

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF A CALL FOR PROPOSALS

**The Minister of Climate, as the Operator of the “Environment, Energy and Climate Change” Programme announces a call for proposals for project concept notes under a pilot activity “Strengthened implementation of Circular Economy” to be financed from the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 with an amount of EUR 3 million, i.e. PLN 13 136 400<sup>1</sup>.**

### **Aim of the Call for Proposals**

The main aim of the Call for Proposals, intended to co-finance projects in the programme area *Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation*<sup>2</sup> shall be to increase the capacity of entities particularly sensitive to climate change, to mitigate its reasons and to adapt to the changing climate through implementation of activities aimed at dissemination of the Circular Economy.

Implementation of projects under this call for proposals shall strengthen the implementation of sustainable development principle and support effective functioning of economy, society, and environment in the era of climate change through the implementation of projects aimed at extension of product life cycles and promotion of the Circular Economy.

### **Type of projects**

The call for projects is aimed at supporting projects related to broadly understood Circular Economy. Applicants may apply for funds for activities related to limitation of raw materials use, reduction of waste production and incorporation the Circular Economy into the business model. Within the call for proposals it is possible in particular to carry out activities related to sustainable industrial production, sustainable consumption, and bio-economy. A project application shall contain educational and awareness measures related to the Circular Economy as integrated parts of the project proposal.

Projects selected within the scope of this call will contribute to achieving the Programme’s Outcome 1: “Ability of local communities to reduce emissions and adapt to a changing climate increased” and Output 1.4 “Projects on circular economy piloted”, which indicators and targets are listed on the table below, in accordance with the Annex 1 to the Programme Agreement, signed in Warsaw on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Table 1 Expected outcome and output from the programme area *Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation*.

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<sup>1</sup> The amount of the allocation of the Call for Proposals given in EUR and subsequently recalculated into the national currency and expressed in PLN, using an average monthly currency exchange rate as published in the Official Journal of the European Union (the C series), counted for the last six months preceding the month when the call is announced, where EUR 1= PLN 4.3788. The grant amount in PLN is indicative. The grant shall be awarded in EUR, but the funds shall be paid in PLN, based on the European Commission’s monthly accounting exchange rate of the Euro (EUR/PLN) for the month in which the payment of the funds will be made.

<sup>2</sup>In accordance with [Programme Agreement “Environment, Energy and Climate Change”](#) implemented under the EEA FM 2014-2021 in Poland.

Programme Area (PA)	Outcome/Output	Expected Programme results	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline value	Target value
PA13	Outcome 1	Ability of local communities to reduce emissions and adapt to a changing climate increased	Number of inhabitants benefitting from adaptation and mitigation measures	Number	0	250,000
			Number of municipal action plans for mitigation and adaptation supported	Number	0	10
	Output 1.4	Projects on circular economy piloted	Number of pilot projects carried out to introduce the circular economy approach	Number	0	6
			Number of people reached by awareness raising campaigns	Number	0	500
			Number of awareness raising campaigns carried out	Number	0	6

The subject scope of the projects may consist in implementation of activities related to the Circular Economy based on the document The [Roadmap of transformation towards a Circular Economy](#) adopted by the Council of Ministers on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019. The proposed projects may be related *inter alia* to sustainable industrial production, sustainable consumption, and bio-economy, but the scope of activities possible to finance can be broader. Under a project it is possible to take actions intended among other things to save energy, water, and raw materials as well as to increase the efficiency of their use at each stage of the product life cycle - from the raw material acquiring, via design, production and consumption to waste management, in particular through reuse. Innovative and easy to replicate activities will be particularly promoted. Additionally, educational activities will be supported within the call, i.e. campaigns aimed at raising citizen's awareness and building knowledge in the field of the circular economy, which should accompany the activities mentioned above.

Examples of education and awareness raising activities in the field of Circular Economy will be provided in the Guide for Applicants. Expenditures on educational activities cannot exceed 50% of the project eligible expenditures.

## Eligible Applicants

Entities specified in Art. 7.2.1 of the Regulation may apply for financing under the call for proposals:

- a) private or public;
- b) commercial or non-commercial;
- c) non-governmental organisations (hereinafter referred to as NGO) meant as a voluntary non-profit organisation established as a legal entity having non-commercial purpose, independent

of local, regional, and central government, public entities, political parties and economic entities. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered NGOs pursuant to Art. 1.6(n) of the Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism (EEA FM) 2014-2021.

## **Donor partnership projects**

In accordance with Art. 7.2.2 of the Regulation any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations established as a legal person either in the Donor States, Beneficiary States<sup>3</sup> or a country outside the European Economic Area (EEA) that has a common border with Poland, or any international organisation or body or agency thereof, actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of the Programme, are considered eligible project partners.

Projects submitted in partnership with an entity from Donor States (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) will receive additional points in accordance with the merit criteria.

In the case of a donor partnership project submitted in a partnership with an entity from the Donor States, the provision of a letter of intent, a partnership agreement or other evidence to confirm the cooperation with the Project Partner from the Donor States shall be required at the stage of the submission of a grant application at the latest. Prior to the conclusion of a project agreement on the implementation of a project submitted in partnership with a partner from the Donor States, the submission of a signed partnership agreement in the English language and its translation into the Polish language shall be required.

In order to support the process of establishing partnerships with partners from the Donor States, the Programme Operator encourages applicants to consult the information provided on the [EEA Grants website](#) and in the Partnership Guide, which is an attachment to the present Announcement.

## **Amount allocated to the Call for Proposals**

EUR 3,000,000, i.e. PLN 13,136,400<sup>4</sup>

## **Grant rate**

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<sup>3</sup> Beneficiary States: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal.

<sup>4</sup> The amount in PLN is indicative. The grant shall be awarded in EUR, but the funds shall be paid in PLN, based on the European Commission's monthly accounting exchange rate of the Euro (EUR/PLN) for the month in which the payment of the funds will be made.

The grant rate of the requested co-financing shall be up to 85% of eligible expenditures.

### **Minimum grant amount**

EUR 300,000, i.e. PLN 1,313,640<sup>5</sup>

### **Maximum grant amount**

EUR 1,000,000, i.e. PLN 4,378,800<sup>6</sup>

### **Period of eligibility of expenditures in projects**

The period of eligibility of expenditures in projects shall start on the day that the Programme Operator (the Ministry of Climate) decides to award the project grant.

The period of eligibility of expenditures in projects shall expire on 30 April 2024.

### **Evaluation and selection process**

The call proceeds in two stages.

In stage one the Applicant shall fill in a project concept note and, subsequently, submit it to the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management (hereinafter the National Fund) via the GAG (Grant Application Generator) in the manner described further on in the Announcement of the Call for Proposals

The project concept notes submitted by Applicants are subsequently analysed in terms of an administrative evaluation (stage I administrative criteria ) and a merit evaluation (stage I merit criteria). Applicants will be informed of the results after each evaluation stage. It is not possible to appeal against results of evaluation criteria. At each stage of the evaluation, the Applicant may be asked once to supplement or correct the project concept note pursuant to principles defined in the Competition Rules.

An administrative evaluation of project concept notes lasts 3 weeks, counting from the end date of the open call. This evaluation shall consist in verifying whether it meets or fails to meet the stage I administrative criteria (the so-called yes-no evaluation).

The merit evaluation (stage I) of the project concept notes shall be carried out for the concept notes, which have successfully passed the administrative evaluation stage. This is a point-based scoring, where points are awarded depending on the degree of fulfilment of a given criterion. The evaluation

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<sup>5</sup>As above.

<sup>6</sup>As above.

shall be carried out by the Evaluation Team appointed by the Minister of Climate. It is not possible to appeal against results of the project concept notes evaluation.

The Ministry of Climate shall subsequently prepare a draft ranking list of project concept notes, considering the evaluation results provided by the Evaluation Team. Only those project concept notes, which obtain the highest number of points, and which total amount of requested grants does not exceed the equivalent of EUR 10 million<sup>7</sup> shall be allowed to the next stage of the call. The National Fund, in the information provided to the Applicant, shall inform, whether the Applicant is allowed to the next stage of competition, and thereby it shall be requested to submit a grant application in accordance with provisions of the Competition Rules. The information provided by the National Fund may also contain recommendations notified during the project concept evaluations, which shall be included at the stage of preparing a grant application.

Grant applications submitted via the GAG shall be verified in a similar way to the stage I assessment, and shall consist of an administrative (stage II administrative criteria) and a merit evaluation (stage II and III merit criteria).

The merit evaluation of applications is carried out in two stages:

- stage II evaluation: carried out by the National Fund experts shall ensure compliance with the applicable rules for the award of state aid, the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination as well as an assessment of the financial condition of the Applicant. This shall be a yes or no evaluation.
- stage III evaluation: shall consist in points-based scoring of a project by at least two external and impartial experts designated by the National Fund which shall be selected in a competition procedure. The experts shall evaluate a project separately in accordance with the stage three merit criteria as published in the Announcement of the Call for Proposals.

In case of a discrepancy between the external experts' scores exceeding 30% of the higher score, the National Fund shall commission an independent evaluation of the application to a third external expert. In such cases, for the purpose of preparing the ranking list of projects, the average of the numbers of points in the two closest scores shall be used.

It is not possible to appeal against results of applications evaluation. A draft ranking list shall be submitted to the Programme Operator (Ministry of Climate), which having sought opinion of the Selection Committee makes a decision on awarding grants to selected projects.

## **Payment scheme**

Each Project Promoter may receive payments to the project in the form of:

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<sup>7</sup>I.e. PLN 43,788,000 converted in accordance with the exchange rate, referred to in footnote 1.

- advance payments

The amount of a single advance payment may not exceed 40% of the total grant amount. The first advance payment shall be made to the Project Promoter within 30 days of the date of submission of the request for an advance payment. Subsequent advance payments shall be made on the condition that 70% of all the previously made advance payments is settled in payment requests or returned as an unused advance payment. Detailed obligations and restrictions for the use and settlement of advance payments are specified in the Guide for Applicants.

- reimbursement

Payments to the Project Promoter shall be made on the basis of approved payment requests. The total amount of advance payments and reimbursements may not exceed 90% of the total grant amount.

- final payment

The final payment representing 10% of the total project grant amount shall be made after the final project report is approved.

### **Eligible expenditures, excluded costs, in-kind contribution, expenditure documentation**

Expenditures are eligible in accordance with the general rules, pursuant to Article 8 of the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Grants 2014-2021, with the following exceptions:

#### **Direct expenditures:**

- Equipment:

The purchase of used equipment shall not be eligible.

- Educational activities:

Pursuant to Article 8.4 of the Regulation and provisions of the Programme Agreement the expenditures on educational activities in case of non-investment projects shall be established in accordance with the standard scales of unit, based on the catalogue of expenditures which can be downloaded below.

The rules for the settlement of expenditures shall be laid down by the Programme Operator in the project contract.

#### **Indirect costs:**

Indirect costs shall be all eligible costs which cannot be identified by the Project Promoter and/or the Project Partner as directly attributable to the project.

The only allowable method for identifying indirect costs shall be a flat rate of up to 25% of total direct eligible costs, excluding the direct eligible costs of subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the Project Promoter or Project Partner, in accordance with Article 8.5(1)(b) of the Regulation.

The detailed method for calculating indirect costs has been developed by the Programme Operator and is available as attachments to this Announcement.

The method for calculating the indirect costs and their maximum amount shall be determined in the project contract. The method for calculating the indirect costs of a Project Partner shall be stipulated in the partnership agreement between the Project Promoter and the Project Partner.

**Excluded costs** are specified in Article 8.7 of the Regulation.

**Own contribution:**

In principle, the own contribution shall be made in cash.

Only in the case of projects, where the Project Promoter is an non-governmental organisation, the in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work may represent up to 50% of the own contribution required for a project under the Programme.

In such a case, the Applicant shall calculate the value of the in-kind contribution taking into account

- the amount of time worked on a voluntary and unpaid basis for the project, expressed by the number of hours, and
- a standard hourly and daily rate for a given type of work performed, in accordance with rates normally paid for such work.

Due to the wide variety of types of work that the volunteer can carry out in the project, the size of rates proposed by the Applicant for individual works will be verified by an expert at the stage of merit evaluation of the grant application. The accepted amount of the above rates will be recorded in the project agreement.

**Cost documentation:**

The cost incurred under the project shall be documented with the help of received invoices or accounting documents of equivalent probative value. The detailed obligations of the Project Promoter in this respect are specified in the project contract.

In the case of donor partnership projects, the Project Partner whose primary location is in one of the Donor States may provide proof of expenditures incurred in the form of a report of an independent auditor or a competent and independent public officer, certifying that the claimed costs have been incurred in accordance with the Regulation, the relevant law and national accounting practice.

## **Date and manner of the submission of project concept notes**

The date of the notice of the call for proposal – 22 June 2020.

The opening date for receiving applications from Applicants – 22 July 2020.

The closing date for receiving applications from Applicants – 22 September 2020, at 3 p.m.

## **Date and manner of the submission of grant applications**

The anticipated date of the announcement of the call for grant applications - 7 December 2020.

Detailed information on the date of submission of grant applications shall be displayed on the Ministry of Climate and the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management websites.

## **The manner of submitting project concept notes/applications**

Project concept notes (within stage I) and grant applications (stage II of the selection procedure) shall be prepared using only the Grant Application Generator (GAG). The detailed rules for the submission of a project concept and a grant application using the GAG are laid down in the Competition Rules. Project concept notes and grant applications, along with attachments, shall be submitted to the National Fund in an electronic form via the GAG available on the [National Fund website](#)<sup>8</sup>.

The grant application form is available along with instructions for filling in the application at the following address: <https://gwd.nfosigw.gov.pl>

Two options for signing an electronic application shall be allowed:

- using a certified electronic signature which produces legal effects equivalent to those of a handwritten signature;
- using a trusted profile on the Electronic Platform for Public Administration Services (ePUAP).

## **Project concept note/application submission date**

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<sup>8</sup> Preparing the application in the GAG will be possible from the opening date for receiving applications.



The prepared applications shall be submitted in an electronic form using the GAG.

The date of submission of the application is the date and time of receipt of the application at the inbox of the National Fund on the ePUAP Platform, confirmation of which is the Applicant's receipt of an electronic confirmation of the application submission (e-mail containing the date and time of receipt of the application on the National Fund inbox).

Applications submitted after the deadline shall not be considered.

The Programme Operator shall allow one Applicant to submit more than one application under the same call, under the following conditions: (i) the projects cannot include the exact same measures; (ii) if an applicant submits more than one application for the exact same measures, the application submitted first will be assessed and subsequent ones rejected. The Program Operator does not allow for changes to the application by the applicant after it has been submitted.

## **Legal framework and programme documents**

- [Programme Agreement for the EEA Grants Programme for “Environment, Energy and Climate Change” under the EEA FM 2014-2021;](#)
- [Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 between Iceland, the Principality of Lichtenstein, the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Poland on 20 December 2017;](#)
- [Regulation on the implementation of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014-2021;](#)
- [Procurement Guidelines for the EEA Grants 2014-2021 and the Norway Grants 2014-2021;](#)
- [Guidelines on the Information and Visual Identification for the EEA Grants 2014–2021 and the Norway Grants 2014–2021;](#)

## **List of attachments to the announcement of the call for project concept notes / applications**

- Competition Rules, including an impartiality declaration;
- Administrative stage I conditions;
- Merit stage I criteria;
- Administrative stage II conditions;
- Merit stage II criteria;
- Merit stage III criteria;
- Stage I administrative checklist template;
- Stage I merit evaluation checklist template;
- Stage II administrative checklist template;
- Stage II merit evaluation checklist template;
- Stage III merit evaluation checklist template;

- Partnership Guide;
- Methodology for indirect costs calculation;
- Catalogue of standard unit costs for educational activities;
- Guide for Applicants;
- Project Agreement template

## **List of attachments required for a project concept note**

### **Obligatory attachments at the project concept note stage**

1. Documents determining the Applicant's legal status;
2. Mandate to sign the application;
3. Documents confirming a project partnership - a Letter of Intent with an entity from Donor States, a signed partnership agreement with an entity from Donor States, or other proof of partners cooperation - if applicable;

**In accordance with Article 7.3 of the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, the grant application should include information regarding all consultants involved in the preparation of the application.**

### **Attachments submitted after the merit evaluation I, at the stage of a grant application**

At the stage of a grant application submission (after merit evaluation I) the Applicants shall submit attachments resulting from the planned project concept of activities, or those included in the Recommendations presented by the Team.

1. Permits and administrative decisions determining the possibility of implementing the project or the schedule for obtaining them - if applicable;
2. A consent of the owner, manager, or perpetual usufructuary of the area, on which the Project is to be implemented, if the applicant is not the owner, manager, or perpetual usufructuary of the above land - if applicable;
3. Site plan - if applicable;
4. Communication Plan prepared in accordance with Annex 3 to the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA FM and NG 2014-2021;
5. Calculation of indirect costs made based on the Methodology for indirect costs calculation as an attachment to the announcement of a call for proposals - if applicable;
6. Documents related to the planned educational activities - e.g. programmes of training, workshops, seminars, conferences, events, festivals including determination of their duration and thematic scope, etc., synopses of planned campaigns, publications, brochures

- (including technical parameters), assumptions of a TV/radio/film/spot script (including technical parameters and a cost estimate of one episode), educational competitions rules;
7. Other documents considered necessary to submit by the applicant.

**In accordance with Article 7.3 of the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, the grant application should include information regarding all consultants involved in the preparation of the application.**

Declarations submitted by the Applicant at the project concept note stage remain valid at the stage of evaluation a grant application. The Applicant is obliged to update the information provided within the call.

## **Language of an application grant**

Grant applications, along with attachments, shall be submitted in the Polish language.

In addition, the following shall be submitted in the English language:

- a letter of intent, a partnership agreement or other proof of cooperation between partners (in the case of partnership projects with foreign entities, in particular those from the Donor States);
- a brief summary description of the project, along with the justification of the need to implement the project and the roles of partners (included in a grant application - in the Summary tab).

## **Contact with the Programme Operator**

Any queries about the Call for Proposals shall be sent to the following e-mail address:

National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management

e-mail: [mfeog\\_klimat@nfosigw.gov.pl](mailto:mfeog_klimat@nfosigw.gov.pl)

Ministry of Climate

e-mail: [mfeog@klimat.gov.pl](mailto:mfeog@klimat.gov.pl)

Questions shall be answered as soon as possible, but at the latest within 7 working days.

## **Reporting irregularities:**

Citizens who have had suspicions of maladministration and corruption in relation to the Financial Mechanisms may report them to the Financial Mechanism Office, the National Focal Point and other relevant institutions listed on the [EEA Grants website](#).