

Information Session on Open Call on Soft Measures for development of business skills for enterprises in Greece and Croatia

Questions and Answers

Disclaimer: The questions have been kept as asked and answered based on the limited information provided.

General Information

Q: If we are relevant in two categories how should we approach submission i.e. ICT and Green?

A: If your project is relevant to more than one of the focus areas of the call, you are free to choose the most relevant focus area in your application. The focus area selected is not factored in the evaluation of the application, so it will not make a difference whichever you select. However, all projects must be relevant to (at least) one focus area included in the call.

Q: Company stages are there specific stages Norway Grants, company sizes, revenue requirements?

A: There is no limit to the type of company that can apply in the call (see Art. 1.1 of the call). Start-up companies, companies in their growth phase or mature companies can all apply. Micro, small, medium and large companies (with no more than 25% public ownership) can all apply as well. There are no revenue requirements, but all applicants must justify and document how they intend to co-finance the project.

Assessment Process

Q: Is Norway Grants involved in the selection process?

A: Norway Grants is the Financial Mechanism (provider of the funding) for the Programme in Croatia. EEA Grants is the Financial Mechanism (provider of the funding) for the Programme in Greece. Innovation Norway is the fund operator for both programmes, and the one responsible for the evaluation and selection of projects under both calls.

Eligible Applicants

Q: Will start-ups with limited financial and small human resources history be rejected?

A: No, startup companies are eligible to apply, as long as they are legally registered in the Beneficiary country (Greece or Croatia) and can document that they have the financial resources to co-finance the project.

Q: Does the female entrepreneur need to own more than 50% of the company if the partner - co-owner is male?

A: There is no % threshold in order to define a company as female-owned or female-driven. However, it could be an enterprise where a woman holds a (not insignificant) % of the shares, where the legal representative is a woman, an enterprise- where a woman is a partner, or an enterprise where a woman is the chairperson of the Board of Directors for example. The woman should in other words be in a position where she is able to influence company decisions, strategies, etc.

Please also note that, as all projects, projects related to female entrepreneurs, will need to be related to one

of the focus areas in the call.

Project Activities

Q: In case we proceed with trainings based in ICT sector as a project of business intelligence, is it eligible to organize trainings from different vendors-firms?

A: The project must include cohesive activities, that will all contribute to the same overall aim. If the project aim is to increase the applicant company's capacity for business development, through the development of skills and competence related to BI, then it is possible to select different trainings from different providers, which will be complementary and contribute to the achievement of the project goal.

Q: Is participation in fairs (as exhibitors) in Greece an eligible activity?

A: Yes, as long as the fair is relevant to one of the focus areas of the call, and will contribute to increased capacity for business development for the applicant company. Please note that the fair must take place before 30th of April 2024.

Q: Is training small businesses on how to become greener eligible as an activity? Even if they are not in the specific industry themselves?

A: Yes, training on greening of the business would be an eligible activity. As the activity falls under the Green Industry Innovation focus area, it is not necessary that the applicant is also active in one of the focus areas themselves.

Q: Can an SME (project applicant) use a university (as subcontractor and not as a partner) for training sessions in ICT technologies? Will this cost be eligible for the SME ?

A: In case of subcontracted costs, a procurement process will need to be followed. So, for example, for a value above EUR 20,000 at least 3 offers will need to be requested. If you have already identified a suitable subcontractor (e.g. university), then it is best that the university is included as a partner. Otherwise, they might not be the final contractor selected, in case a competitive procurement process is to be followed.

All eligible project expenses (including the expenses of the partner(s) and any subcontractors) must be included in the project budget. The grant will be calculated according to the applicable grant rate and the eligible expenses. The partners (and subcontractors) will invoice the applicant for their expenses, which must be settled by the applicant before claiming reimbursement. The grant will be awarded and paid to the applicant, for expenses already incurred and paid. An advance payment of up to 10% can also be requested with the signature of the project contract.

Q: Are the costs of testing eligible in feasibility study?

A: The question is not very elaborate. Usually testing occurs after a feasibility study, so it would not be an eligible activity.

Q: Is sub-contracting limited to certain activities?

A: No, any eligible activity can potentially be subcontracted. However, the applicant should always have a clear and meaningful contribution in the project and the achievement of the project objectives. In cases where the applicant company is also the beneficiary of the project, then the applicant might not have an active role as they will be the recipient of services or activities (e.g. in case of training).

Q: Would it be eligible to organise more than one event

A: Yes, as long as the events are relevant and would lead to the achievement of the same overall project goal.

Project Partnership

Q: Is there a limit to the number of partners included from Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein?

A: There is no formal limit to the number of partners included in a project application. However, the structure of the project should not be overly complicated as this might adversely affect the implementation. We do not see many cases where more than 1 or maybe 2 partners will be needed for the implementation of projects under this Call.

Q: Can a Lithuanian company act as a Partner which is 77% owned by a Norwegian company?

A: No, only entities registered as a legal entity in one of the beneficiary states (Greece or Croatia, depending on the call), or in the donor states are eligible partners. The ownership of a company is not considered.

Q: It was mentioned that each applicant can only participate in one proposal, but can be a partner in several. Could you describe a bit more about what kind of partnership would this be? Could you maybe give an example?

A: An entity that is an eligible applicant under the call can only submit one application (as applicant). However, the same entity could participate in different projects as a partner. There is no limit to the number of projects that an eligible entity could participate as a partner. For example, a company might submit an application in which they participate in a fair as an exhibitor, and participate as a partner in another application, where they intend to facilitate the organisation of a training on green processes, in collaboration with a business association (that will be the applicant entity in this proposal).

Q: Who can be the Beneficiary in the following outcome: "Enhanced business collaboration between Croatian entities and Donor State entities"? Only enterprise in Croatia and Norway or?

A: This outcome is an optional outcome under this call. All projects involving a partner from one of the donor states is contributing to this outcome as, through the project, the beneficiary state entity and donor state entity will collaborate for a common goal. As with all projects under this call, the end beneficiaries must always be companies registered in the beneficiary states (so either Greece or Croatia).

Q: Do the Norwegian partners will also receive funding?

A: Yes, the costs of the Norwegian partners are eligible for reimbursement (as long as their activities are eligible). The grant will be awarded to the applicant, who will then reimburse the partner based on the grant rate and the actual costs incurred.

Grant Rates

Q: Are research institutions from Norway funded 100% through this call?

A: No, the maximum grant rate under this call is 90% (please see Art. 1.4 of the Call). This includes also research institutions from Norway. However, in case the applicant agrees to cover the whole co-financing amount for the project, then the Norwegian partner will be reimbursed for 100% of their expenses (90% grant plus 10% from the applicant entity)

Questions specific to Greece

Q: What is the role of the Hellenic Development Bank?

A: The Hellenic Development Bank (HDB) is the National Programme Partner of the Business Innovation Greece Programme. They contributed in the designing of the programme, as well as assisted Innovation Norway in dissemination activities. They do not have an active role under the present call.