



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
Ministry of Education and Science

**Programme of the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area
2009-2014**

**THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME
BG09**

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS
FOR BILATERAL ACTIONS**

1 June 2016

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Ministry of Education and Science has been appointed as the Programme Operator for the EEA Scholarship Programme BG09 under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism (EEA FM) for the programme period 2009-2014.

The main objective of the Programme is strengthening the cooperation between Bulgaria and the EEA EFTA states (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) in the field of higher education and scientific research, via the allocation of financing for implementation of projects.

The operational objectives of the Programme are the following:

- Increasing the mobility of students and staff in the higher education system between Bulgaria and the donor states;
- Reinforcing the cooperation between higher education institutions (HEIs) from Bulgaria and the donor states through elaborating joint curricula and study modules;
- Raising the competence level of Bulgarian teachers, researchers and administrative staff in higher education and science;
- Boosting the quality and applicability of the educational programmes, offered by the Bulgarian HEIs.

The activities within the Programme are open to all areas of higher education and all scientific fields, including priority fields aimed towards meeting the general goal of 10 % of the EEA FM funds to be utilized in support of the socio-economic inclusion of citizens from Roma origin, as follows:

- 1) *Pedagogical sciences*, incl. courses for continuing training of teachers.

The projects/bilateral actions in this field should be with emphasis on the inclusive education, including:

- ✓ educational integration in the educational system of pupils from other ethno-cultural groups and groups in a disadvantaged position, including from Roma origin;
- ✓ training in a multicultural environment;
- ✓ education in human rights;
- ✓ pedagogical methods and approaches for keeping children at school, for reducing early school leaving, etc.

- 2) *Medicine and dental medicine*, incl. different specialties, with a particular focus on health of ethnical minority groups, including of Roma origin.
- 3) *Social sciences*, with an accent on strengthening social cohesion, in particular of Roma.
- 4) Other areas and professional fields in higher education and scientific specialties, besides those in 1)-3), which have impact over the socio-economic inclusion, in particular, of people from Roma origin by means of higher education and research.

Defining a project/bilateral action as a project/bilateral action in a priority fields should be clearly stated and justifies by the Applicant. In such a case the project activities should have a direct impact onto improving the social-economic inclusion of citizens from disadvantaged groups, including with Roma origin, by means of higher education and research.

Projects/bilateral actions in priority fields of the Programme receive extra points in the process of evaluation.

It is mandatory for all applicants, prior to their participation in the competition, to have made themselves familiar with the documents and guidelines for participation in the activities of the EEA FM, which are available on www.eeagrants.org, including the **EEA FM Regulation:**

<http://eeagrants.org/Results-data/Resultsoverview/Documents/Legal-documents/Regulations-with-annexes/EEA-Grants-2009-2014>

DESCRIPTION OF THE CALL

The present call for proposals for bilateral actions under the programme bilateral fund of BG09 programme is aimed to strengthening bilateral relations at institutional level between education and training institutions, including higher education and research institutions on one hand, and private sector – enterprises and social partners cooperating with education and research institutions, private and public organizations including not-for-profit and non-governmental institutions from Bulgaria and the Donor States of the EEA FM (Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein) on another hand in accordance with the activities listed in Art. 6.3 (b) of the EEA FM Regulation 2009-2014, i.e. activities aimed to facilitate networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice between organisations from Bulgaria and entities in the Donor States.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

Applicants can be officially recognized or accredited education and training institutions including state, municipal and private schools, vocational training centres, higher education institutions and officially recognized scientific organizations from Bulgaria and the donor states.

ELIGIBLE DONOR PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

The eligible partner institutions from the donor states are officially recognized education and training institutions, including higher education institutions, research institutions, private sector – enterprises and social partners cooperating with education and research institutions, private and public organizations including not-for-profit and non-governmental institutions.

ELIGIBLE PARTNERS FROM BULGARIA – optional

The eligible partner institutions from Bulgaria are officially recognized education and training institutions including higher education institutions, research institutions, private sector – enterprises and social partners cooperating with education, training and research institutions, private and public organisations including not-for-profit and non-governmental institutions.

ELIGIBLE ACTIONS

1. participation in conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops;
2. study trips (up to 5 days including days for travelling);
3. visits by experts (up to 5-day visits including days for travelling);
4. feasibility studies and preparation of financial and economic analysis;
5. organization of conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops.

PERIOD FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF BILATERAL ACTIONS

The period for implementation of a bilateral action under this Call is from 30 June 2016 to 31 January 2017.

TOTAL BUDGET OF THE PROGRAMME BILATERAL FUND: 81 500 €.

TOTAL BUDGET UNDER THIS CALL: 64 000 €.

GRANT AMOUNTS

The minimum amount of grant requested for implementation of bilateral actions shall be 5000 € while the maximum amount of the grant requested shall be 10000 €.

PAYMENT MODEL

The beneficiary institution can receive an advance payment of up to 80% of grant awarded, which will be made within 15 days after the grant agreement is signed. The advance payment will be used as working capital throughout the implementation of the bilateral action. The payment of the final balance (up to 20%) will be made no later than 15 days after the approval of the final report.

REPORTING

The beneficiary submits a final narrative and financial report within 14 days after completion of the bilateral activity.

ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

The following expenditures are eligible in implementation of a bilateral action:

- fees, travel costs, accommodation costs and daily subsistence allowance for participation in conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops;
- travel costs, accommodation costs and daily subsistence allowance for study trips;
- travel costs, accommodation costs and daily subsistence allowance, and salary costs for visits by experts;
- costs related to feasibility studies and preparation of financial and economic analysis;
- costs of conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops;
- purchase of data necessary for the preparation of the application;
- external consultancy fees;
- additional, individual cost resulting from disability (if applicable).

The expenditures shall become eligible as of the date of concluding a Contract between the Programme Operator and the Beneficiary. Deadline for the expenditure eligibility is the contract deadline.

Hotel accommodation and daily subsistence allowance for Bulgarian citizens, citizens of other member states of the EU, and EEA EFTA citizens are according to applicable rates to the per diems according to EC-funded external aid contracts and in case of missions requiring an overnight stay away from the base of operations, which is specified in <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/perdiem-rate-20150318.pdf>

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

I. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

Applicant institutions should apply by submitting applications to the Programme Operator (Ministry of Education and Science) within the deadline of the Call.

The call launching date is 1 June 2016 and the deadline for submission of applications is 9 December 2016 or until funds depletion.

The grant applications submitted shall be continuously evaluated as they are registered, until the entire financial allocation is spent. The applicants shall be notified about the selection results within 20 days after submission of the grant application. The final list of beneficiaries shall be published on the web site of the PO within 10 days after the final selection results become available.

A package of accompanying documents must be enclosed to the proposal. The list of the necessary accompanying documents is enclosed to the application sheet.

The applicant institutions shall submit paper versions of their applications in 2 identical packages – one in Bulgarian and one in English language.

METHOD OF DELIVERY

The proposals must be submitted in sealed and intact envelope/package received in the form of letter/parcel through registered mail or express delivery, courier or by post on the following postal address:

ADDRESS OF SUBMISSION

European and International Cooperation Directorate
Ministry of Education and Science
2A Kniaz Dondukov blvd.
1000 Sofia

VALID DATE OF POSTAL STAMP: 09.12.2016

II. PROCEDURE FOR SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

The selection procedure of applications under *the programme Bilateral Fund* is implemented by the Programme Operator only on *first come first served basis* upon depletion of funds available and consists of the following 3 stages:

1. *Administrative conformity check-up*, which should be performed by the Programme Operator's team;
2. *Eligibility check-up*, which should be performed by the Programme Operator's team;
3. *Evaluation by the Selection Committee*, which consists of experts from the Programme Operator and the Donor Programme Partners.

The Selection Committee considers and assesses the applications, which have successfully reached that stage; i. e. that have successfully passed all two previous stages of selection, and prepares a proposal for the selection decision. The Head of Programme Operator approves the selection decision proposed by the Selection Committee.

The evaluation during each of the stages of the selection procedure listed above should be made using the selection criteria published in the present Call for proposals. Before starting the selection process the Chair, the Secretary and the members of all the selection commissions, including the Selection Committee, should sign declarations for a lack of conflict of interests with the applicants.

The selection criteria are presented below:

№	Assessment Stage/Criteria	Yes/No/ Points
1	Stage 1 "Administrative compliance check-up"	Yes/No

1.1	The application is submitted within defined deadline	
1.2	The application is submitted using appropriate application forms	
1.3	The applicant institution has submitted the following mandatory documents in Bulgarian and English language:	
1.3.1	Application forms according to the template published to the present call for proposals;	
1.3.2	Annex 1: Declaration of the applicant according to Article 6.2 of the EEA FM Regulation 2009-2014 – for non-budgetary organizations or Annex 2: Declaration of the applicant according to Article 6.2 of the EEA FM Regulation 2009-2014 – for budgetary organizations	
1.3.3	Annex 3: Declaration on the VAT Act status	
1.3.4	Annex 4: Declaration by the applicant for documents at the negotiating stage	
1.3.5	Annex 5: Declaration to a request for a grant under the programme Bilateral Fund concerning the reception of other minimal aid during the two preceding fiscal years and during the current fiscal year (pursuant Commission Regulation (EC) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU to <i>de minimis</i> aid)	
1.3.7	A copy of the Letter of Intent from the Donor Partner Institution concerning the implementation of the proposed bilateral action	
1.3.8	Programme or a plan for implementation of bilateral activities to be implemented during the bilateral action	

1.4	The application forms are signed, dated and stamped by the Applicant's stamp	
1.5	The date of signing the application forms is within the deadline for application	
1.6	All mandatory annexes according to the application form are enclosed, duly signed, dated and stamped. The dates of each one of the annexes are not after the date in the completed application form	
1.7	Additional (supporting) documents are enclosed if applicable	
2	Stage 2 "Eligibility check-up"	Yes/No
2.1	The applicant is officially recognized education, training or research institution from Bulgaria, Norway, Iceland, or Liechtenstein	
2.2	The partner institution/s from the donor state/s is/are officially recognized education, training and/or research institution/s, private sector – enterprises and social partners cooperating with education and research institutions, private and public organizations including not-for-profit and non-governmental institutions	
2.3	The partner institution/s from Bulgaria is/are officially recognized education, training and/or research institution/s, private sector – enterprises and social partners cooperating with education, training and research institutions, private and public organisations including not-for-profit and non-governmental institutions	
2.3	The application is signed by the authorized person representing the applicant institution	
2.4	The aims of the bilateral action are in line with those stated in the present call for proposals	

2.5	The period of implementation of the bilateral action is pointed out in terms of concrete dates and is within the eligibility period of the present Call	
3	Stage 3 “Assessment by the Selection Committee”	0-25 points
3.1	The objectives and the expected outcomes of the bilateral action are clearly stated and justified	0-2 points
3.2	The objectives and the expected outcomes of the bilateral action are in line with the main objectives of the EEA Financial Mechanism	0-2 points
3.3	There is compliance between the Applicant’s institutional profile, the purpose of the bilateral action and the vision for bilateral cooperation	0-3 points
3.4	Agenda or plan for the activities to be undertaken during the bilateral action are presented and are in line with the eligible bilateral actions stated in the call for proposals	0-2 points
3.5	The Applicant has planned and described the concept of cooperation with the donor partner institution/s, and the partner institution/s from Bulgaria (if applicable) in the proper and realistic way	0-3 points
3.6	The Applicant has justified in clear and realistic way how the mutual cooperation will be strengthened in result of the bilateral action. Specific results of the bilateral action are planned in this respect.	0-3 points
3.7	Benefits for all the participating institutions are clearly stated and justified	0-3 points
3.8	There is compliance between the contents of the Letter of Intent and the application contents	0-3 points
3.9	The budget needed for the implementation of the bilateral action is	0-3 points

	correctly calculated, realistic and justified	
3.10	The bilateral action is in a priority area for BG09 programme.	Yes/No
3.11	The bilateral action contains activity/ies in priority area(s) for the BG09 programme, which is/are expected to have a direct impact to meeting the EEA FM objective for supporting the Roma inclusion. Reaching this direct impact is clearly stated and justified.	0-1 point

If the answer of one of the criteria listed below is negative, then the application is rejected, as follows:

- ✓ Criterion 1.1;
- ✓ Criterion 1.5;
- ✓ Criterion 2.1-2.5, excluding the case of a lack of exact timeframe for implementation of the bilateral action, or dates that does not correspond with the project eligibility period. In such a case the Programme Operator has the right to request the applicant's institution to submit new written correspondence between the project promoter and the donor partner with eligible timeframe or formally withdraw the application. In the meantime the application is allowed to pass to the next stage of evaluation upon condition. In case of approval for funding, the contract shall be concluded after receiving the written correspondence containing eligible timeframe.

In case of missing and incomplete documentation, the Programme Operator has the right to request them from the Applicant. The Applicant should submit the respective documentation within 7-day deadline upon receipt of the official letter. In this case the further evaluation of the respective application is suspended upon receiving the requested documents.

If an application submitted under this call receives a total score of less than 20 points out of 25 points in total at stage 3 "Assessment by the Selection Committee", then the application is proposed for non-funding.

POSSIBILITY OF APPEAL OF DECISION

Applicants whose applications are proposed for rejection on administrative check-up and eligibility check-up stages can submit written objections against their rejection to the Head of

Programme Operator within 7-day deadline after the announcement of the list of applicants proposed for rejection on the web site of the Programme Operator.

The Head of Programme Operator proposes experts to conduct a check-up of the justification of objection. These experts are authorized to perform this task by an Order of the Minister of Education and Science. These experts should not be any members of the respective selection commission that has performed the primary administrative and eligibility check-ups of applications.

After completion of the check-up for solidity of objection the authorized experts prepare a written statement with their findings and conclusions and submit it to the Head of Programme Operator.

The Head of Programme Operator concludes on the solidity of each objection. If any objection is solid, the respective application is to be returned back to the stage of assessing administrative compliance/eligibility.

The Head of Programme Operator informs the applicants who have submitted objections about the outcomes of the reconsideration procedure within 7-day deadline after the date when the particular objection has been submitted.

CONTACT PERSON

For general information about the opportunities for participation in the EEA FM Scholarship Programme BG09 the applicants and their partners can contact Ms Mimi Daneva – a contact person of the Programme Operator – tel. +359 2 424 11 07; email: m.daneva@mon.bg.

In case of enquires regarding the financial matters the applicants and their partners can contact Mr. Georgi Getov – financial expert from the team of the Programme Operator – tel. +359 2 9217 416; email: g.getov@mon.bg.

DONOR PROGRAMME PARTNERS

Norway:

The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) is the main programme partner of the Programme Operator in Norway. SIU is the National Agency for international programmes and measures related to education. SIU is the main contact point for cooperation with Norwegian institutions and organizations in the fields of education and training.

The Research Council of Norway is the main contact point in Norway in the field of scientific research.

For additional information, please visit:

- The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education:

<http://siu.no>

or contact by email:

Mrs. Veena Gil, senior advisor (email: veena.gil@siu.no) or

Mr. Frank Moe, senior advisor (email: frank.moe@siu.no)

- The Research Council of Norway:

<http://www.rcn.no>

Education and training institutions and scientific organizations, which seek partners from Norway, can register in the following databases:

Database maintained by SIU:

<http://siu.no/eng/Front-Page/EEA-Partner-search>

Database maintained by the Research Council of Norway:

http://www.forskningsradet.no/no/Artikkel/Partner_search/1253981563289

Iceland:

The Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS) is the programme partner in Iceland. RANNIS is ready to assist, inform and guide interested parties, who seek potential cooperation and other opportunities for research or exchange of experience with partner organizations from Iceland.

For additional information, please visit <http://www.rannis.is> or contact by email

Mr. Vidar Helgason, senior advisor (email: vidar.helgason@rannis.is)

Liechtenstein:

The Agency for International Education Affairs (AIBA) is the programme partner in Liechtenstein. AIBA is the National Agency of Liechtenstein for the European educational programmes, regional and international projects in the field of education.

For additional information, please visit www.eeagrants-li.com or contact by email Mrs. Marion Kindle-Kuehnis, project manager EEA Grants (marion-aiba@llv.li).

WEB PAGES IN ENGLISH AND BULGARIAN WITH INFORMATION ON THE CALL:

▪ **Web Site of the BG09 programme:**

<http://mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=13&subpageId=257>

▪ **DPPs' web-sites:**

✓ <http://siu.no>

✓ <http://en.rannis.is/>

✓ www.eeagrants-li.com

▪ **EEA FM Web-site:**

Eeagrants.org