

Croatian Science Foundation
Second Science and Technology Project (STP II)
Loan No. 8258 -HR

Unity through Knowledge Fund

announces

Call for Proposals

**RESEARCH COOPERABILITY PROGRAM
My First Collaboration Grant (1C)**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Croatia and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development signed the Loan Agreement for Second Science and Technology Project (further in text: STP II) on May 22, 2013. STP II goals are to support Croatia in the absorption of EU funds in the research and innovation sector by improving selected public sector organizations' capacity to qualify for and manage EU Funds in the area of research and innovation and to develop a pipeline of public and private R&D projects, including research groups, that could qualify for financing through EU structural funds.

2. ABOUT UNITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE FUND

The Unity through Knowledge Fund (hereinafter: UKF or the Fund) has mission to unite scientific and professional potential in Croatia and Diaspora in development of the knowledge based society.

In order to achieve this task, UKF strives towards the following goals: fostering internationally competitive research, fostering research that provides new values to Croatian economy and supporting projects that help developing research infrastructure in Croatia.

This Call for Proposals (further in text: Call) sets out the terms and conditions on which the My First Collaboration Grant shall be awarded (further in text: Grant) together with the following documents:

1C My First Collaboration - Application Form 2016, 1C My First Collaboration - Financial plan.xls 2016, 1C My First Collaboration - Curriculum Vitae Form 2016 – Project leader, 1C My First Collaboration - Curriculum Vitae Form 2016 - Project co-leader, 1C My First Collaboration - Instructions for Applicants 2016, 1C My First Collaboration - Baseline Survey Form 2016 (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=1444>) and UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2016. (<http://www.ukf.hr/UserDocsImages/ENG UKF Guidelines 2016.pdf>)

For every project proposal recommended for financing the applicants will be obliged, during the negotiations, to prove that their project is in accordance with *Environmental Management Framework*, which is the condition for financing. *Environmental Management Framework*, guidelines which set the environmental screening categories and *Environmental Screening Form (Environmental Management Framework - Annex A)* are available on the UKF website <http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=1444>.

Also, for every project proposal recommended for financing the applicants will be obliged, during the negotiations, to submit the Procurement plan in line with approved Financial plan in accordance with *Extract 1. CSF – Procurement arrangements for sub-beneficiaries of UKF programs* which is the document that sets out the guidelines and procedures which are to be used for procurement on the project and represents Annex 1 to the STP II Project Operational Manual. This document includes the *Procurement plan form* and is also available on the UKF website (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=1444>).

3. ABOUT RESEARCH COOPERABILITY PROGRAM

Research Cooperability Program supports small and medium-scale collaborative research projects in Croatia. It supports research projects in Croatia that contribute to the goals of the Fund and include involvement of scientific and research Croatian Diaspora. Goal of the Program is to attract promising research projects to Croatian companies and institutions together with international/private financing, their accompanying knowledge, technologies and potential research results.

4. ABOUT MY FIRST COLLABORATION GRANT

The objective of the My First Collaboration Grant is to give an opportunity to outstanding young scientists on a postdoctorate level, from business and academic sector, who live and work in Croatia to unlock their innovation potential in cooperation with top scientists from Diaspora and to lead scientific and technological projects.

The applicants to this Call must have gained a PhD from at least 2 years up to 7 years from the date of opening of this Call for proposals. In case the main applicant has obtained two PhD degrees, the period from obtaining the first PhD degree is counted.

The grant will help the scientists to increase their professional experience and boost career in science or industrial research and development.

The grant provides an incentive for scientists to develop their research, managerial and other skills and to establish networks and contacts. The successful applicants have to show commitment in science and technology with the potential of scientific excellence and for becoming future research and development leaders.

Total amount foreseen for this Call of proposals within Research Cooperability Program, My First Collaboration Grant equals 3 million HRK. Total amount of funds awarded in this Call for proposals will depend on the quality of the project applications. Financial resources for implementation of UKF projects will be available upon successful second restructuring of the Second Science and Technology Project (STP II).

5. GRANT AMOUNTS, INSTRUMENTS THAT CAN BE FINANCED AND DURATION OF THE PROJECT

The Grant may include the following operational instruments:

(see the UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2016)

- a) research project's costs (consumables and other costs)
- b) long-term visits (travel)
- c) short-term visits and conferences (travel)
- d) specific equipment (durables)
- e) supporting consulting and expertise
- f) overhead costs - Beneficiary (Administering organization)

Proposed research projects are to last 15 months and a single grant cannot be lower than 187.500 HRK or higher than 300.000 HRK.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

WHO CAN APPLY?

Main applicants shall be outstanding young scientists, who live and work in Croatia and have obtained a PhD from at least 2 years up to 7 years from the date of opening of this Call for proposals. In a case that the main applicant obtained two PhD degrees, the period from obtaining the first PhD degree is counted. Period spent for maternity leave is exempted.

Main applicant must submit the project application in cooperation with the outstanding experienced scientist or expert of Croatian nationality or origin who lives and works abroad (co-applicant).

Candidates (main applicants) invited for negotiations on project proposals will have to submit:

- a. PhD degree certificate
- b. In a case of above mentioned exemption Certificate of maternity leave

Main applicant shall be already employed at the Administering organization (Beneficiary). In addition, Beneficiary has to commit that the main applicant will have employment contract for the whole time of project duration and it is expected that he/she spends at least 30% of his/her full working time in the proposed project implementation (i.e. 0.3F.T.E. (full time equivalent)).

Also, the Commitment of a Partner organization abroad which engages co-applicant to support the proposed research project and to support and allow his/hers engagement on the proposed project for the whole duration of the project must be submitted.

The successful candidates have to show their potential as research leaders by their excellence, innovativeness and commitment to science and technology. They should have outstanding success during their previous doctorate and post-doctorate work.

The main applicant, at the time of date of the Decision on recommendation on financing proposal (according to cl. 6.6 (iii) of UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2016.“), cannot be project leader on any project of the Croatian Science Foundation. At the time of opening of this call for proposals the main applicant cannot be project leader or co-leader on any ongoing project of the Fund. In addition, main applicant cannot be involved in any other application submitted to the currently open calls of the Research Cooperability Program.

At the time of opening this Call for proposals the co-applicant cannot be leader or co-leader on any ongoing project of the Fund and cannot be involved in any other application submitted to the currently open Call of the Research Cooperability Program. At the time of date of the Decision of recommendation on financing proposal the co-applicant cannot be project leader on any project of the Croatian Science Foundation.

WHICH RESEARCH AREAS ARE ELIGIBLE?

Proposed research in all scientific disciplines is eligible; natural, technical, biotechnical, social sciences, humanities, biomedical and health and etc. Proposed research project should clearly demonstrate the benefit to Croatian science, technology and economy.

WHICH LEGAL ENTITY SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

The Beneficiary (Administering organization) is a legal entity registered in the Republic of Croatia and included in the Register of scientific organizations.

Apart from the Beneficiary all other legal entities from Croatia or abroad may be involved in the project.

The main applicant and the co-applicant are responsible for proposing and agreeing suitable arrangements with all participating organizations.

THE PROJECT PROPOSAL SHOULD CONTAIN FOLLOWING LETTERS OF COMMITMENT:

1. Letter of commitment of the Beneficiary (Administering organization) to accept and administer the proposed research project, which includes: administration of funds, engagement of their current employees and facilities, providing technical and other support according to proposed plan. The Administering organization should accept all responsibilities originating from and connected to the proposed research project. The letter must confirm that the main applicant will be employed for the whole duration of the project.
2. Letter of commitment of a Partner organization abroad which engages the co-applicant to support the proposed research project, to accept all responsibilities originating from and connected to the proposed research project including hosting the main applicant and supporting the Croatian co-workers according to the proposed project plan, and to support and allow the co-applicant's engagement on the proposed project for the whole duration of the project.
3. Letter of commitment of other partner organizations (if included in the project) to participate in the project implementation. Legal organizations involved must support and allow the co-workers' engagement on the proposed project in accordance with stated in the project proposal and accept all responsibilities originating from and connected to the proposed research project.
4. Letter(s) of financial commitment for matching funding in the amount of at least 20% of the amount requested from the UKF. At least 5% of matching funding of the amount requested from UKF shall be in form of financial contributions (cash contributions), while other matching funding may be in form of in kind contributions (goods or services) needed for research. The financial commitment can be given by any or more organizations involved in the project.
5. Two recommendation letters for the main applicant (describing the qualities and capabilities of the main applicant).
6. Joint Letter of commitment from a Partner organization abroad which engages the co-applicant and the Beneficiary (Administering organization), in case that the Partner organization will host the main applicant for the period longer than 6 months, which contains an elaborated plan of personal and professional development in science of the main applicant during his/her stay.

WHAT ARE THE BUDGET REQUIREMENTS?

At the time of project application, **matching funding has to be secured and shall**

amount to at least 20% of the amount requested from the UKF. At least 5% of the matching funding of the amount requested from UKF shall be in form of financial contribution (cash contribution). Any existing or planned financial support from the Ministry of Science and Education, Croatian Science Foundation as well as other sources of financing from the State Budget which are intended for science and technology development are not eligible as matching funding for this Grant. Other 15% of the matching funding of the amount requested from UKF may be in form of in kind contributions (goods or services) needed for research. Please note that salaries of scientists employed at the Administering organization are not an allowable contribution.

The funds requested from the UKF for the whole duration of the project shall amount to at least 187.500 HRK up to 300.000 HRK.

7. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF HOW FUND WILL FINANCE PARTICULAR PROJECTS

General principle of how UKF will finance a project is that the project is co-financed by the Fund under the condition that minimum of 20% of the amount requested from UKF is secured from other sources.

The funds awarded through this Call to a beneficiary who is legal or natural person and by engaging in economic activity participates in trade of goods and services (Article 2 of the State Aid Act (Official Gazette, no 47/14)) are considered to be de minimis aid and thus the beneficiary who is the recipient of de minimis aid shall act in accordance with the national legislation on state aid and is obliged to declare the state aids granted to the Ministry of Finance in accordance with the provisions of the legislation governing this legal area.

As stated in Article 2 of the Law on State Aid (Official Gazette, 47/14.), de minimis aid is regulated by existing European Commission Regulation, which regulates de minimis aid (EC no. 1407/2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU on de minimis aid) as aid which due to its amount does not distort or threaten to distort competition, does not affect trade between EU member states and does not constitute State aid under Article 107 paragraph 1 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

The total amount of de minimis aid to be granted by the Member State to a single enterprise shall not exceed 200 000 EUR over any period of three fiscal years.

8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

All project proposals are evaluated against the fixed set of criteria stated in this Call (see below). The project application should address all points stated in these criteria with measurable and provable information. Anonymous, internationally recognized and independent experts will evaluate all project applications which passed the administrative check for formal eligibility. The UKF Secretariat and Steering Committee will assure that evaluators are in neither direct nor in indirect conflict of interest. Steering Committee is assessing the compliance of the project application to the Fund's goals. Based on the evaluation of independent experts and the mark given by the Steering Committee projects are proposed for financing. The project selection process is described in detail in the *UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2016*.

The scientific excellence is a prerequisite for awarding the Grant. The contribution to the Fund's goals – international competitiveness, development of research infrastructure and potential to provide a new value to Croatian economy – is a cornerstone of the assessment.

Specific assessment criteria for this Grant are described below and they are to be assessed (evaluated) by independent experts (evaluators).

- i. SCIENTIFIC/TECHNOLOGICAL QUALITY OF THE PROJECT ASSESSED BY ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:
 - a. Scientific/technological significance and originality of the proposed project
 - b. Clarity and measurability of the goals and prospect for achieving them
 - c. Feasibility of the project and suitability of the methods – including work plan and budget
 - d. Potential contribution to Croatian science, technology and economy
- ii. INNOVATION POTENTIAL AND LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES OF THE MAIN APPLICANT /PROJECT LEADER, ASSESSED BY ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:
 - a. Excellence of doctoral thesis and accompanying publications
 - b. Previous successes, innovativeness and overall career development
 - c. Personal letters of recommendations
 - d. Potential for professional development and future scientific excellence of the main applicant

- iii. RESEARCH/ MANAGERIAL TALENT OF CO-APPLICANT/PROJECT CO-LEADER INCLUDING THEIR LEADERSHIP ABILITY TO UNDERTAKE GROUND-BREAKING RESEARCH, ASSESSED BY ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:
- a. Required expertise, previous successes and overall career development
 - b. Key publications
- iv. PROJECT'S POTENTIAL TO ACHIEVE FURTHER CO-FINANCING AND GAIN FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSED BY ONE OF FOLLOWING:
- a. Prospect for attaining additional co-financing from EU/international funds
 - b. Prospect for attaining additional co-financing from non-public and private sources

Steering Committee assesses the projects' proposals contribution to the Fund's goals:

1. Supporting research that is competitive on international level.
2. Fostering research that creates new values in Croatian economy.
3. Supporting projects that help the development of research infrastructure in Croatia.

In a case the large number of project proposals is received to a Call, the evaluation procedure may be carried out in two rounds while the first round of evaluation does not necessarily have to be peer-review evaluation.

In calculating the project mark criteria i and ii have more importance over criteria iii and iv.

9. GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Project proposal should contain all filled-in forms and letters and there are additional guidelines for filling-in the forms in accompanying *1C My First Collaboration - Instructions for Applicants 2016*. (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=1444>).

To be formally eligible to this Call, a project proposal must fulfil the following:

- must be submitted and locked by the deadline stipulated in this Call
- project lasts 15 months
- the single grant (amount of funds requested from UKF) is not lower than 187.500 HRK or higher than 300.000 HRK

- must include the following filled-in forms (on the official forms as available on the Fund's website or on request):
 1. *1C My First Collaboration - Application Form 2016 – must be signed by the main applicant and co-applicant and the responsible person of the Beneficiary (Administering organization).*
 2. *1C My First Collaboration -Financial plan.xls 2016*
 3. *1C My First Collaboration - Curriculum Vitae Form 2016 - Project leader*
 4. *1C My First Collaboration - Curriculum Vitae Form 2016 - Project co-leader*
 5. *1C My First Collaboration - Baseline Survey Form 2016*
- must include the following letters which include all requested information stated in the chapter 6. Eligibility criteria of this Call and are signed by the authorized persons:
 1. Letter of commitment and support of the Beneficiary (Administering organization)
 2. Letter of commitment and support of the Partner organization abroad which engages the co-applicant
 3. Letters of commitment and support of other partner organizations involved in the project (if any)
 4. Letter(s) of financial commitment for the matching funding
 5. Two recommendation letters for the main applicant (if sent via e-mail from third part, it has to be received within the Call deadline, and if sent by post to the Fund address, the date of sending the letter of recommendation (as read on the envelope) has to be within the Call deadline)
- in case of main applicant's stay abroad for **longer than 6 months the Joint letter of commitment** signed by Beneficiary and Partner organization from abroad which engages co-applicant must be submitted
- **the project proposal (ALL forms and letters) must be submitted in English language or equally in both Croatian and English language**
- if the project proposal is submitted equally in both Croatian and English language, to be formally eligible in this Call it must include all forms and letters, according to the chapter 9. Guidelines for project proposal submission of this Call, in both languages

Check list for the formal eligibility criteria for the Call is available at (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=1444>).

The signed project proposal (all forms and letters) must be electronically submitted no later than **March 8, 2017., until midnight** using the web interface available at UKF website (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=39>).

The applicants will receive a notice on submittal of project proposal **after they lock it**, by electronic mail to the e-mail address provided on applicant's registration.

Important: The notice on submittal of project proposal indicates that the application is locked and not that it includes all required documents which are listed above.

By submitting this project proposal applicant accepts to provide the information on the project to the Fund when requested and to be available for subsequent updates, within the reasonable limits, for the purpose of evaluating the impact of the program.

10. FURTHER INFORMATION

Letters of rejecting or accepting proposals, with statements of opinion, will be sent to all applicants within 6 months after the Call for proposals deadline. Evaluation results will be made available within applicants' accounts at the UKF website. The accepted project proposals are subject of further negotiations and final approval procedure, according to the *UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2016*.

Letters with final decisions and contracts (in case of positive decision on financing) will be sent to the applicants. The summaries of successful projects will be published on the UKF's website (www.ukf.hr). All decisions of the UKF Steering Committee are final and are not subject to further revisions. Any claim or inquiry in a case of administrative error of the UKF Secretariat should be addressed to the contact persons at the Unity through Knowledge Fund (UKF): e-mail: office@ukf.hr; phone: +385 1 2352 685; address: Unity through Knowledge Fund, HRZZ, Ilica 24, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia within three weeks from the date of the Decision on incompliance with eligibility criteria.