

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS 2014-2021
FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS
CROATIA
Call No.1

SUMMARY OF THE CALL

Call name:	Strengthening bilateral cooperation between Croatia and Norway in Green transition
Information and legal framework:	All information available on: www.eeagrants.hr
Call modality:	Thematic open call with single deadline
Call duration:	14 October - 28 November 2022
Initiative duration:	Maximum 12 months
Areas of support:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Energy and climate change 2. Blue growth and green maritime 3. Sustainable aquaculture
Maximum grant to be applied for:	100,000 Euro
Minimum grant to be applied for:	40,000 Euro
Co-financing:	No co-financing is requested from the applicants
Total allocation:	500,000 Euro ¹
Announced by:	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds – the Croatian National Focal Point (NFP) of the EEA and Norway Grants
Eligible applicants and partners:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central government, regional and local authorities 2. Universities, research and scientific bodies 3. Other public institutions 4. Non-Governmental Organisations, Chambers and Professional associations or other similar institutions
Further eligibility limitations:	Partnership with entity from Norway is mandatory
Funding source(s):	EEA Financial Mechanism (EEA Grants) Norwegian Financial Mechanism (Norway Grants)

All further information available in the Call text, its annexes and online on <https://eeagrants.hr/>.

¹ The allocation may be increased by decision of the JCBF, if justified by oversubscription of quality proposals.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS:

Strengthening bilateral cooperation between Croatia and Norway in Green transition

1. Scope

The overall objective of the EEA and Norway Grants is to contribute to reducing economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area (hereinafter referred to as “EEA”) and to strengthening bilateral cooperation between donor and beneficiary states through financial contributions in specified priority sectors.

The Fund for bilateral relations in Croatia (hereinafter referred to as “Bilateral fund”) was established within the framework of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 to strengthen bilateral relations between the Donor states (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Croatia.

The Bilateral Fund (BF) serves as a flexible source of financial support for a wide range of initiatives of mutual interest for Croatia and Donor states.

The call is managed by the Joint Committee for Bilateral Funds (hereinafter referred to as the “JCBF”). The JCBF is established by the Beneficiary State to discuss matters of bilateral interest, decide on the use of the fund for bilateral relations and review progress in the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014- 2021 towards reaching the objective of strengthened bilateral relations. The JCBF consists of five voting members, two representatives from beneficiary country and the three representatives from donor states.

The aim of the call is to identify and support quality project applications in areas of Energy and climate change, blue growth and green maritime and sustainable aquaculture. This call for proposals is open to bilateral initiatives involving **applicants and partners from Croatia and Norway**. All initiatives **must be developed and implemented in bilateral cooperation** between the applicants/partners.

If necessary, any part or element of the Call including the budget as well as the terms and conditions might be modified at any time upon decision of the Joint Committee for the Bilateral Fund. Modifications of the Call will be immediately communicated on the website www.eeagrants.hr.

2. Available funding

Total call budget for funding initiative is € 500,000. In case that additional funds will be allocated to the call, a modification of the call will be published by the same means as those of the original call publication.

Maximum grant per initiative is € 100,000.

Minimum grant per initiative is € 40,000.

The expenditure is eligible by 100%.

Applicants shall draw up a budget in EUR.

3. Eligible applicants and partners

Any public entity, non-commercial and non-governmental organisations², established as a legal entity in Croatia or in Norway is considered eligible applicant as well as eligible partner. In particular, the entities falling under the following categories may apply/participate as applicants or partners:

- Central government, regional and local authorities
- Universities, research, and scientific bodies
- Other Public institutions
- Non-Governmental Organisations, Chambers and Professional associations

The Programme Operators of the Programmes within the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 in Croatia are not eligible applicants under the BF Open Calls.

Every application should be developed and implemented in a partnership of at least two entities, one from Croatia and one from Norway. All partners must have a clear and well-grounded role in achieving the objective of the application. While it is not a requirement, for ease of implementation it is recommended that an entity based in Croatia takes on the role of applicant.

A letter of intent signed by the partner(s) should be submitted together with the application at the stage of application submission. If an application is awarded funding, the applicant shall submit a signed partnership agreement before the signing of the grant agreement, no later than 15 working days of receiving the award decision.

A partnership shall not be replaced by sub-contracting. A (sub-) contractor is not considered a partner. Contractors providing services and supply of goods on the market do not fall within the

² For Croatian applicant or partners those who are registered in Register of associations of the Republic of Croatia.

category of partners and are selected by the respective organization under the rules for the procurement of services and/or goods, i.e. selection of contractor.

Additional criteria for eligibility of applicants and partners

1. The applicant/partner has the legal, financial and operational capacity to implement the activities to the extent described in the grant application.
2. The applicant/partner has paid all taxes and other mandatory obligations in accordance with national legislation due for payment up to and including the last day of the month before the application for the Call
3. The applicant/partner is not in the process of termination of work, in the procedure of pre-bankruptcy settlement, bankruptcy procedure, procedure of forced collection or in the procedure of liquidation
4. The applicant/partner or a person authorized by law to represent it has not been convicted of criminal offences related to business and professional conduct (e.g., fraud, bribery, tax evasion, abuse of position and authority, illegal favouritism, participation in a criminal association
5. The applicant/partner or a person authorized by law to represent him is not in a conflict of interest in the award procedure in question
6. The applicant/partner is not guilty of providing false information or of violating the provisions on the intended use of funds and other provisions of the contract concluded for the purpose of awarding grants from public sources
7. The applicant/partner is not subject to an outstanding recovery order following a previous European Commission decision declaring the aid illegal and incompatible with the internal market.

The applicant/partner declares that it meets the eligibility criteria 4. – 9. by signing the Applicant form/Partner Statement (Annex 4). The NFP reserves the right to verify compliance with these requirements by consulting other publicly available information, as well as seeking additional clarifications from the applicant/partner.

4. Eligible policy areas

The eligible priority areas of this call are:

- Energy and climate change
- Blue growth and green maritime
- Sustainable aquaculture

Applications should clearly indicate which priority area(s) they address.

Within the priority areas, applicants are encouraged to submit initiatives on the following issues:

- Greening of coastal traffic
- Low emission/Zero emission solutions of mobility along the coast (passengers and cargo)
- Smart coastal transport solutions (passengers and cargo)
- Electrification in ship building and transport
- Innovative and digital solutions to maritime transport and mobility (incl. Artificial Intelligence)
- Capacity development in energy independence and climate change on islands
- Marine renewable energy (MRE)/Energy from the sea and offshore wind
- Promotion of innovative technologies and solutions in blue economy sectors
- Expansion of green digital solutions in the coastal areas
- Development of circular economy solutions
- Exploration of sustainable offshore renewable energy solutions
- Support of ecosystem-based management practice of coastal area
- Enhancement of green and sustainable tourism
- Advancement of blue skills
- Sustainable fish farming/aquaculture (exploration of potentials, obstacles, and risks)
- Innovative and/or digital solutions for preservation of marine and aquatic ecosystems
- Deep sea fish farming /aquaculture
- Smart solutions and/or innovations in seafood production
- Capacity development in sustainable aquaculture

The list above is not exhaustive, and applications on other relevant topics within the priority areas will be considered.

5. Eligible activities and expenditures

Expenditure related to the following activities are eligible for funding:

Activities aiming at strengthening bilateral relations between Croatia and Norway through:

- a) Peer to peer and networking with aim to exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice between partners entities in Croatia and Norway,
- b) Activities aiming at strengthening cooperation and exchanging experiences and best practices between similar entities in Croatia and Norway

Taking into account the principle of proportionality, per diem can be used when calculating travel expenses.

This call shall support well-balanced partnerships (bilateral or multilateral) where all parties are actively involved in planning of the initiative and its implementation, and where all parties benefit from the cooperation and contribute towards the application results.

Application must have a clear bilateral profile and serve the purpose of strengthening bilateral relations in the priority areas. Welcomed are series of events, such as workshops, seminars, round tables or discussions that will take place over longer time. An application focused solely on one day workshops or an organization of only one on-line conference/discussion has lower likelihood to receive support under this call.

The maximum duration of an initiative is 12 months.

Activities that could be implemented within the Bilateral Fund may include:

- Events that are not linked to a specific programme of the EEA/Norway Grants³.
- Technical cooperation and exchange of experts
- Secondments and internships
- Capacity building and short-term training
- Workshops, seminars, meetings, etc. on topics of common interest
- Study trips and visits
- Research data collection and analyses, reports, development of studies and publications
- Development or translation of information materials
- Broadcasting of discussions between leading Croatian/Norwegian experts/professionals in the priority areas
- Lectures of leading (academic) experts/professionals from Croatia/Norway on certain topics within the priority areas
- Information campaigns, exhibitions, information and promotional tools and materials

³ The list of the programmes funded under the EEA/Norway Grants is available on the <https://eeagrants.hr/en/>.

This call is intended primarily for soft measure activities. Expenditures related to infrastructure are not eligible. For the purchase of new or second-hand equipment, only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be considered eligible expenditure.

6. Excluded costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- (a) interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
- (b) charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs related to accounts required by the NMFA, the National Focal Point or the applicable law and costs of financial services imposed by the project contract;
- (c) provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- (d) exchange losses;
- (e) recoverable VAT;
- (f) costs that are covered by other sources;
- (g) fines, penalties and costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project; and
- (h) excessive or reckless expenditure.

7. Eligibility of expenditure, financing and reporting

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred by the applicant and partner(s), which meet the following criteria:

- a) they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of an application as specified in the Grant agreement between the applicant and the NFP;
- b) they are connected with the subject of the application, and they are indicated in the application budget;
- c) they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the application.
- d) they are used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective of the application and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- e) they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting

records of the applicant and partner(s) and determined according to the applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles; and

f) they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

Expenditures are 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). Exceptionally, costs in respect of which an invoice has been issued in the final month of eligibility are also deemed to be incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid within 30 days of the final date of eligibility.

Applicants and partners are required to keep a separate accounting record for the initiative.

Other rules of eligibility as per chapter 8 “Eligibility of expenditures” of the Regulation⁴ are applied *mutatis mutandis* to the application under this call.

Application may not generate profit. If an application generates income as a part of its operation, the applicant should report on it within the application form.

Payments to applicants who are not direct State budgetary users shall take the form of advance payments, interim payments and payments of the final balance. The level of advance payment to projects shall be set out in the Grant agreement. The maximum level of advance payment shall be determined depending on the size of the application budget and duration. Payments towards applicants who are direct State budgetary users shall be made in accordance with state budgetary rules following the requests for payments submitted by the applicants and approved by the NFP.

The application shall be completed, and Final report of the application submitted no later than 30 days after the last day of eligibility of expenditures stated in the Grant Agreement.

8. Submission of proposals

1. Each applicant may submit one application in total under this call.
2. The application shall be submitted electronically to the electronic address nft@mrrfeu.hr by the applicant’s legal representative. Applications submitted by other means shall not be accepted/considered.
3. The applicant shall submit its application using the Application Form in Annex 1. In addition to the Application Form, applicants shall also submit the Application Budget using

⁴ Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, <https://eeagrants.org/sites/default/files/resources/Amended%20EEA%20Regulation.pdf>

- table in Annex 2, Letter of intent and supporting documents listed at the end of the Call. All annexes shall be submitted in English and supporting document translated into English.
4. The applications must be submitted between 14 October 2022, at 16:00 (Central European Time), and 28 November 2022, at 16:00 (Central European Time). Upon successful application submission, the applicant receives confirmation e-mail of the application. Applications submitted after expiry time shall not be accepted.
 5. A complete application includes the application form (Annex 1) and its annexes. An integral part of the application are the following supporting documentation/documents:
 - Application budget in Excel showing costs per unit and activity (Annex 2)
 - Application implementation timetable (Annex 3)
 - Legal form of the applicant organisation evidenced by an extract from the relevant national register
 - Legal form of the partner(s) organisation(s) evidenced by an extract from the relevant national register
 - Letter of partnership intent - a statement by which the applicant and envisaged project partners declare their intent to form a partnership in the event of the grant application being selected for funding; and by which they outline their roles and responsibilities in the project.
 - Declaration of the absence of double financing for the applicant and the partner(s) (Annex 4)
 - Declaration of absence of conflict of interests (Annex 5)
 - Declaration of exemption from value added tax (VAT) for the applicant and the partner(s) (Annex 6)
 - Bank identification of the applicant and the partners

The applicant must send the original documents and their courtesy translation in English, The applicant is obliged to submit an official translation of the original documents if requested by the NFP.

All supporting documents must be submitted in a pdf file format, as attachments to the submitted application.

9. Administrative and eligibility check

Applicants will submit their applications to the NFP who will perform an administrative and eligibility criteria check.

Upholding the principle of equal treatment to all applicants, the NFP reserves the right to disqualify applications that do not fulfil the criteria specified in the call or/and are not complete.

Administrative and eligibility criteria check done by the NFP:

No.	Control question	Yes	No	Comments, if any
1.	Was the application delivered by the deadline, using the Application Form and required method of delivery?			
2.	Are all required documents submitted and duly signed?			
3.	Are the applicant and the partner(s) eligible in accordance with the provisions of point 3. Eligible Applicants and Partners?			
4.	Is the application in accordance with the principles and values of the EEA and Norway grants (ref. Art 1.3 of Regulations)			
5.	Is the duration of the initiative implementation in line with the open call terms?			
6.	Is the budget within the maximal and minimal limit of the call?			
7.	Are the budgeted costs eligible?			

10. Quality assessment

Every application (including detailed budget) meeting the formal and eligibility criteria is circulated to all JCBF voting members for quality assessment according to the questions in the table below. A JCBF member can nominate an evaluator to replace him/her in the quality

assessment. This should be notified to the JCBF by e-mail, including the relevant information and contact details of the nominated evaluator.

No	Criterion	Description	Range	Score	Comments, if any
1.	Relevance of the initiative	The initiative contributes to strengthening bilateral relations between partners, and/or enhancing cooperation, and/or transfer of knowledge and/or experience in areas prescribe in the Call	0-3		
2.	Relevance of the partnership	The initiative is balanced, and partners are actively involved in the implementation of the initiative	0-3		
3.	Capacity	The applicant and partner(s) have appropriate organizational, financial, and expert capacities for implementation of the initiative	0-3		
4.	Quality of the application	The application is clear and concise	0-3		
5.	Relevance of the indicators	Indicators are relevant and measurable	0-3		
6.	Sustainability	The initiative has clear potential for partnership or other benefits, even after the implementation	0-3		
7.	Budget efficiency	The initiative represents value for money and the planned costs are effective	0-3		

No	Criterion	Description	Range	Score	Comments, if any
8.	Gender equality	The initiative contributes to gender equality	0-3		
Total score					
Comments for the improvement of the quality of the application, if any					

Scoring range:

- 0 – does not comply
- 1 – complies to minimal extent
- 2 – complies partially; there is a need of some adjustments
- 3 – complies to full extent

Applications receiving 0 points from one or more JCBF members in category 1, 2 and 5 are excluded from receiving a grant under this call. Applications receiving below 12 points altogether are also excluded from receiving a grant under this call. Only applications that get 12 points or more shall be considered for the rest of the procedure.

JCBF members and/or nominated evaluator(s) will provide the NFP with their quality assessment by the deadline defined by the NFP depending on the number of the received applications. Based on the individual quality assessments, the NFP will establish a ranked list of proposals. JCBF members and/or nominated evaluator(s) that remain silent are considered to have provided an assessment equal to the average of the other assessments. The ranking of an individual application is calculated as the average of the scores of the JCBF voting members.

In case two or more different applications achieve the same number of points, priority will be given to the applications that achieve a higher cumulative number of points in Quality Criteria 1 and 5. The ranking list will also include a reserve list of applications that will be considered for funding in case of availability of additional funding.

The NFP will send a draft award decision, based on the ranked list of proposals, to the JCBF by e-mail, with a deadline for adoption of five working days. JCBF members that remain silent within the given deadline are considered to have supported the award decision.

11. Contracting the project initiative

NFP informs the applicants of the JCBF award decision.

The decision of the JCBF is final and cannot be appealed.

Before contracting, the NFP ensures implementation of the JCBF member's comments for improvement of the application if any, and does the technical tuning (budget clearing, Partnership agreement, etc.) of the applications.

The NFP may request additional information and documents from the applicant, if required, to finalize contracting.

After the completion of this process, the Grant Agreement will be signed between the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds in its role as the Croatian National Focal Point of the EEA and Norway Grants and the selected applicants.

12. Communication and information about this Call

The website www.eegrants.hr is the key communication channel for this call. The call, all relevant documents, including the legal framework, and any modifications of the call as well as information about the progress and results of the call will be communicated through the website.

For questions or further information about this call, kindly contact nft@mrrfeu.hr at the National Focal Point. The questions can be submitted continuously for the duration of the call but not later than 10 working days before the deadline of submission of applications.

Questions and Answers and all necessary clarification will be published on www.eegrants.hr within 7 working days after receiving relevant questions.

Please note that only written information is binding.

The National Focal Point may also introduce a section for Frequently Asked Questions related to the call, if relevant.

Questions concerning the assistance with search for Norwegian partners may be addressed to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Zagreb by e-mail: embzag@mfa.no, but keeping the NFP (nft@mrrfeu.hr) in the copy of the e-mail correspondence on the matter.

13. Further information

All applicants are required to disclose any consultant⁵ involved in the preparation of the Grant Application.

⁵ Staff of the National Focal Point providing general advice or answers on queries by phone is not considered as consultants and therefore should not be listed on the list of consultants.

Before and during preparation of an application, it is recommended to become familiar with the following documents:

- Regulation on implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021, available on <https://eeagrants.org/resources/regulation-implementation-eea-grants-2014-2021>, and Regulation on implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021, available on <https://eeagrants.org/resources/regulation-implementation-norway-grants-2014-2021>
- Bilateral Guideline issued by the Financial Mechanism Office, available on <https://eeagrants.org/resources/2014-2021-bilateral-guideline>
- Financial Guidance issued by the Financial Mechanism Office, available on <https://eeagrants.org/resources/2014-2021-financial-guidance-version-2>
- Communication and design manual available on <https://eeagrants.org/resources/2014-2021-communication-and-design-manual>
- Guidelines for Applicants issued by the NFP available on <https://eeagrants.hr/bilateralna-suradnja/vazni-dokumenti/>
- Draft of the Grant Agreement issued by the NFP available on <https://eeagrants.hr/bilateralna-suradnja/vazni-dokumenti/>

14. Annexes

1. Application Form
2. Application Budget
3. Application implementation timetable
4. Applicant/Partner statement
5. Declaration of the absence of double financing for the applicant and the partner(s)