



SAIA, n. o.

as the Programme Operator of the

EEA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME SLOVAKIA

announces the

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

for grant applications for

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION/TRAINING

Call No.: EEA/EHP-SK06-IV-V-02

Call opened: 3rd March 2015

Call closed: 11th May 2015

1. Introduction

EEA Scholarship Programme Slovakia (EEA SP) is one of nine programmes implemented in Slovakia under the EEA and Norway Grants. The overall objectives of the EEA Grants are to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations between the Donor States and the Beneficiary States.

EEA Scholarship Programme Slovakia supports mobility of students, PhD students and academic staff of higher education institutions, as well as development and strengthening of bilateral and multilateral relations at upper-secondary-school and higher-education levels between Slovakia and the Donor States (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).

EEA Scholarship Programme Slovakia is financed by EEA Grants (85% of total amount) and the state budget of the Slovak Republic (15% of total amount). Total budget of the programme is EUR 2,255,882.

SAIA, n. o. is the Programme Operator of the EEA Scholarship Programme Slovakia.¹ Donor Programme Partners are: Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNÍS) Iceland, National Agency for International Education Affairs (AIBA) Liechtenstein and Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) Norway.

2. Objectives

The objective of inter-institutional cooperation projects is **to increase bilateral or multilateral institutional cooperation** among higher education institutions and upper secondary schools in Slovakia and in the Donor States. Priority is to support balanced and innovative partnerships (bilateral or multilateral) based on reciprocity of activities and benefit from cooperation for all involved parties.

Under the measure **Inter-institutional cooperation between higher education institutions** the priority will be given to the projects aiming at:

- a) enhancement of the quality of a study programme;
- b) strengthening of the practical training of students and PhD students in an international environment, in particular in the non-academic sector;
- c) development of interdisciplinary education.

Under the measure **Inter-institutional cooperation in upper-secondary education/training** the priority will be given to the projects aiming at:

- a) acquisition of skills for practical use in the labour market for all social groups;
- b) identification and work with talents;
- c) enhancement of the quality of education at the school.

¹ SAIA, n. o. has been established the Programme Operator of the EEA Scholarship Programme Slovakia by the Government Office of the Slovak Republic as the National Focal Point of EEA Grants in Slovakia based on the public procurement competition.

3. Project outcomes

The project outcomes (measurable indicators) are set in the Guide for Applicants, annexed to this call. The applicant is required to choose at least 4 mandatory measurable indicators, as explained in the Guide for Applicants. The applicant may add its own project outcomes..

4. Eligible activities

Thematic focus of projects is not defined (bottom-up approach).

4.1 Inter-institutional cooperation projects between higher education institutions

1. Various types of activities shall be combined to form a comprehensive project proposal and in accordance with the conditions stated in the paragraph 2 of this article:
 - a) **Support for faculty-based cooperation between institutions in Slovakia and in Donor States** aiming at long-term relations. The elements for such cooperation could be for example student exchanges, development of common curricula and joint study programmes.
 - b) **Development of common study modules** with the aim of offering common study programmes at a later stage. Such modules should encompass at least 30 ECTS.
 - c) **Development or preparation of new teaching aids and teaching methods** (with special focus on ICT-based learning) on the basis of experience sharing.
 - d) **Intensive courses for students and PhD students:** short courses lasting from **2 weeks (14 days) to 4 weeks** within a specified field. Participants should have the course recognised through ECTS credits and counted towards their degree.
 - e) **Preparation of joint scientific papers and publications as the output of a common project.**
 - f) **Organising conferences, seminars, training, workshops, and summer schools as a part of the project.** Summer schools must last for at least 7 days.
 - g) **Internships, practical placements, professional training of students and PhD** students in research organisations, hospitals, companies, non-profit organisations and in other organisations of practice cooperating with accredited educational institutions - at 1st, 2nd, 3rd level of higher education from **2 weeks (14 days) to 8 weeks**. The condition of this activity is the international mobility between Slovakia and the Donor States and vice versa. Mobility shall take place within one academic year (from August/September-till July/August).
 - h) **Short-term mobility of students, PhD students** from the organisations of applicant and eligible partners with the objective of receiving specialised expertise and experience (e.g. thesis preparation, participation in conferences, competitions, summer schools, workshops, trainings, language courses - focused mainly on native languages of the Donor States and Slovakia, etc.). The mobility may take from **3 days to 6 weeks**. The

condition of this activity is the international mobility between Slovakia and the Donor States and vice versa. Inland/domestic mobility and mobility related to the participation of associated partners from other countries within the EEA Scholarship Programme area is allowed in justified cases.

- i) **Short-term mobility of academic staff** from the organisations of applicant and eligible partners with the objective of expertise and experience exchange (e. g. teaching assignments of five teaching hours per assignment, participation in conferences, seminars, workshops or other training events, job shadowing, research cooperation and other activities of this Measure). The mobility may take from **3 days to 6 weeks**. The condition of this activity is the international mobility (**both ways**) between Slovakia and the Donor States and vice versa. Inland/domestic mobility and mobility related to the participation of associated partners from other countries within the EEA Scholarship Programme area is allowed in justified cases.
- j) **Short-term mobility of experts** from research organisations, hospitals, companies, non-profit organisations and other organisations cooperating with accredited educational institutions with the aim of sharing the expertise and experience with HEIs and mutual cooperation. The mobility may take from **3 days to 6 weeks**. This activity may be used also in order to fulfil various activities of this Measure. The condition of this activity is the international mobility between Slovakia and the Donor States and vice versa. Inland/domestic mobility and mobility related to the participation of associated partners from other countries within the EEA Scholarship Programme area is allowed in justified cases.
- k) **Short-term mobility of top management and administrative staff** of HEIs with the aim of institutional relations development, exchange of experience with the organisation management and development strategies. The mobility may take from **3 days to 2 weeks**. The condition of this activity is the international mobility (**both ways**) between Slovakia and the Donor States and vice versa. Inland/domestic mobility and mobility related to the participation of associated partners from other countries within the EEA Scholarship Programme area is allowed in justified cases.

2. Every project must involve at least 1 of the activities a) – e) and 2 of the activities g) – k). Minimum 2 student/PhD student mobilities and at least 2 mobilities of HEI academic, top management, administrative staff must take place within every project between Slovakia and the Donor States.

4.2 Inter-institutional cooperation projects in upper secondary education/training

1. Various types of activities shall be combined to form a comprehensive project proposal and in accordance to the conditions stated in the paragraph 2 of this article:

- a) **Support for inter-institutional cooperation in education among upper secondary schools** in Slovakia and in the Donor States including activities focusing **on students, teachers and other employees of the upper secondary schools**.

- b) **Support for inter-institutional cooperation in education among upper secondary schools** in Slovakia and in the Donor States **on the joint implementation of topics of common interests.**
 - c) **Development or preparation of new teaching aids and methods**, with special focus on ICT-based learning.
 - d) **Organising knowledge contests for students** (on a distance basis and/or by a mutual visit lasting for **3 – 13 days**).
 - e) **Organising of summer environmental schools** lasting for **1 – 3 weeks**.
 - f) **Organising of excursions and intensive courses for students** related to the teaching-learning process lasting for **6 – 13 days**.
 - g) **Professional stays and practice for student groups or teachers** in hospitals, companies, non-profit organisations and in other organisations cooperating with educational institutions. The mobility may take **1 – 3 weeks**. The condition of this activity is an international mobility between Slovakia and the Donor States or vice versa.
 - h) **Mobility of students** with the aim to take part in one of the activities proposed above (a, d - g).
 - i) **Distance cooperation of students on common assignments** among partner organisations, using ICT, on topics related to the teaching-learning process and/or interdisciplinary topics.
 - j) **Organising and participating in professional seminars** focusing on issues linked to the teaching-learning process and education of secondary-school students for school staff of **6 – 13 days**.
 - k) **Mobility of teachers** to develop professional teaching of subjects, including the preparation of teaching aids and ICT-based tools lasting for **2 – 4 weeks**.
 - l) **Mobility of school staff** focusing on improvement of upper secondary schools management lasting for **6 – 13 days**.
2. Every project must involve at least 1 of the activities a) – c) and 3 of the activities a) – l). Minimum 2 staff (including teachers) mobilities must take place within every project.

5. Eligible applicant and partners

5.1 Inter-institutional cooperation projects between higher education institutions

1. The eligible applicant is higher education institution with the seat in Slovakia².
2. Eligible partner is:
 - A. Eligible partner from Slovakia:

² According to the Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on HEIs (Article 2, Paragraph 2, a), b), c))

- a) higher education institution with the seat in Slovakia²;
 - b) external educational institution with the seat in Slovakia authorised to train PhD students³;
- B. Eligible partner from the Donor State is a higher education institution and/or another organisation authorised to provide education at the higher education level.
3. Associated partner is:
- a) higher education institution within EEA Scholarship Programme area⁴ recognised by the relevant country according to its legislation;
 - b) organisation of practice (mainly from non-academic sector, typically industrial or non-profit organisation) with the seat in one of the countries: Slovakia, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
4. Eligible applicant must have at least 1 eligible partner organisation according to paragraph 2, point B of this article.
5. It is possible to create a consortium consisting of at least 3 partners: eligible applicant, eligible partner according to paragraph 2, point B of this article and additional partner according to paragraph 2 points A, B and/or paragraph 3 of this article.
6. Associated partner according to paragraph 3 of this article may participate in project activities; however he will not have its own budget. Eligible expenditures in justified cases shall be: expenditures related to individual mobility of participants involved in project activities from the organisation of associated partner; expenditures related to participation in events organised within the project and the remuneration of experts coming from associate partner organizations involved in activities within the project. These expenses must be included in the budget of the Project Promoter or eligible partner.

5.2 Inter-institutional cooperation projects in upper secondary education/training

1. The eligible applicant is upper secondary school with the seat in Slovakia⁵.
2. Eligible partner is:
- A. Eligible partner from Slovakia:
 - a) upper secondary school with the seat in Slovakia⁵;
 - b) higher education institution with the seat in Slovakia².
 - B. Eligible partner from the Donor State is:
 - a) upper secondary school and/or another organisation authorised to provide education at the secondary-school level;
 - b) higher education institution and/or another organisation authorised to provide education at the higher education level.

³ According to the Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on HEIs (Article 54 and related articles)

⁴ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain

⁵ According to the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (the School Act) (Article 32)

3. Associated partner is:
 - c) upper secondary school within EEA Scholarship Programme area⁴ recognised by the relevant country according to its legislation;
 - d) organisation of practice (mainly from non-academic sector, typically industrial or non-profit organisation) with the seat in one of the countries: Slovakia, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
4. Eligible applicant must have at least 1 eligible partner organisation according to paragraph 2, point B a) of this article.
5. It is possible to create a consortium consisting of at least 3 partners: eligible applicant, eligible partner according to paragraph 2, point B a) of this article and additional partner according to paragraph 2 points A, B and/or paragraph 3 of this article.
6. Associated partner according to paragraph 3 of this article may participate in project activities; however he will not have its own budget. Eligible expenditures in justified cases shall be: expenditures related to individual mobility of participants from the organisation of associated partner involved in project activities; expenditures related to participation in events organised within the project and the remuneration of experts coming from the organisation of associated partner involved in activities within the project. These expenses must be included in the budget of the Project Promoter or eligible partner.

6. Partnership

1. The relation between the Project Promoter and a partner shall not substitute the business relations between supplier and customer.
2. An eligible partner has its own budget and defined project activities it is obliged to implement. Eligible partner with the seat in one of the Donor States is obliged to ensure independent and certified audit of claimed costs according to paragraph 3 of Article 7.13 of the Regulation on the implementation of EEA FM 2009 – 2014.
3. An associated partner does not have its own budget, but it is involved in defined activities. Eligible expenditures of an associated partner are financed from the budget of the applicant (Project Promoter) or eligible partner, where relevant.
4. The Project Promoter is responsible for all commitments and errors of a partner in relation to the Programme Operator.
5. Partnership agreement (in English) shall be concluded between the Project Promoter and the eligible partner. Partnership agreement is subject to the approval by the Programme Operator before the Project contract is concluded. Partnership agreement shall meet requirements set in article 6.8 of Regulation on the implementation of EEA FM 2009 – 2014.

7. Eligible area

Eligible area is the entire territory of Slovakia, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

8. Eligible period for submission of grant application and for implementation of activities

1. The call for proposals is open from 3rd March 2015 till 11th May 2015.
2. Expected project start is September 2015, while duration of the project is minimum 9 months and maximum 12 months.
3. First day of eligibility of expenditures is the day of entry into force of the Project contract between SAIA, n. o., and the Project Promoter, if not otherwise specified in the Project contract.
4. Last day of eligibility of activities is the day of planned end of project implementation, latest 31st August 2016.
5. Last day of eligibility of expenditures is 31st August 2016.

9. Call allocation

1. Total amount available for this call for proposals is EUR 946 314,88.
2. Contribution from EEA Grants represents 85% and contribution from the state budget of the Slovak Republic is 15% of the total amount.

10. Grant amount and grant rate

1. Grant amount for the projects of inter-institutional cooperation between higher education institutions is minimum EUR 50,000, maximum EUR 120,000.
2. Grant amount for the projects of inter-institutional cooperation in upper secondary education/training is minimum EUR 30,000, maximum EUR 100,000.
3. Project grant shall cover maximum 90% of the total project eligible expenditures. Remaining costs of the project and incurred ineligible expenditures shall be financed from the own resources of the Project Promoter or resources ensured by the Project Promoter (also resources of the partners or other resources e.g. bank loans or deposits of third parties).

11. State aid

Though it is not expected that project grants under this call could constitute state aid, the Programme Operator reserves the right to carry out the standard state aid test before the grant application is approved. In case the project grant or its part would constitute state aid, the Programme Operator shall consult the Project Promoter on possible solutions, such as for instance granting *de minimis* aid.

12. Eligibility of costs

1. The eligible direct costs are expenditures directly related to the project and comply with the provisions set out in the Regulation on the implementation of EEA FM 2009 – 2014, Chapter 7, except expenditures excluded in the Article 7.6 and costs according to Article 7.3, paragraph 1(d) (purchase of land and real estate). Costs of new or second hand equipment are eligible in the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applicable to Project Promoter and generally accepted for the items of the same type. In-kind contribution is not allowed. Specific rules for expenditures related to international mobility (daily allowances/scholarships, travel costs) binding for the EEA Scholarship programme Slovakia are set out in the Guide for Applicants, annexed to this call. Direct expenditures consist of expenditures on project activities, project management and project promotion. Expenditure on project management may be applied up to 10% of expenditures on the project activities. Expenditure on project promotion may be applied up to 3% of expenditures on the project activities.
2. Indirect costs (overheads) are all eligible costs that cannot be identified by the Project Promoter and/or project partners as being directly attributed to the project but which can be identified and justified by its accounting system as being incurred in direct relationship with the eligible direct costs attributed to the project. They may not include any eligible direct costs. Indirect costs which comply with Article 7.4 of the Regulation on the implementation of EEA FM 2009 – 2014 are eligible and may be identified according to one of the methods set in Article 7.4 paragraph 1 (a) or (b) i.e. based on actual indirect costs in an analytical accounting system or opt for a flat rate in accordance with instructions in the Guide for Applicants, annexed to this call. Indirect costs may be applied up to 10% of direct expenditures minus subcontracting and third party costs not incurred on the premises of the Project Promoter. When applying flat rate indirect costs, Project Promoter and eligible partners must provide an acceptable methodology for calculating indirect costs. This methodology will be part of the documentation to the Project contract concluded between Programme operator and Project promoter.
3. Expenditures must comply with eligibility criteria set in Article 8.1 of the System of Management of the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the Programme Period 2009 - 2014.

13. Submission of the grant application

1. Grant application shall be filled out Slovak, unless otherwise specified⁶.
2. Grant application consists of completed application form and mandatory annexes set in Annex 3 to this Call for proposals.
3. Filled-out application form together with required annexes shall be submitted electronically via the on-line application system accessible from the Programme webpage www.spehp.saia.sk⁷ and in printed form. The grant application shall be submitted tied.
4. Completed grant application shall be submitted via the on-line application system during the open call, but at the latest by the call deadline, i.e. 11th May 2015, till 16:00. Printed and signed version of the grant application shall be delivered in person or by courier latest on the day of call deadline till 16:00, or submitted by post to the address of the Programme Operator stated in article 16 of this call. For grant applications submitted by post, the postmark date applies, latest on the day of call deadline. The grant application sent by post shall be delivered to the seat of the Programme Operator latest 5 working days after call deadline. Grant application delivered after this date shall not be accepted.
5. Complete grant application shall be submitted in 1 original and 1 copy.
6. The following shall be written on the envelope/parcel:
 - “NEOTVÁRAŤ” (i.e. do not open)
 - title “Štipendijný program EHP Slovensko – Projekty inštitucionálnej spolupráce” (i.e. EEA Scholarship programme Slovakia – Inter-institutional cooperation projects)
 - Call No “EEA/EHP-SK06-IV-V-02”
 - complete applicant name
 - project name.
7. All of the information provided in the grant application must be up to date, true, complete and accurate. The Programme Operator may reject the grant application from the further assessment process should it find out that the information does not meet the criteria listed in the previous sentence. When such fact is discovered by the Programme Operator later, while concluding that the wrongly provided information has had or might have had an effect on the assessment process, the project shall be terminated and the Programme Operator shall request the payback of the entire project grant provided.

⁶ Parts of the grant application which shall be filled out in English are clearly marked.

⁷ Information on registration and grant application submission via on-line application system is stated in the Guide for Applicants, annexed to this call.

14. Selection procedures, selection criteria and contract negotiation

1. Grant applications will be assessed based on administrative compliance criteria, eligibility criteria and expert evaluation. The assessment is carried out on the basis of criteria stated in annexes 4 and 5 to this call for proposals. Further details are listed in the Guide for Applicants.
2. The grant application will be rejected without the possibility to supplement the missing information in any of the following cases:
 - a. if the grant application was not delivered in the on-line application system till the call deadline;
 - b. If the printed version was not delivered within deadline set in paragraph 4 of article 13 of this call;
 - c. if the applicant is not an eligible applicant according to article 5 of this call;
 - d. if the applicant does not have at least 1 eligible foreign partner according to article 5 of this call;
 - e. if the objective of the project is not in accordance with this call.⁸
3. If the grant application does not meet any other criteria of administrative compliance or eligibility criteria specified in annex 4 to this call, the applicant will be given 5 working days to rectify identified shortcomings. The applicant will be informed of the shortcomings in the grant application by e-mail, while the time period given to supplement the missing information, resp. to rectify the shortcomings starts on the day after sending the e-mail to the applicant. If the missing information in the grant application is not supplemented resp. the shortcomings rectified within the set deadline, the grant application will be excluded from further assessment and rejected. The Programme Operator may extend the time period given to eliminate identified shortcomings based upon the request of the applicant, by a maximum of 3 working days.
4. There exists no legal entitlement for the applicant to be awarded the project grant applied for. Applicants whose grant applications are rejected due to non-compliance with administrative and/or eligibility criteria may appeal this decision and request the Programme Operator to review the decision⁹.
5. In case a grant application is approved and can be supported, the Programme Operator will send to the applicant official decision and the Grant Offer. The applicant shall submit a statement whether it agrees to conditions specified in the Grant Offer and deliver all necessary documents and information within 15 working days. Time period can be extended in justified cases, based on the request of the Project Promoter

⁸ The priorities are not considered in this respect. Considered is the increase of bilateral or multilateral institutional cooperation among higher education institutions and upper secondary schools in Slovakia and in the Donor States

⁹ Detailed information on appeal procedures and complaints is given in Article 8 of the Guide for Applicants, annexed to this call.

6. Within the time period given to accept the Grant Offer shall the Project Promoter (previously referred to as “eligible applicant”) send to the Programme Operator for approval draft of the Partnership Agreement (according to article 6 of this call). Time period for submitting the draft Partnership Agreement can be extended in justified cases, based on the request of the Project Promoter. The Partnership Agreement shall be concluded before concluding the Project contract.
7. Time period given to sign the Project contract by the Project Promoter is 15 working days after its delivery to the Project Promoter. If the Project contract is not signed by both parties within 45 days from its delivery to the Project Promoter due to reasons on the side of the Project Promoter, the grounds on which the contract shall be concluded are considered to cease to exist.

15. Payment of the grant and reporting

1. Payments to projects shall take the form of advance payment, interim payments, and payment of the final balance in the form of refund of incurred expenditures.
2. The Programme Operator shall provide the Project Promoter with an advance payment up to the amount of 80% of the project grant following the conclusion of the Project contract. The exact amount of the advance payment will be communicated with the applicant before signing the Project contract.
3. Interim payments combined with the first advance payment do not exceed 90% of the project grant awarded and are provided to the Project Promoter only when at least 40% of the total project costs have been incurred. Interim payments are bound to 4-month reporting periods and shall be paid based on an approved Interim Project Report, which is also a payment claim¹⁰.
4. The remaining 10% of the project grant will be provided to the Project Promoter following the approval of the Final Project Report by the Programme Operator.

16. Further information and contacts

Before and during preparation of a grant application it is advised to be familiar with the following documents, as amended.

- Information on EEA Scholarship Programme Slovakia published on the website of the Programme www.eeasp.saia.sk, resp. www.spehp.saia.sk;
- Guide for Applicants;
- Regulation on implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 – 2014;

¹⁰ According to Article 4.3.1 and 4.7 of the System of Funding and Finance Management of EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the Programme Period 2009 – 2014.

- System of Management of the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the Programme Period 2009 - 2014
- System of Funding and Finance Management of EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the Programme Period 2009 – 2014;
- Guidelines, instructions and other documents published by the Financial Mechanism Committee, Financial Mechanism Office, National Focal Point, or Programme Operator.

These documents are published on the Programme's website, www.eeagrants.sk and/or www.eeagrants.org.

Applicants are strongly recommended to follow the Programme's website www.eeasp.saia.sk, www.spehp.saia.sk until the deadline of the call, where updated information related to the call will be published.

Programme Operator will introduce a special section called "FAQ" on the Programme's website, where it will place answers to frequently asked questions, which will respond to repeated inquiries from potential applicants.

If the applicants would like to consult some issues related to the application process directly with the Programme Operator, they can contact it via:

- a) e-mail: spehp@saia.sk
- b) post, at the address:
SAIA, n. o.
Sasinkova 10
812 20 Bratislava 1
Slovak Republic
- c) Phone: +421-2-59 30 47 00, +421-2-59 30 47 11
- d) fax: +421-2-59 30 47 01
- e) in person, at the address according to b)

In case of written queries the Programme Operator will provide an answer within 5 working days after delivery of the query.

17. Annexes of the call

1. Grant application form:
 - a) Form for higher education institutions
 - b) Form for upper secondary schools
2. Guide for Applicants
3. List of Annexes to the grant application
4. Selection criteria
5. Evaluation sheet
6. Statute of the Selection Committee
7. Rules of Procedure of the Selection Committee