

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Call for proposals EACEA No 10/2014

Key Action 3: Support for policy reform - Prospective initiatives

European policy experimentations in the fields of Education and Training, and Youth:
trans-national cooperation for the implementation of innovative policies under the leadership
of high-level public authorities

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1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

1.1 Policy experimentation – definition and caveats

Effective and efficient reforms require a solid evidence base that enables to plan the most appropriate actions and to identify and avoid potential risks. Innovative policies usually involve a certain degree of uncertainty and risk. Experimentations in real life situations enable policy-makers to perform solid reality checks that help them to make informed choices against objective and realistic outcomes. This approach is consistent with the increased need to ensure efficient public spending while responding to stakeholders' needs and expectations.

The present call seeks high-level institutional leadership in order to generate a strong and sustainable systemic impact. The policy experimentations need to be placed in a clear and consistent policy perspective. The work undertaken under this call shall therefore be based on trans-national cooperation between **public authorities** at the highest level (Ministry or equivalent) responsible for developing and implementing policies in education, training and youth in the eligible countries², in particular top-level authorities involved in the Open Methods of Coordination in these fields. These authorities should be actively committed to the project by building a partnership with other peer authorities, ensure strong policy leadership and steering of the project, and secure the exploitation of results, in particular scalability.

In the context of the present call, public authorities responsible for education, training, and youth at the highest institutional level (Ministries or equivalent) - hereafter referred to as “the responsible public authorities” - should aim at evaluating the potential impact of an innovative policy measure by testing it through trials in the field, on a sample of potential beneficiaries, before deciding whether it should be applied to the whole target population. Policy experimentations are inspired by so-called “experimental” or “semi-experimental” scientific methods that verify hypotheses in a “*controlled*” environment, i.e. through measurable direct interventions and comparisons (e.g. “before/after”, or “treated”/“non-treated” groups) instead of observational studies or theoretical analyses. The experimentation allows verifying a *causality link* between the measure and the *change* (or lack of change) in the sample that has occurred through the measure.

For a policy experimentation to take place, the responsible public authorities will need to identify a potentially relevant measure that has already undergone some impact analysis

¹ The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing ‘Erasmus+’: the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, in particular Articles 9 and 15 – Support for policy reform - constitutes the legal basis for the present call.

² see Section 5 for the definition of eligible countries

and/or evaluation. By providing a concrete and substantial verification of the potential impact of such measure, a well conducted experimentation is likely to secure smooth and effective implementation and wide and sustainable stakeholder consensus on the measure.

Experimentation is a complex and costly process that is likely to be cost-effective when applied to test significant and substantial policy measures. It needs to take place at the appropriate stage in a policy process: in an ex-ante evaluation process involving several progressive steps towards implementation, experimentation could be one of the final steps, confirming already robust assumptions and identifying and testing scalable approaches.

The responsible public authorities' decision to undertake experimentations should be based on a number of key general considerations, which are outlined in the present call, and on more distinctive elements linked to country- and/or sector-specific contexts, bearing in mind that the *quality of the evaluation* of the experimentation results is absolutely essential.

The call supports European policy experimentations in two fields:

- Education and Training
- Youth

Each field has specific priorities (see section 2) and is allocated a specific budget (see section 4). Applicants must indicate clearly in the application form which field they are addressing.

The call is divided in two submission/evaluation stages: pre-proposal stage and full proposal stage (see Section 3).

The management of this call is delegated by the European Commission to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency³, hereinafter referred to as "the Agency".

1.2 Policy context

The economic and financial crisis is having dramatic socio-economic effects in Europe. It is threatening Europe's economic growth and employment and the sustainability of Europe's social welfare model.

The Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, endorsed by the European Council in 2010, aims at helping Member States to overcome the economic downturn and to boost economic recovery, employment and competitiveness.

The broad mission of education, training and youth policy encompasses objectives such as active citizenship, personal development and well-being. While these go hand in hand with the need to upgrade skills for employability, against the backdrop of sluggish economic growth and a shrinking workforce due to demographic ageing, the most pressing challenges for governments are to address the needs of the economy and focus on solutions to tackle fast-rising unemployment, particularly among young people.

By supporting the responsible public authorities in carrying out policy reforms in the fields of education and training and of youth, the Erasmus+ programme, and specifically Prospective

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<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu>

Initiatives under Key Action 3, aims at helping eligible countries to use the potential of Europe's human capital and talent efficiently in order to achieve the Europe 2020 goals. In practice, this involves supporting the preparation, implementation and follow-up of the European Semester as far as education, training and youth are concerned - including the Annual Growth Survey and the country-specific recommendations - through the Open Methods of Coordination in the fields of education and training and of youth: respectively, the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020) and the Renewed Framework for cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), as well as other EU sector-specific policy agendas such as the Agenda for the modernisation of Europe's Higher Education, the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, and the European Agenda for Adult Learning. Certain policies are successful on a small scale, but some have the potential to be replicated in other contexts or to contribute to a wider systemic change. It is therefore appropriate to test the relevance, impact and efficiency of innovative policies before full-scale implementation. This call aims at enabling the competent authorities of the eligible countries to collect and evaluate relevant evidence to back and monitor policy reform using solid and widely recognised evaluation methods involving large scale field trials.

2. OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY THEMES

2.1. Objectives

The objectives of this call are to:

- Promote trans-national cooperation and mutual learning between competent authorities at the highest level in order to test and improve policy implementation systems, structures and processes, with a potentially significant impact
- Facilitate the collection and analysis of substantive evidence allowing the responsible public authorities to assess and monitor the implementation of innovative policies
- Identify key criteria and conditions for effective policy implementation and monitoring
- Facilitate transferability and scalability

2.2. Priority themes

Proposals submitted under the present call should tackle only one of the following priorities. Applicants are free to consider any specific aspect or measures within a priority theme.

Priority theme 1 to 4 apply to the Education and Training field, while priority 5 applies to the Youth field. If the proposal addresses priority 5 you should tick the box Youth Policy on the front page of the application form. Similarly if the proposal addresses priorities 1 to 4 you should tick the box Education and Training.

These priorities are exclusive: proposals focusing on other themes will not be considered for funding. In the context of the priorities listed below, applicants are encouraged to include - when relevant and appropriate – efficiency evaluations, e.g. based on cost-benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis.

– **Priority theme 1 - Education and Training: Assessment of transversal skills in basic and secondary education**

The responsible public authorities will seek, through this action, to identify, design and test assessment tools of transversal skills such as **digital competences, entrepreneurship and linguistic skills** across large scale pilots in formal primary and secondary compulsory education. Defined as a policy priority by the Council conclusions on Investing in education and training – a response to the Commission Communication ‘Rethinking education : investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’ and the recent EU Initiative on Opening up Education, assessment of transversal skills should be a core part of formal school education. Individuals should also be able to have their skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning - including those acquired through open digital sources - assessed, validated and recognised (see Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning).

While many countries have reformed school curricula, it remains a challenge for governments to modernise assessment to support learning and teaching. Based on on-going work to define and describe transversal skills in terms of learning outcomes, assessment and evaluation methods have to be adapted to cover these. Assessment of transversal skills requires a fundamental rethinking as being proven by a worldwide study on 21st century skills. Assessment for formative purposes to support the day-to-day skills learning also needs to be more widely used. In this context, the potential of new technologies to help find ways of assessing key competences needs should be fully explored.

Under the leadership of the responsible public authorities, the policy experimentations will test innovative assessment approaches and practices through real-life practical experiences on a large scale across a large number of schools and involving a large number of learners, teachers and policy makers. By testing these through a sufficiently high number of schools, authorities will reach a representative critical mass. Importance is given to developing a robust evidence base and reliable monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures. This will lead to analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the approach, conditions required and the transferability to other eligible countries. The outcomes of these experimentations will allow the responsible public authorities to explore the scalability of the initiative to become mainstreamed practice, for example, with the support of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The outcomes of these experimentations are also to develop tools for individual assessment of skills, particularly in the areas of languages, digital competences and entrepreneurial initiative. Promotion and dissemination among high-level public authorities at European level will increase the quality and prevalence of assessment of transversal skills, fostering transfer of innovation between different education and training systems.

– **Priority theme 2 - Education and Training: Practical entrepreneurial experience at school**

Entrepreneurship education is also a policy priority identified in the Commission Communication on “Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes.” and acknowledged in the corresponding Council conclusions. The Communication called on EU Member States to provide at least one practical entrepreneurial experience for all learners before they complete compulsory education. A practical entrepreneurial experience is an educational experience where the learner has the opportunity to come up with ideas, identify a good idea and turn that idea into action. It should be a student led initiative either individually or as part of a small team, involve learning-by-doing and should produce a tangible outcome. The aim of such an opportunity is for learners to

develop the skills, confidence and capability to spot opportunities, identify solutions and put their own ideas into practice.

Across Europe, a clear picture of the level of implementation of this approach at policy level is not yet available, although numerous examples of smaller scale initiatives as well as some evidence at national level can be seen. To embed practical entrepreneurial experiences at national level requires real commitment at all levels, and evidence of approaches that are both efficient and have high impact on learning outcomes.

Through this policy experimentation, the responsible public authorities will seek to identify and test scalable approaches to practical entrepreneurial experiences in compulsory education, with a view to developing innovative and well-evidenced exemplars for dissemination across all countries. They shall give importance to developing a robust evidence base and reliable monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures. This will lead to detailed analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the approach, conditions required and the transferability to other countries. The outcomes of these experimentations will allow the responsible public authorities to explore the scalability of the initiative to become mainstreamed practice, for example, with the support of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

– **Priority theme 3 - Education and Training: Cooperation on innovative methods for fast and smooth academic recognition across borders in higher education**

Academic recognition in higher education (giving the right to be considered for acceptance into an academic programme in another country) is a prerequisite for free circulation for further study and on the labour market. With the EU having adopted a target that 20% of higher education students should be mobile during their studies, and with the additional opportunities available under Erasmus +, study mobility in the EU is set to increase, with a need for smoother, even automatic, recognition processes.

Procedures for academic recognition are often costly and bureaucratic. The decision to recognise a qualification for purposes of further study is usually taken by individual higher education institutions (HEIs), and it is not always clear whether they are familiar with EU and Bologna recognition tools or follow best practice.

The Pathfinder group on automatic recognition within the Bologna process has concluded that the legal frameworks to support automatic recognition exist and that a more automatic system of recognition would be feasible. However, *how* HEIs interpret the legal frameworks is vital for removing barriers to recognition.

The experimentation will enable high-level public authorities to test innovations in the recognition and admission processes, including the mutual recognition of degrees or of recognition decisions, working with a small number of higher education institutions and National Recognition Information Centres (NARICs). It could influence recognition policy throughout the EU/Bologna process and provide practical accompaniment to the Bologna ministerial conference in April 2015.

– **Priority theme 4 - Education and Training: Reducing the number of low skilled adults**⁴

Developing effective strategies for reducing the number of low skilled adults is one of the priorities of the Council conclusions on Investing in education and training – a response to the

⁴ Adults in this context refers to adult learners, i.e. any person who, having completed or is no longer involved in initial education or training, returns to some forms of continuing learning (formal, non-formal or informal)

Commission Communication ‘Rethinking education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes’. These are key strategies for equipping European citizens with the skills and competences they require for full participation in the labour market and society as a whole. Through the experimentation, the responsible public authorities will seek to identify and test scalable innovative approaches by establishing at regional or local level one-stop centres to enhance provision of guidance and learning opportunities for adults, including validation of non-formal and informal learning. These open learning centres should contribute to achieving the 15% lifelong learning participation benchmark through exploitation of modern technologies and promotion of their use, effective utilization of resources, existing services or networks, and improved access to information and guidance. The tested experimentation should allow the responsible public authorities to explore the scalability of the initiative to become mainstreamed practice, for example, with the support of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

– **Priority theme 5 - Youth: Encouraging the development and internationalisation of young people’s volunteering**

A large-scale experiment between different relevant national/regional administrations competent for providing youth volunteering schemes, notably based upon good practice established through the European Voluntary Service, will be an efficient way to test innovative approaches to support the development of young people's volunteering schemes and in particular their internationalisation. This will include mutualisation of funding from public and private sources, as well as active measures for the better recognition of volunteering experiences in education institutions, companies and social partners.

2.3. Expected results

Having regard to the high level of EU co-funding (max EUR 2.000.000, see Section 4), to the nature and scope of the partnership - involving at least 3 major public authorities at ministry level or equivalent that should ensure strong institutional leadership and a wide geographical coverage, the experimentations proposed under the present call should lead to significant results in particular in the following areas:

- Easier scalability and transferability of innovative policies. Scaling up does not necessarily mean merely duplicating the tested measures on a larger number of beneficiaries. It should rather be understood as creating the best possible conditions for extending the tested measures in a given context and to a given target group, by anticipating potential risks and liabilities on the basis of the trial results. It should also help to make the best possible use of potential opportunities recognised during the trials.
- Improved knowledge base for the implementation of reforms with potentially high systemic impact addressing complex challenges in the education, training and youth fields.
- European added value through the joint identification of critical success factors, best practice and lessons on 'what works' and 'what does not work'.
- Enhanced tools for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of reforms, based on stronger links between public authorities and stakeholders, increased consistency between policy design and implementation, and between European strategies and national/regional policies.

The outcomes of the European policy experimentations should draw from and feed into the Open Methods of Coordination in the field of education and training and in the field of youth⁵.

Erasmus+ promotes the open access to materials, documents and media that are useful for learning teaching, training, youth work and are produced by projects funded by the Programme. Beneficiaries of Erasmus+ grants producing any such materials, documents and media in the scope of any funded project must make them available for the public, in digital form, freely accessible through the Internet under open licenses. Beneficiaries are nonetheless allowed to define the most appropriate level of open access, including limitations (e.g. interdiction of commercial exploitation by third parties) if appropriate in relation to the nature of the project and to the type of material. The open access requirement is without prejudice to the intellectual property rights of the grant beneficiaries⁶.

2.4 Applicants and stakeholders

- a) The proposals submitted under the present call must demonstrate high-level institutional leadership and clear links between the objectives of the experimentations and higher policy objectives. The call is therefore specifically designed to allow **public authorities** responsible for designing and implementing policies in education, training and youth at the highest level (Ministry or equivalent) to play a major role. Top-level public authorities involved in the Open Methods of Coordination in the fields of education and training and of youth are particularly encouraged to apply. Through the involvement of these authorities, the innovation implemented on small scale should pave the way for a more structural reform, if proved successful.
- b) To ensure a rigorous and consistent approach, partners with **expertise in impact evaluation** should be systematically involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of policy experimentations. At least one of the project partners needs to possess sound professional expertise and experience in the field of policy impact evaluation. The experimentation methods and protocols should be designed and implemented in conditions guaranteeing the independence of the evaluator from the policy maker.

The involvement of, and good quality cooperation with relevant **stakeholders** - education and training stakeholders (learners, parents, staff), learning providers, other relevant public authorities, youth organisations, social partners, social service providers, etc. - is essential and will be instrumental in making the policy experiment a success. Stakeholder involvement and commitment should be secured as soon as the project discussion starts in order to build consensus on the design of the policy, the evaluation methodology, the sets of outcomes that will be considered during the experimentation and the follow-up to the experimentation.

⁵ See under §1.2 above

⁶ An open licence is a way by which the owner of a work grants permission to everyone to use the resource. A licence is associated to each resource. An open licence is not a transfer of copyrights or Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Beneficiaries will remain the copyright holders and are allowed to use them as they wish. The only requirement for grant beneficiaries is to make educational resources (or other documents and media produced by the project) freely accessible through open licences. Beneficiaries can also commercialise their project outcomes and experience shows that open access brings visibility and may encourage interested users to buy the printed version or physical material, document or media

Applicants must ensure that there is a **consensus** among all the parties involved in the experimentation on the following key elements:

- *Policy objective*: there is a need to address a particular need or to respond to a particular challenge
- *Specific objective of the experimentation*: the measure to be tested is consistent with the need
- *Methodology*: the way in which the measure should be implemented and evaluated
- *Liabilities, constraints and opportunities*: the situations in which the measure may affect – in a positive or negative way – existing processes or the interaction between stakeholders, or may interfere with other planned measures
- *Operational capacity*: the availability – with all the relevant players - of the resources and skills necessary to upscale the measure (if the experimentation is successful)

2.5 Methodological considerations to plan and carry out the policy experimentation

Phase I –Preparation of the proposal

The project partners, under the leadership of the public authorities from the different eligible countries, agree on the basic elements of the proposal to be submitted: what measure they want to test to address a particular problem, which hypotheses(is) they want to verify, what existing evidence could be corroborated by the experimentation, on which groups should the measure be tested, who should be the evaluator(s) in charge of designing the experimentation protocol(s) and evaluating the results, what indicative amount of (human and financial) resources they could make available, establish a roadmap, etc.

Within the priority themes described in Chapter 2.2, European policy experimentations should not address broad topics, but target **specific measures** to be tested within a well-defined, concrete scope.

Experimentations should be designed and performed with regard to specific groups or in specific contexts or geographical areas, and evaluated according to objective and generally accepted criteria. They should respect clear schedules to ensure concrete results within a reasonable time frame.

Applicants are encouraged to link the proposal to relevant work in the framework of the Open Methods of Coordination in education and training and in youth (Council conclusions and recommendations, policy handbooks and guidelines, collections of good practice, Commission Communications and Staff Working Documents, etc.), to EU sector-specific policy agendas and to relevant EU-funded activities - in particular in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), of the Youth in Action Programme (notably the European Voluntary Service), of the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) and of Structural Funds (ESF, ERDF). Work within the scope of the priority themes carried out by other international organisations such as Council of Europe or OECD can also provide useful elements for the development of the proposals.

Applicants are encouraged to link the proposal to the implementation of the country-specific recommendations on education and training and on youth resulting from the European Semesters and to the Commission Staff Working Papers accompanying such recommendations.

The proposal should include the following key elements:

a) Involvement of high-level public authorities (Ministry or equivalent): the proposal should demonstrate how competent high-level public authorities actually play a steering role in defining the strategic objectives and the specific objectives of the experimentation, the expected outcomes, the profile of the target population to be tested and the potential for scalability. It should show clear links with relevant strategic documents adopted in the context of the ET 2020 strategic framework, the Europe 2020 strategy and the European Semester, in particular national Reform Programmes and country-specific recommendations.

b) Rationale of the testing: the proposal should provide a rigorous and documented description of the measure to be tested and its expected results on the target population (= the hypothesis to be verified). The causal link between the measure and the need it seeks to address should be explained by drawing on a thorough desk research on prior evaluations or analyses of similar measures (studies, analyses, schemes, surveys, projects, publications, reports, etc.), demonstrating the existence of a real need and how the measure is likely to address the identified need *in the countries participating in the proposal*.

c) Implementation plan: identification of the cohort(s) participating in the experimentation, of the planned set of actions and main operating steps, and of the potential opportunities and constraints. Applicants should have a clear strategy on how they intend to obtain the commitment of the target population to participate in the experimentation. The expected quantitative and qualitative impact of the measure should be defined in measurable terms. The plan should consider the strategic objectives of the measure and the context in which it would be implemented. It should ensure that the measure is politically relevant and acceptable for the stakeholders; it should make sure that the measure is feasible and commensurate to the operational, strategic and financial capacity of the various partners and stakeholders. A thorough search for examples of similar measures that have been conducted domestically or abroad, to demonstrate the relevance and effectiveness of the measure, is encouraged.

d) Choice of the evaluation method: applicants are free to choose the method for evaluating the impact of the experimentation, as long as it relies on robust conceptual foundations and involves rigorous data collection and monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures, in compliance with the principles of experimental or quasi-experimental research for testing variables and validating results. Qualitative as well as quantitative data should be taken into account.

Choosing the right method can be a trade-off between the cost of the experimentation in terms of time and money and the cost of scaling up an ineffective policy (or stopping an effective one) because the experimentation erroneously concluded that the policy was effective – or ineffective. When evaluating the optimal trade-off, the following elements should inter alia be considered:

- The quality of the evaluation
- The cost of the experimentation
- The differences between the possible evaluation methods in terms of reliability and cost
- The cost of the measure once it is scaled up
- The degree of (un)certainly of the effectiveness of the measure considered.

Methods that yield robust results can make the up-scaling decision smoother and are likely to be more acceptable to stakeholders but may be more expensive.

Some examples of evaluation methods based on different underlying assumptions are briefly described below.

EXAMPLES OF EVALUATION METHODS ⁷

- 1) Comparing participants to non-participants: involving individuals eligible for the measure but who *chose* not to participate in it⁸.
- 2) Before-after comparisons: the *same population* is used both as treatment and control group by comparing it before and after the action.
- 3) Statistical matching: it builds “*pairs*” of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries who are similar to each other and compares the “twins” with each other.
- 4) Difference in difference (DID): similar to the “before-after” method. It compares the *change* (evolution) over a time period across the two groups.
- 5) Regression discontinuity: it compares beneficiaries who are “*almost*” ineligible because they are slightly above/below the threshold to non-beneficiaries who are “*almost*” eligible for the same reason.
- 6) Randomised experimentations: methods involving some form of *random assignment* are recommended since they are the most reliable. A representative sample of the target population is divided into treatment group and the control group on the basis of a random assignment (“lottery”)⁹.

e) Identifying potential follow-up: Applicants should also describe the potential for *scaling up* the measure, should the experimentation produce the expected results.
Durability of impact: in case of successful experimentations, applicants should consider some kind of longer-term monitoring of the experimentation participants, since immediate positive effects may merely be contingent on externalities and may not necessarily persist over time.

Phase II –Implementation of the proposal

The implementation should comply with all the essential requirements of good project management. In addition, particular care should be devoted to the following steps. The responsible public authorities secure the commitment of the institutions and individuals to take part in the experimentation. They provide accurate information on the requirements, implications and follow-up of the experimentation. The evaluator(s) design the experimentation protocol in cooperation with the project partners. The evaluation protocol should be set up from the start of the project in order to reach shared conclusions about the

⁷ For further details please refer to “Social Experimentation – A methodological guide for policy makers” (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&furtherEvents=yes&eventsId=790>)

⁸ This may be not be applicable where testing compulsory approaches that all learners are required to complete within a pilot and therefore cannot choose not to participate.

⁹ For a description of randomised controlled trials and their use in education policy, please refer to the EENEE Analytical Report n. 11”, February 2012, prepared for the European Commission (http://www.eenee.de/portal/page/portal/EENEEContent/IMPORT_TELECENTRUM/DOCS/EENEE_AR11.pdf)

scalability potential of the measure, based on its measured impact. It should ensure that the highest analytical standards are complied with in each country participating in the project. Each public authority implements the field trials in the territory under its responsibility on the basis of the protocol agreed with the evaluator and the other partner authorities. It regularly updates the participants and other key stakeholders at all the key stages of the experimentation.

The protocol agreed upon by the trans-national partnership is tested simultaneously in at least three countries participating in the project, among an adequately large cohort in order to reach a reasonable and representative critical mass.

Phase III – National and trans-national evaluation

The results of the field trials are evaluated first at country level and then collectively with the other countries participating in the project, with the systematic involvement of the evaluator(s).

Impact evaluation: informed professional judgement on the extent to which the tested action has produced a **clearly defined impact** and what would have happened in the absence of the action. This process should include the following components:

- **national evaluation** of the experimentation results in each of the countries that participated;
- **trans-national evaluation** of the experimentation results: the national evaluations are discussed and compared between all the partners, to identify common findings and good practice, success and risk factors;
- **trans-national peer review**: an external evaluation of the experimentation results provided by authorities or experts from other eligible countries;
- a global **self-evaluation** of the entire process by each partner.

Phase IV – Follow-up at national and trans-national level

The results of the experimentation should provide indications on the likely impact of the action and its cost-effectiveness, to better understand what sub-groups are likely to benefit most from it and consequently to decide whether to upscale it or not. They should show how conclusive policy experimentations results could help public authorities to introduce reforms for systemic change.

a) What will happen if the experimentation confirms the initial hypothesis?

Applicants should indicate whether they would consider up-scaling a successfully tested measure and how; possibly using EU-funds – in particular the European Structural and Investment Funds, or whether they would consider further action-research at grass-root level through Erasmus+ Key Action 2.

Durability of impact: immediate positive impacts may be due to externalities and may not necessarily persist over time. Applicants should therefore consider longer-term monitoring of the cohorts that participated in successful experimentations and provide an indication of the strategy for long-term monitoring beyond the end of the project.

Applicants should also indicate options for further policy development at EU level, in particular how the experimentation outcomes could feed into the Open Methods of Coordination.

b) What will happen if the experimentation does not confirm the initial hypothesis?
Applicants should describe follow-up or alternative options in case of inconclusive experimentations.

3. PROCEDURE/TIMETABLE

3.1 Procedure

The present call is divided in two submission/evaluation stages: pre-proposal stage, and full proposal stage.

This approach intends to simplify the application process by requesting in the first phase only basic information on the proposal. Only those pre-proposals satisfying the eligibility criteria and reaching the minimum threshold of 60% on the score for the award criterion Relevance will access the second phase for which applicants will be requested to submit a full application package.

3.1.1 Pre-proposal stage:

Pre-proposals should summarise basic information on the following elements:

- a) Rationale, objectives, policy measure to be tested and target groups of the experimentation, and adequate involvement of relevant public authorities
- b) Indicative total budget and requested EU grant

Pre-proposals will be assessed on the basis of the eligibility criteria described in section 5 and the award criterion Relevance (see section 8). Coordinators of unsuccessful pre-proposals will be informed of the pre-selection results and receive an evaluation report.

Coordinators having submitted pre-proposals satisfying the eligibility criteria and reaching the minimum threshold of 60% on the score for the award criterion Relevance will be invited to submit a full application package and to elaborate further on their proposal.

3.1.2 Full proposal stage:

The award criteria and their respective weightings for a full proposal are:

1. Relevance (20%)¹⁰
2. Quality of the project design and implementation (30%)
3. Quality of the partnership (20%)
4. Impact, Dissemination and Sustainability (30%)

Based on the results of the pre-proposal, full proposals are expected to provide information on:

- a) Experimentation method and protocol followed for the experimentation
- b) Project design, project management and quality control measures

¹⁰ The award criterion Relevance will not be reassessed at full proposal stage. The scoring received at pre-proposal stage will be added to the score of the other three award criteria according to the weighting indicated.

- c) Detailed estimated budget
- d) Profile of the key partners and of their roles
- e) Expected systemic impact, dissemination, communication and exploitation strategies

Full proposals will be assessed on the basis of exclusion, selection, and the three remaining award criteria (Quality of the project design and implementation; Quality of the partnership; Impact, dissemination, and sustainability - see section 8). The Agency will verify that the eligibility criteria are maintained in the second stage and where appropriate supported by the required documentation (See section 5).

As a result those proposals considered compliant with the eligibility, exclusion, and selection criteria will be ranked in order of merit according to the total score obtained. The total score for a full proposal will be the total of the scores obtained at the pre-proposal stage and at the full proposal stage (by applying the weighting indicated).

Only proposals having reached at least the threshold of 60% on the total score will be considered for EU funding.

The final ranking of the proposals may be adjusted by the Evaluation Committee to ensure a more equal number of projects per policy priority in the call. A proposal with a lower score may be placed in a higher position in the ranking list if this ensures a better coverage of all the policy priorities.

All coordinators of full proposals will be informed of the final selection results and receive an evaluation report.

3.2 Timetable

	Pre-proposal stage:	Full proposal stage:
Deadline for submission of proposals	20 May 2014 - as per postmark	2 October 2014 - as per postmark
Notification to coordinators of selection results	July 2014	November 2014
Grant agreement	N/A	01 December 2014

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget available for the co-financing of projects under the present call is EUR **10.000.000**, and is divided in the following way among the two fields of operation:

- Education and Training: EUR 8.000.000;
- Youth: EUR 2.000.000

Financial contribution from the EU cannot exceed **75%** of the total eligible costs.

The maximum grant per project will be EUR **2.000.000**.

The Agency reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Pre-proposals which comply with the below criteria will be the subject of a content evaluation. The eligibility criteria will be assessed at pre-proposal stage on the basis of the information provided in the application form. The compliance with the eligibility criteria will have to be supported by the requested evidence at the full proposal stage. Applicants shall be able to demonstrate that they continue to be eligible for the action by providing the necessary documents.(see 5.2 to 5.6).

5.1 Formal criteria

Only proposals submitted in one of the official EU languages, using the official application form, completed in full and including all requested annexes, signed (original signatures or equivalent required) and received by the specified deadlines, will be considered.

In order to submit an application, applicants must provide their Participant Identification Code (PIC) in the application form. The PIC can be obtained by registering the organisation in the Unique Registration Facility (URF) hosted on the Education, Audiovisual, Culture, Citizenship and Volunteering Participant Portal¹¹.

The Unique Registration Facility allows applicants to upload or update the information related to their legal status and attach the requested legal and financial documents. See the section 13.2 Registration in the Unique Registration Facility for more information.

5.2 Eligible Countries

Proposals from legal entities established in one of the following programme countries are eligible:

- the 28 Member States of the European Union,
- the EFTA/EEA countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway¹²,
- EU candidate countries: Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹³
- the Swiss Confederation¹⁴

¹¹ The Unique Registration Facility is a tool shared by other services of the European Commission. If your organisation already has a PIC that has been used for other programmes (for example the Research programmes), the same PIC is valid for the present call for proposals.

¹² The participation of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway is subject to an EEA Joint Committee Decision. If, at the time of the grant award decision, the Erasmus+ regulation has not been incorporated in the EEA Agreement, participants from these countries will not be funded and will not be taken into account with regard to the minimum size of consortia/partnerships.

¹³ The participation of Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the present call for proposals is subject to the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission and the competent authorities of each of these countries respectively. If, at the time of the grant award decision, the Memorandum of Understanding has not been signed, participants from this country will not be funded and will not be taken into account with regard to the minimum size of consortia/partnerships.

¹⁴ The participation of the Swiss Confederation is subject to the conclusion of a bilateral agreement to be concluded with this country. If, at the time of the grant award decision, this bilateral agreement has not been

5.3 Applicants

The term 'applicants' refers to all organisations and institutions participating in a proposal regardless of their role in the project (high-level public authorities ensuring the strategic leadership of the project, evaluators, other stakeholders, etc.).

Applicants considered eligible to respond to this call are:

a) Public authorities (Ministry or equivalent) responsible for education, training or youth at the highest level in the relevant national or regional context (reference to highest level considers NUTS codes 1 or 2; for countries where NUTS codes 1 or 2 are not available, please apply the highest NUTS code available¹⁵). Public authorities at the highest level responsible for sectors other than education, training and youth (e.g. employment, finance, social affairs, health, etc.) are considered eligible as long as they demonstrate that they have a specific competence in the area in which the experimentation is to be carried out. Public authorities can delegate to be represented by other public or private organisations, as well as legally established networks or associations of public authorities, provided that the delegation is in writing and makes explicit reference to the proposal being submitted

b) Public or private organisations or institutions active in the fields of education, training or youth

c) Public or private organisations or institutions carrying out activities linked to education, training and/or youth in other socio-economic sectors (e.g. recognition centres, chambers of commerce, trade organisations, cultural organisations, evaluation entities, research entities, etc.)

Furthermore, for the implementation of this call for proposals, National Agencies or other structures and networks of the Erasmus+ Programme, receiving a direct grant from the Commission in accordance with the legal basis of the Programme are NOT eligible to participate. Nevertheless, the legal entities hosting the Erasmus+ National Agencies or the structures and networks mentioned above, as well as entities affiliated to these legal entities, are considered eligible applicants.

5.4 Minimum partnership composition

The minimum partnership requirement for this call is 4 entities representing 3 eligible countries. Specifically:

- a. At least one public authority (Ministry or equivalent) or delegated body – as described in 5.3 - from 3 different eligible countries, or a legally established network/association of public authorities representing at least three different eligible countries. The network or association must have a delegation from at least 3 relevant public authorities - as described under 5.3 - to operate on their behalf for the specific proposal.

signed, participants from the Swiss Confederation will not be funded and will not be taken into account with regard to the minimum size of consortia/partnerships.

¹⁵http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/nuts_nomenclature/correspondence_tables/national_structure_s_eu

Proposals must include at least one public authority as indicated under point 5.3 a) from a Member State.

Public authorities participating or represented in the proposal shall be responsible for strategic leadership of the project and for steering the experimentation in their own jurisdiction.

- b. At least one public or private entity with expertise in the evaluation of policy impact. Such entity shall be responsible for the methodological aspects and the evaluation protocols. The proposal can involve more than one evaluation entity, as long as the work is coordinated and consistent.

5.5 Coordination

A proposal can only be coordinated and submitted - on behalf of all applicants – by one of the following:

- a. A public authority as described under 5.3.a).
- b. A legally established network or association of public authorities indicated under point 5.3.a);
- c. A public or private entity delegated by public authorities indicated under point 5.3.a) to reply to the call. Delegated entities must have an explicit endorsement in writing by a public authority as described under 5.3.a), to submit and coordinate the proposal on their behalf.

Proposals must be submitted by the legal representative of the coordinating authority on behalf of all applicants. Natural persons may not apply for a grant.

5.6 Activities and duration

Activities must start between 1 December 2014 and 1 March 2015.

The project duration must be between 24 and 36 months. However, if after the signing of the agreement and the start of the project it becomes impossible for the beneficiaries, for fully justified reasons beyond their control, to complete the project within the scheduled period, an extension to the eligibility period may be granted. A maximum extension of 6 additional months will be granted, if requested before the deadline specified in the agreement. The maximum duration will then be 42 months.

The activities to be financed under this call shall include as a minimum:

- **Development of field trials** on the implementation of innovative measures. Appropriate attention has to be given to developing a robust evidence base and involving reliable monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures based on recognised methodological approaches, developed by a competent and experienced policy impact evaluator in consultation with the relevant project partners.

This should include (the list is not exhaustive): identifying and selecting the measure(s) to be tested, the samples and the set of actions envisaged; defining the expected impact of the measure in measurable terms and assessing its relevance with regard to the expected results, including by thoroughly searching for examples of similar policy interventions that have been conducted domestically or abroad; defining a robust methodology and indicators to measure the impact of the tested measure at national and European level.

- **Parallel implementation** of the field trials in various countries participating in the project under the leadership of the respective authorities (Ministry or equivalent). A sufficiently representative number of participating entities/establishments should be involved to reach a reasonable and representative critical mass and provide a significant evidence base.
- **Analysis and evaluation:** effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the tested measure, but also of the experimentation methodology, of the conditions for scalability and the transnational transfer of the lessons learned and good practice (peer learning).
- **Awareness-raising, dissemination and exploitation** of the project concept and its results at regional, national and European level throughout the project duration and in the longer term, and to foster transferability between different sectors, systems and policies.

An **Exploitation plan** of the experimentation results through the Open Methods of Coordination in education and training and in youth, in connection with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy is recommended.

6. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The Exclusion criteria will be assessed at full-proposal stage.

Applicants must state that they are not in any of the situations described in Articles 106(1), 107 and 109 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union and set out below.

Applicants will be excluded from participating in this Call for Proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of *res judicata*;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify including by decisions of the EIB and international organisations;
- (d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal

provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the responsible Authorising Officer or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;

- (e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such illegal activity is detrimental to the Union' financial interests;
- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 109(1) of the Financial Regulation.

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interests;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Agency as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure, or fail to supply this information.
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in Article 106 (1) of the Financial Regulation;

In accordance with Article 109 of the Financial Regulation, administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on beneficiaries who are guilty of misrepresentation or are found to have seriously failed to meet their contractual obligations under a previous contract award procedure.

To comply with these provisions, applicants for a grant exceeding EUR 60.000 must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in any of the situations referred to in Articles 106(1) and 107 of the Financial Regulation.

7. SELECTION CRITERIA

The Selection criteria will be assessed at full-proposal stage.

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the project is being carried out or the year for which the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. They must have the professional competencies and qualifications required to complete the proposed project.

Applicants must submit a declaration on their honour, completed and signed, attesting to their status as a legal person and to their financial and operational capacity to complete the proposed activities.

7.1 Operational capacity

In order to allow an assessment of their operational capacity, organisations applying for a grant above EUR 60.000 must include in the dedicated sections of the application form:

- the short CVs of the applicant/persons responsible within each partner institution showing all their relevant professional experience;

- for the last year, a list of projects already undertaken in the specific field by the applicants. In addition, as far as the evaluation body is concerned, a reference list of similar evaluations carried out in the last 5 years.

7.2 Financial capacity

In order to allow an assessment of their financial capacity, organisations applying for a grant above EUR 60.000 must submit to the URF (See 13.2):

- the profit and loss accounts of the coordinator organisation, together with the balance sheet for the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed
- a completed financial capacity form, available via the link to the Call web page at section 13.3 below;
- the bank details form completed by the coordinator and certified by the bank (original signatures required), available via the link to the Call web page at section 13.2 below.

The verification of financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies, or to international organisations.

For the purpose of this call, public bodies, as well as schools, higher education institutions and organisations in the fields of education, training, youth and sport that have received over 50 % of their annual revenue from public sources over the last two years shall be considered as having the necessary financial, professional and administrative capacity to carry out activities under the Programme. They shall not be required to present further documentation to demonstrate that capacity. Such organisations are required to state in a signed declaration on honour (included in the application package for full proposals) that their organisation complies with the above-mentioned definition of public body. The Agency reserves the right to request documentation to prove the veracity of this declaration.

If, on the basis of the documents submitted, the Agency considers that financial capacity has not been proved or is not satisfactory, it may:

- reject the proposal
- ask for further information
- require a guarantee (see section 9.2)
- offer a grant agreement without prefinancing
- make a first payment on the basis of expenses already occurred.

7.3 Audit

Grant applications must be accompanied by an external audit report produced by an approved external auditor. This report shall certify the accounts for the last year available. This obligation does not apply to public bodies and international organisations under public law. In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the thresholds of grant for an action above EUR 750.000 shall apply to each applicant.

8. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible proposals will be assessed on the basis of the below criteria.

STAGE I: Pre-proposal

I.1) Relevance

- The need to be covered by the proposed policy experimentation is relevant to European and country-specific policies, the work under the Open Methods Coordination in education and training and in youth, and the objectives and priority themes of the call
- The measure to test is consistent with European and country-specific objectives, fits in the strategies of the countries participating in the project, is appropriate to the target groups and stakeholders involved, and innovative.
- The target groups addressed by the measure are clearly identified and the benefits they are expected to enjoy through the measure to be tested are clearly described.
- Transnational cooperation allows achieving results that would not be achieved at country level alone, and there is potential for transferring results to countries not involved in the project or other sectors.
- The experimentation method is relevant to the objectives of the measure to be tested and to the target groups.
- There is adequate involvement of relevant public authorities and description of the concrete implementation of the relevant expertise available in the consortium.
- The envisaged outcomes are relevant to the objectives of the call and have the potential to lead to systemic change

STAGE II: Full proposal

II.1) Quality of the project design and implementation (30%):

- The potential for effective results of the measure to be tested relies on valid, reliable, and convincing evidence.
- The proposed experimentation method is defined in a clear and structured way; its rationale and implications – including definitions of success/failure criteria - are explicitly described, and based on a sound theoretical approach.
- The experimentation method is appropriate to the measure to be tested and the target groups.
- The experimentation protocol is clear, comprehensive and rigorous, and presents:
 - a) A comprehensive experimentation plan identifying roles, responsibilities and resources, a roadmap of the various steps involved, monitoring, reporting and follow-up provisions
 - b) Evaluation samples selected following clear principles and procedures, and qualitatively and quantitatively appropriate to the evaluation method and the target groups
 - c) Appropriate typology and timing of field trials
 - d) Clear assessment criteria and benchmarks and reliable indicators that are likely to lead to valid results

- e) National, trans-national, internal, external and peer evaluation plans.
- The project design is clear, organised in different phases, with appropriate milestones and pertinent deliverables/outputs/results
- The project management plan is sound with adequate resources allocated to different tasks, clear cooperation and decision-making processes, allowing public authorities to exercise clear leadership.
- The quality plan adequately covers project management. There is a clear monitoring strategy and methodology for identifying risks and introducing mitigating actions.
- The budget shows cost effectiveness and value for money. There is coherence between tasks, roles and financial resources allocated to partners. The financial management arrangements are clear and appropriate for the consortium and the design of the proposal

II.2) Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements (20%):

- The partnership is composed of authorities, organisations, and institutions that ensure full achievement of the objectives of the call with due regard to priority theme selected by the applicants.
- The partnership is composite and ensures coverage of all necessary skills and expertise with adequate allocation of time and input. Skills and competences of the partnership are complementary.
- The roles attributed to each partner guarantee:
- Political leadership and direct involvement of high-level public authorities
 - Contribution of high level expertise on the evaluation of policy impacts
 - Reaching of a large number of stakeholders and target groups and covering a representative geographical scope

II.3) Impact, dissemination, and sustainability (30%):

- The impact envisaged by applicants is of a systemic nature, significant and scalable.
- The approach envisaged to transform the results of the experimentation into changes in the education and training systems and youth policies in the countries involved in the project is convincing and sound
- There is a clear awareness-raising, dissemination and communication strategy that ensures reaching the relevant target groups (in particular the specific samples) and stakeholders before, during and after the field trials, as well as the general stakeholders and the general public during the lifetime of the project. This strategy includes how to make educational materials¹⁶ produced in the experimentation freely accessible through open licences.
- The exploitation approach is clearly described and involves up-scaling of positive results through concrete reforms for which potential funding sources are identified; the way in which the approach is expected to lead to long-term impact on systems and policies is explicitly explained.

¹⁶ For this purpose, educational materials should be understood as any materials meant to provide support to teaching and learning processes, such as course syllabi, class notes, presentations, exercises, textbooks, interactive materials or other Open licenses for these materials should guarantee, as a minimum, free access for any individual or organisation. Applicants are allowed to include limitations in the open licences as appropriate.

- The way in which the project results will lead to peer-learning at European level and feed into the Open Methods of Coordination is explicitly described

In the calculation of the total score for the full proposal the score obtained for Relevance at pre-proposal stage will be taken into consideration with a weighting factor of 20%. Only full proposals having reached at least the threshold of 60% on the total score (i.e. score on the award criterion Relevance plus scores on the three award criteria assessed in the second stage) will be considered for EU funding.

9. FUNDING CONDITIONS

An EU grant is an incentive to carry out activities that would not be possible without the support of the Union. It is based on the principle of co-financing. The EU grant supplements the applicants' organisations own financial involvement and/or any national, regional or private support they may have obtained.

Acceptance of the proposal by the Executive Agency does not constitute an undertaking to award a grant equal to the amount requested by the applicants. Furthermore, under no circumstances may the amount awarded exceed the amount requested.

The award of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

9.1 Contractual provisions and payment procedures

In the event of definitive approval by the Agency, a grant agreement drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the coordinating institution (hereafter 'the coordinator') representing all other applicants (hereafter 'other beneficiaries').

Two copies of the original agreement must be signed by the legal representative of the coordinator and returned to the Agency immediately. The Agency will sign them last.

The agreement will be a multi-beneficiary agreement.

A pre-financing payment of 30% of the grant amount will be transferred to the coordinator within 30 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement, provided all possible guarantees are received. Pre-financing is intended to provide the beneficiaries with a float.

A second prefinancing payment of 40% of the total grant amount will be made within 60 days after the Agency receives a request for payment accompanied by a progress report on the project's implementation, provided the Agency approves the report. This second prefinancing payment may not be made until at least 70% of the previous prefinancing payment has been used up. Where the consumption of the previous pre-financing is less than 70%, the amount of the new pre-financing payment shall be reduced by the unused amounts of the previous pre-financing.

The account or sub-account indicated by the coordinator must make it possible to identify the funds transferred by the Agency.

The Agency will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the coordinator on the basis of the final reports.

9.2 Guarantee

The Agency may require any organisation which has been awarded a grant exceeding EUR 60.000 to provide a guarantee in order to limit the financial risks linked to the prefinancing payment.

The purpose of this guarantee is to make a bank, a financial institution, or third party stand as irrevocable collateral security for, or first-call guarantor of, the grant beneficiaries' obligations.

This financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. When the beneficiary concerned is established in a third country, the Agency may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if it considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State.

The guarantee may be replaced by joint and several guarantees by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement.

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the beneficiaries, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

This requirement does not apply to:

- public bodies and international organisations under public law established by inter-governmental agreements, specialised agencies created by such organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.
- beneficiaries who have entered into a framework partnership agreement may also be released from this obligation.

9.3 Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate in the application form the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.

9.4 Funding method

Projects will be financed on budget-based grants (eligible costs).

- ✓ General provisions

Budget-based grants are calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget. The budget attached to the application form must be complete and in balance, i.e. total estimated expenditure must equal total revenue, including the Executive Agency grant application. The

budget must indicate clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding. The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-financing rate of 75% of eligible costs.

The budget must be drawn up in euros. Applicants not based in the euro zone must use the exchange rate published in the Official Journal of the European Union on the date of the publication of this call for proposals.

Part of the total estimated eligible expenses must be financed from sources other than the Union grant. Applicants must indicate the sources and amounts of any other funding received or applied for in the same financial year for the implementation of the project.

The allocated amount may not exceed the amount requested.

The Union grant may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the beneficiaries. Profit is defined as a surplus of receipts over eligible costs incurred by the beneficiaries. The amount of the grant will be reduced by the amount of any surplus.

✓ Eligible costs

To be eligible for this call, costs must:

- Be incurred by the legal entities/institutions of the official consortium (i.e. coordinator and other beneficiaries);
- Be incurred during the duration of the project as specified in the grant agreement, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and certificates on the financial statements and underlying accounts. The period of eligibility of costs will start on the day indicated in the grant agreement after the signature by the last of the parties. If beneficiaries can demonstrate the need to start the project before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application. **Costs incurred prior to 1 December 2014 will not be considered;**
- Be connected with the subject of the agreement and indicated in the estimated overall budget of the projects;
- Be necessary for the implementation of the project that is the subject of the grant;
- Be identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the coordinator or the other beneficiaries and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the coordinator or the other beneficiaries are established and according to the usual cost-accounting practices of the beneficiaries;
- Comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- Be reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The coordinator's and other beneficiaries' internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenues declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Eligible direct costs:

The eligible direct costs for the project are those costs which, with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly. In particular, the following direct costs are eligible, provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in the previous paragraph:

- The cost of staff assigned to the project, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in their remuneration, provided that this cost does not exceed the rates corresponding to the usual remuneration policy of the coordinator or, where applicable, the other beneficiaries. NB: this cost must be actual cost incurred by the

coordinator or the other beneficiaries, and staff cost of other organisations is eligible only if it is paid directly or reimbursed by the coordinator or other beneficiaries;

The corresponding salary costs of personnel of national administrations are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities that the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned was not undertaken;

- Subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project (for meetings, European conferences, etc.) provided that they are in line with the beneficiaries' usual practices.

- Travel allowances for staff taking part in the project (for meetings, European conferences, etc.), provided that they are reasonable, justified, and that they comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency, and provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiaries usual practices.";

- Purchase cost of equipment (new or second-hand), provided that it is written off in accordance with the tax and accounting rules applicable to the beneficiaries and generally accepted for items of the same kind. Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation corresponding to the duration of the action and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be taken into account by the Agency, except where the nature and/or the context of its use justifies different treatment by the Agency;

- Costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;

- Costs entailed by other contracts awarded by the beneficiaries for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met;

- Costs arising directly from requirements linked to the performance of the project (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the project, audits, translations, reproduction, etc.), including, where applicable, the costs of any financial services (especially the cost of financial guarantees).

- Non-deductible VAT unless it is related to activities of the public authorities in the Member States.

Eligible indirect costs (administrative costs)

- A flat-rate amount, up to 7% of the eligible direct costs of the project, is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiaries' general administrative costs that can be regarded as chargeable to the project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget category.

Applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that in the case of organisations receiving an operating grant, indirect costs are no longer eligible under specific actions.

✓ Ineligible costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- Return on capital;
- Debt and debt service charges;
- Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- Interest owed;
- Doubtful debts;
- Exchange losses;
- Costs declared by the beneficiaries and covered by another action or work programme receiving a European Union grant;
- Excessive or reckless expenditure.
- Expenses for travel to or from countries outside eligible countries, unless explicit prior authorisation is granted by the Agency

Contributions in kind shall not constitute eligible costs.

- ✓ **Calculation of the final grant amount** - Documents to be submitted for budget-based financing:

The Executive Agency will establish the final amount of the grant on the basis of the following documents:

- A final report providing details of the implementation and results of the project
- The final financial statement of project costs actually incurred.

In addition, for Grants for a project of EUR 750.000 or more, when the cumulative amounts of request for payment is at least EUR 325.000, the beneficiaries are required to submit, in support of the final payment, a consolidated “Report of Factual Findings on the Final Financial Report - Type II” produced by an approved auditor or in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer. The certificate shall certify, in accordance with a methodology approved by the Agency, that the costs declared by the beneficiaries in the financial statements on which the request for payment is based are real, accurately recorded and eligible in accordance with the grant agreement. The report must be a single document and include all costs related to the project for all beneficiaries involved in the project.

The procedure and the format to be followed by an approved auditor or in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer, are detailed in the following “Guidance Notes”:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/documents/guidance-notes-audit-type-ii_11.2012_en.pdf

The use of the report format set by the “Guidance Notes” is compulsory.

In the estimated budget, costs for such a certificate should be foreseen.

The calculation of the final grant amount by the Agency is based on a detailed final financial statement of the beneficiary, accompanied, if requested, by supporting documentation for the incurred expenditure.

After analysis of the declared costs, if the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary are lower than anticipated, the Agency will apply the rate of co-financing stated in the grant agreement to the expenditure actually incurred. The Agency also reserves the right to reduce the amount of the grant if the organisation has not fully implemented the agreed project.

Where applicable, the beneficiaries will be required to reimburse any excess amounts paid by the Agency in the form of pre-financing.

10. SUB-CONTRACTING AND AWARD OF PROCUREMENT CONTRACT

Where implementation of the project requires sub-contracting or the awarding of a procurement contract, the coordinator and, where applicable, the other beneficiaries, must follow the following principles:

- award the contract to the bid offering best value for money
- ensure that the award process is fully transparent and based on equal treatment of potential contractors
- take care to avoid conflicts of interests

In the event of procurement exceeding EUR 60 000, the coordinator and, where applicable, the other beneficiaries must obtain competitive tenders from at least 5 potential contractors, unless national rules prescribe differently. In the latter case, national rules will apply provided

that the contracting authority is able to demonstrate, if requested, the coherence between the procedure followed and the national rules applied.

Subcontracting is intended for specific, time-bound, project-related tasks that cannot be performed by the Consortium members themselves. In all cases, tasks to be subcontracted have to be identified in the proposal and the estimated amount entered in the budget. If this is not the case, prior written authorisation from the Agency must be obtained.

The total costs for subcontracting may not be more than 30 % of the total direct costs of the project. The management and the general administration of the project may not be subcontracted.

11. PUBLICITY

All grants awarded in the course of a financial year must be published on the Internet site of the European Union institutions during the first half of the year following the closure of the budget year in respect of which they were awarded. The information may also be published using any other appropriate medium, including the Official Journal of the European Union.

The beneficiaries authorise the Agency and the European Commission to publish the following information in any form and medium, including via the Internet:

- The beneficiaries' name and locality
- The amount awarded
- Nature and purpose of the grant

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiaries, the Agency may agree to forgo such publicity, if disclosure of the information indicated above would threaten the safety of the beneficiaries or harm their business interests.

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

Furthermore, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and logo of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project. To do this they must use the format and the logo of the relevant programme, which will be provided by the Agency. If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced.

12. DATA PROTECTION

All personal data (such as names, addresses, CVs, etc.) will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the European Union institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

Unless marked as optional, the applicants' replies to the questions in the application form are necessary to evaluate and further process the grant application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposals. Personal data will be processed solely for that purpose by the department or Unit responsible for the Union grant programme concerned (entity

acting as data controller). Personal data may be transferred on a need to know basis to third parties involved in the evaluation of proposals or in the grant management procedure, without prejudice of transfer to the bodies in charge of monitoring and inspection tasks in accordance with European Union law. The applicants have the right of access to, and to rectify, the data concerning them. For any question relating to these data, please contact the Controller. Applicants have the right of recourse to the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time. A detailed Privacy statement, including contact information, is available on EACEA's website:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/documents/calls_gen_conditions/eacea_grants_privacy_statement.pdf

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- The Commission Decision of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (EWS) for the use of authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies (OJ, L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 125), or

- The Commission Regulation of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database – CED (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 12),

their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the EWS only or both in the EWS and CED, and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above-mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract or a grant agreement or decision.

13. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

13.1 Publication

The call for proposals is being published in the Official Journal of the European Union and on the following Internet site

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/prospective-initiatives-eacea-102014_en

13.2 Registration in the Unique Registration Facility

Before submitting an application, applicants will have to register their organisation in the Unique Registration Facility (URF) and receive a Participant Identification Code (PIC). The PIC will be requested in the application form.

The Unique Registration Facility is the tool through which all legal and financial information related to organisations will be managed. It is accessible via the Education, Audiovisual, Culture, Citizenship and Volunteering Participant Portal. Information on how to register can be found in the portal under the following address:

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/participants/portal>

The URF tool also allows applicants to upload different documents related to their organisation. These documents have to be uploaded once and will not be requested again for subsequent applications by the same organisation.

The Agency can propose an agreement only on the basis of acceptance of documents which make it possible to define the coordinator's legal personality (public administration, private company, or non-profit organisation, etc.), and on the provision of financial identification/bank details.

The relevant documents to be uploaded for the purpose of this call for proposals are the following:

- Legal entity form: this document summarises the legal details of the coordinating organisation. For public-law entities the legal resolution or decision established in respect of the public company, or other official document established for the public-law entity needs to be submitted with the legal entity form. For private-law bodies, the statutes and official registration of the company are requested.
- The Annual Balance sheet for the last two approved accounting periods (only for private organisations – see 7.2)
- Profit and loss accounts (only for private organisations – see 7.2)
- Financial capacity form (only for private organisations – see 7.2)
- VAT registration (when applicable)

The Agency can propose an agreement only on the basis of acceptance of documents which make it possible to define the beneficiary's legal personality (public administration, private company, or non-profit organisation, etc.), and on the provision of financial identification/bank details.

13.3 Application package

Grant applications must be drawn up in one of the official EU languages, using the official Application Package available on the Executive Agency webpage. Please ensure you are using the correct application form for respectively the pre-proposal stage and the full proposal stage.

The Application Package is available on the Internet at the following address:

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/prospective-initiatives-eacea-102014_en

13.4 Submission of the grant application

The selection of proposal will take place in two steps: Pre-proposal stage and full proposal stage.

13.4.1 Pre-proposal stage:

Coordinators are requested to apply for funding on behalf of the entire consortium by submitting a pre-proposal application form containing:

- Basic information on the partnership involved; a project summary; and an indicative total budget and total EU grant requested.
- A project description limited to basic elements of the proposal following the points highlighted under 3.1.1

The pre-proposal application package must be submitted by the deadline (see point 3.2) on the correct form, duly completed, dated, showing a total budget and total grant request, and signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the coordinator.

Application forms which do not include all the necessary information and which are not submitted by the deadline will not be considered.

13.4.2 Full proposal stage:

Only applicants that have passed successfully the pre-proposal stage will be invited to complete their proposal by submitting a full proposal package containing:

- Basic information on the partnership involved, a project summary and a budget outline
- Full project description following the points highlighted under 3.1.2
- Detailed budget using the specific budget tables available on the website (see 13.3), providing full details on costs according to the different budget categories, i.e. staff, travel and subsistence, equipment, subcontracting, other costs, and overheads
- Declaration on Honour: this declaration will be considered as evidence of the applicants complying with the exclusion criteria, and certify that the information contained in the application package is correct and has been fully agreed with partner organisations
- In case of Networks and Associations of public authorities delegation letters from the relevant public authorities as described under 5.3.a. to submit, coordinate and/or carry-out the experimentation, as appropriate
- In case of delegated bodies, all necessary letters of delegation for the specific roles to be covered (i.e. Coordinator, carry-out the experimentation) by the appropriate public authorities as described under 5.3.a.
- Letters of mandate: these letters provide powers of attorney to the coordinator to submit the proposal on behalf of all other beneficiaries and to enter into legally binding agreements with the Executive Agency.
- Bank details form: this document provides the details of the bank account that will be used to operate the funds linked to the project. No specific bank account is needed. However, the applicants must have in place a system for tracking and recording expenses linked to the project.

As appropriate, applicants also need to upload in the URF (see 13.2) all necessary documents to define the coordinator's legal personality (public administration, private company, or non-profit organisation, etc.), its financial capacity, and the financial identification/ bank details.

The full-proposal must be submitted by the deadline (see point 3.2) on the correct form, duly completed, dated, showing a balanced budget (revenue/expenditure), and signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisations.

All coordinators will receive written notification of the results together with an evaluation report.

13.5 General provisions for the submission of application forms

Application forms that do not include all the stipulated documents and Annexes and which are not submitted by the deadline will not be considered.

Application forms will be submitted as a package by post. Each package will contain only one complete paper version signed by the legal representative of the coordinating organisation. In addition a complete **scanned version of the signed application** will be sent by email to the address below immediately after posting the paper version. Both versions will contain all relevant and applicable annexes and supporting documents.

The package will be sent by express courier service (the registered delivery receipt of the mail service serves as proof) to the following address:

Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency
Unit A.1 – Erasmus+: Schools, Prospective initiatives, Programme coordination
Call for Proposals EACEA/10/2014
BOU2 02/109
Avenue du Bourget, 1
BE-1049 Brussels

and by e-mail to: EACEA-Policy-Support@ec.europa.eu

Applications submitted by post after the deadline will not be considered.

Application forms sent by e-mail only will not be accepted. Application submitted by fax will not be accepted.

No changes to the application file can be made after the application package has been submitted. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects, the Agency may contact the coordinator for this purpose.

Coordinators will be informed of the receipt of their proposal within 20 working days after the deadline.

Only proposals that fulfil the eligibility criteria, submitted by applicants that meet the exclusion and selection criteria will be considered for a grant. If a proposal is deemed ineligible, or an applicant considered in one of the situations described under the exclusion criteria or without sufficient operational capacity, a letter indicating the reasons will be sent to the coordinator. Selected proposals will be subject to a financial analysis, in connection with which the Agency may ask the coordinator to provide additional information and, if appropriate, financial guarantees.

All unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing.

13.6 Applicable rules

- Regulation (EU) N° 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC;
- Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p.1);
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 362, 31.12.2012, p.1).

13.7 Contacts

If you have any questions, please contact:

Ms Tatiana Niskacova
EACEA-Policy-Support@ec.europa.eu