



KINNITATUD

Sotsiaalkaitseministri 10.02.2015 käskkirjaga nr 21  
„Norra finantsmehhanismist 2009-2014 rahastatud programmi  
„Sooline võrdõiguslikkus ning töö- ja pereelu tasakaal“  
kahepoolsete suhete fondist toetuse andmise  
tingimuste kehtestamine“

## **GUIDELINES for Applying for Support from the Fund for Bilateral Relations**

“Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance”  
Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014

The present Guidelines for Applying for Support from the Fund for Bilateral Relations (hereinafter referred to as “the Guidelines”) establish the terms and selection procedures (as well as reporting responsibilities) regarding the allocation of funds that have been set aside for the purpose of initiating and/or strengthening bilateral relations between Estonian and Norwegian<sup>1</sup> public and/or private institutions, NGOs and/or research institutions and international organisations.

The funds have been provided by the **Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014** via the Fund for Bilateral Relations, established within the framework of the programme “Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance” (hereinafter referred to as “the Programme”).

The main objective of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 is to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen relations between Norway and the Beneficiary States to the mutual benefit of their peoples.

The main objective of the Programme is to promote gender equality and work-life balance in Estonia through raising the general awareness on matters related to gender equality as well as promoting research on gender issues and improving the balance between work, private and family life.

The Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia (hereinafter referred to as “the Programme Operator”) is managing the Fund for Bilateral Relations in cooperation with the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (hereinafter referred to as “the Donor Programme Partner”).

The Guidelines have been drawn in compliance with the following documents:

- Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 adopted by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 11 February 2011, amended on 15 December 2011, on 14 March 2013 and on 2 July 2014 (hereinafter referred to as “the Regulation”);
- Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 between the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Estonia;
- Programme Agreement between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Estonian Ministry of Finance for the financing of the Programme “Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance” signed on 25 February 2013 amended on 15 July 2013 and on 2 January 2014;
- Management and Control Systems of the Norwegian and European Economic Area Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014 in the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, approved by the Minister of Social Protection and the Minister of Health and Labour on 27 October 2014 with Decree No 176.

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<sup>1</sup> Cooperation with international organisations is eligible as well.

## **1. RULES CONCERNING THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

### **1.1 General Objective**

1.1.1 The aim of the Fund for Bilateral Relations is to facilitate and support bilateral cooperation between entities from Estonia and Norway as well as international organisations.

- Strong bilateral relations are characterized by cooperation between institutions and persons at administrative and political level as well as in the private sector, academia and civil society. Other elements of bilateral relations include cultural exchange, as well as general knowledge, understanding and public awareness about the other country.

1.1.2 Taking into account point 1.1.1, the current call for proposals aims at:

- improving mutual understanding between entities from Estonia and Norway as well as international organisations (at individual, organisational or community levels);
- providing opportunities for the transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practices;
- providing shared results, i.e. involving both Estonian and Norwegian entities (or international organisations) in the planning and implementation of the initiative<sup>2</sup> and having both contribute to the achievement of the outcomes.

### **1.2 Eligible Applicants**

1.2.1 Support from the Fund for Bilateral Relations is available to all of the organisations **that have received funding from the Programme's small grant scheme<sup>3</sup>.**

1.2.2 Applicants must possess the administrative capacity to implement the activities for which the grant is applied and they must not have any national tax liabilities, including social security contribution obligations as of the date when submitting the application (source: electronic database of the Tax and Customs Board).

1.2.3 Applicants must not be under liquidation procedures or bankruptcy, the operation of the organisation may not be put to a halt and none of the people associated with the initiative (at any level) may be convicted of professional misconduct, fraud, money laundering, corruption, involvement in criminal organisations or in any other illegal operations.

### **1.3 Size of Grants**

1.3.1 The total amount of the grant that will be distributed is 30 000 EUR.

1.3.2 The maximum amount of support that will be distributed to one applicant is 5 000 EUR. **An applicant may submit multiple applications** providing the cumulative amount requested does not exceed the set limit of 5 000 EUR.

1.3.3 The grant rate is set at 100% for all applicants, i.e. **no co-financing is required.**

1.3.4 The grant may qualify as de minimis state aid as specified in the European Commission's Regulation (EC) nr. 1407/2013. Before adopting the decision to grant de minimis aid, the Programme Operator will notify the beneficiary of the aid of the planned grant of de minimis aid. De minimis aid given from different sources shall not exceed a ceiling of 200 000 EUR over any period of three years. Information on de minimis aid previously granted to Estonian applicants shall be checked from the relevant registry under the Estonian Ministry of Finance<sup>4</sup>.

### **1.4 Supported Types of Activities**

1.4.1 Support will be given to concrete activities that facilitate networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and/or best practices

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<sup>2</sup> The Programme Operator is introducing the term "initiative" as opposed to "project" due to the nature of the Fund for Bilateral Relations. The funds are meant for concrete activities that complement the projects already in implementation and that have a fairly short life cycle.

<sup>3</sup> Funding is available to organisations that received funding in the open call that was launched 1 April 2014.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on state aid, please see: <http://www.fin.ee/riigiabi>

between Estonian and Norwegian as well as international organisations.

This includes but is not limited to:

- participation in conferences, seminars, courses, workshops, meetings, study trips, etc. which are held in Norway/or in the country in which the cooperating international organisation operates in;
- organising conferences, seminars, courses, workshops, meetings, etc. in Estonia that act as a means of promoting bilateral relations;
- including Norwegian participants and/or international organisations in conferences, seminars, courses, workshops, meetings, etc. which are held in Estonia.

1.4.2 Relevant questions to ask one's self in the planning process of a bilateral initiative include:

- Is there a wish to develop on existing relations or establish new ones?
- Are there on-going initiatives or upcoming events of importance for bilateral relations to build on?
- Are there European or international arenas where Estonian and Norwegian organisations (as well as international organisations) could collaborate or promote initiatives jointly?
- Could initiatives be tied to major events in either Estonia or Norway (state visits, international chairmanships, etc.)?

1.4.3 The proposed activities must complement the objectives and outcomes of the Programme and the project funded from the small grant scheme, i.e. the main focus has to be on gender equality and/or work, private and family life balance.

1.4.4 Activities that have already been planned (i.e. have been budgeted for) in the projects funded from the small grant scheme **will not be supported**. The applicant is responsible for mitigating any risks related to double financing.

## **1.5 Eligible expenditure**

1.5.1 Eligible expenditure of initiatives are actually incurred by the Grantee or its Counterparts<sup>5</sup> and meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility as specified in the contract;
- they are connected with the subject of the grant contract and they are shown in the estimated overall budget of the grant application;
- they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the activities;
- they must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective(s) of the Fund for Bilateral Relations;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular by being recorded in the accounting records of the Grantee and determined in accordance with applicable accounting standards of the Estonian Republic and are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

1.5.2 An expenditure is considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in case of services and works).

1.5.3 **Eligible expenses are:**

- fees and travel costs for participation in conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops;
- travel costs for study trips;
- travel and salary costs for visits by experts;

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<sup>5</sup> The Programme Operator is introducing the term "Counterpart". The term applies to all entities with which the applicant wishes to cooperate in order to achieve the goals of the initiative (i.e. this can be an entity responsible for organising a conference/seminar/workshop/etc. that the applicant would like to partake in or any entity with whom to cooperate in organising an event in Estonia). Organisations that qualified as "Project Partners" in the small grant scheme and whose employees participate in the initiative are considered Counterparts as well.

- costs of conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops;
  - promotional and information activities;
  - external consultancy fees.
- 1.5.4 Travel, accommodation and subsistence allowances for the staff taking part in the initiative are eligible, provided that they are in line with the Grantee's and Counterparts' usual practices on travel costs and are in accordance with the provisions set forth in the relevant laws and regulations.
- Regarding the Grantee and the employees of any Counterparts that are registered in Estonia, travel costs and per diems must be compensated in accordance with the cost provisions for business trips in the laws and regulations of the Republic of Estonia.
  - Regarding the employees of any Counterparts registered in Norway, travel costs and per diems must be compensated in accordance with the cost provisions set forth in the laws and regulations of the Kingdom of Norway. In the case of international organisations, the laws and regulations of the organisation must be followed.
  - The price of flight/train/boat/etc. tickets must not exceed the average price of a ticket in the economy class of an equivalent flight/train/boat/etc. Exceptions must be confirmed with the Programme Operator.
- 1.5.5 The following costs shall not be considered as eligible:
- costs foreseen in the budget of the already implemented project(s) by the Grantee;
  - interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
  - charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs;
  - provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
  - exchange losses;
  - recoverable VAT;
  - costs that are covered by other sources;
  - fines, penalties and costs of litigation;
  - indirect expenses;
  - excessive or reckless expenditure;
  - other costs that do not correspond with the provisions of costs eligibility.

## **2. APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **2.1 Application Deadline and Period of Eligibility**

- 2.1.1 Applications can be submitted on a continuous basis until 30 September 2015. Nonetheless, in order to give the Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partner ample time to process and evaluate the requests, applications must be submitted at least 30 workdays before the activities are planned to begin.
- 2.1.2 The eligibility of activities and costs starts on the date that the grant contract is signed by both parties (i.e. the Grantee and Programme Operator).
- 2.1.3 All activities connected to the initiative must be finished by 31 March 2016.

### **2.2 Submitting an Application**

- 2.2.1 All applications should be signed digitally and sent to the Programme Operator via email at [info@sm.ee](mailto:info@sm.ee). The subject of the email should read: "*EE09 kahepoolsed suhted*". Information on how to sign documents digitally is available on the homepage of the Certification Centre at <http://www.id.ee/>.
- 2.2.2 All applications submitted after the deadline (i.e. after 30 September 2015) will be disregarded and will not be evaluated.
- 2.2.3 Guidelines for the call for proposals including the application form (together with all the relevant annexes) are available at <http://www.sm.ee/et/sooline-vordoiguslikkus-ning-too-ja-pereelu-tasakaal>.

## **2.3 Eligibility of an Application**

2.3.1 Applications must be presented on the application form provided by the Programme Operator (Annex 1), completed in English and include all relevant supporting documentation regarding the proposed activities. This includes\*:

- Commitment letters from all Counterparts that are actively participating in the initiative (Annex 2);
- invitations and/or agendas regarding conferences, seminars and other similar events;
- CVs/professional experience descriptions of persons included, if not already submitted in the previous call for proposals in the small grant scheme.

\*To ensure the success of your application, **please consult with the Programme Coordinator(s) with regard to what additional documentation to present** before finalizing and submitting your application.

2.3.2 An application is eligible when:

- activities listed in the application correspond with the activities that are supported (as listed in point 1.4 of the Guidelines);
- the amount of the applied grant corresponds with the grant requirements set forth in point 1.3.2 of the Guidelines;
- eligible activities have not begun before the contract has been signed by both parties (i.e. the Programme Operator and the Grantee) and activities are planned to end by 31 March 2016;
- the information presented in the application is complete and correct;
- the application and all other relevant documents are signed by an authorised person.

## **3. EVALUATION PROCESS**

### **3.1 Evaluation of Applications**

3.1.1 Each application will undergo an initial administrative and eligibility criteria check (Annex 3) upon submission.

3.1.2 All applications that pass the administrative and eligibility criteria check will be evaluated by 2 persons - a representative of the Programme Operator and a representative of the Donor Programme Partner. The evaluators will separately evaluate the quality of each proposed application and its accordance with the objectives of the Programme and the Fund for Bilateral Relations. They will record their observations, recommendations and overall assessment in an evaluation form (Annex 4).

3.1.3 The financing decision will only be valid upon a unanimous decision by both of the evaluators. This means that in order to receive a positive financing decision, the application has to receive a score of 38 points or higher from both evaluators.

3.1.4 The evaluators are allowed to communicate with each other in order to reach a unanimous decision. In the case that the evaluators disagree on a financing decision or agree on a negative decision, the applicant will be notified of the shortcomings and will be permitted to resubmit the application.

3.1.5 The Programme Coordinator will inform the applicants of the evaluation results via e-mail within five workdays after the evaluators have cast their decisions (i.e. after both evaluators have submitted signed evaluation sheets).

3.1.6 The Programme Operator will sign grant contracts with all Grantees whose applications are deemed successful and who receive funding from the Fund for Bilateral Relations. Information about the grantees and their activities will be published on the Programme's homepage.

## **4. PAYMENTS AND REPORTING**

### **4.1 Method of payments**

4.1.1 The grant will be disbursed in full (100%) within 10 working days from the date on which the grant contract is signed.

- 4.1.2 The Grantee is responsible for forwarding the relevant grant to its Counterparts in the cases where that is necessary.
- 4.1.3 The Grantee is responsible for returning the grant amount that remains unused and/or that is declared as ineligible by the Programme Operator within 15 working days after the approval of the final report.

## **4.2 Reporting**

- 4.2.1 The Grantee will prepare and submit a report that includes a progress and financial report within 20 working days after the end of the initiative's activities. The financial report shall include all of the expenses that have been incurred.
- 4.2.2 The Grantee is responsible for collecting all the relevant documentation regarding incurred expenses from all Counterparts.
- 4.2.3 The report must include:
- copies of invoices, payment receipts, or bank statements proving the settlement of payments;
  - copies of travel tickets (including boarding passes);
  - copies of articles, informational or advertisement material prepared during the implementation of the initiative;
  - agendas or other informational material about conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and/or workshops attended or links to sources of such information, certificates received etc.;
  - reports about the events.
- 4.2.4 The Programme Operator will review the report within 10 workdays after the Grantee has submitted it. When no deficiencies are found, the report will be approved.
- 4.2.5 In the case that deficiencies are detected, the Programme Operator will request corrections from the Grantee within a reasonable deadline.

## **4.3 Irregularities**

- 4.3.1 In the case of irregularities, Regulation No 278 of the Government of Estonia - "*The procedure and criteria of reclaiming and reimbursing the received grant and informing on irregularities*" - (adopted on December 22, 2006) will be followed. According to Article 7.16.2 of the Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 all Grantees must follow the Estonian Public Procurement Act. Article 7.16.3 makes an exception to NGOs who have to comply with the Public Procurement Act starting from thresholds set for public procurement by the European Union. Nevertheless, §3 of the Public Procurement Act has to be respected by NGOs as well. Neglecting the before mentioned act will be treated as an irregularity.

## 5. Points of Contact

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**Queries sent by email will be answered as quickly as possible, but no later than 3 working days.**

## 6. Documents and other Relevant Information Related to the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014:

- Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period 2009-2014 between The Kingdom of Norway and The Republic of Estonia<sup>6</sup>
- Programme Agreement of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 programme "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance"<sup>7</sup>
- Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014<sup>8</sup>
- Regulation No 278 of the Government of Estonia - "*The procedure and criteria of reclaiming and reimbursing the received grant and informing on irregularities*" - (adopted on December 22, 2006) (In Estonian)<sup>9</sup>
- Website of the Ministry of Finance dedicated to the Norwegian and European Economic Area Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014<sup>10</sup>
- Website of the Norwegian and European Economic Area Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014<sup>11</sup>
- Website of the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs – the Donor Programme Partner<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/217062011001>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sm.ee/et/sooline-vordoiguslikkus-ning-too-ja-pereelu-tasakaal>

<sup>8</sup> <http://eeagrants.org/Results-data/Results-overview/Documents/Legal-documents/Regulations-with-annexes/Norway-Grants-2009-2014>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/12769549>

<sup>10</sup> <http://eeagrants.fin.ee/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://eeagrants.org/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.bufetat.no/engelsk/bufdir/>