

Croatian Science Foundation  
Second Science and Technology Project  
Loan Nr. 8258 -HR

## **Unity through Knowledge Fund**

announces

Call for Proposals

### **RESEARCH COOPERABILITY PROGRAM Crossing Borders Grant (1B)**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Government of Croatia and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development signed the Loan Agreement for Second Science and Technology Project (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 the 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 develop research infrastructure in Croatia.

This Call for Proposals (further in text: Call) sets out the terms and conditions on which the Crossing Borders Grant shall be awarded (further in text: Grant) together with the following documents: *Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant - Application Form 2015, Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant -Financial plan.xls 2015, Research Cooperability Program,*

*Crossing Borders Grant - Curriculum Vitae Form 2015, Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant - Instructions for Applicants 2015, Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant - Baseline Survey 2015 (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=244>) and UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2015. (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=7>).*

### 3. ABOUT RESEARCH COOPERABILITY PROGRAM

STP II funds will be used to provide support for the strengthening of research excellence and of research commercialization activities through scientific cooperation with Croatian Diaspora and leading international scientific institutions.

Research Cooperability Program is a research support program that finances medium-scale collaborative research projects in Croatia that fulfil the conditions outlined in the Fund's goals, with involvement of Croatian scientific and professional Diaspora.

Program includes all Fund's operational instruments. The Program goal is to attract promising research projects to Croatian companies and institutions together with their international/private financing, their accompanying knowledge, technology and potential research results.

Total amount foreseen for the Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant equals 10,6 million HRK. Total amount of funds awarded in this Call for proposals in the year 2015 will depend on the quality of the project proposals. Financial resources for UKF programs will be available upon successful restructuring of the Second Science and Technology Project (STP II).

### 4. ABOUT CROSSING BORDERS GRANT

The aims of the Crossing Borders Grant are to support outstanding Croatian scientists and professionals working and living abroad (Diaspora) in establishing scientific cooperation with local scientists (Croatian and foreign researchers and experts working and living in Croatia), as well as to foster Croatian institutions and enterprises to use potentials of Croatian scientific and professional Diaspora.

The Grant should enable transfer of knowledge and attract investments to Croatian organization through cooperation between Diaspora and local scientists. Eventually, it should facilitate the return of Croatian researchers and

experts from abroad through networking with scientific colleagues from Croatia.

## 5. INSTRUMENTS THAT CAN BE FINANCED AND DURATION OF THE PROJECTS

The Grant may include the following operational instruments (see the *UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2015*):

1. research project's costs (consumables and other costs)
2. human resources in S&T (costs for newly employed early-stage researchers (PhD students) and post-doc researchers (salaries))
3. short-term visits (travel costs and allowances)
4. long-term visits (travel costs and allowances)
5. specific equipment (durables)
6. conferences/lectures
7. supporting consulting and expertise
8. overhead costs - Beneficiary (Administering organization)

**Proposed research projects are to last for a minimum period of 12 months and a maximum of 24 months and a single grant cannot be lower than 750.000 HRK or higher than 1.500.000 HRK.**

## 6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### WHO CAN APPLY?

- a. The outstanding experienced Croatian or foreign researchers and experts who live and work in Croatia and want to initiate and establish cooperation with an outstanding researcher or expert of Croatian nationality or origin who has built a career, works and lives abroad.
- b. The outstanding experienced researchers and experts of Croatian nationality or origin who live and work abroad and want to initiate and establish cooperation with the outstanding experienced Croatian or foreign researchers and experts who live and work in Croatia.

Main applicant and co-applicant should have previous experience as research project leaders and should demonstrate the ability to lead research and team.

Main applicant or co-applicant who works and lives in Croatia must have employment contract at his/her institution 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. 0.3 full time equivalent (F.T.E.)).

Main applicant or co-applicant who works and lives in Croatia, at the time of the date of Decision of recommendation on financing proposal (according to cl. 6.6 (ii) of *UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2015.*“) cannot be the project leader of the Croatian Science Foundation's project.

Who cannot apply - researchers and experts who work and live in Croatia and have already been granted the projects as project leaders and co-leaders within the Research Cooperability Program can not apply as main applicants and co-applicants.

### **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 (Administering organization) 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 the all participating organizations.

### **The project proposal should contain following letters of commitment:**

1. 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, newly employed researchers, providing technical and other support according to proposed plan. The Beneficiary (Administering organization) should accept all responsibilities originating from and connected to the proposed research project. The letter must confirm that the main applicant/co-applicant will be employed for the whole duration of the project.
2. Commitment of a Partner organization abroad which engages the main applicant / co-applicant to support the proposed research project, to accept all responsibilities originating from and connected to the proposed research project including hosting and supporting the Croatian researchers according to the proposed project plan, and to support and allow the main applicant / co-applicant's engagement on the proposed project for the whole duration of the project.
3. Commitment of other Partner organizations on participating in the project implementation. Legal organizations involved must 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). 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).

**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, economy, environment and/or society.

**WHAT ARE THE BUDGET REQUIREMENTS?** At the time of 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 matching funding of the amount requested from UKF shall be in form of financial contributions (cash contributions).** Any existing or planned financial support from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 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 matching funding may be in form of in kind contributions (goods or services) needed for research. Please note that salaries of researchers employed at the Beneficiary (Administering organization) are not an allowable in-kind contribution. The total UKF Grant for a project requested over total period cannot be lower than 750.000 HRK or higher than 1.500.000 HRK.

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 (Annex A – Environmental Management Framework)* are also available on the UKF website <http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=244>.

For every project proposal recommended for financing, the applicants will be obliged, during the negotiations, to submit the Procurement 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 available on the UKF website <http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=244>.

## 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.

Since the Republic of Croatia must establish State aid control in line with European Union practice, Croatian Competition Agency (CCA) which governs the compliance with the State aid rules set out by the Croatian legislative framework, must be notified of the State aids awarded within the programs of the Fund.

State aids for research, development and innovation within the Research Cooperability Program will be awarded by the Fund according to the Decision on Authorization issued by the Croatian Competition Agency, Class: UP/I 430-01/12-02/008, Reg.No.: 580-09-01/89-2012-005 from October 25<sup>th</sup> 2012 (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=7>) and according to the approval of the EU Commission of the Program of grants for scientific research projects through "Unity through Knowledge Fund", where this measure is considered to be existing aid according to the article 108. of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

**In accordance with this Decision on Authorization, if the Beneficiary is a big, middle or small enterprise, Fund will finance projects depending on the project research category (basic, applied or developmental research), in the maximum percentages (the aid intensity), as follows:**

- 100% of eligible expenditures for basic research
- 50% of eligible expenditures for applied research
- 25% of eligible expenditures for developmental research;

while eligible costs for applied and developmental research may be increased for:

- 10% for middle enterprises

- 20% for small enterprises;

and additional 15% bonus may be added to the maximum of 80% eligible costs under the following conditions:

(i) the project involves effective collaboration between at least two SMEs which are independent of each other and the following conditions are fulfilled:

- no single SME must bear more than 70 % of the eligible costs of the collaboration project,
- the project must involve collaboration with at least one SME or be cross-border, that is to say, the applied and development activities are carried out in at least two different Member States, or

(ii) the project involves effective collaboration between SME and a research organisation which is not a Beneficiary, if following conditions are fulfilled:

- the research organisation bears at least 10 % of the eligible project costs,
- the research organisation has the right to publish the results of the research projects insofar as they stem from research implemented by that organisation, or

(iii) only in case of applied research, if the results of the project are widely disseminated through technical and scientific conferences or published in scientific or technical journals or in open access repositories (databases where raw research data can be accessed by anyone), or through free or open source software.

For the purposes of points (i) and (ii) subcontracting is not considered to be effective collaboration.

State aids cannot be awarded to the enterprises in difficulty in accordance with paragraph 9 to 11 of the Decision on publication of rules on state aid for rescuing and restructuring firms in difficulty (OG 20/07 and 119/11).

## 8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

All project proposals are evaluated against the fixed set of criteria stated below. The project proposal should address all points stated in these criteria with measurable and provable information. Anonymous, internationally recognized and independent experts will evaluate all proposals 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 contribution of the project to the Fund's goals. At the end of the evaluation procedure the projects for financing are proposed according to the final marks given by the evaluators and the mark given by Steering Committee. The evaluation procedure is described in detail in the *UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2015*.

The scientific excellence is a prerequisite for awarding the Grant. The contribution to the Fund's goals – international competitiveness and potential to provide a new value 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 the evaluators.

- i. SCIENTIFIC/TECHNOLOGICAL QUALITY OF THE PROJECT ASSESSED BY ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:
  - a. Significance and originality of the research proposed
  - 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, time plan and budget
- ii. IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT IN CREATING ADDED VALUES FOR CROATIAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY ASSESSED BY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:
  - a. Potential for creating research result important for Croatian science, economy, environment and society
  - b. Prospective innovations, patents, commercial applications, new or improved products or processes or environmental benefit
  - c. Potential of strengthening Croatian research capability
- iii. RESEARCH/MANAGERIAL QUALITY OF THE MAIN APPLICANT/PROJECT LEADER AND THE CO-APPLICANT/CO-LEADER, INCLUDING THEIR LEADERSHIP ABILITY TO UNDERTAKE GROUND-BREAKING RESEARCH, ASSESSED BY ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:
  - a. Necessary expertise, previous success and overall career development (for the main applicant/project leader and co-applicant/co-leader)
  - b. Key publications (for the main applicant/project leader and co-applicant/co-leader)
  - c. Personal letters of recommendations for the main applicant/project leader
- iv. PROJECT'S FUTURE 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 project's 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 big number of 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 III have more importance over criteria II 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 *Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant - Instructions for Applicants 2015*. <http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=244>.

### **To be formally eligible a project proposal must fulfil the following:**

- must be submitted by the deadline stipulated in this Call
- project lasts for minimum of 12 and maximum of 24 months
- the single grant request is not lower than 750.000 HRK or higher than 1.500.000 HRK
- must include the following filled-in forms (on the official forms as available on the Fund's website or on request):
  1. *Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant - Application Form 2015 – must be signed - by the main applicant and co-applicant and the responsible person of the Beneficiary (Administering organization).*
  2. *Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant -.Financial plan xls. 2015*
  3. *Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant - Curriculum Vitae Form 2015 - for the main applicant and co-applicant*

#### *4. Research Cooperability Program, Crossing Borders Grant - Baseline Survey 2015*

- must include the following letters which include all requested information stated in the paragraph 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 main applicant/co-applicant
3. Letter(s) of commitment and support of other Partner organization(s) involved in the project
4. Letter(s) of financial commitment for the matching funding
5. Two recommendation letters for the main applicant (if sent by post, the date of sending the letter of recommendation (as read on the envelope) which has to be within the proposal deadline will be considered)

- 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 it must include all forms and letters, according to the paragraph 9. 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=244>.

The project proposal (all forms and letters) must be electronically submitted no later than **12. June 2015 until midnight** using the application available at UKF website (<http://www.ukf.hr/default.aspx?id=39>).

The applicants will receive a notice on submittal of proposal by electronic mail.

By submitting this project proposal applicants accept to provide the information on the project to the Fund when requested and to be available for subsequent updates within the limits of reasonability for the purpose of evaluating the impact of the program.

#### 10. FURTHER INFORMATION

Letters rejecting or accepting proposals, with statements of opinion, will be sent to all applicants within 6 months after the application deadline. Evaluation results will be made available within applicants' accounts at the UKF website.

The accepted proposals are subject of further negotiations and final approval, according to the *UKF Guidelines and Procedures - Second Science and Technology Project (STP II) 2015*.

Letters with final decisions and contracts on financing will be sent to the applicants. The summaries of successful proposals will be published on the UKF's website, [www.ukf.hr](http://www.ukf.hr). All decisions of the UKF Steering Committee are final and are not subject to further revisions, except in case of administrative mistake. Any claim or inquiry should be addressed to the contact persons at the Unity through Knowledge Fund (UKF): e-mail: [office@ukf.hr](mailto:office@ukf.hr); phone: +385 1 23 52 685; address: UKF, Planinska 1, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia.