



CALL FOR PROPOSALS – ECOKT2014

Pilot project **Open Knowledge Technologies: Mapping and validating knowledge**

1. INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND

The European Commission adopted on 14 May 2014 a financing decision¹ for a pilot project in the field of online learning and skills.

In the current economic context having a better skilled workforce is paramount if the EU aims to achieve Europe 2020 goals of boosting EU competitiveness and becoming an innovation driven economy. Education and training build the critical foundation for developing more prosperous but also more cohesive European societies.

Open technologies provide the opportunity for Europe to attract new talent, equip citizens with relevant skills, promote science and research and fuel innovation, productivity, employment and growth. Through Open Educational Resources (OER)², and specifically MOOCs, teachers and education institutions can now reach thousands of learners simultaneously, showcasing that language is not always a barrier. Cooperation is enhanced by allowing learners, educators, researchers and institutions to create, share and discuss content.

There is a need to match the interests and the current knowledge&skills of individuals not only with the most demanded labour market skills but also with the possible learning roadmaps that can help them acquire the knowledge and skills required by the market. Mapping and certifying the formal and informal knowledge acquired must also to be addressed so that the quality of their learning can be validated.

Mechanisms may therefore be identified that would allow individuals to assess their current competencies (e.g. creating their individual knowledge map), the knowledge required by the labour market and the learning path that can link the two, hence providing the right training to each particular individual.

This social and technological innovation benefits all citizens regardless of their level of resources, the languages they speak, their age, their health or their cultural capital, and can help towards reducing unemployment by helping especially the young currently unemployed to maximize their learning and find new career opportunities.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/pilot-project-open-knowledge-technologies-mapping-and-validating-knowledge>

² OER are learning resources that are usable, adaptable to specific learning needs, and shareable freely.

2. OBJECTIVE(S) – THEME(S) – PRIORITIES

The overall objective of this pilot project is to develop and demonstrate a European-wide learning technology system to support effective (re)-training by matching the interests and the current knowledge of individuals with the most demanded labour market skills, and suggest possible learning roadmaps that can enable European citizens to acquire the required knowledge and skills.

The pilot project shall develop and deploy a technological platform for knowledge networking, integrating online services including, inter alia, the following modules:

1. Skill / competences mapping;
2. Tailored learning roadmaps and paths (via educational services, including specific open educational resources);
3. Mechanisms for the validation of the acquired knowledge.

These services should be accompanied by a thoughtful and comprehensive social innovation process to engage people in the learning and skilling acquisition activities.

The pilot project has to identify from the start how it will build further on and how it relates to the work on: the European Area for Skills and Qualifications; Recommendation of validation of informal and non-formal learning; European Skills, Competences Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO); EUROPASS; EQF; eCompetency Framework; Rethinking Education; Opening up Education Initiatives, as well as to initiatives on digital skills in the context of the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs.

The project should gather evidence for assessing the potential new open learning and training systems may have to shortening the up - and re-skilling time of European citizens.

3. TIMETABLE

	Stages	Date and time or indicative period
a)	Publication of the call	August 2014
b)	Deadline for submitting applications	22 September 2014 17:00 CET
c)	Evaluation period	September/October 2014
d)	Information to applicants	October 2014
e)	Signature of grant agreement or notification of grant decision	December 2014
f)	Starting date of the action/ work programme	January 2015

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at EUR 1 500 000 (one and a half million euro).

The Commission expects to fund one single proposal.

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applications must be sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3.
- Applications must be submitted in writing and on usb key (see section 14), using the application forms available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/news-redirect/17410>
- Applications must be drafted in English.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1. Eligible applicants

Only applications from legal entities established in the EU Member States are eligible:

Applications may be submitted:

- by a single legal entity;
- by a consortium made up of several legal entities; or
- by **one** applicant, whether established specifically or not for the action, which is formed of several legal entities complying with the eligibility, non-exclusion and selection criteria set out in this call for proposals, and implementing together the proposed action, provided the application identifies the said entities. For the purpose of declaring eligible costs as specified under section 11.2, the entities composing the applicant shall be treated as affiliated entities.

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, the following supporting documents are requested:

Examples of supporting documents (*see also section 4.3.4.2.1 of the Vade Mecum*):

- **private entity**: extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- **public entity**: copy of the resolution or decision establishing the public company, or other official document establishing the public-law entity;
- **consortium**: in addition to the supporting documents referring to their legal status, consortium members will submit letters confirming their participation to the project,
- **natural persons**: photocopy of identity card and/or passport;

- **entities without legal personality:** documents providing evidence that their representative(s) have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf.

Eligible legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, may take part in the action as affiliated entities, and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 11.2.

6.2. Eligible activities

Types of activities eligible under this call for proposals.

Prototyping, deployment and testing/validation actions

Conferences, seminars;

Awareness and dissemination actions;

Actions aiming at the creation and improving of networks, exchanges of good practices;

Studies, analyses, mapping projects;

Research activities

Implementation period:

The maximum duration of projects is 24 months;

Applications for projects scheduled to run for a longer period than that specified in this call for proposals will not be accepted.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. Exclusion from participation:

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of res judicata;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify including by decisions of the EIB and international organisations;
- (d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the RAO or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;
- (e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for

fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such an illegal activity is detrimental to the Union's financial interests;

- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 109(1).

7.2. Exclusion from award:

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Commission as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure or fail to supply this information;
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in section 7.1.

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities.

Administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, who are guilty of misrepresentation.

7.3. Supporting documents

Applicants must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in articles 106(1) and 107 to 109, filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying the call for proposals and available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/news-redirect/17410>

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1. Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out or the year for which the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents to be submitted with the application:

- a) Low value grants (\leq EUR 60 000):

- a declaration on their honour.

- b) Grants \geq EUR 60 000:

- a declaration on their honour and,

EITHER

- the profit and loss account, the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts were closed;
- for newly created entities, the business plan might replace the above documents.

OR

- the table provided for in the application form, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.

c) Grants for an action \geq EUR 750 000, in addition to the above:

- **an audit report**³ produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the two last financial year available.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above thresholds apply by applicants.

In the case of legal entities forming **one** applicant, as specified in section 6.1, the above requirements apply to those entities.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the Commission considers that financial capacity is not satisfactory, it may:

- request further information;
- propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;
 - propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 11.4 below);
 - where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries;
- reject the application.

8.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action or work programme. In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour, and the following supporting documents:

- curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation (accompanied where appropriate, like in the field of research and education, by a list of relevant publications);
- the organisations' activity reports;
- an exhaustive lists of projects and activities performed in the last three years and connected to the policy field of a given call or to the actions to be carried out;
- an inventory of natural or economic resources involved in the project.

In the case of legal entities forming **one** applicant, as specified in section 6.1, the above requirements apply to those entities.

³ The authorising officer responsible may, depending on a risk assessment, waive the obligation of audit referred to in paragraph c) above, for education and training establishments, for applicants who do not bear any financial responsibility and, for applicants who have accepted joint and several liabilities in the event of agreements with several beneficiaries³.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible applications/proposals will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Award criterion	Maximum score/weighting	Threshold
Soundness and quality of objectives	40	20
Quality, effectiveness and impact of dissemination and exploitation of the results	30	15
Effectiveness and rationality of methodology and organization (including timetable) and relevance and quality of implementation;	14	7
Resources deployed in relation to the objectives envisaged (particularly in terms of cost-effectiveness)	16	8
Total	100	60

Minimum score per criterion (threshold):

Proposals scoring less than 50% of the maximum score for any technical award criterion will be considered of insufficient quality and rejected.

Minimum total score (threshold):

Proposals with a total score of less than 60 points at the end of the evaluation process will be considered of insufficient quality and rejected.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiary, as well as the procedure in view to formalise the obligations of the parties.

The 2 copies of the original agreement must be signed first by the beneficiary and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last.

Please note that the award of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1. General Principles

a) Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its

functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.⁴

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed or the grant decision is notified.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action or the work programme may not be entirely provided by the EU grant.

Co-financing of the action or of the work programme may take the form of:

- the beneficiary's own resources,
- income generated by the action or work programme,
- financial contributions from third parties.

Co-financing may also take the form of in-kind contributions from third parties, i.e. non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties to the beneficiary or to the consortium. The corresponding costs are not eligible.

d) Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action or work programme is to be attached to the application form. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants which foresee that costs will not be incurred in euros, are invited to use the exchange rate published on the Infor-euro website available at http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm.

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action or the work programme requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2004/18/EC⁵ or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2004/17/EC⁶ shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules.

Sub-contracting, i.e. the externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action/work programme as described in the proposal must satisfy the

⁴ Art. 196.4 RAP.

⁵ Directive 2004/18/EC on the coordination of procedures for the award of public work contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts.

⁶ Directive 2004/17/EC coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors.

conditions applicable to any implementation contract (as specified above) and in addition to them the following conditions:

- it may only cover the implementation of a limited part of the action;
- it must be justified having regard to the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- it must be clearly stated in the proposal.

f) Financial support to third parties.

The applications may not envisage provision of financial support to third parties.

11.2. Funding forms

Mixed financing grants are calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget indicating clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding. The grant amount may neither exceed the eligible costs nor the amount requested. Amounts are indicated in euros.

➤ **Maximum amount requested**

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate of 70 % of **eligible costs** *taking into account the maximum grant amount referred to in section 4.*

Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimative budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see section 11.1c).

➤ Contributions in kind

The external co-financing may be made up of contributions in kind in order to cover other costs necessary to carry out the project. Such contributions must not exceed:

- either the costs actually borne and duly supported by accounting documents;
- or, in the absence of such documents, the costs generally accepted on the market in question.

In-kind contributions shall be presented separately in the estimated budget to reflect the total resources allocated to the action. Their unit value is evaluated in the provisional budget and shall not be subject to subsequent changes.

In-kind contributions shall comply with national tax and social security rules.

➤ Eligible costs

Eligible costs are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary of a grant which meet all the following criteria:

- ✓ they are incurred during the duration of the action or of the work programme, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;

The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement or the grant decision.

If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application (see section 11.1b).

- ✓ they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action or work programme;
- ✓ they are necessary for the implementation of the action or of the work programme which is the subject of the grant;

- ✓ they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- ✓ they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- ✓ they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

The same criteria apply to the affiliated entities.

Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the action/ work programme are those costs which, **with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above**, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action or the work programme and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as :

- *the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the applicant or equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that these costs are in line with the applicant's usual policy on remuneration. Those costs may include additional remuneration, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of their nature, provided that it is paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required and independently from the source of funding used;*
 - *subsistence allowances (for meetings, including kick-off meetings where applicable, conferences etc) provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices,*
 - *costs of travel (for meetings, including kick-off meetings where applicable, conferences etc), provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel,*
 - *costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the action/project;*
 - *costs entailed by implementation contracts awarded by the beneficiaries for the purposes of carrying out the action/project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement or grant decision are met;*
 - *costs arising directly from requirements linked to the implementation of the action/project (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, translations, reproduction);*
 - *costs relating to a pre-financing guarantee lodged by the beneficiary of the grant, where required;*
 - *costs relating to external audits where required in support of the requests for payments;*
- value added tax ("VAT") is not eligible.*

Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

- a flat-rate amount of 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action, is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Applicants's attention is drawn to the fact that in the case of organisations receiving an operating grant, indirect costs are not eligible under specific actions.

➤ **Ineligible costs**

- return on capital;
- debt and debt service charges;
- provisions for losses or debts;
- interest owed;
- doubtful debts;
- exchange losses;
- costs of transfers from the Commission charged by the bank of a beneficiary;
- costs declared by a beneficiary and covered by another action receiving a European Union grant. In particular, indirect costs shall not be eligible under a grant for an action awarded to a beneficiary who already receives an operating grant financed from the Union budget during the period in question;
- contributions in kind;
- excessive or reckless expenditure.
- others (in accordance with the relevant legal base).

➤ **Calculation of the final grant amount**

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the action or work programme, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents *including relevant supporting documents where appropriate*:

- a final report providing details of the implementation and results of the action/work programme ;
- the final financial statement of costs actually incurred,
- where applicable, a certificate on the financial statements of the action or the work programme and underlying accounts⁷.

EU grants may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action or the work programme of the beneficiary. **Profit shall be defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary**, when the request is made for payment of the balance. In this respect, where a profit is made, the Commission shall be entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to carry out the action or work programme.

11.3. Payment arrangements

A pre-financing payment corresponding to 50% of the grant amount will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days either of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement, or of the notification of the grant decision, provided all requested guarantees have been received.

One interim payment shall be paid to the beneficiary. The interim payment is intended to cover the beneficiary's expenditure on the basis of a request for payment when the action

⁷ Art. 207.3 RAP

has been partly carried out. For the purpose of determining the amount due as interim payment, the reimbursement rate to be applied to the eligible costs approved by the Commission shall be 70%.

The total amount of pre-financing and interim payments shall not exceed 90% of the maximum grant amount.

The Commission will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the beneficiary on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 11.2 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the Commission through a recovery order.

11.4. Pre-financing guarantee

In the event that the applicant's financial capacity is not satisfactory, a pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1. By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

12.2. By the Commission

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level if he/she is domiciled within EU or equivalent if domiciled outside EU,
- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

13. DATA PROTECTION

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the Inclusion, Skills and Youth unit of the Communications Networks, Content and Technology DG. Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at: http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacystatement_publicprocurement_en.pdf.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Warning System (EWS) only or both in the EWS and Central Exclusion Database (CED) by the Accounting Officer of the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision 2008/969 of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (for more information see the Privacy Statement on: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm),

or

- the Commission Regulation 2008/1302 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (for more information see the Privacy Statement on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm)

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the formal requirements and by the deadline set out under section 5.

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or for the correction of clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

➤ Submission on paper

Application forms are available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/news-redirect/17410>

Applications shall be submitted on the correct form, duly completed, dated, showing a balanced budget (revenue/expenditure), submitted in 5 copies (one original clearly identified as such, plus 4 copies), and signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation. Please also include in the envelope the proposal in digital form on a usb key.

Where applicable, all additional information considered necessary by the applicant can be included on separate sheets.

Applications must be sent to the following address:

European Commission

Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology

Directorate Media and Data – Inclusion, Skills and Youth (unit G.4)

For the attention of the Head of Unit (EUFO 2/274)

L-2920 Luxembourg

- by post, date as postmark;
- in person, date as receipt,
- by courier service, date of receipt by the courier service.

Applications sent by fax or e-mail will not be accepted.

➤ Contacts

For any questions please contact:

- *CNECT-G4@EC.EUROPA.EU*

- <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/news-redirect/17410>

➤ Annexes:

- Application form
- Grant application budget
- Checklist of documents to be provided
- Model grant agreement