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CENTRAL PROJECT
MANAGEMENT
AGENCY

Academic research project grants in the framework of EU4Belarus: Support for advanced learning and training (SALT II) programme

Questions and Answers

Question 1:

In case of award, what is the latest date of beginning the project? In May 2024, I will still have my current job which I cannot quit.

Answer 1:

According to The Practical Guide 6.5.10.2 The signing of a grant contract with an applicant must take place within 3 months from the notification of the award decision. It is expected that the implementation of the project could start right after signing the grant contract. Please have in mind, that the initial planned duration of an action must be between 6 months and 12 months as stated in the Guidelines for applicants section 2.1.4. "Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made". There is no strict requirement that a team member cannot be employed by alternative employers during the implementation of the project unless there are other legal/financial/personal reasons due to which the potential team member cannot be part of both. It is up to the potential team member to discuss and negotiate the conditions of employment with the Lead applicant/co-applicant/affiliated entities (incl. employment start date).

Question 2

In case of award, how will the team members be employed, on which contract and by which entity? In case the applicant is a state research entity from Poland.

Answer 2

In case of award and grant agreement signature, team members must be employed by Lead applicant or co-applicant/affiliated entity if any (see 2.1.5. "Eligibility of costs"). In cases when relation between organization and research team member is referred as „employment“, it covers both – relation based on employment contract and service contract.

It is up to Lead applicant and co-applicant/affiliated entity to identify potential team members and negotiate the employment; Contracting Authority (CPMA) is not part of this process.

Question 3

I didn't find information about the remuneration for team members, could you clarify on that?

Answer 3

Guidelines for applicants do not specify the remuneration for team's members, it should be determined and justified in the budget of the Academic research project. The grant will be paid to the Lead applicant and it is up to Lead applicant and co-applicant and affiliated entity to negotiate the conditions of remuneration with the potential team members.

Question 4

One of the team members should have 4+ yrs of work experience in an academic EU institution. Do doctoral studies in Germany count as such?

Answer 4

No, doctoral studies do not count as work experience.

Question 5

We have a question on our ability to take part in this programm. We work with academic persons who match the description in the conditions but not sure if we match with our institutional form.

Answer 5

<p>The contracting authority is not in a position to provide a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants, activities or costs at this stage. Please check the Guidelines for applicants, section 2.1.1 “Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))” if your organization meets the eligibility criteria for Lead applicant.</p>
<p>Question 6 Can the same person receive both a Fellowship to Belarusian lecturers, scientists, and PhD students at EU higher education and research institutions under the Programme support to advanced learning and training (EU4Belarus SALT II) and be a member of the research team applying for Academic research project grants in the framework of EU4Belarus: Support for advanced learning and training (SALT II) programme? If yes, can the fellowship period overlap with the research project period?</p>
<p>Answer 6 In Guidelines for applicants, section 2.1.4. “Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made” it is stated that: <i>Research team members cannot receive funding from any other scheme in EU4BELARUS programme (scholarships, fellowships, grants, etc.) for the same action and/or research topic.</i> The Contracting Authority leaves the right to request additional documents during the evaluation process in case of doubt. If such case is identified research team members may choose to cancel other funding sources if application under proposed Action is recommended for award.</p>
<p>Question 7 What is the earliest date to start the project and the latest to finish?</p>
<p>Answer 7 Regarding the earliest day to start the project please see Q1. Latest day to finish must be determined in the grant contract of the awarded application. End date of the project implementation must be no later than 30 May 2025, final date to submit report of the project must be no later than 31 July 2025. Please have in mind, that the initial planned duration of an action must be between 6 months and 12 months as stated in the Guidelines for applicants section 2.1.4. “Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made”.</p>
<p>Question 8 Could you please let us know, if a member of the team (applying for grant) can be a person who is resident in Belarus, and currently works at university in Belarus (s/he might be under threat, but was not sacked from his/her job). All other team members will be EU-based. Thanks.</p>
<p>Answer 8 According to guidelines for applicants section 2.1.4. “Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made”, in Research team composition first point “i: includes at least one citizen of Belarus who has left Belarus since no earlier than August 2020 due to repression or persecutions on political grounds and who is currently affiliated as researcher, PhD student and lecturer at European (EU, EEA, UK, EaP countries) university or research institution, including think tanks and research NGO, or who had been affiliated as researcher, lecturer or PhD student in Belarusian university or research institution, and has lost his/her position because of political reasons and repressions no earlier than August 2020 (concerns both those remaining in Belarus and in exile). If at least one other member of the research teams satisfies the requirement described above, other research team members are not strictly required to also satisfy this requirement. If there is no such (at least one) team member, such team will not be eligible. While submitting the application a detailed information about persecutions and/or repressions on political grounds experienced by Belarusian research team member(s) will be requested.</p>
<p>Question 9 how to calculate the salary in this project for a supervisor, an employee with 4 years of experience and a Belarusian PhD student. In what percentages should it be? Is it tied to the current position, e.g., junior researcher or senior researcher?</p>
<p>Answer 9 Please see Q3.</p>
<p>Question 10</p>

<p>1.Can be museum as grant applicant?</p> <p>2. If we talk about grant rate percentage as 90% do we need to show the other 10% and how?</p>
<p>Answer 10</p> <p>1. Please see Q5.</p> <p>2. Project budget must be developed by encompassing of 100% planned eligible costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80%-95% that will be covered of the grant. • 5-20% must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union or the European Development Fund. These costs must be identified in relevant entries of section “Expected sources of funding” of separate worksheet of Annex B “Budget” (Part B – Co-Financing) Please note that in-kind contribution and volunteer’s work are ineligible in this call. <p>This also will be reflected in Article 3 “Financing the Action” of the Grant Contract (template in Annex G) and other places if relevant.</p>
<p>Question 11</p> <p>1. Could you please clarify if it is eligible for an organization not to be permanently affiliated with the applicant? Can I apply from the university, where I am currently a research fellow on a grant?</p> <p>2. Another question concerns applicants: Is Belarusian citizenship a requirement for all applicants?</p> <p>3. The next is whether research can be conducted remotely or requires all researchers to be in the same organization.</p>
<p>Answer 11</p> <p>1. Lead-applicant or co-applicant must be an organisation. In case of award, team members must be employed on employment contract / service contract by Lead applicant and or co-applicant/affiliated entity if any (see 2.1.5. “Eligibility of costs”).</p> <p>A natural person (potential member of the research team) cannot apply individually. Potential team member can be employed by a second employer, who is not the lead applicant/co-applicant/affiliated entity, but must also have employment contract / service contract with the lead applicant/co-applicant/affiliated entity (see Q1)</p> <p>2. At least one team member must satisfy the requirement related to Belarusian citizenship (Please see Q8).</p> <p>3. Location of the research and researchers depend on the design of the project (type of action and types of activities). In essence, there is no strict requirement for all research team members to be in the same physical location, and remote work from other locations is not prohibited, but all team members must be employed by / have service contract with the relevant organisations (lead applicant / co-applicant / affiliated entity).</p>
<p>Question 12</p> <p>A research project I'm currently working on involves training large language models (LLMs) for Belarusian. This is a computationally intensive task, with the projected cost of up to € 10000, which are to be spent on renting GPU time from Amazon AWS or other cloud service providers – that is, hardware (not software) usage is an essential and costly part of project implementation. Could you please clarify if such costs would be eligible for funding within EU4Belarus SALT II programme?</p>
<p>Answer 12</p> <p>Please refer to Guidelines for applicants section 2.1.4. “Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made” parts “Types of Action”, “Types of Activity” and “Expected outputs” of the to assess if your research topic meets the criteria of valid and eligible object for funding. Should all or any parts of the research project described in the Question be eligible for funding would be assessed during the evaluation process if it meets “software essential for project implementation” or any other eligibility criteria or not.</p>
<p>Question 13</p> <p>1. Could you please let me know how many team members can be in the research team -- i.e. if there are any minimum and maximum numbers?</p> <p>2. I also wonder if, under this grant, salary can be paid by Lead Applicant to a person who is resident in Belarus (say, on a bank account of this person in an EU country)?</p>
<p>Answer 13</p>

<p>1. Guidelines for applicants do not determine (and therefore – does not limit) the number of the team members. Be advised that the team, whatever the number of experts are involved, must comply with eligibility criteria (see Q8).</p> <p>2. It is up to Lead applicant and co-applicant/affiliated entity to negotiate the employment conditions and payment modalities with the team members. Contracting Authority (CPMA) is not part of this process. Be advised, that at least 1 team member must satisfy eligibility criteria for Belarusians (see Q8).</p>
<p>Question 14 According to the information above, groups can participate in the grant competition, in which there is at least one Belarusian researcher who suffered because of expressing a civic position in 2020. I am only getting a bachelor's degree, which can be a hindrance in obtaining funding. Is this a problem?</p>
<p>Answer 14 Please see Q8 for the status and eligibility criteria of at least 1 team member from Belarus. Other team members, if they satisfy the criteria to be part of research team, can have different status.</p>
<p>Question 15 One of the applicants is supposed to have at least four years of working experience at a European university. I wondered, what counts as such? For example, I did my PhD at a German university, would this count?</p>
<p>Answer 15 Please see Q4.</p>
<p>Question 16 For information on Eligibility of applicants: - be a legal entity and - be non-profit-making and University is a private limited liability company in its legal form. Does this mean that we cannot apply for this call as a non-profit institution?</p>
<p>Answer 16 That is correct, only non-profit making entities can be eligible to apply under this call for proposals.</p>
<p>Question 17 Could you please clarify the applicant's eligibility considering the following: The core research team consists of three members. Researcher 1 is the team leader and has a temporary affiliation with the institution A through the Fellowship EU4Belarus SALT. Researcher 2 is currently located in Belarus. Researcher 3 has been employed for over 4 years and is affiliated with one University in Sweden. 1) Is the institution A eligible to apply in this case? 2) Is it valid to involve researchers who are not citizens of Belarus in the team?</p>
<p>Answer 17 1. Please see Q6. Most important, that <i>Research team members cannot receive funding from any other scheme in EU4BELARUS programme (scholarships, fellowships, grants, etc.) for the same action and/or research topic.</i> For more information regarding the eligibility of an institution A please see Q5. 2. Please see Q8.</p>
<p>Question 18 1. How can young Belarusian researchers who study and work at the US universities apply to and participate in the EU4Belarus projects? 2. What is the legal status of the project's researchers once they receive the grant? Do they sign a specific employment contract while they work for the supported project? If yes, who is responsible for hiring them? 3. What is the project's duration and how is it defined? What is the due date for the researchers' contracts to be signed? Is it possible for the research team participants to join at different stages of the project or in different days (considering their contract responsibilities for other institutions)?</p>
<p>Answer 18 1. Please see Q11 regarding participation in ongoing call for applications for Academic research project grants in the framework of EU4Belarus: Support for advanced learning and training (SALT II) programme.</p>

To emphasize, Guidelines for Applicant refer (see art. 2.1.1) that Lead applicant, as an organization, must also be established in Member State of European Union. If this requirement is met, such organization (or any co-applicant or affiliated bodies, see Guidelines for Applicant for respective requirements for such organizations) are free to hire (or have service contracts) with an eligible research team member. Eligibility criteria for research team members and location of the activities are defined in section 2.1.4 of the Guidelines for Applicants.

2. Please see Q11.

3. Please see Q1.

Question 19

Could you please clarify the issue, related to the possible hiring of external experts? If a research team (3-4 persons) is selected for this grant, is it allowed to employ (by the Lead Applicant/receiver of the grant) the external experts, who have not been a part of the research team (at the time of application), and to pay to these experts for their work from the grant funds? If it is allowed, are there any constraints related to the geographical location of these experts (i.e. they should live/work only in Belarus, or only in the EU, etc.)?

Answer 19

You should check in the guidelines for applicants section 2.1.4 "Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made" and section 2.1.5. "Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included" for the eligible costs regarding external experts. Leader of the research team together with Lead applicant and if any, co-applicant and/or affiliated entity, are responsible to organise work of team members. Please see in the Guidelines that "Location: Activities related to dissemination of project results to the scientific community and other relevant stakeholders must take place in the European Union." Please also see Q11. To emphasize, for the Applicant to be eligible, such organization must have information on the research team in its proposal. During the implementation phase, any parties are allowed to amend the composition of the team as long as the team and its members remain eligible as per requirements. New team members shall be compensated if any old members are changed, but the Grant budget will not be increased in such case. Research team members must have employment (or service contracts) with lead Applicant, co-applicant, or affiliated entities; requirements for these organization are listed in Guidelines for Applicants. There is no requirement, that team members must physically reside in Member State of European Union.

Question 20

Can the reporting period (between 30 May 2025 and 31 July 2025) be included in the duration of the project, and project staff working on the report still be paid during this time, considering that the overall duration of the project will not exceed 12 months?

Answer 20

Implementation period must be finished before the final reporting time.

According PRAG costs related to the submission of final reports (including the costs of the staff preparing the final report) and the winding up of the action, including expenditure verification, audit and the final evaluation of the action, may be incurred after the implementation period of the action, but in any event before the submission of the final reports.

Therefore, at the time of the budget evaluation, a justification should be given:

- for the need for such expenditure;
- reasonableness of the percentage of staff involvement.

Question 21

1) What percentage of the budget can the lead applicant use for his own needs? Including accounting, preparation of contracts, grant administration etc. Of the huge amount of text on the site, this one is not at all easy to understand, since the description language is quite complex.

2) Is there an optimal number of participants in a research group? Is there a limit on the number of participants?

Answer 21

1. Such horizontal tasks, which are not directly attributed to research activities, can be covered by Indirect costs, which cannot exceed 7% of the direct costs. Please see in guidelines for applicants 2.1.5. "Eligibility of costs" section "Eligible indirect costs". Please note that "The indirect costs for the action are those

eligible costs which may not be identified as specific costs directly linked to the implementation of the action and may not be booked to it directly according to the conditions of eligibility in Article 14(1). However, they are incurred by the beneficiary(ies) **in connection with the eligible direct costs for the action**. They may not include ineligible costs as referred to in Article 14(9) or costs already declared under another costs item or heading of the budget of this contract.

2. As long as research team complies with requirements, listed in the Guidelines for Applicants, and the maximum possible budget is not exceeded, organizations which apply for the Grant are free to have any composition of the research team. Please see Q13.

Question 22

Our main business is developing and producing of different types of products. Formerly we exist as Belarussian company founded by scientists from Belarussian university, but in 2021 as the result of politic situation and persecutions on political grounds our co-workers we relocated our stuff into the Poland and founded company A. At this moment we concentrate on development of the new products for EU market. Some of our research project we develop with collaboration with polish academic institutions. The most actual issues for us are search a financing of R&D projects. We are interested in EU4Belarus program participation as company A in cooperation with scientists from the Institute A in Poland. Is such applicant match to EU4Belarus program rules? Or you interested only in academic institutions?

Answer 22

Please see Q5 and Q12.

Question 23

Can a scientist apply for this program if on December 15 he has already submitted an application for the "Programme support to advanced learning and training (EU4Belarus SALT)"?

Answer 23

Only an organization can apply under this call of proposals, which employs (or has service contract) with a specific eligible research team member. Such team member can apply to as many opportunities as he/she wants, but limitations would apply for which funding he/she would be approved based on case-by-case assessment. For more details, please see Q6.

Question 24

Paragraph 2.1.3 of the guidelines states that "Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action". However, the form provided in the application in part B, chapter 3 (associates participating in the action) implies that only organisations can participate in the action as associates. Can individuals representing informal groups be included in the action as associates? If yes, how?

Answer 24

According to guidelines for applicants section 2.1.3. "Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action". The form provided in the application in part B, chapter 3 (associates participating in the action) is standard PRAG form which should be completed with the available information.

While the contracting authority is not in a position to provide a prior opinion or decision-making on the eligibility of any organization or individual, involved with specific applicant, we advise to fill the required forms as completely and in detail as possible, do describe the individual person as allowed by Article 2.1.3 of the Guidelines for Applicants.

Question 25

- 1. Are there any limitations on the share of salaries in the overall budget?**
- 2. Can an applicant count the provision of their own equipment or premises as a contribution for the purposes of the projects?**
- 3. Are there any norms for the costs of conducting an audit?**
- 4. Where can I find the "Legal entity file number" and which contracts are being referred to?**
- 5. If an applicant is applying alone, do they need to fill out the Affiliated entity(ies)'s statement documents?**
- 6. What exactly is meant by "operating grant financed from the EU"?**

Answer 25

1. There are no limitations on the share of salaries (and service contracts) in the overall action budget.

2. Contributions in kind are not allowed (see in guidelines for applicants section 2.1.5. "Eligibility of costs"), specifically – costs related to usage of own pre-existing equipment or premises will not be compensated to the Applicant in the form of payments from EU funding.
3. The audit verification costs shall be included in the budget of the Action and shall not exceed 1% of total direct costs (see 2.1.5. "Eligibility of costs"). The audit verification costs shall be included in the budget of the Action and should not exceed 1% of total direct costs. If Applicant presents justified grounds (e.g. no external audit company is willing to conclude service contract within this price range), this requirement of „max. 1% of total cost“ could be reviewed on case by case basis, budgets transfers made without exceeding approved total budget amount.
4. Legal entity file number is assigned after signing the contract with European Commission. For more information about the Legal entity file you may read https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelines-tenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/forms-contracts_en
5. If there is no Affiliated entity(ies), Affiliated entity(ies)'s statement is not required.
6. An operation grant funds the operating costs of an organisation pursuing an objective supporting European Commission's policies. For more information about an operation grant you may read https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/looking-funding/grants_en

Question 26

Could you clarify if a Belarusian citizen with a PhD, who left Belarus no earlier than August 2020 due to political repression or persecution, can be the head of a research group?

Answer 26

According to guidelines for applicants section 2.1.4. "Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made", in Research team composition part iii. "includes a leader of the research team who has a PhD or equivalent". There is no restriction which team member should meet the eligibility criteria "includes at least one citizen of Belarus who has left Belarus since no earlier than August 2020 due to repression or persecutions on political grounds...". So while there is no requirement that such person must only be the head of the group, such person can be any member of the team including the head of the team.

Question 27

Is an independent think tank registered in Lithuania as public institution (viesoji istaiga) eligible to apply as a co-applicant?

Answer 27

Please see Q5.

Question 28

Many Belarusian researchers currently residing in the EU maintain close ties with their home country. Given the current situation in Belarus, it is possible that acknowledging EU grant financing in peer-reviewed publications and other research outputs (as required in section 2.1.4 of the Guidelines, part "Visibility") may trigger further persecution of the Belarusian nationals who are part of the research team – e.g. criminal charges in absentia. In case of award, are there any measures that could be taken to reconcile the requirement of visibility with security of the Belarusian team members?

Answer 28

Identification of the authors or associates on the scientific research output (e.g. research paper), participation in related events (seminars, conferences, etc.) with identifiable attendees, and visibility requirements (publication of the fact of EU funding, targeted publicity measures, press coverage, etc.) are essential elements of the Action. For more information, please see Guidelines for Applicants section 2.1.4. "Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made".

If there would be an applicant, which would raise such concerns, and such applicant would be selected for potential approval, contracting authority will not ignore such concerns and will seek mutually beneficial solutions including advice from EU representatives in due course.

Question 29

The research team must include a Belarusian scholar, a scholar with 4 years of EU experience, and a team leader with PhD. Does it mean three different persons? Or can it be only two persons, assuming that the PhD leader has the required 4-year experience?

Answer 29

Section “Research team composition” of the Article 2.1.4 of the Guidelines for Applicant list 3 criteria (member from Belarus, experience of 4 years, leader with PhD), which all must be met. These requirements are for the research team as a whole unit – at least one person must qualify for each of these criteria. There is no requirement on the number of these criteria attributed to a single team member, so one specific team member could meet 1, 2 or all 3 criteria. There is no limitation (minimum or maximum) on number of research team members in the research team, as long as full composition of the team satisfies the 3 listed criteria. You may also see Q13 part 1.

Question 30

Could you please clarify what it means that the ‘Research team members cannot receive funding from any other scheme in EU4BELARUS programme (scholarships, fellowships, grants, etc.) for the same action and/or research topic’?

Suppose that a team member is a recipient of the ‘fellowship actions for research’, with the funding from the EU4Belarus SALT II programme, at the Polish institution, with a research topic A. Does it mean that he/she cannot be a research team member at the project, implemented at the same time as the fellowship of this individual in Poland, but in a different country and with a topic B, which is different from topic A? If it is not possible at the same time, even with the different topics (I kindly ask you to clarify this), will it be possible if the timeframes are different (say, individual project in Poland will end for this person in September, and his/her participation in collective fellowship will start in October)?

Answer 30

The contracting authority is not in a position to provide a prior opinion on the eligibility of applicants or activities at this stage, as this will be assessed on case-by-case basis with properties of each case examined and taken into account individually.

This requirement stems from risk management to avoid EU double funding (see part c of Article 14.11 of Annex II), when a single person or entity could declare same costs and receive different payments from 2 (or more) EU funded actions or work programmes, or in other words – would be paid by EU two or more times for the same academic endeavours and results.

If potential team members would be involved with different research topics (A and B), the difference of which could be substantiated (e.g. different academic fields, no direct identifiable relation between two topics, etc.), such cases could be eligible depending on the individual assessment by the contracting authority. Not overlapping periods of EU funding decrease the risk of double funding even more. In all cases, potential applicants, which propose team members who already receive funding from EU4Belarus programme, are advised to identify such cases in their applications, describe the facts and provide supporting documentation for assessment by Contracting Authority.