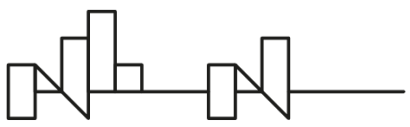


**Iceland**   
**Liechtenstein** **Norway**  
**Norway grants** **grants**



## **Unlocking Youth Potential**

**EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment**

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**Distribution date: 01.09.2020**

**Deadline for applications: 5 January 2021**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Financial Mechanism Office ("the FMO") announces call no. 2020-1 seeking the submission of proposals for grants for transnational projects under the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment ("the Fund").

The Fund supports projects that promote sustainable and quality<sup>1</sup> youth employment in 18 beneficiary countries.<sup>2</sup> It operates on the basis of calls designed and launched by the Donor States (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) with support from their secretariat (the FMO). The fund operator, a consortium consisting of Ecorys Polska and JCP Srl, assists the FMO in implementing the Fund.

The following documents constitute the legally binding framework which applies to the Fund:

- *Protocol 38c on the EEA Financial Mechanism (2014-2021), Article 7;* and
- *Agreement between the Kingdom of Norway and the European Union on a Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period 2014-2021, Article 7.*

The added value of this Fund compared to other initiatives of the EEA and Norway Grants is its **transnational** focus. The Fund seeks to help entities across Europe pooling their efforts to find new ways of dealing with youth unemployment. This is in line with the Europe 2020 strategy and the EU cohesion policy that take account of the crucial role the regions and cross-border cooperation play in smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Transnational cooperation is also highlighted in the European Commission's priorities for the 2019-2024 period.<sup>3</sup> The Fund supports this policy by funding transnational consortia that work together on common challenges and learn from each other through dialogue and the exchange of good practice leading to mutual and accelerated learning and the replication of successfully tested solutions. Project activities, outputs, outcomes and the impact of the Fund shall therefore be transnational in nature and the added value of the transnational dimension should be clearly visible. The projects could complement transnational activities implemented in the context of the European Social Fund transnational cooperation projects. The inclusion of expertise partners from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, the Donor States and international organisations should be considered.

All projects and activities funded shall be based on the common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of people belonging to minorities. All projects and activities supported by the Fund shall follow the principles of good governance; they shall be participatory and inclusive, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient. There shall be zero-tolerance towards corruption. All projects and activities supported by the Fund shall be consistent with sustainable development, long-term economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection.

The application form, the template for project contracts and the template for partnership agreements is available in the fund operator's electronic application system ([EGREG](#)).

The main data and conditions of the call for proposals are included in the table below. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and that all information is further explained in the text of the call.

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<sup>1</sup> By 'sustainable and quality youth employment' is meant jobs that are long-term or permanent, with fair and decent working conditions.

<sup>2</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/priorities\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/priorities_en)

<b>Call launching:</b>	1 September 2020
<b>Call closure:</b>	5 January 2021
<b>Call number:</b>	2020-1
<b>Outcomes:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved employment situation of NEETs/target group</li> <li>2. Increased participation in education and training of former NEETs/target group</li> <li>3. Increased number of NEETs/target group experiencing social inclusion</li> <li>4. Innovative approaches on lowering youth unemployment have been developed or adopted</li> <li>5. Increased transnational cooperation on labour market issues</li> <li>6. Increased knowledge of the effects of employment initiatives targeting NEETs/target group</li> <li>7. Increased capacity on evaluating effects of employment initiatives for NEETs/target group in research institutions</li> <li>8. Increased use of impact studies among policymakers</li> <li>9. Increased knowledge on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on NEETs/target group</li> </ol>
<b>Maximum grant:</b>	2 million euro
<b>Minimum grant:</b>	1 million euro
<b>Co-financing:</b>	The project consortium is required to provide project co-financing. The grant cannot constitute more than 85% of the total eligible costs of the project. In case of project partners with the status of non-governmental organisations, in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work may constitute up to 100% of the co-financing required for the project.
<b>Total allocation:</b>	11.5 million euro
<b>Eligible applicants:</b>	<p>Projects shall involve entities from at least two countries. Each project must include one lead partner and at least one beneficiary partner.</p> <p>Eligible lead partner: any eligible entity established in a Beneficiary State. Beneficiary States of the EEA and Norway Grants are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia;</p> <p>Eligible beneficiary partner: any eligible entity established in a Beneficiary State, Ireland, Italy or Spain.</p> <p>Expertise partners can be any eligible entity established in Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway, in EU Member States not mentioned above<sup>4</sup> or international organisations.</p> <p>Eligible project partners may be entities, public or private, commercial or non-commercial and non-governmental organisations, established as legal persons.</p>
<b>Further conditions:</b>	<p>Consortium members who are lead partners or beneficiary partners may not participate in other project consortia/applications under this call.</p> <p>Entities that are currently active as lead partner or beneficiary partner in projects selected under the previous call (Active Youth) are not eligible applicants or partners under this call.</p> <p>Expertise partners selected under the previous call (Active Youth) are eligible as expertise partners under this call.</p> <p>Each application may only focus on one support area (Innovation and exploration, Transfer of know-how and good practice or Analysis and research).</p> <p>An advance payment may be requested for the start of the project. The amount of the advance payment (if any) will depend on the availability of a financial guarantee.</p> <p>Lead partners (except public institutions) are requested to fill in a simplified financial statement and submit it electronically via the fund operator's system (<a href="#">EGREG</a>) together with the proposal. The financial viability of the lead partner is an element of assessment against eligibility criteria.</p>
<b>Funding source(s):</b>	EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment

<sup>4</sup> Eligible entities in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden can participate in projects as expertise partners.

## 2. PRIORITIES OF THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### Target groups

Funding is made available for initiatives seeking to ensure access to employment, education or training for the following target groups:

- Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) who are between 25 and 29 years old and live in small towns, suburbs or in rural areas<sup>5</sup>;
- Young mothers not in employment, education or training (NEET) who are between 25 and 29 years old; and
- Long-term<sup>6</sup> unemployed people who are between 25 and 29 years old.

Young NEETs who are not registered with the public employment services, are low-skilled, have dropped out of school, and face multiple barriers to entering the labour market (such as poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, disability and/or poor mental health) shall enjoy the highest priority within the target groups. Please see Annex 3 for background information on the target groups.

### Support areas

This call for transnational projects addressing youth unemployment has three principal support areas that are described below. All support areas imply networking and close cooperation with entities in other eligible countries, including expertise partners if relevant. The outcomes and indicators for each support area can be found in Annex 2. **Each application may only focus on one support area.**

#### Support area 1 Innovation and exploration

Under this area the Fund seeks projects that focus on new, experimental solutions to combat unemployment among the target groups and increase the number of sustainable jobs for young people.

The support area implies piloting solutions and applying unconventional practices. The applicants under this support area must provide evidence in the application that their ideas are new to their field, sector, target group or countries involved.

Project consortia that would like to transfer or test known practices developed by others, should apply for funding under the support area "Transfer of know-how and good practice".

#### Support area 2 Transfer of know-how and good practice

Under this support area the Fund seeks projects that focus on transferring know-how and good practice on youth employment initiatives across European countries, with the goal of creating more quality jobs and lower unemployment rates among youths within the target groups listed above.

To ensure successful transfers, projects that seek to replicate or copy good practice must include in the application analyses of the specific context and conditions of the original practices, as well as suggestions on how these will transfer to a new context.

**Suggested measures within support areas 1 and 2** include but are not limited to<sup>7</sup>:

- Efficient practices that develop sustainable jobs;

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<sup>5</sup> Please apply relevant national definitions where they exist. The EEA and Norway Grants do not have standard definitions of 'rural area', 'small town', or 'suburb'.

<sup>6</sup> Long-term unemployment refers to people who have been unemployed for 12 months or more (OECD).

<sup>7</sup> For a good overview of indicative measures for activating vulnerable young people, please see the 2018 European Commission report *Activation measures for young people in vulnerable situations - experience from the ground*.

- Innovative solutions on how to prepare and train young people for structural labour market changes like digitalisation and smart automation, as well as the effects of climate change on the labour market;
- Widening involvement of stakeholders, including the social services, child/youth services, medical and psychiatric professionals, parents, etc. and the involvement of non-traditional employers and sectors, for instance NGOs, civil society organisations and SMEs;
- Outreach strategies, including strategies on how to motivate NEETs to register with public employment services;
- The development or involvement of social entrepreneurship/enterprises;
- Innovative start-up support to young entrepreneurs;
- Community-based approaches and family learning (learning activities that involve all family members, where learning outcomes are intended for all, contributing to a culture of learning in the family);
- New mentoring and coaching approaches;
- Development of new flexible solutions, e.g. in entry qualification requirements to educational institutions or in work contracts for apprentices;
- Experimental pedagogy and didactics, including innovative focus on employability and soft skills development;
- Mixing informal, non-formal and formal learning arenas;
- Innovative apprenticeship modules, work-based learning, mobility measures and job placements;
- Initiatives aiming at securing access to minimal income.

### Support area 3 Analysis and research

The EU Member States have over the last years allocated significant sums to new initiatives addressing young unemployed people and NEETs. There is however a lack of studies evaluating these new initiatives as well as a need to build the capacity of national research agencies and institutions to perform impact studies. Since many EU Member States have adopted similar initiatives the Fund will support transnational research networks that share ideas, theories, practices and experiences on how to evaluate and perform impact studies of initiatives aiming to address youth employment in the eligible countries. The Fund also welcomes joint applications from cooperating research institutions planning to increase their capacity by supporting PhD candidates within the field of impact studies. The inclusion of expertise partners should be considered.

Transnational analyses and evaluations of interventions targeting older (25+) NEETs, young NEET mothers, the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups are specific priorities of the Fund.

**Suggested interventions that could be analysed** include, but are not limited to:

- Training (e.g. evaluating outcomes of new programmes or modules within or outside formal education and training that offer skills development to young people in order to improve their employability and facilitate their transition to the labour market);
- Interventions to deter drop-out from education and training or encourage dropouts to go back to school;
- Entrepreneurship (e.g. evaluating outcomes of initiatives providing entrepreneurial skills);
- Employment services (e.g. evaluating public employment initiatives that provide counselling, job search assistance and work placements);
- Wage subsidies programmes or similar interventions (e.g. subsidies facilitating employment of young people with disabilities);
- Social and financial support to unemployed young people; and
- Community-based initiatives.

Considering the impact on European societies of COVID-19 it seems likely that young NEETs will be among the groups most affected by the pandemic in the long term. The Fund will support transnational analyses and research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the target groups listed above.

### 3. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS AND CONSORTIA

#### Partner roles

The purpose of transnational partnerships is to ensure the close cooperation of various types of organisations with different skills, knowledge and experiences in handling youth employment issues. Transnational partners shall also help to ensure project sustainability.

A partnership is a contractual relationship between two or more entities, which is based on shared responsibility for project implementation. Partners are jointly involved in project preparation and implementation during the drawing-up of the project application, the implementation of the project, and the completion of the project. The project partners work together in a multinational partnership to reach the objectives which are to be realised through the implementation of the project. All project partners must be actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of the project, i.e. the partnership must be substantiated and sustainable within the consortium.

#### Lead partner

During project preparation one partner entity is to be named **lead partner**. The lead partner has the following role in the consortium:

- It will be responsible for submitting the project application;
- It will enter into a contractual relationship with the fund operator (project contract);
- It will be responsible for the contact with the fund operator on behalf of the consortium;
- It will be responsible for entering into a contractual relationship with the other beneficiary partners as well as expertise partners within the framework of a Partnership Agreement;
- It will receive and distribute the project grant to the other members of the consortium; and
- It will be responsible for the reporting of project performance and results to the fund operator.

#### Beneficiary partner(s)

Beneficiary partners are project partners established in one of the 15 Beneficiary States of the EEA and Norway Grants, or in Ireland, Italy or Spain. A project consortium needs at least one beneficiary partner to be considered eligible. There is no limit on the maximum number of beneficiary partners. The establishment of project consortia with more members than the minimum is considered favourable. However, the size of the partnership must be duly justified in order to reflect the specific scope of the project as well as to remain manageable.

#### Expertise partner(s)

Projects funded are intended to benefit identified target groups within the 15 Beneficiary States, Ireland, Italy or Spain. The consortia may invite expertise partners to support the projects by sharing expertise, experience and know-how. The proposal shall list the expertise partners to be involved in the project and describe their relevant work achievements and how they will contribute to reach the objectives of the project.

Strengthening bilateral relations between Iceland, Liechtenstein and/or Norway and the Beneficiary States shall be encouraged in line with the overall objective of the EEA and Norway Grants.

Target groups or other stakeholders in the countries of the expertise partners cannot benefit directly from the Fund. However, expertise partners may expect to benefit from project involvement through professional cooperation, promoting extended and strengthened European networking and the mutual development and exchange of expertise and good practice.

**Please note that consortium members may not participate in other project consortia under this call.<sup>8</sup>**

**Entities that are currently active as lead partner or beneficiary partner in projects selected under the previous call (Active Youth) are not eligible applicants or partners under this call. Expertise partners selected under the previous call (Active Youth) can participate as expertise partners under this call.**

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<sup>8</sup> Please note that all members of the consortium are required to register in the [EGREG](#) system. The registration can be done only once per legal entity/organisation. For large entities with multiple units only one registration per entity is possible (e.g. two distinct departments of the same university cannot submit two applications, unless they are separate legal entities).

## Country composition

Projects shall involve entities from at least two countries, including at least one Beneficiary State.

Eligible lead partner countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Eligible beneficiary partner countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

Eligible expertise partner countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and EU Member States not listed above<sup>9</sup>. International organisations<sup>10</sup> may also be expertise partners.

Eligible project partners may be entities, public or private, commercial or non-commercial and non-governmental organisations, established as legal persons, including but not limited to:

- Municipalities, organisations owned or partly owned by municipalities, associations of municipalities;
- Regions, organisations owned or partly owned by regions; associations of regions;
- Organisational units of central government, organisations partly funded by central government units, state enterprises, state organisations;
- Public and private education and research institutions;
- Civil society organisations, non-profit organisations, social enterprises, interest associations of legal persons, foundations and endowment funds;
- Commercial companies;
- Cooperatives (manufacturing, housing, consumer);
- Business support organisations (incubators, start-up centres, etc.); and
- Social partners (trade unions, sector associations, employer associations, chambers of commerce and industry).

Sole proprietorships and natural persons are not eligible consortium members. Consortium members must be directly responsible for the implementation of the project for which they are seeking a grant and must not act merely as an intermediary of project activities.

## Provisions for project consortia

The nature of legal relationships between the lead partner and the other partners must not rest upon service provision; i.e. the cooperation is not of a supplier-customer character and the consortium must not be of a commercial character. The creation and implementation of the relationship between the lead partner and the beneficiary partner and/or any expertise partner shall comply with the applicable European Union law on public procurement.

During the project development phase the project partners must make clear how they will undertake the management of the project, how work tasks will be allocated, which measures they will take to ensure that high quality standards are applied by all consortium partners, how they will monitor the achievement of objectives and how they will take appropriate corrective measures if and when necessary during the project period. The lead partner shall sign a Partnership Agreement with all project partners (both beneficiary and expertise partners). All contractual relationships between the lead partner, beneficiary partner(s) and expertise partner(s), their roles in the projects, scope of activities, responsibility and definition of mutual rights and obligations during the project implementation are addressed in the Partnership Agreement.

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<sup>9</sup> Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden.

<sup>10</sup> International organisations are entities established by formal political agreements between their members that have the status of international treaties; their existence is recognised by law in their member countries; they are not treated as resident institutional units of the countries in which they are located [definition by the OECD].



## 4. PROJECT DURATION

The final date for eligibility of expenditures for projects is **30th April 2024 at the latest.**

Unless a later date is provided in the decision to approve the project grant or in the project contract, expenditure incurred shall be eligible as of the date on which the Financial Mechanism Committee decides to award the project grant.

The first and final dates of eligibility of each project shall be stated in the project contract for that project.



## 5. RESULTS FRAMEWORK

All projects supported under this Fund need to follow a results management approach (see Annex 1). Project consortia need to a) describe how their proposed activities will produce or deliver specific outputs; b) define what effect those outputs are likely to have on the outcomes; and c) provide any evidence they have for the likelihood of success.

### **Outcomes and outcome indicators for this call for proposals**

Please see Annex 2 for the outcomes and outcome indicators for this call for proposals. Each support area has a few expected outcomes as well as indicators that are used to measure the outcomes.

**Projects must select only the most appropriate outcomes for their proposals.**

Please note that outcome 5 *Increased transnational cooperation on labour market issues* and its indicators are **mandatory** and should be included in all results frameworks.

Applicants must select the most appropriate indicators listed for each outcome to measure the results of their project activities. A limited number of additional indicators may be included, if they are relevant to measure the outcome(s).

### **Outputs and output indicators for this call for proposals**

Projects should define their expected outputs for each outcome. For the application phase output indicators are not required.



## 6. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

The available budget under this call is **EUR 11.5 million**.

The amount of grant assistance applied for within a project shall not be less than EUR 1 million and not be more than EUR 2 million.

The Financial Mechanism Committee reserves the right not to award all the available funds, to re-publish this call or to re-allocate the funds to other activities.

### **Project co-financing**

The project consortium is required to provide project co-financing. The grant cannot constitute more than 85% of the total eligible costs of the project. A minimum of 15% co-financing on the eligible expenditure of the project must be ensured by one or more partners, as decided among themselves.

In case of project partners with the status of non-governmental organisations<sup>11</sup>, in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work may constitute up to 100% of the co-financing provided by the NGO partner.

The form and sources of co-financing shall be indicated in the proposal.

### **Using voluntary work as a source of co-financing (in-kind contribution)**

Where applicable, the project partner, which is a non-governmental organisation shall indicate in the proposal an hourly rate for the voluntary work which shall be in accordance with salary normally paid for such work in its country of legal registration, including the required social security contributions. The hourly rates may vary depending on the region in which the work is performed or the type of voluntary work and may be adjusted during the implementation of the project in order to take into account changes in salaries.

In-kind contribution can only be based on volunteers working for one or more of the project partners. A beneficiary of the project cannot be included as a volunteer.

Records showing the nature of activities undertaken by volunteers to justify the hourly rate used as well as timesheets must be kept.

### **Budget**

The detailed budget of the project must be submitted using the template included in the proposal. The budget shall be presented in euro.

When designing the budget of the project, applicants must plan the budget allocated to budget headings, work packages and partners according to the general criteria for eligibility of expenditure (see below). The project budget shall reflect the work plan, i.e. work packages, outcomes and outputs, as included in the proposal.

Applicants may be invited to correct/adapt the budget if the proposal is acceptable but includes ineligible costs or requires adjustments to optimise cost-efficiency. Costs which are not eligible according to the applicable criteria for eligibility of expenditure cannot be claimed, even if included in the approved proposal.

### **Net Revenues**

The grant may not have the purpose or effect of producing profit within the context of the project. As a general principle, eligible expenditure of a project (and consequently the grant contribution to it) shall be reduced according to the net revenues generated by the project during its implementation.

Revenues are cash inflows directly paid by users for goods or services provided by the project, such as charges borne directly by users for the use of infrastructure or payments for services.

Net revenues are understood as revenues minus any operating costs and replacement costs of short-life equipment incurred during the respective period.

In case the project foresees to generate net revenues, the relevant section of the proposal shall be filled in.

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<sup>11</sup> Non-governmental organisation: a non-profit voluntary organisation established as a legal entity, having a non-commercial purpose, independent of local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organisations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered NGOs.

Any net revenues generated during the implementation period as a direct consequence of the project must be reported in the interim and final report(s) and will be deducted from the amount of eligible expenditures of the project and consequently reduce the amount of the interim/final payment(s). Where not all project expenditures are eligible, the net revenue shall be allocated pro rata to the eligible and non-eligible parts of the expenditures.

Revenues referred to above shall be limited to those generated by the project up to the date on which the final report is drawn up by the lead partner.

Each project partner is responsible for keeping accounts and documenting all revenues generated following project activities for control purposes.

### **Other cash in-flows**

In addition to revenues, there are other types of cash in-flows. These cash in-flows are not directly paid by users for goods and/or services provided by the project and are not treated in the same way as revenues. Other cash in-flows may be private and public contributions and/or financial gains that do not stem from tariffs, tolls, fees, rents or any other form of charge directly borne by the users.

Co-financing received from international, national, regional and/or local sources is permitted provided the costs are not double-financed.

There will be no obligation to declare and reimburse the interest generated by the transfers of funds to the lead partner's or other project partner's bank account.

### **General criteria for eligibility of expenditure**

Eligible expenditures of projects are those **actually** incurred within the project by the project partners, which meet the following criteria:

- They are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract;
- They are connected with the subject of the project contract and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
- They are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
- They must be used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective(s) of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- They are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the project partner and determined according to the applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles; and
- 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 and works). Depreciation of equipment is considered to have been incurred when it is recorded in the accounts of the project partner.

**The final date for eligibility of expenditures for projects is 30th April 2024 at the latest.**

### **Eligible direct expenditure**

The eligible direct expenditures for a project are those expenditures which are identified by the project partners, in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules, as specific expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly.

Direct expenditures are eligible provided that they satisfy the general criteria for eligibility of expenditure and fall under the following budget headings (BH):

- (a) **Staff costs** (BH1): The cost of staff assigned to the project, either full- or part- time, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that these costs are in line with the partner's usual policy on remuneration. Staff can either be already employed by the project partner entity or staff specifically employed for the project. The corresponding salary costs of staff of national administrations are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;
- (b) **Travel costs and related subsistence allowances** (BH2): Travel expenses and related subsistence allowances of staff taking part in the project, provided that these costs are in line with the partner's usual practices on travel. Any accommodation allowances must not exceed the per diem rates published on the <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about->

[calls-tender/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag/diems\\_en](#). As a general principle, the most cost-efficient means of transport shall be used;

- (c) **Consumables and supplies** (BH3): The costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
- (d) **Equipment costs** (BH4): Cost of equipment provided that it is depreciated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applicable to the project partner and generally accepted for items of the same kind. 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 eligible. In case the project partner determines that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price may exceptionally be eligible;
- (e) **Project contract requirements costs** (BH5): Costs arising directly from the requirements imposed by the project contract (report by an independent auditor, cost of financial guarantees etc.);
- (f) **Subcontracting costs** (BH6): Costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a project partner for the purposes of carrying out the project provided that the award complies with the applicable rules on public procurement (see "Procurement").

### **Eligible indirect costs**

A flat rate of 15% of the total eligible staff costs of the project is eligible under indirect costs, representing the general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the project (**Indirect costs** – BH7).

Indirect costs shall normally include all administrative expenditure of the project which cannot be directly attributed to the project.

Indirect costs calculated in accordance with the above provisions do not need to be supported by proof of expenditure.

Where in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work (**Voluntary work** – BH1a) constitutes part of the project co-financing and the voluntary work is carried out under the responsibility of the relevant project partner, the value of that voluntary work shall be taken into account when calculating the indirect costs.

### **Ineligible costs**

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- Interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
- Charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs specifically required by the applicable law and costs of financial services imposed by the project contract;
- Costs related to purchase of land or real estate;
- Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- Exchange rate losses;
- Recoverable VAT;
- Costs that are covered by other sources;
- Fines, penalties and costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project; and
- Excessive or reckless expenditure.

### **Standard scales of unit costs**

The project grant cannot take the form of standard scales of unit costs. Standard scales of unit costs commonly used in other or similar types of national and international funding schemes are not allowed under this call. Standard scales of unit costs commonly accepted in other programmes under the EEA and Norway Grants do not apply under this call.

### **Management costs**

Project management costs (e.g. the preparation of reports by auditors, preparation of financial reports, coordination of the consortium, participation in project management meetings etc.) shall be indicated in the project budget under the relevant work package.

### **Communication costs**<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This call for proposals sets no binding minimum or maximum amount to be allocated to the communication work package budget. For reference purposes only, an estimated average of 12% of the project budget is usually set aside for communication activities.

Project communication costs related to requirements foreseen under the chapter “Communications and visibility measures” below shall be indicated in the project budget under the relevant work package.

Costs related to attendance of project partners to annual thematic seminars organised by the fund operator shall be included under the relevant work package.

### **Budget changes during the project implementation**

The estimated budget laid down in the approved proposal should be as precise as possible. However, when implementing the project, it might become necessary to adapt the financial plan to the actual project implementation status.

Project partners may transfer budget between themselves, between work packages or between budget headings during the project implementation provided that the total value of the transfer does not exceed 10% of the respective budget entry contained in the estimated project budget set out in the project contract. The 10% shall be calculated on the basis of the source or target budget entry, whichever is lower.

Such transfers do not require prior approval by the fund operator and do not require an amendment to the project contract, provided that the maximum grant amount is not exceeded, the project is implemented as described in the project description and the outcomes are not affected. Transfers between project partners may require changes in Partnership Agreement, irrespective of the amount of transfer.

Reallocations exceeding the established 10% threshold are subject to prior approval by the fund operator and to an amendment to the project contract.

### **Reporting and payment modalities**

Payments will follow the general rules for payments as laid down in the project contract.

Payments will be made by the fund operator to the lead partner.

### **Currency for financial reporting and payments**

Payments of the grant shall be made in euro rounded down to the nearest whole number. Financial reports must be drawn in euro.

In case costs have been incurred in another currency than Euro, the costs must be converted into euros using the monthly accounting rate of the European Commission ([http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm)) of the month when the expenditure was paid.

### **Bank accounts**

Payments shall be made to the lead partner’s bank account specified in the project contract. Subject to contrary provisions of the national law, a separate bank account (or sub-account) in euro currency is required. The lead partner must, for audit and control purposes, at any moment be able to reconcile the accounting records with the actual use of the grant.

### **Advance payment**

An advance payment may be requested for the start of the project. The amount of the advance payment (if any) will depend on the availability of the financial guarantee.

The maximum amount of advance payment shall not exceed 20% of the maximum grant amount. The exact amount of the advance payment will be set in the project contract.

The advance payment shall not be used for any other purpose than project implementation.

Where the financial guarantee cannot be provided, no advance payment will be made to the project.

### **Financial guarantee**

The fund operator shall require the lead partner to provide a financial guarantee in order to limit the financial risk. The financial guarantee shall be denominated in euro, in the same amount as the advance payment.

The financial guarantee shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in the EEA.

After the approval of the final report, where appropriate, the final payment will be transferred, and the financial guarantee will be released by the fund operator. In case the final payment is made in the form of a letter of reimbursement, the financial guarantee remains in force until the funds are reimbursed. The fund operator will release the guarantee following the receipt of the reimbursed funds.

Costs relating to a financial guarantee are eligible direct costs.

### Interim payments

Six-monthly interim payments are foreseen following the approval of interim reports and are calculated on the basis of the accepted eligible incurred costs and the corresponding grant rate. The number of interim payments will depend on the project's duration.

The interim report must be submitted within 30 calendar days following the end of the reporting period. The payment is due within 70 calendar days following the receipt of the interim report by the fund operator and is subject to approval of the report. The fund operator reserves the right to request additional information suspending the payment deadline.

The cumulative amount of advance and interim payments will be limited to 90% of the maximum grant amount, when a financial guarantee is provided by the lead partner.

Where no advance payment is paid at the start of the project, each interim (or the final) payment will represent a reimbursement of expenditure incurred in the respective reporting period.

### Final payment

Within 90 days of the completion of the project activities, the lead partner must submit to the fund operator a final report.

The balance will be paid within 70 calendar days from the receipt of the final report and is subject to approval of the report by the fund operator. The fund operator reserves the right to request additional information suspending the payment deadline.

Where the total amount of earlier payments is higher than the final amount of the grant, the payment of the balance will take the form of recovery.

### Supporting documents for the verification of expenditure - Proof of expenditure

Proof of expenditure in support of any interim/final report, and for the purpose of the administrative verification of the eligibility of expenditure, shall be required. It may take the form of:

- a. **Received invoices, or alternatively accounting documents of equivalent probative value;** or
- b. **A report by an independent auditor** qualified to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents or by a competent and independent public officer recognised by the relevant national authorities as having a budget and financial control capacity over the entity incurring the costs and who has not been involved in the preparation of the financial statement, certifying that expenditure declared in an interim/final report has been incurred in accordance with the provisions of the project contract, national law and relevant national accounting principles.

The report by an auditor under option b. must be submitted in the form of a report of factual findings prepared by an independent auditor. The template will be provided by the fund operator.

International organisations provide a report, prepared by their internal or external auditor and in accordance with the procedures of the international organisation, to prove that expenditure declared in an interim/final report has been incurred in accordance with the provisions of the project contract, and relevant accounting principles.

Costs incurred for the reports by the auditor constitute eligible direct costs and the fund operator must be notified about the selected auditors.

The payment for the reimbursement of costs covered by the proof of expenditure does not preclude the fund operator, the FMO, the EFTA Board of Auditors, as well as the Auditor General of Norway from carrying out checks, reviews or audits.

Total amount awarded to a Project Partner	<200,000 EUR	= or > 200,000 EUR (also if actually incurred <200,000 EUR)
Proof of expenditure form	Option a. or b. as two possible alternatives	Option b. mandatory
Proof of expenditure requirements submission	Should the project partner opt for option a., 100% of supporting documents would be provided in support of each interim/final report.	A report by an auditor under option b. is mandatory and shall be submitted <b>at least annually or whenever the total incurred expenditure</b>

	<p>Should the project partner opt for a proof of expenditure in the form of a report by an auditor under option b., such a report shall be provided <b>annually and with the final project report</b> (for the expenditure incurred in the last period not covered by the previous annual report(s) by the auditor).</p> <p>Exception: If the project duration is less than 2 years, such a report shall be provided at the end, along with the final project report.</p> <p>NB. In the case of option b., supporting documents shall be provided by the project partner upon request by the fund operator.</p>	<p><b>reported by the partner is equal or superior to EUR 200,000 when cumulated with all previously reported incurred expenditure for which a report by an auditor has not been submitted. A report by an auditor shall always be provided at the time of the final report</b> (for the expenditure incurred in the last period not covered by the previous report(s) by the auditor).</p> <p>Exception: If the project duration is less than 2 years, such a report shall be provided at the end, as well as when the cumulative incurred expenditure reported exceeds EUR 200,000.</p> <p>NB. Supporting documents shall be provided by the project partner upon request by the fund operator.</p>
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### Procurement

Applicable national and European Union law on public procurement shall be complied with at any level in the implementation of the projects. The award of contracts (including the procedures prior to the award) and the terms and conditions of such contracts shall, in line with the principle of proportionality, comply with best economic practices, including accountability, allow a full and fair competition between potential providers and ensure the optimal use of resources from the Fund. The highest ethical standards, as well as the avoidance of any conflict of interests, shall be observed during the procurement and execution of contracts.

Specific provisions shall be included in the project contract.

### State aid

Any support under the Fund shall comply with the state aid rules applicable at the time when the support is granted. Potential state aid implications will be examined at the time of project application review and may result in rejection or recommendations for changes to the project application.

### Audits

The fund operator, the FMO, the EFTA Board of Auditors and the Office of the Auditor General of Norway may, at any time during the implementation of the project, and up to five years after the final payment to the project, arrange for audits to be carried out.



## 7. PROJECT CONTRACTING

If a grant is awarded by the Financial Mechanism Committee, the lead partner will be invited to sign a **project contract** with the fund operator. Apart from exceptional cases, the award decision is valid and applicable only to the project consortium composed of partners declared in the proposal.

The project contract shall reflect any corrections and deletions of ineligible costs or activities made during or following the grant award process. The final project description, including the project budget, shall be annexed to the contract.

A template project contract is available together with this call for proposals in the fund operator's application system (EGREG).

All contractual relationships between the lead partner, beneficiary partner(s) and expertise partner(s), their roles in the projects, scope of activities, responsibility and definition of mutual rights and obligations during the project implementation shall be addressed in the **partnership agreement** to be signed between them. The signed partnership agreement shall be provided by the lead partner to the fund operator within 30 calendar days from the day of the last signature of the project contract. Transfer of any payments, including an advance payment, is conditional, inter alia, upon submission of duly signed partnership agreements to the fund operator. In order to proceed with the advance payment, a financial guarantee is also required.

A template partnership agreement is available together with this call for proposals in the fund operator's application system (EGREG). Parties shall follow the proposed template, yet additional elements should be included by the project consortium in order to tailor the partnership agreement to parties' specific needs.



## 8. COMMUNICATIONS AND VISIBILITY MEASURES

Communication is an integral part of the implementation of the funding made available from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants. All information and communication measures undertaken by the lead partners and project partners in the implementation of the Fund shall bring to the attention of the general public of the European Economic Area the contribution of the Grants to the two overall objectives: contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and strengthen bilateral relations between Iceland, Liechtenstein and/or Norway and the Beneficiary States.

Information and communication about assistance through the EEA and Norway Grants shall:

- i) increase public awareness and inform the general public about the contribution and role played by the Donors Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway;
- ii) ensure transparency and legitimacy of the assistance from the Donors;
- iii) create a coherent picture of the EEA and Norway Grants in the Beneficiary and Donor States;
- iv) inform potential and actual beneficiaries; and potential and actual partners from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway about EEA and Norway Grants; and
- v) communicate the impact and results of the Donors' contribution to the Beneficiary States.

The project partners must follow requirements on effective communication and dissemination of results in the projects which will be an integral part of the project contracts to be concluded between the fund operator and the lead partners.

These requirements include, but are not limited to:

- The implementation of project level communication plans, with clear measures to ensure visibility of the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment and public awareness of the projects. The lead partners shall ensure that information on the projects is available to the widest possible audience and across the countries involved in the implementation of the projects as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.
- The communication plan shall include at least the following:
  - a) the aims and target groups, including stakeholders on national, regional and/or local levels and the general public;
  - b) the strategy and content of the information and communication measures, including activities, communication tools and timeframe, having regard to the added value and impact of the EEA and Norway Grants' funding;
  - c) at least one major and two minor annual information activities on progress, achievements and results in the projects, such as a seminar or a conference with stakeholders, a press conference or press event, including a launch activity/event as well as a closing activity/event for the project;
  - d) measures for making information on the project available on the web through a dedicated website in English. Information on the web shall include information about the project, its progress, achievements and results, the cooperation with entities in Iceland, Liechtenstein and/or Norway, relevant photos, contact information and a clear reference to the Fund and the EEA and Norway Grants;
  - e) information on the person responsible for implementation of the information and communication measures.

All information and communication material related to the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment shall be in line with the [Communication and Design Manual](#).

Costs related to information and communication activities must be included in the budget of the proposal under the relevant work package.

## 9. SELECTION PROCESS

The proposals will be reviewed by the fund operator and the FMO against the following criteria:

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE criteria:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
The proposal is drawn up in English		
Project costs/budgets are presented in EUR		
The proposal is submitted before the deadline 5 January 2021 at 12 noon Brussels time		
The proposal is in the prescribed format and all requested information is submitted (proposal, declaration on honour, simplified financial statement (not required for public institutions))		
The consortium has submitted a maximum of one proposal		
<b>EXCLUSION criteria:</b>		
<p>An applicant will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals if it is in one of the situations listed below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided under national legislation or regulations</li> <li>- It has been established by a final judgement or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the law of the country in which it is established or those of the country of the implementation of the project</li> <li>- It has been found guilty of grave professional misconduct</li> <li>- It is not in compliance with its obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which it is established</li> <li>- It has been involved in fraud, corruption, cooperation with a criminal organisation, money laundering or other illegal activity</li> </ul> <p>An applicant will not be awarded a grant under this call if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is in an exclusion situation as listed above;</li> <li>- It has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information</li> <li>- It is subject to a conflict of interest.</li> </ul> <p>Applicants (lead applicant and partners) must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in any of the situations referred to above, using the form attached to the proposal template (this should be added in the proposal as an annex).</p> <p>The FO reserves the right to request further relevant documentary evidence prior to contract signature.</p>		
<b>ELIGIBILITY criteria:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
All project partners are eligible entities		
Lead partners and beneficiary partners do not participate in other project consortia under this call		
Entities are not currently active as lead partner or beneficiary partner in projects selected under the previous call (Active Youth)		
The proposed consortium set-up is in line with the requirements of the call		
The budget proposal is within the parameters set for the call		
The lead partner demonstrates sufficient financial and organisational capacity for project implementation		
<b>SELECTION criteria:</b>	<b>Points</b>	
The project idea is formulated concisely, clearly and accurately and is clearly linked to one of the three support areas of the call. The proposal is well-written.	Max 5	

Jargon and specialized language, as well as excessive use of abbreviations, is avoided.	
The target group(s) listed, and their particular needs, are clearly described and the proposal represents a logical solution to these needs.	Max 5
The proposal outlines a clear and sound strategy to meet the objectives of the call and clearly describes the rationale behind the activities proposed. The proposal is convincing in its effort to solve or contribute to solving the problem addressed. It explicitly states which evidence (experience from similar projects, theory or research findings) underpins the project design. An appropriate results framework is in place. The project has selected the most appropriate outcomes and indicators. No additional outcomes are created. The results framework includes the mandatory outcome on transnational cooperation. The choice of outcomes, outcome indicators and outputs are logical and linked to each other.	Max 5
Activities, outputs, results and the impact of the project are transnational in nature and the added value of the transnational dimension to achieve the project outcome(s) is clearly visible and logical. The consortium works together to find a common solution and does not just implement similar activities in several countries (work tasks are integrated and not just parallel)	Max 5
The composition of the consortium (number of countries/beneficiary partners involved, involvement of expertise partners) is well-adjusted to the objective(s) of the project. Expertise partners contribute with high quality input, without dominating the project. The project has a cross-sectoral partnership (public, private, academia, NGOs etc.) if such combination seems relevant. All partners are relevant and active in the project.	Max 5
The proposal clearly sets out the sustainability of the project idea. The project strategy is replicable by other entities. The outputs can be freely used by other entities. The project's results have long-term impact for the target group(s). A strategy for maintaining the outputs after the project's end is in place and seems convincing.	Max 5
The proposal demonstrates overall proportionate budget.	Max 5
Total score	35

The fund operator assesses whether the applicant and the proposal meet the administrative, exclusion and eligibility criteria outlined above. Only applicants that pass the administrative, exclusion and eligibility criteria will be evaluated against the selection criteria. Applicants that are found not to pass these criteria will be notified by the fund operator and have a right to appeal at this stage. Any appeals shall be submitted to the fund operator, within 10 calendar days of the notification.

Lead partners (except for public institutions) are requested to fill in a simplified financial statement and submit it electronically via the fund operator's system (EGREG) together with the proposal. The lead partner organisation's financial viability will be checked by the fund operator during the administrative and eligibility check. The fund operator may request the lead partner to submit further relevant financial and administrative supporting documents.

The Financial Mechanism Office is responsible for evaluation of the proposals against the selection criteria. A five-point scale will be used in the assessment of each selection criterion:

<b>5 "excellent"</b>	The proposal fulfils the criterion to an excellent level and the provided information is sufficient, clear and coherent for assessing the criterion.
<b>4 "good"</b>	The proposal fulfils well the given criterion, however the provided information includes minor shortcomings.
<b>3 "adequate"</b>	The proposal fulfils the given criterion to a sufficient level, however some aspects of the given criterion have not been met fully or not explained in full clarity or detail.
<b>2 "poor"</b>	The proposal has serious shortcomings in fulfilling the given criterion and/or the provided information is of low quality.
<b>1 "insufficient"</b>	The proposal does not fulfil the given criterion/or information required is missing.

The final assessment and decision on awarding a grant is the responsibility of the Financial Mechanism Committee (FMC). Applicants have no legal entitlement to the award of a grant. There are no guarantees that a proposal that fulfils the criteria above is shortlisted or selected for funding. The FMC may, in order to ensure a geographical spread, targeted use of the resources available and avoid duplication, exclude any proposals.

Please note that applicants will not receive detailed feedback on the outcome of the selection process, including scores.



## 10. FURTHER INFORMATION

The proposal shall be submitted electronically via the fund operator's system (EGREG) by **05.01.2021 (12:00 noon Brussels time)**. No modification to the proposal is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. The EGREG system is available at <https://www.egregsystem.info/fundforyouthemployment/>

**Registration of partners in EGREG is only possible until four weeks prior to the deadline for submitting full proposals, i.e. until 11 December 2020.**

In this proposal phase the fund operator will organise events to support the further development of project proposals in line with the objectives of the Fund. Information about such events will be given by the fund operator.

Answers to the preparation of proposals will be provided during the period the call is active. Technical issues related to the use of the EGREG system are solved via the help desk (helpdesk@egregsystem.info). Other questions should be sent by e-mail to the following account: [eeagrants@ecorys.com](mailto:eeagrants@ecorys.com). Please note that standard response time is **two working days**. All questions via email must be submitted by 18.12.2020. The fund operator cannot guarantee replies to emails submitted later than this deadline. The fund operator will answer phone calls to info lines (see below) until 22.12.2020, by 4 p.m. Brussels time. Applicants may also seek information in one of the info hubs listed at the fund operator's website (see below). To ensure equal treatment, issues that may be relevant to several applicants will be presented in the form of Q&As and published in the EGREG system.

In the interest of equal treatment, the fund operator cannot give a prior opinion on eligibility, partnership composition and/or project description.

Please note that the Financial Mechanism Office will not reply to any questions from applicants.

### Indicative timetable

No	Stages	Indicative dates
1	Deadline for submitting proposals	05.01.2021 at 12:00 noon Brussels time
2	Notification of applicants on the results of the selection procedure	Dependant on the number of received applications, not earlier than 1 July 2021.
3	Time period for contracting between lead partner and fund operator, and between lead partner and beneficiary/expertise partners	Mid-2021
4	Start of project implementation	After the contracting period

### Contact details

EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment website: <http://eeagrants.org/fundforyouthemployment>

ECORYS Polska and JCP (fund operator), tel +48 22 339 45 40, website: [www.ecorys.pl/eeagrants](http://www.ecorys.pl/eeagrants)

- **East Hub Information Unit** (Warsaw): +48 22 339 45 40
- **West Hub Information Unit** (Reggio Emilia): +39 05 22 501 157
- **South Hub Information Unit** (Sofia): +35 92 81 55 680

## 11. DEFINITIONS

### **Beneficiary partner**

A beneficiary partner is an eligible entity established in Ireland, Italy, Spain or any of the 15 Beneficiary States of the EEA and Norway Grants (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Portugal) that together with the lead partner, other beneficiary partners and any expertise partners form the transnational project consortium that will carry out a project.

### **Beneficiary State**

The Beneficiary States of the EEA and Norway Grants are Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Portugal.

### **Donor State, Donors**

The Donor States are Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

### **Eligible country**

The eligible countries for this call for proposals are Ireland, Italy, Spain, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Portugal.

### **Eligible entity**

An eligible entity is an entity established as a legal person in one of the eligible countries that may apply for funding under this call.

### **Expertise partner**

An expertise partner is any entity established as a legal person in a Donor State, in the EU Member States Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden or an international organisation that may contribute with expertise relevant to a project under this call.

### **Financial Mechanism Committee**

The Financial Mechanism Committee (FMC) is the decision-making body for the EEA Grants. The committee consists of representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The FMC draws up policy and guidelines, approves each programme allocation and ensures monitoring, control, and evaluation of the Grants.

### **Financial Mechanism Office**

The Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) is the Brussels-based secretariat for the Grants. The FMO is affiliated to the European Free Trade Association, but reports to the Foreign Ministries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The FMO also serves as a contact point for the Beneficiary States.

### **Fund operator**

The fund operator, the consortium Ecorys Polska/JCP, takes on the administrative and technical tasks related to implementation of the Fund. Its responsibilities, amongst others, are disseminating calls for proposals, project contracting, verification of payment claims, and implementing the audit and monitoring functions. The fund operator follows up implementation and maintains day-to-day contact with the project partners. The fund operator is responsible for the administrative and eligibility checks of projects for the FMO's review and ranking.

### **Lead partner**

During the project implementation one partner entity, based in one of the 15 Beneficiary States, is to be named lead partner. The lead partner has a specific role in the consortium.

## ANNEX 1 BUILDING A RESULTS FRAMEWORK

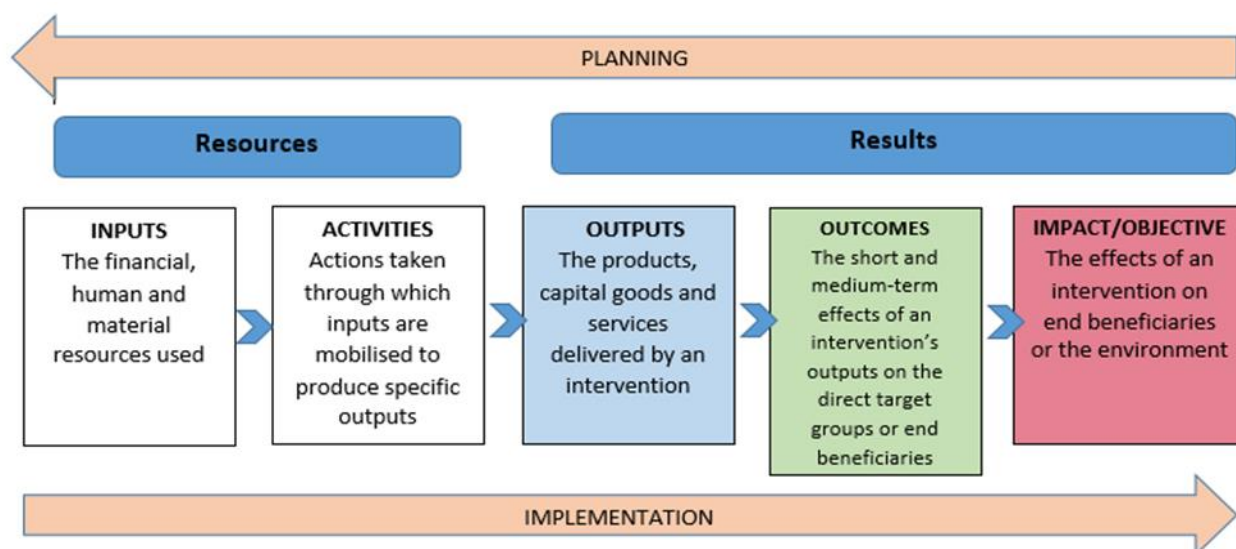
In the proposal, the project partners need to describe the issues the project aims to address and how they intend to work on a solution:

- What is the problem/need the project aims to address?
- What are the main challenges or barriers to addressing the problem/need?
- What is the solution to the problem?
- What are the expected/planned deliverables (outputs)?
- How will the planned outputs bring about the expected outcome(s)?
- How will the outcomes contribute towards fulfilling the Fund's objective?

Any proposed solution to solving the identified problem/needs should also explicitly address the underlying assumptions and risks. How does one know that the proposed solution might lead to the desired results? What evidence (experience from similar projects, theory or research findings) underpins the project design? Providing evidence for the likelihood of success greatly strengthens the proposal. Evidence for sound intervention logic is often found in scientific literature, evaluation reports, stakeholder consultations, conference papers or assessments conducted by reputable institutions, such as the EU, OECD, the World Bank or the United Nations Development Programme to name a few. The more solid the evidence supporting an approach, the better.

If the project has an expertise partner from a Donor State, the proposal should describe how the project cooperation will contribute to strengthening bilateral cooperation between the entity in the Donor State and entities in the other project countries.

A crucial part of the proposal is the results framework. A results framework is an explicit articulation (a summary in the form of a matrix) of the results expected from an intervention. The results framework shall capture the essential elements of the logical and expected cause-effect relationships among outputs, outcomes, and impact (objective).



Unlike implementation, which happens from the left to the right, designing a project is done from the right to the left. In other words, one backtracks from the impact through outcomes to outputs and activities. Outcomes are the short and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs on the direct target group or end beneficiaries. Outcomes are not under the direct control of a project. A single project under this call for proposals may not have more than **five** outcomes. The **impact-level objective**, the **outcomes** and the **outcome indicators** are pre-defined in this Fund.<sup>13</sup> **Note that the outcome on transnational cooperation is mandatory for all projects.**

<sup>13</sup> Please see annex 2 on results frameworks for this call for proposals.



### Assign a baseline value and target value for each indicator on outcome level

The **baseline** is the situation before the start of an intervention – the reference point for measuring change. It is a requirement to provide baseline values for all outcome indicators, as appropriate. You must first ascertain if secondary data that provide information about the situation is already available. If this is the case, there is no need for separate data collection. Oftentimes, governmental statistical agencies, local government units, universities, and civil society organisations produce administrative data, reports and evaluations relevant for the Fund. This secondary data should be used whenever possible. If the available data does not measure the variable set forth in your outcome indicators or measures it at a different level (national vs. local, for example), a baseline study could be commissioned.

If baseline data exists prior to the start of a project, additional data collected over the life of the project must be collected in a consistent manner in order to facilitate comparisons. For example, consider the drop-out rate for adult learning. If baseline data is obtained from the Ministry of Education, the project should continue to collect this data from this same source, ensuring that the data collection methodology remains the same.

It is a requirement to provide baseline values for all outcome indicators, as appropriate. If not available prior to the start of the project, baseline values may be collected within 12 months of entering into the project contract.

**Targets** are specific indicator values to be attained within a specific period (normally from project start to final year). They serve as guiding posts for gauging whether implementation is proceeding as planned. Setting targets for indicators has often been identified as one of the main challenges in results-based management.

### Define outputs for each outcome

**Outputs** are the products, capital goods, and services delivered by an intervention. They must be achieved with the resources provided and within the time frame specified. Since outputs are the most immediate results of project activities, they are usually within the greatest control of the implementing organisation. It is important to define outputs that are likely to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the outcomes. There needs to be a logical link between the outputs and the corresponding outcome. No common outputs have been defined for the Fund and they are therefore not included in the results framework in annex 2. They need to be defined and included in the proposal.

Outputs generally include a **noun** that is qualified by a **verb** describing positive change. For example:

- **Study** of PES's contribution to social inclusion and employment **completed**
- **Teachers trained** in entrepreneurship methodology
- National, participatory **forum convened** to discuss employment strategy for NEETs

## ANNEX 2 RESULTS FRAMEWORKS FOR THIS CALL

**Table 1. Support areas *Innovation and exploration* and *Transfer of know-how and good practice***

Outcome no.	Outcomes	Indicators	Unit of measurement	Base-line <sup>14</sup> value	Base-line year	Target values
1	Improved employment situation of NEETs/target group	Number of jobs created	Number			
		Number of NEETs/target group engaged in active job search	Number			
		Number of NEETs/target group in the process of starting their own businesses	Number			
2	Increased participation in education and training of former NEETs/target group	Number of former NEETs/target group enrolled in education and training, including work-based learning	Number			
		Number of former NEETs/target group enrolled in apprenticeships and/or mobility schemes	Number			
3	Increased number of NEETs/target group experiencing social inclusion	Number of beneficiaries of services provided [NEETs/target group participating in inclusive activities (e.g. training and work-based learning)]	Number			
		Share of NEETs/target group experiencing social inclusion, manifested through empowerment and/or social integration	Percentage <sup>15</sup>			
4	Innovative approaches on lowering youth unemployment have been developed or adopted	Number of new approaches, methods and practices developed, piloted or adopted	Number			
		Number of new services targeting young unemployed established, strengthened or adopted	Number of single services			
		Number of beneficiaries of services provided	Number			
5	Increased transnational cooperation on labour market issues	Number of eligible entities from the Donor States taking part in transnational cooperation projects [mandatory indicator for projects with expertise partners from a Donor State]	Number			

<sup>14</sup> It is a requirement to provide baseline values for all outcome indicators, as appropriate. If not available prior to the start of the project, baseline values may be collected within 12 months of entering into the project contract.

<sup>15</sup> Should be measured by a survey on self-assessment of empowerment and social integration.

	[mandatory outcome]	Number of eligible entities from EU Member States taking part in transnational cooperation projects [mandatory indicator]	Number			
		Level of trust between entities cooperating in the consortium [mandatory indicator]	Scale <sup>16</sup>			
		Share of individuals who apply the knowledge acquired from the transnational consortium [mandatory indicator]	Percentage <sup>17</sup>			

**Table 2. Support area *Analysis and research***

<b>Outcome no.</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Unit of measurement</b>	<b>Base-line value</b>	<b>Base-line year</b>	<b>Target values</b>
6	Increased knowledge of the effects of employment initiatives targeting NEETs/target group	Number of articles submitted to peer-reviewed publications	Number			
		Number of best practices identified and disseminated	Number			
7	Increased capacity on evaluating effects of employment initiatives for NEETs/target group in research institutions	Number of PhDs doing impact studies in supported institutions	Number			
		Number of research collaboration activities across institutions	Number			
8	Increased use of impact studies among policymakers	Number of relevant policies citing impact studies as source/evidence base	Number			
9	Increased knowledge on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on NEETs/target group	Number of articles submitted to peer-reviewed publications	Number			
5	As outcome 5 in table 1 [mandatory outcome]					

<sup>16</sup>The fund operator will give information on the use of scales.

<sup>17</sup> The fund operator will give information on the use of percentages.

## ANNEX 3 BACKGROUND

Despite a recent decrease in the youth unemployment rate in the EU, combatting youth unemployment remains one of the priorities of national and European agendas<sup>18</sup>. The most important European policy incentive has been the Youth Guarantee Council Recommendation<sup>19</sup> on ensuring that, within four months of leaving school or losing a job, young people under 25 could either find a quality job suited to their education, skills and experience or acquire the education, skills and experience required to find a job in the future through an apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education. For most EU Member States, implementing the Youth Guarantee has required in-depth structural reforms of training, job-search and education systems to improve the transition from school to work and the employability of young people. A key financial resource supporting the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes in the EU Member States has been the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) – a dedicated financial resource to support Youth Guarantee-type offers of employment, apprenticeships, traineeships and further education and training for young people in the regions worst affected by youth unemployment.

There are however still great differences between the Member States. Lowest youth unemployment rates are seen in the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands (5.5-6.3 %), while Greece, Spain and Italy are still struggling with high rates.<sup>20</sup>

Gender imbalance is still a feature in the youth unemployment rates. In the countries hardest hit by youth unemployment, young women are disproportionately worse off. Another imbalance can be observed between people with and without disabilities. The European Disability Forum notes:

At EU level, about 47% of persons with disabilities are employed, compared to 72% of persons without disabilities. The unemployment rate of people with disabilities in the EU, aged 20-64, is 17% compared to 10% of persons without disabilities and the EU activity rate of persons with disabilities is 57% compared to 80% of non-disabled people. Moreover, women with disabilities, young disabled persons and people in need of high-level support are more likely to be discriminated and excluded from the labour market.<sup>21</sup>

The long-term unemployment rate has decreased from 5.2% in 2013 to 3.5% on average in the EU in 2017. However, there are still great differences between the EU Member States, and the share of long-term unemployed (being out of work for more than one year) among the unemployed is still about 45%. According to the European Commission,

some groups are still facing higher risks of becoming long-term unemployed than others. Workers with low qualifications are twice as likely to experience long-term unemployment. This is also the case for third country immigrants whose share in all long-term unemployed increased from 12% in 2015 to 15% in 2017 – and reached 20% or more in nine Member States. Moreover, people with disabilities, minorities and people younger than 30 and older than 55 years are disproportionately affected.<sup>22</sup>

The youth unemployment rate is only partially a reflection of the situation among young Europeans, as it is limited to people between 15 and 24 who are conventionally unemployed. To measure the share of young people who are not employed, and not taking part in education and training, the concept **NEET** (“Not in Employment, Education or Training”) has been developed. The various groups within the NEET category have different characteristics and needs, but all NEETs share the common feature of not accumulating human capital through the labour market or education and training. There are great variations between the EU Member States regarding NEET rates, with Italy having the highest rate among the youngest age group, followed by Bulgaria, Romania and Greece.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In February 2020, the youth unemployment rate was 14.8 % in the EU and 15.4 % in the euro area, as compared to 24,1 % and 24,7 % in February 2013.

<sup>19</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:120:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

<sup>20</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment\\_statistics#Youth\\_unemployment](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.edf-feph.org/employment>

<sup>22</sup> European Commission (2019). Commission staff working document: Evaluation. Accompanying the document report from the Commission to the Council on the evaluation of the Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.

<sup>23</sup> [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat\\_lfse\\_20&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_20&lang=en)

A 2016 report<sup>24</sup> on the Youth Guarantee indicated that the policy initiative has been successful, but maintained that more effort was needed to support "hard-to-reach" young people: those who are not registered with the public employment services, are low-skilled, have dropped out of school, and face multiple barriers to entering the labour market (such as poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, disability and/or poor mental health). In parallel, the quality of the offers and services provided to young people could be further improved. The same findings also applied to YEI-supported offers.

These findings were reiterated in 2018, when a report from the European Commission stated: "Youth Guarantee interventions are often not sufficiently adapted to the needs of those facing multiple barriers, such as poverty, social exclusion, disability and discrimination. This is the result of a number of factors, including a limited knowledge of the specific needs of different NEET groups, lack of low-threshold offers, insufficient geographical coverage (often in rural areas) and complexity of registration procedures."<sup>25</sup>

Currently the COVID-19 pandemic has major effects on the European job market. In an April 2020 survey 23% of respondents had temporarily lost their jobs, and almost 40% reported that their economic situation had worsened.<sup>26</sup> Job insecurity is on the rise, and the economic situation is most problematic for the unemployed and the young. An ILO Policy Brief, published in May 2020, describes how

the pandemic is creating a multi-dimensional crisis for young people around the world which also threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities within and between countries. At the country-level, vulnerabilities for young people without access to online schooling/training, as well as gender-based segregation, are likely to increase further. Differences in the impact of the crisis and policy responses across labour markets threaten to put countries with the greatest development needs at a further disadvantage. Moreover, once recovery begins, unless remedial action is taken, there is a danger that the trend towards more flexible and less secure forms of work amongst young people will become intensified, as it did after the global economic and financial crisis.<sup>27</sup>

## The Fund for Youth Employment 2017 call for proposals

The EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021 are set up to contribute to the reduction of social and economic disparities in Europe. Recognising the strong link between social and economic equality and participation in the labour market, measures addressing youth employment are encouraged throughout the various programmes of the EEA and Norway Grants. In addition, the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment specifically aims to support transnational project initiatives that promote sustainable and quality youth employment. The focus on transnational cooperation reflects the view that unemployment among youth is a common European challenge and common European solutions should therefore be explored.

The first call for proposals of this Fund had a special focus on vulnerable 25-29 years old NEETs. The main reason for this was that although the YEI supports young people under the age of 30, many of the eligible EU Member States primarily target young people under 25. Another reason was the difficult labour market that people aged 24+ have encountered in recent years.

While the 15-24 year-olds were still targeted, projects developing solutions for the long-term unemployed, discouraged people who have stopped looking for work, inactive women caring for children or incapacitated adults, ethnic minorities including Roma, asylum-seekers, the low-skilled, people with mental health issues and the disabled were particularly welcome under that call. A large share of the applications submitted, and all the 26 projects ultimately selected focused on these target groups.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2629&furtherNews=yes>

<sup>25</sup> European Commission (2018). *Activation measures for young people in vulnerable situations - experience from the ground*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

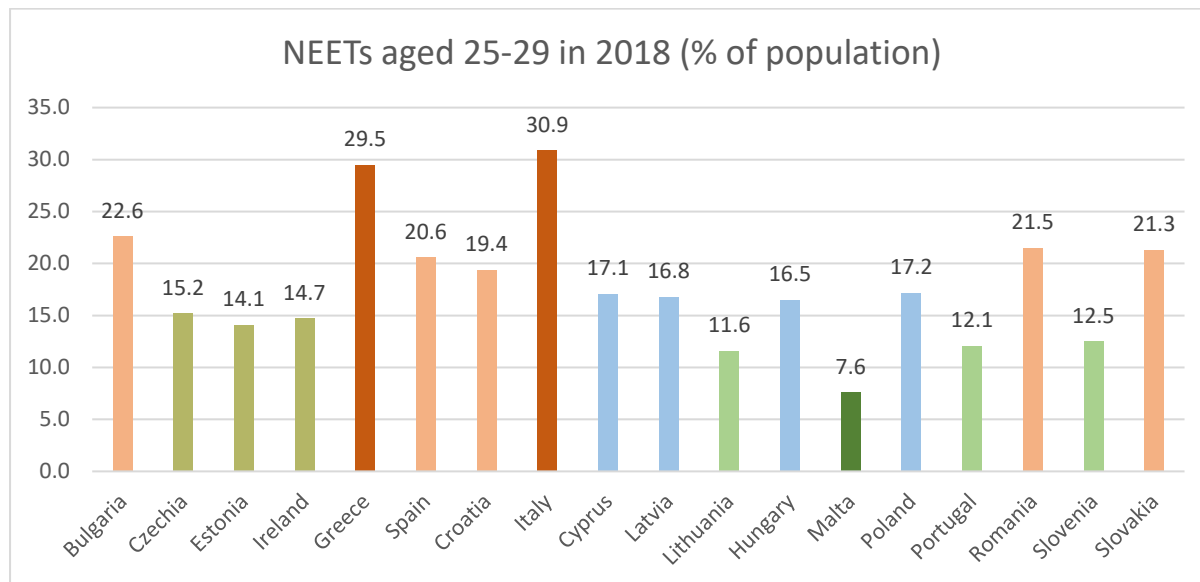
<sup>26</sup> Eurofound (2020). *Living, working and COVID-19: First findings – April 2020*. [https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2020/living-working-and-covid-19-first-findings-april-2020?utm\\_campaign=covid-19&utm\\_content=covid-19&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social-network&fbclid=IwAR1pF2d4asQQiL80\\_IQMUIJK5X5pxKD98zlv0zFDZEQ0SSVbFqhAneWXZs](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2020/living-working-and-covid-19-first-findings-april-2020?utm_campaign=covid-19&utm_content=covid-19&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social-network&fbclid=IwAR1pF2d4asQQiL80_IQMUIJK5X5pxKD98zlv0zFDZEQ0SSVbFqhAneWXZs)

<sup>27</sup> ILO (2020). *Preventing exclusion from the labour market: Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis*. Policy brief, May 2020.

## Considerations for the 2020 call for proposals

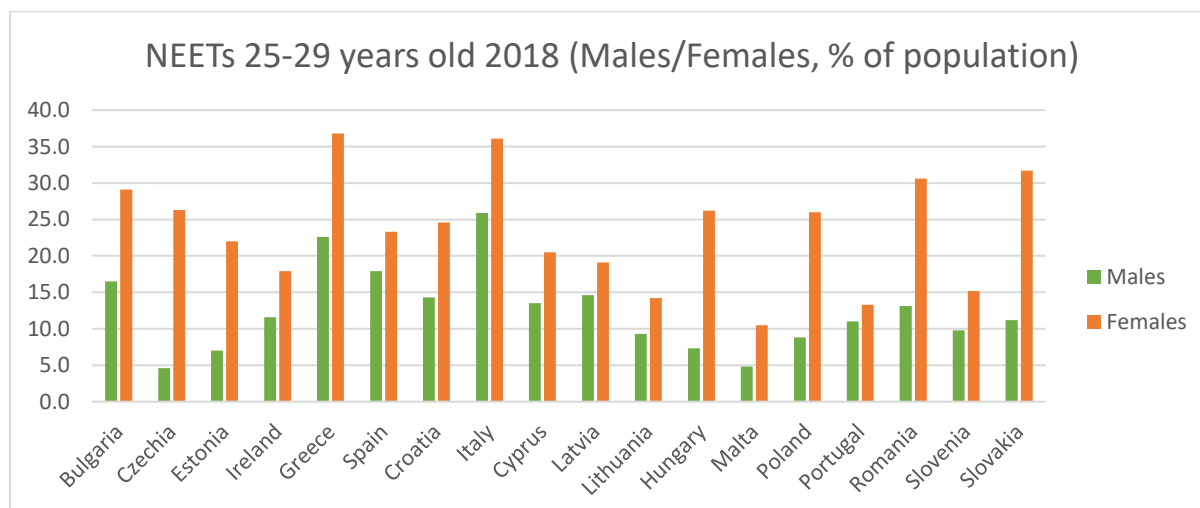
As discussed above, the youth employment numbers in the EU Member States have significantly improved the last few years. However, there are still great differences between European countries, and the most vulnerable facing multiple barriers still experience high levels of unemployment.

NEET rates are still high among the 24+. The table below shows the percentages of NEETs in the 25-29 age group in the beneficiary countries of the Fund:



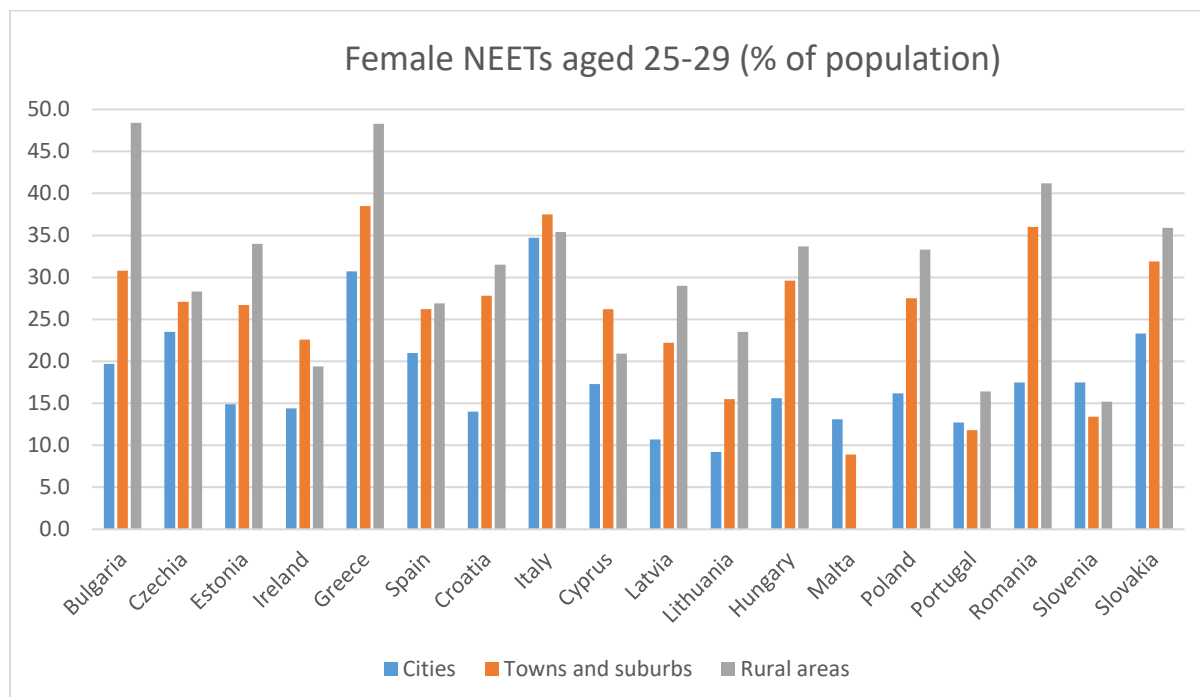
The EU 28 average was 17,1 % in 2018 (latest numbers available).<sup>28</sup> While the general trend is a steady decrease in NEET numbers, also in this age group, almost half of the beneficiary countries of the Fund lie above this average.

Activity is clearly linked to gender: on average 12.4% of men aged 25-29 are NEET while 22% of women in the same age group are NEET - nearly a 10 points difference. However, this gap can be even bigger in certain Member States. The biggest discrepancies are found in Central and Eastern Europe: the Czech Republic (21.7 points), Slovakia (20.5 points), Hungary (18.9 points), Romania (17.5 points), Poland (17.2 points) and Estonia (15 points). In Greece and Italy where the NEET rate is high overall, every third woman aged 25-29 is NEET:



<sup>28</sup> <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

In general, there is a higher proportion of NEETs in small towns, suburbs and rural areas, compared to cities. This is even more the case for women. Rurality and gender combined are major factors for inactivity: almost half of women aged 25-29 living in rural areas are NEET in Bulgaria and Greece. The number is also very high in Romania (41%):



The more than 300 applications submitted under the first call for proposals in 2017 demonstrated the relevance of the Fund's focus on young people not in employment, education or training, specifically the ones between 25 and 29 and those who face personal, social and economic barriers (such as poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, disability and/or poor mental health).

For the 2020 call for proposals these target groups or end beneficiaries are kept. However, since the total funding is limited, some restrictions have been made. In line with the needs expressed by the statistics above, this call invites transnational project consortia to focus on these specific target groups:

- Young people not in employment, education or training who are between 25 and 29 years old and **live in small towns, suburbs or in rural areas**;
- Young **mothers** not in employment, education or training who are between 25 and 29 years old; and
- **Long-term unemployed people** who are between 25 and 29 years old.