

## EDUCATION, SCHOLARSHIPS, APPRENTICESHIPS AND YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME IN ROMANIA

FINANCED THROUGH THE EEA GRANTS 2014-2021

### GUIDELINE FOR APPLICANTS 2021 COOPERATION PROJECTS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

#### 1. LEGAL BASIS

- [Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism \(EEA\) 2014-2021 and Annex 3 on Information and Communication Requirements](#)
- [Memorandum of Understanding between Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and the Romanian Government concerning the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021](#)
- [Guideline for Educational Programmes – Rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under programme Area 3 “Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship”](#)
- [Government Ordinance no 34/2017 concerning the institutional framework for the coordination, implementation and management of financial support granted to Romania through the EEA and Norway Financial Mechanism 2014-2021](#)

#### 2. GLOSSARY

- Donor States (DS): Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway
- Beneficiary States (BS): Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia
- Programme Operator (PO): National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training (ANPCDEF)
- Donor Programme Partners (DPP): Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) and The National Agency for International Education Affairs – AIBA (Liechtenstein).
- National Focal Point (NFP): Ministry of Investments and European Projects
- Project Promoter (PP): the successful applicant that receives a grant.

# 1. CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION

**Eligible applicants** Accredited higher education institutions (universities) from Romania which hold an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) approved by the European Commission

**Description** The main objective of these projects is to strengthen institutional cooperation in The Higher Education (HE) Area based on common needs.

Through the Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship programme, higher education students will acquire professional skills and knowledge, giving them an asset on the labour market; at the same time, the staff will improve their professional competences. At the institutional level, the component will have positive impact on the internationalisation process of the university and it will produce long-lasting affects through improvements of i.e. curricula and teaching methods.

Cooperation projects between RO, DS and other BS universities could take the following forms:

- **Strategic cooperation projects** that seek to modernise or innovate the curricula (intellectual outputs<sup>1</sup> are mandatory);
- **Small size cooperation projects** that aim to exchange good practices in the field of teaching methodologies and organise short term exchanges for students.

Cooperation projects in The Higher Education Area are meant to support innovation and improvement of the teaching methods, curriculum development, to contribute to the modernisation of the university and to ensure a closer relationship between the educational offer and the world of work.

Cooperation projects in The Higher Education Area can be proposed in any field of study.

The projects may address the issue of developing a common curriculum, by creating *inter alia*:

- Integrated programmes, covering a complete cycle of study (bachelor, master or doctoral level), concluded with a joint diploma or a diploma mutually recognised;
- Study programmes and modules for initial and continuous training;
- Teaching modules in fields with a strong inter-disciplinary component

In this respect, joint study programmes or teaching modules can encompass the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of study (bachelor), the 2<sup>nd</sup> (master) or the 3<sup>rd</sup> (doctoral). The curriculum and modules for continuous training will target updating already acquired knowledge, with a special focus on improving skills and competences which increase employability.

Projects focusing on developing common modules will also address issues like learning outcomes, recognition and type of diploma/certificate as well as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and Diploma Supplement.

After a development stage of one or two years, these programmes or modules will be made available to partner institutions in a truly integrated way, thus ensuring

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<sup>1</sup> An intellectual output is substantial, tangible, original, and transferrable (at least at the level of the consortium members), prove the potential for large-scale use, exploitation and impact.

sustainability. When concluding the study programme, students will receive joint or multiple diplomas (or certificates in the case of modules), recognised by all participating institutions and countries.

Modernisation projects imply actions to increase attractiveness of higher education institutions and to make them more responsive to the needs of labour market, citizens and society in general.

Cooperation within these projects can include, *inter alia*:

- Elaborating lifelong learning strategies and reinforcing the link between higher education on one side and vocational training (VET) on the other side, thus helping HEIs become “continuous education centres” or “open education centres” in their region.
- Facilitating access of persons coming from socio-economically disadvantaged fields, who have received non-formal or informal education or who possess alternative qualifications, i.e., obtained by learning through accumulating practical experience.
- Ensuring transparency of mission and performance of HEIs, increasing quality, improving governance or diversifying funding.

Projects that focus on reinforcing the link between the educational offer and the demands of the world of work can bring together HEIs, companies, research institutes, social partners<sup>2</sup> or NGO’s.

In this respect, structured partnerships with the business community (including SMEs) can increase the relevance, quality and attractiveness of education and education and training programmes.

Cooperation projects may organise short term transnational mobility activities of individuals if they are relevant for the objectives of the project, like for example:

- **Transnational project management meetings:** meetings between project partners for implementation and coordination purposes. The activity period will be **up to 4 working days. The maximum number of eligible transnational project meetings will be 4- for projects with a duration of more than 12 months and 2 - for projects with a duration of less than 12 months.**

- **Short term mobility of students**<sup>3</sup>. The transnational learning period is between 5 days and 30 days. If needed, learning activities may combine the period of physical mobility (up to 30 days in total) with virtual activities (i.e. the use of information and communication technologies such as collaborative workspaces, live streaming, videoconferencing, social media, etc. to complement or prolong the learning outcomes of physical mobility).

- **Intensive Study Programmes (“Summer Schools”).**

The activity period is between 5 days and 30 days. The participation of teaching staff (including invited teachers/experts/specialists/professionals) in the activity is between 1 day to 30 days.

An Intensive Study Programme (ISP) is a short programme of study which brings together students and teaching staff from partner HEIs, as well as other relevant invited teachers/experts/specialists/professionals in order to:

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<sup>2</sup> Or other institutions with an active role in modernising Higher Education.

<sup>3</sup> Higher education students must be registered in a participating HEI and enrolled in studies leading to a recognised degree or other recognised tertiary level qualification, up to and including the level of doctorate.

- encourage efficient and multinational teaching of specialised topics;
- enable students and teachers to work together in multinational and multidisciplinary groups and so to benefit from special learning and teaching conditions that are not available in a single institution, and to gain new perspectives on the topic being studied;
- allow members of the teaching staff to exchange views on the teaching content, new curricula approaches, to test innovative teaching methods that could eventually become part of a newly developed joint course or curriculum in an international classroom environment.

Eligible participants: students (see footnote<sup>3</sup>) and teaching staff from HEIs participating in the project, specialists from other institutions than HEIs that are partners in the project.

The selection of ISP participants is carried out by the project partners.

The number of teaching and training hours under the framework of an ISP must ensure that the majority of the time is related to education and training and not to research or any other activity.

- **Short-term joint staff training events.** The activity period is between 3 days to 30 days.

Joint staff training events allow the project partners to organise short training events for education and training staff linked to the topic or scope of the project. These should be organised for small groups of staff from different countries in order to maximise the impact on each participating organisation.

Eligible participants: professors, teachers, trainers, educational and administrative staff working in the partner organisations.

**NB:**

- **Each project shall have its own website or webpage in order to disseminate the projects activities, results and outputs.**
- **The issuing of a joint publication is a compulsory output, no matter the type of project.**
- **The organisation of at least one joint event (intensive programme, seminar, workshop, conference, training course, etc.) is compulsory, no matter the type of project. Please note that costs for seminars, workshops, conferences, training courses envisaged in the projects, will be supported only from project management and implementation budget heading.**
- **All the activities of the project must take place in the countries of the organisations participating in the project.**
- **The participants coming from project partners situated in the same country where the activity take place, could receive funds for travel and individual support only if at least one of the DS project partners will have participants in that activity.**
- The Romanian Higher Education Institution (HEI) (with ECHE) applies to PO, on behalf of a consortium composed of at least 2 institutions, including at least one institution/organisation from a DS;

**Who can participate**

- The other members of the consortium can be accredited universities, companies, research institutes, social partners<sup>4</sup>, NGOs from DS or BS and VET-institutions in Switzerland with a specific cooperation agreement with a company from Liechtenstein.

**Application procedure**

The application will be sent online to the PO, following the procedures described in the 2021 Call for Proposals for cooperation projects in the HE Area (available on [www.eea4edu.ro](http://www.eea4edu.ro)).

**Deadline for application**

**25.10.2021, 13.00 hours (Romanian time)**

**Duration**

Minimum duration: 6 months

Maximum duration: 19.5 months

Projects could start between **15.02.2022 – 31.05.2022, but the end of the projects should not be later than 30.09.2023**

**Funding and payments:**

Budget per project: min.20.000 Euro, max. 200.000 EUR, depending on the complexity and the duration of the project.

**Eligible costs:**

Eligible costs	Description	Financing mechanism	Amount	Rule of allocation
Project management and implementation	Project management (e.g. planning, financial management, coordination and communication between partners; virtual cooperation and local project activities like for example class room project work with learners, organisation and mentoring of embedded learning/training activities, etc.; information, promotion and dissemination, like for example brochures, leaflets, web information, etc.).	Scale of unit costs	Contribution to the activities of the coordinating organisation:  500 EUR per month	Automatic
		Scale of unit costs	Contribution to the activities of the other participating organisations (partners):  250 EUR per participating organisation per month	

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 3.

<p>Intellectual outputs (see staff costs in Table B, below)</p> <p>Funding can be requested only for the staff employed by the partner organisations. If external professionals are needed, the costs related to their work falls under the chapter of Exceptional costs: subcontracting of services</p>	<p><b>Intellectual outputs<sup>5</sup></b>/ tangible deliverables of the project (such as curricula, pedagogical materials, study programmes or modules, Open Educational Resources, IT tools for teaching, learning or assessing learning outcomes, analyses, studies, guidelines, policy recommendations, peer-learning methods, etc.)</p>	<p>Scale of unit costs</p>	<p><b>B1.1</b> per manager involved</p> <p><b>B1.2</b> per researcher/ teacher / trainer involved</p> <p><b>B1.3</b> per technician involved</p> <p><b>B1.4</b> per administrative staff involved</p> <p>See Table B, page 8</p>	<p><b>Conditional</b></p> <p>Staff costs for managers and administrative staff are expected to be covered already under "Project management and implementation" and do not relate to this particular unit costs. To prevent potential overlap with such item, applicants will have to justify the type and volume of staff costs applied for in relation to each output proposed</p> <p>The outputs should be substantial in quality and quantity to qualify for this type of grant support</p>
<p>Multiplier events</p>	<p>Contribution to the costs linked to the organisation of national and transnational conferences/seminars/events aimed at sharing and disseminating the intellectual outputs realised by the project.</p> <p>It is compulsory that the Project Promoter will ensure that the participants at multiplier events will be also from other institutions than those involved in the project.</p>	<p>Scale of unit costs</p>	<p>100 EUR per local participant</p> <p>(i.e. participants from the country where the event is taking place)</p> <p>200 EUR per international participant (i.e. participants from other countries)</p>	<p><b>Conditional</b></p> <p>Support for multiplier events is provided only if in direct relation to the intellectual outputs of the project. A project without intellectual outputs cannot receive support for organising multiplier events</p>
<p>Exceptional costs</p>	<p>Contribution to real costs related to subcontracting or purchase of goods and services, that are proved necessary for the implementation of the project and cannot be covered through the unit costs above</p>	<p>Reimbursement of the eligible costs</p>	<p>100% of eligible costs</p> <p>Maximum of <b>20.000 EUR</b> per project</p>	<p><b>Conditional</b></p> <p>Subcontracting has to be related to services that cannot be provided directly by the partner organisations for duly justified reasons. Equipment cannot concern normal office equipment or equipment normally used by the participating organisations</p>

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 1.

## Tables A. Short term transnational mobility activities of individuals (Amounts in Euro)

The following costs are eligible:

Unit costs applicable to travel costs:

Eligible costs	Description	Financing mechanisms	Amount	Rule of allocation
Travel	Contribution to travel costs of participants, from their place of origin to activity venue and return- including accompanying persons (**)	Scale of unit costs	Distances between 10 – 99 KM: 20 EUR per participant Distances between 100 – 499 KM: 180 EUR per participant Distances between 500 – 1999 KM: 275 EUR per participant Distances between 2000 – 2999 KM: 360 EUR per participant Distances between 3000 – 3999 KM: 530 EUR per participant Distances between 4000 – 7999 KM: 820 EUR per participant	Conditional  Applicants to justify financial need related to project objectives and results

For the establishment of the distance band applicable, the Project Promoter shall indicate the distance of one-way travel using the on-line distance calculator available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/distance-calculator\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/distance-calculator_en)

By default, the place of origin is understood as the place where the sending organisation is located and the place of venue as the place where the receiving organisation is located.

Unit costs applicable to individual support:

Eligible costs	Description	Financing mechanism	Amount	Rule of allocation
Individual support for students (short term mobility of students and intensive programmes)	Costs directly linked to subsistence of participants, including accompanying persons (**), during mobility	Scale of unit costs	Up to the 14 <sup>th</sup> day of activity: <b>58 EUR per day per participant</b> + between the 15 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> day of activity: <b>42 EUR per day per participant</b>  Subsistence for another 2 travel days (one before and one after the activity period) could be allocated (if needed).	Automatic

Individual support for staff and professionals (Project management meetings, Short term joint staff training events, Teaching or providing expertise in Intensive Study Programmes, accompanying persons in all activities	Costs directly linked to subsistence of participants, including accompanying persons (**), during mobility	Scale of unit costs	Up to the 14 <sup>th</sup> day of activity: <b>106 EUR per day per participant</b> + between the 15 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> day of activity: <b>74 EUR per day per participant</b>  Subsistence for another 2 travel days (one before and one after the activity period) could be allocated (if needed).	Automatic
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(\*\*)as a general definition an accompanying person is the one who accompanies participants – whether learners or staff -with special needs (i.e. with disabilities) in a mobility activity, in order to ensure protection, provide support and extra assistance.

**SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT:** as a general rule, 100% of the real costs proved as necessary for supporting the participation (e.g in mobility) of persons with special needs will be allocated (in addition to the ones marked with (\*\*)) above).

**Table B – Rates applicable to staff costs (amounts in Euro per day)**

The amounts depend on: a) profile of staff involved in the project and b) the country of the partner organisation whose staff is involved.

	<b>Manager</b>	<b>Teacher/Trainer/ Researcher/</b>	<b>Technician</b>	<b>Administrative staff</b>
	B1.1	B1.2	B1.3	B1.4
<b>Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland <sup>6)</sup></b>	294	241	190	157
<b>Iceland</b>	280	214	162	131
<b>Czech Republic, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia</b>	164	137	102	78
<b>Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia</b>	88	74	55	39

<sup>6)</sup> It applies only for VET institutions from Switzerland involved in the project, with a specific cooperation agreement with a company from Liechtenstein.



## Payments:

In the case of projects with a duration over or equal with 12 months, the first advance instalment shall be paid within 30 calendar days following the last signature of the Project Contract, amounting 60% of the total grant amount. Second advance instalment amounting 40% of the budget shall be paid within 60 calendar days after the receipt of Project Interim Reports providing that the Project Promoter already spent at least 70% of the 1<sup>st</sup> instalment and that the report was approved.

After the assessment and approval of the final report, within 60 days from its receipt, the final grant will be established and if it the case the PO will issue a debit note for the remaining unspent funds.

In the case of projects with a duration of less than 12 months, the first advance instalment shall be paid within 30 days following the last signature of the Project Contract, amounting 80% of the total grant amount. Second advance instalment amounting 20% of the budget shall be paid within 60 calendar days after the receipt of a interim report that proves that the Project Promoter already spent at least 70% of the 1<sup>st</sup> instalment. After the assessment and approval of the final report, within 60 days from its receipt, the final grant will be established and if it the case the PO will issue a debit note for the remaining unspent funds.

## 2. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

- Eligibility rules:**
- The application and all annexes were submitted until the application deadline (as announced in the 2021 Call for Proposals);
  - The applicant is a Romanian accredited HEI with ECHE;
  - There is at least one eligible partner from DS\*;
  - The declaration of honour bears the signature of the person legally authorised to sign on behalf of the applicant institution/ organisation, as well as the stamp of this institution/ organisation (if applicable);
  - The application is not in the situation of requesting double funding;
  - The other partners are from DS\* or BS

\*or VET institutions in Switzerland with a specific cooperation agreement with Liechtenstein.

**Minimum number of countries:** 2

**Minimum number of partners:** 2

- Grant awarding criteria**
1. Relevance: The project needs, its objectives and the expected results are clearly relevant to the objectives of the Programme and for the HE Area. The objectives are SMART and refer to adequate topics and target groups
  2. Innovative character: The project will supply innovative solutions to clearly identified needs of clearly identified target groups.
  3. Quality of the work programme: Organisation of project work is clear and appropriate for fulfilling the objectives. The implementation timeline is realistic and appropriate.
  4. Quality of the partnership: The partnership has all the professional competences, expertise and experience required to implement the project activities and to achieve the objectives and results. Tasks are adequately distributed among

partners as to guarantee the results achieved in due time and within the requested budget

5. Impact: Foreseeable impact on target groups, institutions and systems is clearly defined and measures to ensure this impact are detailed. There is there a clear procedure, methods and instruments to measure the project impact
6. Communication/Dissemination: The communication plan contains clear and appropriate objectives, target groups and activities. The dissemination and exploitation activities will allow optimal use of results beyond the partners and lifetime of the project, during and after the contractual period.
7. Added value of transnational cooperation with DS: Needs and benefits for transnational cooperation with DS are clearly demonstrated.
8. Cost effectiveness: The proposed project is cost effective in terms of budget requested to implement the planned activities and to achieve the planned results

**NB:** Projects that:

- a) address the topics of Social inclusion of vulnerable groups (with a focus on Roma),
- b) address the topics of Democracy and Citizenship,
- c) ensure synergies with approved projects within programmes: Research, Business Development, Innovation and SMEs, Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency or Energy Security,
- d) aim at innovating learning/ teaching practices and tools in the digital era (therefore with focus on digitalization of education),

will be encouraged through additional priority points (maximum 10 points awarded for each priority a), b), c) and maximum 20 points in case of d) priority.

Maximum number of points that a project could be scored is 120 points + maximum 50 priority points. To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least 72 points. The priority bonus points will be allocated only in cases when the project obtains at least 72 points for quality assessment (award criteria 1-8).

### 3.CONTRACTUAL PROCEDURES

**Probable date of sending preliminary information about selection results**

10.01.2022

**Partnership agreements**

The Project Promoter shall sign a partnership agreement, in English, with all the project partners. A draft partnership agreement shall be submitted to the Programme Operator before the signing of the project contract. A template of such a partnership agreement can be downloaded from [here](#).

**Contracting**

The Project Promoter will receive the contract in electronic version, after the publication of the selection results and has the obligation of sending the contract, electronically signed by the legal representative, in maximum 10 working days from

the receipt of the electronic contract, together with the copies of partnership agreements signed with the project partners.

Please, note that the PO reserves its right to conclude the contracts only if all the conditions set above are accomplished.

## **Reporting**

In the case of cooperation projects with more or equal with 12 months of implementation the Project Promoter will have to submit an Interim Report at the middle of the contractual period, including information on project progress in implementing the planned activities and achieving the results and a financial statement. Second advance instalment shall be paid after the approval of the Project Interim Report providing that the Project Promoter already spent at least 70% of previous advance payment.

In the case of cooperation projects with less than 12 months of implementation the Project Promoter will have to submit an interim report showing that it already spent at least 70% of the 1-st advance payment. Second advance instalment shall be paid after the receipt of this interim report.

The final report shall be submitted by the Project Promoter within 2 months after the end of the project. After the assessment and approval of the final report, within 60 days from its receipt, the final grant will be established and if it the case the PO will issue a debit note for the remaining unspent funds.

The selected projects will report on results achievement based on the output 2.1 and outcome 2 indicators from [the results framework](#) in the programme agreement.

## **4. SELECTION OF THE APPLICATIONS**

The PO has the entire responsibility for organising the selection process and taking the grant award decision.

The selection process consists in an administrative/eligibility check and qualitative assessment.

The administrative/eligibility check is performed by the PO's experts, members of the programme implementation unit, using specific check-lists.

After finalising this stage, a list of eligible projects will be drafted and submitted to external evaluation experts. Each application will be assessed by two external evaluation experts, in a fully transparent way, guaranteeing impartiality and equal treatment to all applicants.

The list with projects proposed for funding, on the reserve lists and rejected will be drafted and submitted to the Selection Committee for review.

The final proposal of the Committee is submitted to the PO director, who takes the grant award decision.

For administrative/eligibility check the elements mentioned in section 2 of Evaluation Procedures chapter - Eligibility rules will be verified.

For qualitative assessment the elements mentioned in section 2 of Evaluation Procedures section– Grant award criteria will be evaluated.

In the case where clerical errors are detected, the applicants will be notified to make corrections in a period of up to 5 working days from the receipt of the notification.

## **5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEAL**

### **a. Eligibility check**

Applicants rejected as a result of the administrative or eligibility check can submit an appeal against this decision, with arguments, in up to 5 working days from the publication of results; the appeal will be sent electronically to [contestatie@anpcdefp.ro](mailto:contestatie@anpcdefp.ro) using the [specific form](#).

The appeal will be analysed in two stages: PO is the first instance analysing the appeal and if the appeal is rejected, NFP is the second instance where the applicant can submit an appeal.

If the NFP also rejects the appeal, the decision to reject the application is deemed final. If the appeal is accepted by one of the two instances, then the application is deemed approved and passed on to qualitative assessment.

The applicant who submits the appeal will be notified by email in maximum 15 working days from the receipt of the appeal.

### **b. Qualitative assessment**

All the applications declared approved following the administrative or eligibility check, will undergo a qualitative assessment, according to the criteria described under paragraph 2.

Rejected applicants can appeal, with arguments, in maximum 5 working days from the publication of results.

The appeal will be analysed in two stages:

PO is the first instance analysing the appeal that will be sent electronically to [contestatie@anpcdefp.ro](mailto:contestatie@anpcdefp.ro) using the [specific form](#).

If the appeal is rejected, NFP is the second instance where the applicant can submit an appeal.

During the analysis of the appeal, the conformity and regularity of the qualitative assessment process (conformity to internal assessment procedures) will be reviewed, but the PO and the NFP will not redo the qualitative assessment and will not give a different score to the application. If the NFP also rejects the appeal, the decision to reject the application is deemed final.

The applicant who submits the appeal will be notified by email in maximum 15 working days from the receipt of the appeal.