic.

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

Grant Application should be submitted as DOC or DOCX files. Other annexes should be submitted as PDF files to prevent accidental loss of data.

The Grant Application shall be received in due time prior to the scheduled start of its implementation. When drafting the schedule, applicants shall take into account that the whole evaluation may take up to 4 weeks, thus it is recommended to plan the activities not earlier than 8 weeks following the submission of the Grant Application. While aiming to be flexible, a grant application submitted later than eight weeks before the planned start of a bilateral initiative shall be rejected by the Programme Operator. Resubmission can be allowed in case the Call closure is not approaching.

5. SELECTION PROCEDURES

The Grant Applications will be evaluated in the order they are received (FIFO principle), which means that the applications are being assessed in the exact same order in which they were delivered. The Selection Criteria are attached to this Call, where the detailed information on the selection procedures can be found.

6. FINANCING AND REPORTING

Payments are generally provided in the form of reimbursement of incurred expenses. If the amount of the grant exceeds EUR 25,000, after the agreement with the Program Operator, it is possible to provide an advance payment of up to 80% of the amount of the grant after signing the Agreement.

The reimbursement is based on the approved Final Report submitted by the beneficiary within two months after the completion of substantive implementation.

In case of longer initiatives (more than 6 months), an Interim Report shall be submitted, in order to report the progress in the implementation of the bilateral initiative.

7. STATE AID

The activities eligible under this Call (networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice; joint seminars; workshops and trainings; etc.) are aimed at cross-border cooperation between Slovakia and Donor states. The activities are non-economic in nature.

Before approving a Grant Application, the Programme Operator will carry out a state aid test. If applicable, the grant or its respective part can be provided as de minimis aid under the scheme number DM-8/2019 published at www.eeagrants.sk, if conditions for granting this aid are met.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Please note that all applicants are required to disclose any consultant⁴ involved in the preparation of the Grant Application.

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

- Bilateral Guideline issued by the Financial Mechanism Office;
- Bilateral Fund Guide issued by the National Focal Point;
- Regulation on implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021 and Regulation on implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021;

⁴ Staff of the Programme Operator providing general advices or answers on queries by phone is not considered consultants and therefore should not be listed on the list of consultants.

- Guidelines, instructions and other documents issued by the Financial Mechanism Office, National Focal Point and Ministry of Finance of the SR (Certifying Authority).

These documents are published on the websites <https://www.eeagrants.sk/en/basic-information/zakladne-dokumenty/> and/or <https://eeagrants.org/resources>. The Programme Operator may also introduce the FAQ section, if relevant.

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

The Programme Operator can be contacted for queries by:

- e-mail: eeagrants@mirri.gov.sk (the request needs to be linked to the call – by call code GGCBF02; questions received by e-mail will be responded within 10 days);
- phone: +421-2-2092 8464.

9. CALL ANNEXES

1. Grant Application form
2. Selection criteria and selection procedure