

OPEN CALLS FOR PROPOSALS UNDER THE FINANCIAL MECHANISMS

For the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism, openness and transparency are key principles that must be adhered to at all levels of operation. For the process of granting assistance, these principles come into practice through the open calls for proposals. As a general rule, open calls for proposals shall be organised once a year for the total annual allocation available unless otherwise agreed with the FMO. In principle, this guide covers all three types of assistance; individual projects, programmes and block grants (for programmes and block grants, please also refer to the last paragraph).

The FMO and the EEA EFTA states must be informed of all calls for proposals *well in advance* of their announcement, and provided with an English translation of the call no later than 15 working days before the announcement. All calls must be cleared by the FMO ahead of publication.

Under the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, the open calls for proposals must be conducted according to the following minimum requirements:

1. they must be widely publicised
2. they must include a clear and reasonable deadline and address for submission
3. they must clearly address who are eligible to apply
4. they must clearly address what kind of operations are eligible
5. they must provide a clear reference/link to the application form and user guide
6. they must clearly state the total amount available through the call
7. they must clearly state the co-financing requirement(s)
8. they must provide clear references to further information
9. they must provide contact information for queries
10. they must provide a fixed exchange rate for the national currency and euro

1 PUBLICATION OF OPEN CALLS

Open calls must be published with a view to reach all potential applicants, and the relevant Focal Point must be prepared to justify and explain the chosen method for publication to the FMO and the EEA EFTA states. In general, open calls must be published in national media, on the national web page and on www.eeagrants.org to fulfil this requirement. If relevant, it should also appear in specialist publications.

2. DEADLINES AND ADDRESS OF SUBMISSION

Open calls must include a clear and reasonable deadline for submission, including the hour local time, which should be no shorter than two months from the announcement. The open calls must also include a detailed address for submission, and clearly state the number and format of the applications (one signed hard-copy and an identical copy in electronic format).

3 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Open calls must as a principle be open to all eligible applicants as per pt 4.1 in the Rules and Procedures of both mechanisms, which states that:

“All public or private sector bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) constituted as legal entities in the Beneficiary States and operating in the public interest - e.g., national, regional and local authorities, education/research institutions, environmental bodies, voluntary and community organisations and Public-Private Partnerships may apply for assistance.”

In principle, any deviations from this rule place a restriction on the call for proposals, and must therefore to be regarded not as an open call, but as a restricted call. In such instances, the Focal Point must duly justify and explain to the FMO and the EEA EFTA states the reasons for restricting the open call procedure *well in advance* of the call.

4 ELIGIBLE OPERATIONS

An open call must clearly state what kind of operations that are eligible for assistance. For example, open calls for applications for individual projects under all priority sectors of the two mechanisms¹ must clearly identify these priority sectors in order to inform potential applicants of the scope of the open call. For open calls within a pre-defined group of priority areas, or a single priority area, this must be similarly stated in the announcement.

5 APPLICATION FORM/USER GUIDE

Open calls must always include a clear reference/link to the application form, user guide and examples of indicators for the financial mechanisms (available on www.eeagrants.org).

6 TOTAL AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR THE OPEN CALLS

Open calls must clearly state the overall allocation available in order to make the process open and transparent. A failure to clearly state the available allocation through an open call would likely result in a high degree of uncertainty among applicants as well as selection committees, which could again lead to difficulties in the decision-making process and to complaints by potential promoters and other interested parties.

7 CO-FINANCING REQUIREMENTS

Open calls must indicate the co-financing requirements. The maximum contribution from the financial mechanisms will generally be in the range of 60% to 90%, depending on the source of the additional financing.

¹ For Greece, Spain and Portugal: EEA Financial Mechanism only

8 FURTHER INFORMATION

Open calls must include clear references to all relevant information, such as the *Rules and Procedures* of both mechanisms, *guidelines* and any documents available in the local language. There must always be references to www.eeagrants.org, where all the general rules and regulations are available online, as well the national web-page/site.

9 CONTACT DETAILS

Open calls must contain clear contact details to the Focal Point (and/or the relevant programme/block grant intermediary and/or the relevant intermediate body) for any queries.

10 EXCHANGE RATE

Open calls must clearly state a fixed exchange rate for the national currency and the euro to be used by applicants. The exchange rate shall be set as the average of the official monthly exchange rate published in the C series of the Official Journal of the European Union for the six-month period up until the month preceding the announcement of the open call.

PROGRAMMES AND BLOCK GRANTS

Under the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, programmes and block grants are in principle subject to the above-mentioned minimum requirements for open calls for proposals. However, the role of programme or block grant intermediary may be subject to strict requirements that in practice only a very limited number of the eligible entities are able to fulfill, for example as block grant intermediary for NGO funds. This might make it impractical to conduct an open call along the same lines as described above, and therefore a restricted call for intermediaries (or even a direct appointment) may be justified in some instances.

In such instances, the Focal Point must duly justify and explain to the FMO and the EEA/EFTA states the reasons for restricting (or even abandoning) the open call procedure *well in advance* the call (or appointment). All restricted calls (or appointments) must be approved by the FMO ahead of publication (appointment).

Restricted calls should in any case comply with the procedures of the open calls described above to the extent possible.

When a programme or block grant has been established, the programme or block grant intermediary will be responsible for organising open calls for proposals for the programme/block grant according to approved procedures.