



The Ministry of National Education as Programme Operator and The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding as Implementing Agency for the Romanian – EEA Research Programme under EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014

Announce

The CALL FOR PROPOSALS - 2013

Further call information, forms and guidelines are available on the MEN and UEFISCDI webpages:
<http://www.research.edu.ro>; www.uefiscdi.gov.ro.

1. Scope of the Programme

The Romanian-EEA Research Programme aims to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen the bilateral relations by enhancing research cooperation between the scientific communities of Romania, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, stimulating long-term cooperation and equal partnerships between the research entities.

2. Objectives of the Programme

The Romanian-EEA Research Programme objectives are:

- To enhance research-based knowledge development in Romania through intensifying research cooperation between Romania and the Donor States; the cooperation is to be based on equal partnerships between research entities in the Donor States and in Romania, with the leading role of the latter;
- To create benefits on several levels: Programme Operator, Project Promoters, Project Partners as well as researchers, including postdoctoral candidates and postgraduates (PhD students) and graduates (Master level);
- To obtain research results, including scientific publications, patent applications submitted and numbers of PhD students supported by the Programme funding.

The research programme shall reflect and promote the general principles laid down in the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

3. Thematic Areas

The programme will fund joint research projects (JRPs) in the following areas of research:

- Renewable energy;
- Health and food safety;
- Environmental protection and management;
- Social sciences and humanities.

The distribution of grants will be based on scientific and technical quality of JRPs regardless of the thematic area involved.

In the Call both basic research and applied research projects will be eligible for financing in all thematic areas.

The main criterion of evaluation for all thematic areas of the Programme will be the scientific quality of the project, and additionally, for applied research, development and innovation projects, the socio-economic impact reflecting the innovation-driven approach.

3.1 Renewable energy

All four countries which support the Programme have strong common points of interest in the field of renewable energy sources. From the point of view of resources, institutional structures, consumption pattern and research objectives, Romania is in position to cooperate on a multitude of aspects, including micro hydro power generation (MHG) and wind, solar and geothermal energy, along with biomass, bio-fuels and alternative low-carbon fuels, and also in all other aspects related to renewable energy.

Thus, the Programme should contribute to a sustainable economic development and environmental protection with focus on renewable energy solutions.

The overall objectives of this thematic area are:

- to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and air pollutants;
- to increase the share of renewable energy in energy balance in Romania and Donor States;
- to strengthen the knowledge base concerning the application of environmental technology.

3.2 Health and food safety

The research in this field aims to promote activities which will improve the quality of life and the wellbeing of the society.

In relation to the health status, Romania faces a serious gap compared to the other Member States mostly due to an excess of mortality and morbidity due to non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, some cancers, diabetes and obesity etc) which partly are related to the lifestyle. Infectious diseases are also part of the problem, one of four TB cases notified in EU originating from Romania. The food safety area is also a very sensitive issue, especially concerning the food additives used in food processing, food supplements or preservatives, consumer information and awareness and market competition.

The overall objectives of this thematic area are:

- to stimulate multidisciplinary research (medical and engineering) for improving the quality of life and the wellbeing, including the elderly;
- to promote mechanisms of governance for improving public health, health information and health systems performance;
- to provide new and to improve the existing methods for facilitating access to medical monitoring and expert medical diagnosis;
- to reduce food related and food contamination risks;

- to increase the trust in the food industry and to improve the level of consumers' awareness and their capacity to make healthy choices;
- to improve the health status of the Roma population and other disadvantaged groups.

3.3 Environmental protection and management

The industrial centres in central and southern Romania generate severe air pollution problems. Part of the industrial waste waters ends up in the Danube river system threatening diverse ecosystems in the river, in the Danube Delta and in the Black Sea.

The Programme aims at improving national expertise and capacities in environmental advanced studies, in monitoring and data processing for developing sound solutions for a sustainable management of ecosystems and for improving air, water, sediments and soils quality.

The overall **objectives** of this thematic area are:

- to improve compliance with environmental legislation;
- to prevent injury and adverse environmental effects caused by chemicals and hazardous waste;
- to develop a sustainable management of the nature resources while preserving biodiversity;
- to develop and implement modern technologies for environmental monitoring and risk assessment; to predict the regional impact of climate changes, based on numerical data;
- to increase the application of research results in planning and control of the environment, and adaptation to climate change.

3.4 Social sciences and humanities

Researchers within the social science and humanities are invited to address issues that will contribute to the objectives for this thematic area both on short and long term.

Project proposals are in particular invited to address issues related to the Roma population.

The overall objectives of this thematic area are:

- to increase good governance and democratic participation;
- to increase the society's capacity to cope with demographic change and cultural diversity;
- to strengthen capacity and human resources development;
- to increase innovation and economic growth;
- to improve the living conditions of the Roma population and other disadvantaged groups;

- to stimulate interdisciplinary research;
- to increase knowledge about bilateral relations between Romania and the Donor states.

4. Eligible applicants:

- Research organizations as defined in the Community Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2006/C 323/01) as Project Promoters and Project Partners;
- Small and medium sized enterprises as defined in the Community Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2006/C 323/01) as Project Partners;
- Project Promoters and Partners financed under this program have to be located in Romania, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland.

5. Project Promoter, Project Partners and Principal Investigator

Joint Research Projects (JRPs) have to be submitted by consortia comprising at least one Romanian and at least one Donor States entity (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein). For each proposal, the project partners designate a Project Promoter (PP) which has the formal administrative responsibility for the project, and has to submit the proposal on their behalf.

The Project Promoter may exclusively be a Romanian entity eligible according to the call.

Project partners from third countries are eligible to participate with their own funds under the same terms and conditions as project partners from Romania and Donor States.

For each JRP, the Project Promoter designates the Principle Investigator (PI) who is the researcher having the scientific lead of the JRP on a daily basis.

6. Budget

The amount of EUR 21.681.063 is made available under this call for Joint Research Projects.

Based on scientific quality of the projects:

- at least EUR 4.337.000 shall be earmarked for projects under the research area "Social sciences and humanities" including research on the bilateral relations between the Donor countries and Romania;
- up to EUR 3.000.000 shall be allocated to projects in the area of renewable energy;

- at least EUR 2.353.000 shall target research contributing to the improvement of the situation of the Roma population, across all thematic areas.

The minimum amount of grant assistance to be applied for is EUR 500.000 and the maximum amount is EUR 1.500.000 (maximum duration of project is 3 years).

Grants from the Programme may be up to 100% of total eligible project costs, provided that all applicable National and EU rules on State Aid are complied with. Any remaining costs of the project shall be provided or obtained by the Project Promoter and/or Project Partners.

The budgetary allocation to partners should reflect the actual contribution made by each party and should be the subject of negotiation between the Project Promoter and the Project Partners. It is expected that the eligible costs claimed by the Donor States entities participating in the project shall normally not exceed 40% of the total eligible costs of the project.

7. Eligible expenditures

- **Direct costs:** personnel costs; travel and subsistence allowances; equipment; consumables and supplies; other costs (including subcontracting);
- **Indirect costs** (overheads).

The description of the categories of costs listed above can be found in "Guide for applicants - Call 2013".

The first and final dates of eligibility of each project will be stated in the project contract. The expenditures incurred after 30th April 2017 shall not be eligible.

8. The currency used for the project proposal and implementation

The currency used for proposal submission and contracting (payments from the PO to Project Promoters) and settlements between the Project Promoter and Project Partner(s) will be the Romanian Lei (RON). The European Central Bank's exchange rate from the date of the call launch will be used for calculation of all costs related to project proposal and implementation.

9. Evaluation process and selection criteria

The selection of scientific proposals for funding is based strictly on peer-review evaluation with excellence as the sole criterion.

Before proceeding to the evaluation, proposals are checked against the eligibility criteria applicable to this call. Proposals failing any of the criteria do not enter the evaluation process. The eligibility check is carried out by the IA whereas the peer-review evaluation is conducted by international experts.

The peer-review process has two stages:

- individual evaluation;
- consensus.

A proposal can receive a total number of 100 points in the evaluation procedure. In order to be recommended for funding, a proposal must receive minimum 75 points and pass all thresholds according to the scores presented in the table below:

Criterion	Thresholds	Weight
Coherence with the call topic*	YES	Precondition
<i>Scientific and/or technical excellence</i>	3/5 – 24 points/40 points	40% - 40 points
<i>Quality and efficiency of the implementation and management</i>	3/5 - 24 points/40 points	40% - 40 points
<i>Impact and dissemination of the project results</i>	3/5 - 12 points/20 points	20% - 20 points

**This criterion is considered an elimination criterion. The project proposal should be assessed if it fits the call objectives and thematic areas. Also, for the project proposals addressing Roma population issues the experts must confirm with brief justification that the project proposals fit this specific focus.*

The final ranking list and recommendation of the proposals for funding is the task of the Programme Committee. The Programme Operator issues funding decision for the proposals recommended for financing by the Programme Committee.

In case, following the evaluation of proposals submitted under the call for proposals, of an insufficient number of projects achieving the overall threshold within the area of research “Social sciences and the humanities” so as to comply with the minimum 20% allocation of funds to such projects, the Programme Committee shall make a final decision on the allocation of the remaining funds. Same rule applies for the threshold targeting the

improvement of the situation of the Roma population so as to comply with the minimum 10% allocation to such projects, across all thematic areas.

More detailed information on the evaluation procedure is presented in the document “Guide for Evaluators (Peer – Reviewers) – Call 2013”.

10. Payment system

Payments towards Project Promoters are in the form of advance payments, interim payments and a final payment.

The Project Promoter can request an annual advance payment of up to 90% of the budget for the respective year in the first year and any interim years of the project. The balance of the annual budget shall be paid after the approval of the interim report for the year in question.

The annual advance payment to the Project Promoter in the last year of the project shall not exceed 70% of the budget for the respective year. The balance of the annual budget shall be paid after the approval of the final report.

The advance payment shall be offset against incurred expenditures reported in the interim or final reports. The Programme Operator may retain at least 30% of the Project Grant in the last year of the project until the final report is approved.

The Project Promoter should ensure that all appropriate payments to the project partners are made without delay, no later than 15 days after the receipt of the Payment from the Programme Operator.

11. Submission of proposals

The proposals must be submitted in English.

Only the Romanian PP is authorized to submit a proposal via a specific electronic proposal submission platform (www.uefiscdi-direct.ro), using own credentials (username and password). After the closing date of the call, an acknowledgement of receipt is sent to the PP.

Versions of proposals sent on paper, removable electronic storage medium (CD – ROM, diskette), by email or by fax will not be regarded as having been received by the Implementing Agency.

The proposals must be submitted by the PPs no later than 17th of January 2014, 23:00 (Romanian time).

Detailed explanation about the application process is given in a separate document called “**Guide for Applicants – Call 2013**”. Explanations about the Peer Review process and the selection criteria are described in a separate document called “**Guide for Evaluators (Peer – Reviewers) – Call 2013**”.

12. Preparatory costs of the project proposal

The Programme foresees the possibility to apply for reimbursement of the project proposal’s preparatory costs both for the Project Promoter and partners from Donor States. These are the costs related to the search for partners prior to or during the preparation of a project application, the development of such partnerships and the preparation of an application for a donor partnership project proposal. Project promoters will apply for the reimbursement of costs actually incurred by project promoters from Romania and partners from the Donor States while applying for a project to be funded under the call for proposals. Up to EUR 5,000 will be reimbursed in the case of proposals recommended for financing. Up to EUR 2,500 will be reimbursed for proposals that are not selected for financing but receiving a score above a certain threshold within available budget. The financial resources earmarked for the above mentioned costs will be accounted for and reported on separately to those for project financing.

13. Timeline of the Call 2013

Action	Date
Launching the call	A week after FMO approval
Deadline for submission of applications	8 weeks after launching the call Estimated date: 17 th of January 2014
Evaluation process	20th January – March 2014
Funding decision / Contracting phase	March - April 2014

14. Call documents

- **Guide for applicants**
- **Annex 1 – Funding application**
- **Guide for Evaluators (Peer – Reviewers)**

15. Legal Acts

- Regulation on the implementation of EEA Financial Mechanisms 2009-2014

- Annex 12 of Regulation – Rules for the establishment and implementation of donor partnership programmes falling under the Programme Areas “Research within Priority sectors” and “Bilateral Research Cooperation”

16. Question and queries to the Implementing Agency

For additional information, contact:

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