

OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS
ON FOSTERING INSTITUTIONAL CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION WITH UKRAINE
EEA Grants 2014 – 2021
SLOVAKIA

1. BASIC DATA AND CONDITIONS

The objective of the call is to find projects dedicated to fostering institutional cross-border cooperation with Ukraine related to good governance, accountable institutions, transparency and contributing to improved integrity and accountability of public administration.

Call launching:	16 th September 2019
Call closure:	31 st January 2020, 23:59 CET
Call number:	GGC01
Programme outcome(s):	Slovak-Ukrainian institutional cooperation enhanced
Programme output(s):	Measures fostering Slovak-Ukrainian cooperation implemented
Maximum grant to be applied for:	EUR 1,000,000
Minimum grant to be applied for:	EUR 200,000
Co-financing:	For public sector entities, co-financing is not required.
Total allocation:	EUR 2,000,000
Announced by:	Government Office of the Slovak Republic
Eligible applicants:	Any public entity established as a legal person in the Slovak Republic
Eligible partners:	<p>Mandatory partner: Any public entity established as a legal person in Ukraine</p> <p>Other partner: Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations established as a legal person either in the Donor States¹, Beneficiary States² or a country outside the European Economic Area that has a common border with the respective Beneficiary State³, or any international organisation or body or agency thereof, actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project.</p>
Further conditions:	<p>1. The mandatory attachments to the Grant Application are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Budget; b) Cross-border cooperation activities plan. The mandatory template is attached to this Call; c) Partnership Statement, Letter of Intent or other similar document proving the interest of the applicant and its partner to jointly

¹ Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein

² For the full list of the Beneficiary States consult the document Agreement on the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:02eed2b7-da51-11e5-8fea-01aa75ed71a1.0011.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

³ Ukraine

	implement the Project, signed by the mandatory partner. 2. This call is primarily not intended for infrastructure (hard measures) ⁴ .
Funding source(s):	EEA Grants and State Budget of the Slovak Republic

2. EXPECTATIONS AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The main ambition of this Call is to support **high quality projects fostering institutional cross-border cooperation** among Slovak and Ukrainian public institutions in the area of good governance, accountable institutions and transparency.

This call is primarily dedicated to national cooperation between Slovak and Ukrainian public institutions to support larger scale initiatives.

The Programme will support activities aimed at the improvement of integrity and accountability of public institutions in Slovakia and Ukraine. In addition, activities focused on facilitating the Ukrainian accession process to the EU shall be prioritised. All the projects shall include awareness raising activities and appropriate communication activities about the ambitions and the achieved results of the project to the general public.

Cooperation with NGOs as project partners/cooperating entities in the field of improvement of good governance, accountable institutions; transparency will be appreciated and encouraged.

Projects supported under this Programme contribute to the Programme Objective defined as *“Integrity and accountability of public administration improved”*.

Projects supported under this Call contribute to Programme Outcome defined as *Slovak-Ukrainian institutional cooperation enhanced* and one Programme Output defined as *Measures fostering Slovak-Ukrainian cooperation implemented*.

In the Application Form, applicants are obliged to set baseline and target values for the following Programme Indicators:

- Number of cooperation partnerships remaining between Slovak and Ukrainian Line Ministries at completion of the Programme⁵.
- Number of best practices transferred in the field of transparency from Slovakia to Ukraine - **Minimum target value of best practices transferred is 1 per project.**

⁴ For the purposes of the Programme the infrastructure (hard measures) are defined as any activities that require a building permit/a building announcement or purchase of buildings or estates.

⁵ Cooperation partnerships between Slovak and Ukrainian Line Ministries are not mandatory; however projects including such cooperation partnerships shall be prioritised. The final target value will be assessed by the Programme Operator at the end of implementation of the Programme.

- Number of people attending joint workshops organised between Slovak and Ukrainian public sector entities (disaggregated by gender). **Minimum target value of people attending joint workshops is 70 per project.**
- Number of secondments⁶ from Ukraine to Slovakia. **The minimum target value of secondments is 3 per project.**

No baseline values are required for output indicators, as all of them should automatically be set to zero.

The full results framework of the Programme is listed in the Annex I to the Programme Agreement for financing the Programme "Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency / Cross-border Cooperation" concluded between Slovakia and the Donor States and published at <http://www.eeagrants.sk>.

3. SELECTION CRITERIA AND PRIORITISED PROJECTS

Priority shall be given to:

- Projects with activities that are sufficiently described, needed and appropriate.
- Projects reflecting the recommendations of the *OECD recommendation of the Council on Public integrity*⁷.
- Projects to be implemented in partnership with entities from Norway/Iceland/Liechtenstein, especially a partner from the public sector.
- Projects aimed at facilitating the Ukrainian accession process to the EU.
- Projects including cooperation with an NGO active in the field of good governance as a project partner/cooperating entity.
- Projects involving cooperation with line ministries in Slovakia and Ukraine.

It is highly unlikely that one project will meet all the priorities of this Programme. It is also highly recommended **not to try** to meet all of them; otherwise, the project will be very hard to implement. For the success of the whole Programme, it is important that some projects contribute to certain priorities and other projects contribute to different ones.

Selection criteria, reflecting the above mentioned priorities, have been published along with the Call.

⁶ One secondment means involvement of one person.

⁷ <https://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/OECD-Recommendation-Public-Integrity.pdf>

4. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The project grant can be used for the following purposes and activities **in the area of good governance, accountable institutions and transparency**:

- (a) networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice,
- (b) joint seminars, workshops and trainings organized between Slovak and Ukrainian public institutions,
- (c) internships realized between Slovak and Ukrainian public institutions,
- (d) secondments from Ukraine to Slovakia,
- (e) improvement of the level of bilingualism in Slovak and Ukrainian public institutions (e. g. language course),
- (f) awareness raising and capacity building in Slovak and Ukrainian public institutions,
- (g) joint strategies of public institutions in Slovakia and Ukraine provided that at least one pilot element of the joint strategy is implemented within the project, and
- (h) awareness raising activities and the activities aiming at appropriate communication about the ambitions and the achieved results of the project to the general public (mandatory activity).

Within all projects, surveys shall be conducted at the beginning and at the end of the project, in order to identify the following baseline and target values:

- “Level of knowledge (reported by respondents) among Ukrainian participants involved in cooperation with Slovakia (on issues related to public procurement, judiciary, etc.) targeted by projects’ activities”

Project Promoters shall follow instructions of the Programme Operator in this regard.

Below please find more concrete examples of eligible activities:

- transfer of experience and best practices such as accessing various types of registers for public (e.g. central register of contracts, cadastral portal etc.), mandatory publication of internal acts and procedures, contracts, invoices, orders and various reports by the public institutions,
- transfer of experience and best practices aimed at establishing a register of partners of public sector,
- transfer of knowledge, technology and best practices in the area of public procurement from Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein,

- transfer of knowledge, technology and best practices in the area of protection of whistleblowers and anti-corruption measures,
- transfer of anti-bureaucracy measures,
- joint creation and implementation of a strategy aimed at good governance, accountable institutions and transparency, including the pilot element implementation,
- several months' secondment of Slovak and Ukrainian representatives of an analogous public institution in one of the Donor States regarding e.g. institutional transparency, integrity and/or accountability etc.,
- language courses for Ukrainian and Slovak employees at the border (e. g. English, Slovak, Ukrainian courses),
- cooperation of the public institutions in different areas such as culture, education etc. in order to transfer knowledge and best practices in relation to public, institutional accountability and transparency (e.g. national culture monuments and guide for owners and operators of the monument).

5. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

Except for the so-called “excluded expenditures” listed in Article 8.7 of the Regulation on the Implementation of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 („the Regulation“), all types of expenditures may 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.

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 30th April 2024) of the Regulation, whichever is earlier.

The inclusion of an expenditure item in a project budget approved by the Programme Operator cannot be considered as a prerequisite of its eligibility.

For the purpose of this Call, equipment⁸ costs shall be considered costs of non-current (long-term) tangible and intangible assets according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the applicant and/or project partner is established and according to generally accepted accounting principles.

Applicants and project partners may opt to submit proof of expenditure by way of an independent audit report. It is highly recommended that project partners from the Donor States or Beneficiary

⁸ 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. The entire purchase price of that equipment may only be eligible in case the PO determines that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project by way of exception from the rule.

States indeed opt to use this possibility and that they indicate the costs related to these audits in the Budget. For further information, see Article 8.12 of the Regulation.

6. RECOMMENDED MILESTONES AND TIMEFRAME

The Programme Operator highly recommends that the projects comply with the following time-frame:

Event/Milestone	Expected date
Call closure	January 2020
Project Contract signed	September 2020
Project completed	December 2023

As indicated in the table above, the entire selection process will last approximately 6 - 8 months.

7. PARTNERSHIP

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

It is mandatory to have at least one project partner from Ukraine – a public entity established as a legal person in Ukraine. If this condition is not met, the application shall be automatically rejected.

An example of suitable partnership is a transfer of know-how, development of joint strategies or internships between entities from Slovakia, Ukraine and Donor States. A poor example of a partnership is a situation in which the partner provides services for the applicant. This, in fact, is not a partnership within the meaning of this Call; this would be a business relation. Project partners are expected to actively contribute to the development of the project application, and this as well as their role should be very clearly reflected and elaborated in the project application.

In a working partnership, the Partner has its own budget and 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 statement, 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 partnership agreement shall be drafted in line with the point 7.7 of the Regulation. The draft agreement is subject to the Programme Operator's screening before it is concluded. **It is neither necessary nor recommended to enter into 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.

The number of partners receiving support under the Project is limited to 4. Other entities involved in the project can be mentioned in the Project Application as cooperating entities.

Partnership with Donor States entities

One of the two main objectives of the EEA Grants is to support the cooperation with Donor State entities. To this end, the Programme Operator has opened for the possibility to apply for a grant for the search and establishment of partnerships between Slovak and donor states entities. These activities can be funded under the Programme Bilateral Fund, which will provide small grants up to **5 000 EUR**, covering mainly the related travel costs.

Please, be aware that:

1. It is necessary to apply for these funds before the expenses have been incurred.
2. The grants will be disbursed in the form of reimbursement.

When searching for a suitable partner in Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein, the applicants may use one of the following tools:

1. Sending an inquiry with short description of the project to eeagrants@vlada.gov.sk. Such request will be shared with the Donor Programme Partner.
2. When searching for partners from Iceland, it is recommended to contact RANNIS as the contact point at Ragnhildur.Zoega@Rannis.is.
3. When searching for partners from Liechtenstein, it is recommended to contact the Programme Operator eeagrants@vlada.gov.sk with the description of the intent of the project and with the specified type of organisation the applicant is looking for
4. When searching for partners from Norway, it is recommended to contact the Norwegian Barents Secretariat as the contact point at Elizaveta@barents.no.

Further information can be found in the **Call for bilateral activities**, published at www.eeagrants.sk.

8. SELECTION PROCEDURES

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.

The Selection Committee shall consist of at least six persons possessing the relevant expertise. At least two of them shall be external to the Programme Operator and its Partners. The DPP shall be a voting member of the Selection Committee. The International Partner Organisation, the Financial Mechanism Committee, the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bratislava 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 project applications for compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria. Applicants whose project applications are rejected at this stage shall be informed and given a reasonable time to appeal that decision.

Each project application that meets the administrative and eligibility criteria shall be reviewed by two experts: one of these experts shall be appointed by the Programme Operator and the other shall be appointed by the DPP. The experts shall be impartial and independent of 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 projects, 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 projects.

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 SC can mainly give priority to the projects enabling to achieve the target value of the indicators, to cover the certain geographical regions lagging behind; and clearly defined less privileged target groups. The justification for the modifications shall be detailed in the minutes of the meeting of the Selection Committee. If such a modification results in a project's rejection, the affected applicant shall be informed in writing about the justification for the modification. The Selection Committee shall submit the list of recommended projects 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. If, in exceptional cases, the Programme Operator modifies the decision of the Selection Committee or suggests modification of the project, it shall inform the Selection Committee and the applicants affected and provide them with a justification.

The Programme Operator shall notify the applicants about the results of the selection process within a reasonable time and publish the results.

9. FINANCING AND REPORTING

Payments of the project grant shall take the form of advance payment, interim payments and a final payment. The level of advance payment to projects shall be set out in the project contract. The maximum level of advance payment shall be linked to the project budget and duration as follows:

Project implementation duration ⁹	Advance payment	1 st Interim payment	2 nd Interim payment	3 rd Interim payment	4 th Interim payment	Final payment ¹⁰
Less than 24 months	20%	40%	30%	-	-	10%
24-36 months	15%	30%	25%	20%	-	10%
More than 36 months	10%	20%	20%	25%	15%	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 shall 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 1 month after the approval of project interim reports.

10. STATE AID

The activities eligible under the Call (networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice; joint seminars; workshops and trainings; internships; secondments etc.) are aimed at institutional cross-border cooperation between Slovakia and Ukraine. The activities are non-economic in nature and the applicant is a public organization established as a legal person in Slovakia, the state aid rules are not applied to the Call.

Before approving a project application the Programme Operator will carry out a state aid test.

⁹ 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 to proceed with these payments.

¹⁰ Retention may be applied at the end of the implementation or pro rata from each advance payment and interim payments.

11. PROJECT APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION

Project Application shall be prepared in English and submitted electronically via the web application accessible at [directlink](#) until the date and time of the call closure specified in Chapter 1 of this Call (Basic data and conditions). The Application Form can be found at [directlink](#) and the user guide at [directlink](#).

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

1. Budget (template is attached to this Call);
2. Cross-border cooperation activities plan (template is attached to this Call);
3. Partnership statement, letter of intent or other similar documents proving the interest of at least one mandatory partner in participating on the implementation of the project. The document should be signed and submitted as a scanned version.

The date and time of the submission of the Project Application is identical to the date on and time of its receipt by the server of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic.

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

Project Application and the Budget should be submitted as XLS or XLSX files. Other annexes should be submitted as PDF files to prevent accidental loss of data.

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.

Before and during preparation of a Project Application the applicant is strongly advised to comply with the following documents, as amended.

- Guideline for Applicants
- Guideline for Project Promoters and Project Partners
- Project contract template

Further recommended documents are:

- Programme Agreement for the financing of the Programme “Cross-border Cooperation/Good governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency”;
- Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021;

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

These documents are published on the websites www.eeagrants.sk / www.norwaygrants.sk and/or www.eeagrants.org. The Programme Operator may also introduce the FAQ section, if relevant.

The complaints page of the NFP can be found under this link: [complaints](#).

The Programme Operator can be contacted for queries by:

- e-mail: eeagrants@vlada.gov.sk (the request needs to be linked to the call - by call code GGC01; questions received by e-mail will be responded within 10 days);
- phone: +421-2-209 25 516.

13. CALL ANNEXES

1. Application Form
2. Budget template
3. Cross-border cooperation activities plan
4. Selection Criteria
5. Selection Committee Statute and Rules of Procedures