

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND SPORTS
Science and Technology Project, World Bank Loan Nr. 7320-HR

Unity through Knowledge Fund

announces

Call for Proposals

for

YOUNG RESEARCHERS AND PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM "My First Research Topic" Grant (3A)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Croatia received funds through the World Bank for the Science and Technology Project (World Bank Loan Nr. 7320-HR). The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has an ultimate objective to improve business infrastructural environment for science & technology through the Project. Within this framework, the Ministry has established the Unity through Knowledge Fund (UKF) for promotion of professional exchanges and contacts and joint projects between Croatian scientists and researchers working abroad with their Croatian colleagues.

2. ABOUT UNITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE FUND

Under the motto Connectivity – Cooperability – Creativity, the Unity through knowledge Fund has mission to unite scientific and professional potential in Croatia and diaspora in the development of the knowledge based society.

In order to achieve this task, UKF strives towards the following goals: fostering internationally competitive science and technology, fostering science and technology that provides new values to Croatian economy and supporting projects that develop science and technology infrastructure.

This *Call for Proposals* together with *Young Researchers and Professionals Program – Application Form 2008*, *Young Researchers and Professionals Cooperability Program – Curriculum Vitae Form 2008*, *Young Researchers and Professionals Cooperability Program – Instructions for Applicants 2008* and the *UKF Guidelines and Procedures 2007* (www.ukf.hr), sets out the terms and conditions on which the Grant is awarded.

3. ABOUT YOUNG RESEARCHERS AND PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

Young Researchers and Professionals Program fosters young researchers and professionals both from Croatia and diaspora within all aspects of their professional advancement. Program is committed to support "brain-gain" to Croatian innovative small and medium enterprises, universities and research institutions.

The program goal is to unlock the innovation potential by allowing young scientists and experts to lead projects autonomously. Program encompasses projects of researchers and professionals at postgraduate and postdoctorate level, up to 5 years after doctorate. Program supports: (a) post-doctorate advancement of top young scientists and experts in order to become future research leaders, (b) excellent young scientists and experts of Croatian origin from abroad to start autonomous projects in Croatia, and (c) successful and innovative Croatian small and medium enterprises to include young scientists and professionals both from homeland and from diaspora on their research and development projects. Projects should enable transfer of knowledge, skills and investments into Croatia.

Fund will support projects from all area of science and technology, chosen on competitive basis, according to the below stated criteria. The total amount foreseen for the program in 2009 is 3.300.000 HRK.

4. ABOUT "MY FIRST RESEARCH TOPIC" GRANT

The objective of the "My First Research Topic" Grant is to give an opportunity to outstanding young researchers and experts, either from Croatia or from abroad to develop their innovative ideas.

The applicants must have gained a doctorate within last 5 years or be just about to finish a doctorate. The grant will help the young scientist to increase their experience and boost career in science or industrial research and development.

The grant provides an incentive for young scientists and experts for developing their research, managerial and other skills and for establishing networks, especially in cooperation with diaspora. The successful applicants have to show potential of excellence and commitment in science and technology for becoming future research and development leaders.

The awardees should accomplish the grant through work at Croatian organization, and, to some extent, through stays and short visits to excellent research centres abroad. Proposed projects have to last for a minimum period of 12 months and a maximum of 24 months.

5. INSTRUMENTS THAT CAN BE FINANCED

The grant may include application of the following instruments (see the enclosed *UKF Guidelines and Procedures 2007*):

- project's costs (consumables and other costs)
- salary or fellowship for the main applicant (partly or fully)
- short-term visits and conferences (travel and accommodation costs)
- long-term visits (travel costs)
- supporting consulting and expertise (including the administering organization's overhead)

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

WHO CAN APPLY? Outstanding young researchers and professionals may apply if they have finished doctorate within the last 5 years (at the earliest in 2003) or if they can prove they will achieve doctorate degree within one year. Candidates should not be more than 36 years old at the time of the application (allowance can be made for compulsory military service and childcare).

Young researchers and professionals of either Croatian nationality, or foreign nationality and Croatian origin are eligible. They may be already employed at administering organization or they may be still looking for an affiliation with administering organization. In the latter case, a commitment of the organization to accepting the applicant is required.

The eligible applicant has to show her/his potential as a future research leader by her/his excellence, innovativeness and commitment to science and technology. She/he should have outstanding success during her/his previous doctorate and post-doctorate work.

The applicant cannot be a project leader on any other project of the Fund nor cannot be involved within any other application submitted to the currently open calls of the Young Researchers and Professionals Program.

WHICH AREAS ARE ELIGIBLE? Proposed projects in all scientific disciplines, including medicine, engineering, social sciences and humanities are eligible. Proposed project should clearly demonstrate benefit for Croatian science, economy, environment and society.



WHAT IS NECESSARY INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT? The support will be awarded to an administering organization (legal entity) that will host the applicant and the project. Eligible organizations are small and medium enterprises, all public and private institutes and universities, who have necessary infrastructure for proposed research and development activities. The administering organization should be based in Croatia.

The project proposal should contain a separate commitment of the administering organization to host and administer the proposed project. That includes administration of funds, full employment responsibility (if needed), support of the applicant's engagement on the proposed project, and providing other support according to proposed plan.

The administering organization should accept all responsibilities originating from and connected to the proposed project. The applicant is responsible for proposing and agreeing suitable arrangements with the administering organization. Responsible person of the administering organization is required to co-sign the project proposal.

For every long-term stay (longer than 6 months) planned abroad, the hosting organization should provide a separate letter of commitment with clearly stated personal and professional development plan of the applicant.

WHAT ARE THE BUDGET REQUIREMENTS?

Proposal should provide a guarantee for matching funding of the project from other sources, e.g. administering organization, foreign partner organization, foreign or private fund or sponsor. The matching funding should be at least 20% of the amount requested from the UKF for projects that produce only scientific result at non-profit institution, 30% of the amount requested from the UKF for projects that produce only scientific result at for-profit corporation and at least 50% for projects that produce a potentially commercial result. Matching funding (at least 5% of the amount requested from the UKF) shall be in form of financial contributions (cash contributions). Other matching funding may be in form of in kind contributions (goods or services) needed for research.

Any existing or planned financial support from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports is not eligible as matching funding for this Grant. The matching funding from other sources can include financial and in-kind resources (goods or services) needed for project.

Please note that salaries of researchers employed at the Leading organization (administering organization) are not an allowable in-kind contribution.

The total Fund's subsidy for a project requested over total period cannot be higher than 355.000 HRK. If requested from the Fund, total gross salary/grant for the applicant cannot exceed 284.000 HRK per year, what includes also all personal incomes from other sources. Fund supports individual salary/fellowship only up to the difference between 284.000 HRK and all other already existing (or planned) personal incomes (salary, fellowship etc.).

7. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All proposals are evaluated against the fixed set of criteria stated below. The proposal should address the points stated in these criteria with measurable and provable information. Steering committee will nominate one or more anonymous, internationally recognized and independent experts to evaluate every eligible proposal. The Steering Committee will assure that the proposal evaluators are in neither direct nor indirect conflict of interest. The Steering Committee will review evaluations of the experts and propose the projects for financing. The Approval Committee will finally approve or reject the recommendations of the Steering Committee. The evaluation procedure is described in detail in the enclosed *UKF Procedures and Guidelines 2007*.

The scientific/technological excellence of the proposal and the innovation leadership potential of the candidate are prerequisites for awarding the grant. The contribution to the Fund's goals – international competitiveness, and potential to provide benefit to Croatian society – is a cornerstone of the assessment.

Specific assessment criteria for this Grant are described below and they are to be assessed by independent experts. The relative importance of the each criterion is under the authority of the Steering Committee.

- 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 and technology, economy, environment and society
- ii. INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL OF THE APPLICANT, ASSESSED BY ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:
 - a. Excellence of doctoral thesis and accompanying publications
 - b. Previous successes, demonstrated innovativeness and overall career development
 - c. Personal letters of recommendations (references)
 - d. Potential for professional development and future excellence of the applicant

8. GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION

Proposal is to be submitted on the official forms: *Young Researchers Program - Application Form 2008 and Young Researchers Program – Curriculum Vitae Form 2008*, which are available on the Fund's website or on request. Proposal should contain all details and annexes as described there and in accompanying *Young Researchers Program – Instructions for Applicants 2008*. The proposal must be written in English and must be signed by the project applicant and the responsible persons of the legal entity involved.

The proposal with scanned signatures must be submitted together with the relevant annexes as an electronic version using the UKF web application (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=39>) The proposal must be electronically submitted no later than **15 January 2009 until midnight**. The applicants will receive a notice on successful submittal of proposal by e-mail.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Letters rejecting or accepting proposals, with statements of opinion, will be sent to all applicants within three months after the application deadline (excluding the periods from 15 July and 31 August and from 20 December and 7 January, according to Croatian law). The accepted proposals are subject of further negotiations and final approval, according to the *UKF Guidelines and Procedures 2007*. The summaries of successful proposals will be published on the UKF's website.

Please note that the submission of project proposal does not establish any form of legal claim or responsibility of Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. All decisions of the UKF Committees are final and are not subject to further claims or revisions, with exception of administrative mistakes.

Any inquiries should be addressed to the Unity through Knowledge Fund: e-mail: office@ukf.hr; phone: +385 1 23 52 685; address: UKF, Planinska 1, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia.