



THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

Ministry of Education and Science

Programme of the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area

THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME BG09

CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS

PREPARATORY VISITS MEASURE

30th September 2014

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 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 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 in this field should be with emphasis on the inclusive education, including:

- ✓ training of children and pupils with special educational needs;
- ✓ educational integration in the educational system of pupils from other ethnocultural 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) *Agrarian sciences*, with a focus on enhancing economic and social cohesion and integration of people in a disadvantaged social position, in particular from Roma origin through provision of joint training courses in Agriculture.
- 5) Other areas and professional fields in higher education and scientific specialties, besides those in 1)-4), which have impact over the socio-economic inclusion, in particular, of people from Roma origin.

Projects in priority fields should have a direct impact on improving the socio-economic inclusion of people from disadvantaged groups, including of Roma origin, by means of education, training, and research.

Projects in priority fields receive extra points in the process of evaluation under the three measures of the Programme.

It is mandatory for all candidates, 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/Results-overview/Documents/Legal-documents/Regulations-with-annexes/EEA-Grants-2009-2014>

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>

- **The Research Council of Norway:**

<http://www.rcn.no>

Higher education 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>

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 <http://www.aiba.llv.li/>

DESCRIPTION OF THE CALL:

The Preparatory visits Measure is designed for higher education and research institutions from Bulgaria and the donor states wishing to establish contacts and settle the grounds for future bilateral or multilateral cooperation and development of joint activities under the other programme measures (“Mobility projects in higher education” and “Inter-institutional cooperation projects”).

The applicant should have at least one partner institution, which will be the host of the preparatory visit.

Single call for project proposals is envisaged under this programme measure. It should be announced in third semester of 2014 and will remain open for two months.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

Applicants can be accredited higher education institutions and officially recognized scientific organizations from Bulgaria and the donor states or enterprises and social partners from Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein cooperating with higher education and research institutions, private and public organisations including not-for-profit and non-governmental institutions.

ELIGIBLE DONOR PARTNER INSTITUTIONS:

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

Partners from Bulgaria

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

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES UNDER THE PROJECTS:

Preparatory visits are short-term mobilities of representatives of higher education and research institutions, aiming at:

- establishing cooperation between institutions, preparing and signing bilateral/multilateral cooperation agreements;
- supporting and developing of existing inter-institutional contacts;
- preparing and planning joint projects under the other measures of the BG09 programme and the EEA FM in general.

DURATION OF A PREPARATORY VISIT

Duration of one visit is from 1 up to 5 working days, excluding days for travelling. Travels between the home to the host country and vice versa should not be longer than 1 day.

PERIOD FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VISITS:

The period for implementation of a preparatory visit under this Call is from 1 February 2015 to 30 September 2015.

TOTAL BUDGET FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEASURE: 65 000 EUR.

TOTAL BUDGET UNDER THIS CALL: 65 000 EUR.

GRANT AMOUNTS:

The amount of the grant is up to 4000 EUR per visit.

PAYMENT MODEL

The beneficiary institution can receive an advance payment of up to 80% of grant awarded, which will be made within 30 days after the grant agreement is signed. The advance payment will be used as working capital throughout the implementation of the visit. The payment of the final balance (up to 20%) will be made no later than 30 days after the approval of the final report.

REPORTING

The beneficiary submits a final narrative and financial report within 1 month of the completion of the preparatory visit.

ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES:

The following expenditures are eligible in implementation of a preparatory visit:

- travel expenses;
- hotel accommodation;
- daily subsistence allowance;
- medical insurance for travelling abroad;
- 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

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/per_diems/documents/perdiem_2013_07_corrigenum_3_febr_2014.pdf

DEADLINES:

- **28.11.2014 at 12.00 h Bulgarian time: Submission of the documents at the Programme Operator**
- **30.12.2014: Announcement of the approved candidates**

ADDRESS OF SUBMISSION

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

METHOD OF DELIVERY

Paper version of application should be submitted in two copies – one written in Bulgarian language and one – in English.

VALID DATE OF POSTAL STAMP: 28.11.2014.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES:

The selection of project proposals under *Preparatory Visits* measure is implemented entirely by the Programme Operator and consists of the following 3 stages:

1. *Administrative conformity and eligibility check-up*, which should be performed by the Programme Operator's team – criteria for this stage are:
 - ✓ The project proposal is submitted within the deadline;
 - ✓ The correct grant application form is used in accordance with the call;
 - ✓ The project proposal is signed by the authorized person (Rector of the HEI, President or Director of the scientific organization);
 - ✓ All mandatory annexes are enclosed;
 - ✓ The applicant is accredited/officially recognized higher education or research institutions. The partner institution(s) correspond to the respective requirements described in the call for proposals.

2. *Independent evaluation*, which should be performed by two independent external expert-evaluators who evaluate the project proposals and put them forward for further evaluation by the Selection Committee;
3. *Evaluation by a Selection Committee*, which consists of representatives from the Programme Operator, HEIs and scientific organizations. All members of the Selection Committee should preliminarily sign declarations for a lack of conflict of interests. The Selection Committee prepares the selection decision, which is signed by the Head of Programme Operator.

The evaluation criteria, which will be used during the stages of independent evaluation and evaluation by the Selection Committee are related to the project eligibility and quality and are presented in the table below:

№	Criterion	Points
1.	Administrative compliance check-up	Yes/No
1.1	The project is submitted within defined deadline	Yes/No
1.2	The project is submitted using appropriate application forms	Yes/No
1.3	The project is signed by relevant persons	Yes/No
1.4	Official letters confirming that the applicant and the partner(s) are supporting the visit are enclosed	Yes/No
1.5	All required mandatory annexes are attached	Yes/No
2.	Eligibility check-up	Yes/No
2.1	The applicant is officially recognized higher education or research institution from Bulgaria, Norway, Iceland, or Liechtenstein or enterprises and social partners from Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein cooperating with higher education and research institutions, private and public organisations including not-for-profit and non-governmental	Yes/No

	institutions	
2.2	The host institution(s) is/are officially recognized higher education or research institution(s) from Bulgaria, Norway, Iceland, or Liechtenstein or enterprise(s) and social partner(s) from Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein cooperating with higher education and research institutions, private and public organisations including not-for-profit and non-governmental institutions	Yes/No
3.	Quality of the project proposal	
3.1	The objectives and the expected outcomes of the visit are clearly stated and justified.	0-2
3.2	The objectives of the visit and the expected outcomes are in line with the Programme BG09 objectives and the main objectives of the EEA Financial Mechanism	0-2
3.3	There is a compliance between the Applicant's institutional profile, the purpose of the visit and the vision for future cooperation	0-3
3.4	Agenda or plan for the activities to be undertaken during the visit are presented and are in line with the project objectives	0-2
3.5	The Applicant has planned and described the concept of future cooperation with the host institution in the proper and realistic way	0-3
3.6	The Applicant has justified in clear and realistic way how the mutual cooperation will be strengthened due to the planned visit. Specific results of the visit are planned in this respect.	0-3
3.7	Benefits for all the participating institutions are clearly stated and justified.	0-3

3.8	There is compliance between the contents of the official letters of participating institutions and the application contents.	0-3
3.9	The project budget is correctly calculated, realistic and justified.	0-3
Maximum total grade regarding Criterion № 3:		24
4.	Orientation of project activities in a priority area for BG09 programme	1
4.1	The application contains activity/ies in priority area(s) for the BG09 programme, which is/are expected to have a direct contribution to meeting the EEA FM objective for supporting the Roma inclusion. This direct contribution is clearly stated and justified.	0-1
Maximum total grade regarding Criterion № 4:		1
	Maximum total grade (a sum of the grades regarding Criterion № 3 and Criterion № 4):	25

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.

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 assessing commission that has performed the primary administrative and eligibility check-ups of applications.

After completion of the check-up for solidity of objection the authorised experts prepare 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 can contact the institutional coordinators¹ at the respective higher education and research institutions or Ms Mimi Daneva – a contact person of the Programme Operator – tel. +359 2 424 11 07; email: m.daneva@mon.bg.

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/>
- <http://www.lebenslangeslernen.li/>

Embassy of Norway in Sofia: <http://www.norvegia.bg/>

EEA FM Web-site: Eeagrants.org

APPLICATION FORMS CAN BE DOWNLOADED:

[HTTP://MON.BG/?GO=PAGE&PAGEID=13&SUBPAGEID=257](http://MON.BG/?GO=PAGE&PAGEID=13&SUBPAGEID=257)

¹ The list of institutional coordinators from Bulgarian higher education and research institutions is published and is accessible on the website of BG09 programme, at address: <http://mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=13&subpageId=257>