Call for proposals 2015 ECFIN 016/A4 published on Europa website
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/economy_finance/procurement_grants/grants/proposals/ecfin_2015_016a4_en.htm

	Question	Answer
Questions answered until 28/09/2015		
1.	Direct Costs (Item .II.) : Staff Costs. As described in the Guidelines for applicants for the financial Management of grant agreements: Information for each staff category (e.g. management/executive staff, researchers, interviewers, technical staff and administrative staff) must be provided. The details should specify at least the number of persons, their salaries (either on a daily, weekly, monthly or yearly basis) and the time allocated to BCS surveys. Where it is impossible to quantify the expected number of hours/days worked for each survey, a ratio has to be applied (based on an estimated time allocation or on the number of harmonised BCS questions in relation to the total number of questions asked in an omnibus survey). The calculation of the ratio needs to be transparent. The methodology for calculating incurred staff costs (BCS ratio for apportioning of costs, daily rate) needs to be explained in a separate sheet (please fill in 'Calculation methodology' worksheet in the Financial statements excel form). Our question is: We will subcontract the sampling and interviewers costs to the national statistical office. We will additionally have 5 employees to work on the Project for 5 days a month on a monthly basis, which are actually permanent staff of the beneficiary. We will not employ extra staff for the Project. Their salary will not change but anyways ¼ of their monthly work will be dedicated to the Project. What kind of document do you need that provides evidence on the above? We can provide a legal document with the gross cost per day of each worker. Will this be enough as supporting document?	According to the Specifications of the Call for proposals 2015 ECFIN 016/A4, the applicants shall submit a budget proposal for year 1 of the action (1st May 2016 - 30th April 2017) which must show a balanced budget (revenue/ expenditure) together with the application. For providing the budget proposals the applicants shall use the Annex V of FPA - Model financial statement (please see the template document http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/economy_finance/procurement_grants/grants/proposals/ecfin_2015_016a4_en.htm#iii) The information you will provide in the budget proposal is sufficient for the purpose of the evaluation of your application. No supporting documents are requested at the time of the call for proposals, unless you consider them necessary for the evaluation of your proposal. 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.
2.	We will provide a balanced budget together with the application using the Annex V of FPA. Our question is: In	Detailed information on the submission of final financial statement(s) and payment request is provided in the "Guidelines for the financial management of grant

	the case our proposal will be accepted, what kind of documents will be necessary to prove the eligible costs incurred by beneficiary? (Since the eligible costs (staff and materials) cannot be registered separately (and linked to this grant) in our balance sheets, beneficiary can only provide internal documents for this purpose.)	agreements". Please check the complete list of documents needed to be provided together with the payment request http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/economy_finance/procurement_grants/grants/proposals/ecfin_2015_016a4_en.htm. The supporting documents to be submitted in the first place is the detailed lists of incurred costs, which must include detailed information about invoices and payslips: reference number, date of issue, amount and a short description of the purchase/cost and the ratio apportioned to the BCS action. Copies of the reference documents (invoices, payslips, etc.) substantiating the costs shall be provided only upon request. The costs must satisfy a certain number of criteria to be eligible including that the costs 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. For a more detailed presentation please check chapter 11.2.2 "Eligible costs general aspects" of the "Specifications" of the Call for proposals 2015 ECFIN 016/A4 (follow the link above).
3.	For the consumer survey, the age decomposition starts at 16. Does this absolutely need to be the starting point or would it be possible to start at age 18?	While full harmonisation in terms of the breakdown by consumer categories is desirable, starting the lowest age bracket at 18 instead of 16 would not in itself lead to the rejection of the proposal, as long as the breakdown of the collected survey results is generally in line with section 2.2.1 of the Specifications of the Call for Proposals. Yet, it might have an impact on the assessment of the quality of the proposed survey methodology, as detailed in section 9 (Award Criteria) of the Specifications of the Call for proposals.
4.	The grant application forms indicate that if sub-contractors are going to be used, a signed contract should be included. Again, is it essential that this is signed or can a draft of the proposed contract be provided?	For the evaluation of the proposals in terms of the award criteria, applicants have to submit a technical proposal containing, only if applicable, a duly filled in standard form (worksheet SUBCONTRACTING in the model financial statement - Annex V of FPA) regarding subcontractors (see also point 11.1 e)) involved in the action, including a justification and a detailed description of the tasks to be subcontracted. It is compulsory to declare your intentions concerning sub-contracting of the BCS action by filling in the application forms, but it is not mandatory to have the contracts signed with your service providers before applying for the grant. In case you already have in place a contract with a service provider, do not hesitate to enclose a copy in your application forms.

5.	In section 11. Financial Provision; 11.1 General principle; d) Balanced budget; it is foreseen that all cost should be incurred in euros, if the cost are in another currency we have to convert them in euro using the exchange rate published in the Official Journal of the European Union. In the website of the Official Journal of the European Union we see that there is not exchange rate published from EURO to ALL (Albanian Lek). The website: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/infoeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm Does not work. **Questions:** • Please can you instruct use where do we have to take the exchange rate in this case? • Which date of the application do we have to refer as the correct exchange rate (because the exchange rate changes every day)?	When you estimate your budget for the purpose of presenting an application for the current call for proposals it is not compulsory to use a particular exchange rate. At the same time you should pay attention to take all the precautionary measures when presenting your budget as exchange losses are ineligible costs. After having a grant agreement signed and conducting a 12-month action (surveys) the beneficiary must present for the payment of the balance the final financial statements where he must declare the actual cost incurred. By way of derogation from Article II.23.4 of the Framework agreement, the conversion of the actual costs into euro shall be made by the partner at the rate applicable on the day when the action covered by the specific grant ends (30th of April) published in the Official Journal of the European Union or, failing that, at the rate published on the European Commission's website: (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm) There is a typing error in the web link you send us, this being the reason why it is not working. For the particular case of Albania, the web link provided above shall be used, as ECB is not publishing a quotation for the national currency in the Official Journal of the European Union. For more information about the way presenting the financial statements and the costs incurred in other currency than euro, please refer to the model framework partnership agreement (Special and General conditions) published under the current call for proposals: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/economy_finance/procurement_grants/callforproposals/2015/016a4/fpa_model_and_annex_ii_general_conditions.pdf
6.	Regarding the Model Financial Statement Annex V of the framework Partnership Agreement there are two sheets Model of detailed list of the eligible costs one for administrative costs and one for staff costs. **Questions:** • In which phase of the application do we have to deliver these two models? • In order to fill these administrative costs models it is required invoice number or in case of no invoice number internal accountancy reference number. Do we have to book (register) the administrative costs separately for the project in the accounting system or	"Model of detailed list of the eligible costs" worksheets, both Administrative and Staff costs, are presented for information purposes only. You do not need to fill in these worksheets at the time of presenting your application for the current call. In any case the cells of these sheets are locked for editing. These documents shall be presented by the beneficiary after implementing the action, for the first grant agreement in May 2017. The costs must be 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. In case the usual practice within your institute is to book the costs incurred for EU

	we have to keep it as it is (in the pool) and we will use as supporting document only the invoice? • In order to fill these staff costs models it is required our reference number. Do we have to book (register) the staff costs separately for the project in the accounting system or we have to keep it as it is (in the pool the total staff cost) and we will use as supporting document a written document?	projects using separate recording system, then you should proceed according to your internal rules. You are requested to provide more information about your actual practices in your budget proposal, the worksheet "Information on the methodology applied to estimate the costs for the EU BCS action". Please check the template published under the current call for proposals.
7.	Regarding the Investment Survey, are we free to choose between October and November round to carry it out (for the Autumn survey)? The Same for the Spring survey, are we free to choose between March and April?	Yes, applicants are free to carry out the fieldwork in October and/or November for the autumn survey and in March and /or April for the spring survey.
8.	The name of our country (Albania) is missing in the excel file provided to fill the methodology for consumer and business survey (in the first section Information on the applicant). Can you please sent the updated files?	Please find attached the updated Methodology forms.
9.	We (a Cluster of companies) are going to prepare proposal for Albania and Montenegro. Montenegro has positive financial results for 2013 and 2014 and there we do not have problem. Unfortunately, because of some internal financial consolidation within the Cluster, we have had negative financial results for Albania in 2013 and 2014. At the same time, Parent Company (from Croatia) is 100% owner of Subsidiary in Albania and are going to use know how and experience from Croatia (experts, frame definition, sampling, analysis , …). Parent Company has positive financial results in 2013 and 2014. We would like to send proposal from Parent Company (Croatia) with Albanian office as an affiliated entity (based on the "Proposal by an applicant with affiliated entities with a legal or capital link", page 6. "Specification Call for Proposal"). We have few questions about this and we wonder whether you could help us with some answers / comments or to give us right address to ask:	Applications from legal entities established in EU Member States, Candidate Countries or EFTA and EEA countries are eligible in the context of the current Call for proposals. Entities that have a link with the applicant, in particular a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, are considered entities affiliated to the applicant. Those entities may take part in the action and may declare eligible costs. To answer your questions: 1. In case you are a legal entity established in an EU member state, then you are allowed to apply to carry out actions consisting in one or more of the surveys described in chapter 2.1 Objectives of the Specifications Call for Proposals. Under the provisions of the current Call for proposals, you can also involve in the implementation of the action other entities eligible for the call (established in EU Member States, Candidate Countries or EFTA and EEA countries) and which are affiliated to you. 2. Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain the activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out and to participate in its funding. Only the applicants and not the affiliated entities are requested to prove their financial capacity by providing the supporting documents requested under the chapter 8.1 Financial capacity of the Specifications Call for Proposals.

	1. Is it formally OK? 2. Does positive financial results in Croatia would be enough to qualify us for this project? 3. If the total Grant would be < 60.000€ do we need to send P&L and balance sheets for our companies?	3. In the situation of a low value grant (< € 60.000) the applicant (and not the affiliated entity) must provide only the declaration on their honour (FORM 5a) certifying that the applicant has the financial and operational capacity to carry out the proposed action. No supporting documents (FORM 6 containing financial key figures; the balance sheets and profit and loss accounts) are requested in the situation of a low value grant. Nevertheless, responsible authorising officer may request further information or take other actions if he considers that the financial capacity is not satisfactory.
10.	Consumer Survey: Section: Information on the applicant - Country: Albania is not listed between the countries.	The EXCEL file has been updated so that Albania now features in the list of countries in the section "Information on the applicant". Please find attached the updated Methodology forms. The revised EXCEL file will be uploaded on our dedicated website. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/economy_finance/procurement_grants/grants/proposals/ecfin_2015_016a4_en.htm
11.	Consumer Survey: Section II. Sampling Method: c) Panel sampling and response rates. In cases of no Panel sampling questions, all questions must be inactive. However, the following questions: "How many households /individuals will you attempt to contact for every wave of the survey (=sample size) & How many firms do you think will on average complete the survey" are active. Does it mean that these fields must be filled in?	Yes, indeed, both questions need to be filled out. Admittedly, the headline of this section "c) Panel sampling and response rates" is a bit misleading in the sense that it suggests that all questions in the section apply only in the case that panel sampling is used. However, in fact, it is only the selection of questions which changes, depending on whether panel sampling is used or not. In this context, please note that there is a typo in the EXCEL file. The correct formulation of the second question you quote should be: "How many households/individuals do you think will on average complete the survey?" Please find attached the updated Methodology forms. The revised EXCEL file will be uploaded on our dedicated website. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/economy_finance/procurement_grants/grants/proposals/ecfin_2015_016a4_en.htm
12.	Consumer Survey: Section III. Survey Mode : What will be the field work period of the survey? - does it refer to working days or calendar days?	The answering options "first 7 days of the reference month", etc. refer to calendar days.
13.	Business Survey: Section: Information on the applicant –	ad a) The EXCEL file has been updated so that Albania now features in the list of countries in the section "Information on the applicant". The revised EXCEL file have

	a) Country: Albania is not listed between the countries. b) Survey: Since it is only possible to select each of the surveys one by one, if we want to apply for all sectors of the survey, do we need to make different applications for each of them, or should you add another option at line 6 as “All Surveys”.	been uploaded on dedicated website. Please find attached the updated Methodology forms. The revised EXCEL file will be uploaded on our dedicated website. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/economy_finance/procurement_grants/grants/proposals/ecfin_2015_016a4_en.htm ad b) No, we would like you to fill out a separate EXCEL file for every sector you intend to survey. The background is that, sometimes, sampling designs, samples sizes, expected response rates, etc. differ across surveyed sectors.
14.	Business Survey: Section I. Sampling Frame: The following question “IF AVAILABLE: The frame represents ....% of the total employment of all firms in the surveyed sector (use cell on the right) ”, is inactive and it is not possible to enter any figures.	We have checked the EXCEL file and – to us – it appears possible to make entries in the cell. However, note that the cell is restricted so that only digits can be entered into this cell. No letters are accepted, since we inquire a percentage here. Should the cell still not work, we propose that you answer the question in the field "Do you have further comments about the sampling frame you use (use cell below)?", which is located three rows further down in the EXCEL file.
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15.	There is one more issue regarding the **excel format of description survey, form 8.** As far as we understood, the applicant company will provide a hard copy and an electronic one for all the proposals. But we are facing some difficulties with the **hard copies** of format 8 (the excel format): We are able to enter all the relevant information for a survey, but we are not able to print the entire information out. While printing, only part of the information is printed. We would be grateful if you could advise us on this matter.	For the evaluation of the proposals in terms of the award criteria, applicants have to submit a technical proposal containing among other elements a duly filled in standard excel form (FORM 8) providing a detailed description of the methodology for each survey the applicant submits a proposal. The Excel files: model financial statement - Annex V of the FPA and FORM 8 Description of the survey methodology must also be submitted to the following address: ECFIN-BCS-CALL-Budgets-Methodology@ec.europa.eu . In case the settings of the text boxes in the Form 8 do not allow you to print all the text you have written, please provide the missing information on an extra sheet enclosed with your application. For the evaluation of the proposal we will mainly rely on the electronic version of form 8 which, as you say, contains all the relevant information.
16.	Regarding to administrative procedure, Section III, Step 3, which handles information for the subcontration, we are not clear if, it is required to have a signed contract with the subcontractor at this stage of the application, or in a second phase, after being awarded (if will result of such after this	For the evaluation of the proposals in terms of the award criteria, applicants have to submit a technical proposal containing, only if applicable, a duly filled in standard form (worksheet SUBCONTRACTING in the model financial statement - Annex V of FPA) regarding subcontractors (see also point 11.1 e)) involved in the action, including a justification and a detailed description of the tasks to be subcontracted.

	application) of the Bank of Albania?	It is compulsory to declare your intentions concerning sub-contracting of the BCS action by filling in the application forms, but it is not mandatory to have the contracts signed with your service providers before applying for the grant. In case you already have in place a contract with a service provider, do not hesitate to enclose a copy in your application forms.
17.	We are preparing proposal for Albania, and while reading A user guide we notice following paragraph: The institutes are selected by the Commission through a call for proposals. The Commission supports their activity with action grants, which are limited to a maximum of 50% of the total costs of the surveys. These grants are designed to cover the costs associated with the adoption of the harmonised methodology. As the Commission's financial support takes the form of grants, the data collected remain the property of the institutes, but the Commission acquires a parallel right of free use of the data. In contrast, when the national institutes have no clear interest or purpose in conducting a particular type of survey, the Commission concludes a service contract with the selected institute. In such cases, the Commission covers the full cost of the survey and has the copyright of the data. We are interested in this part in red – is it possible to conclude such service contract and what is the procedure for this?	The Commission is launching the call for proposals (ref. N° 2015 ECFIN 016/A4) for carrying out surveys, as part of the BCS Programme, in Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Albania and Montenegro. No other procedure for selecting partner institutes is foreseen at this moment to cover other BCS surveys. This co-operation between the Commission and future partners shall be in the form of a framework partnership agreement over a period of maximum five years (May 2016 – April 2021), covering the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020. The current call is at this moment the sole way for possible applicants to submit a proposal for conducting the above mentioned surveys in the respective countries. The other possible alternative (service contract) to conduct particular type of surveys is referred to in the "Methodological User Guide" in a much larger context of BCS surveys here including financial services, which are not covered by the current call for proposals.
18.	Could you please send us some clarification regarding the latest activity report that we are supposed to provide? What should be the composition of this report is it referring to the previous year of conducting the Business survey? What is the maximum number of pages allowed?	According to national legislations and conditional on the form of legal entity, it is common that economic operators or public entities are requested to publish each year an activity report. Typically, such reports cover the organisation's activities, performance of the company etc.
19.	In Form 8 (description of survey methodology) when typing the comments in the space for additional comments all text that we wrote cannot be visible if it is larger than the space provided in template. The cells are blocked and we cannot extend the cell. Could you please unblock the cells and send us a new excel template?	For the evaluation of the proposals in terms of the award criteria, applicants have to submit a technical proposal containing among other elements a duly filled in standard excel form (FORM 8) providing a detailed description of the methodology for each survey the applicant submits a proposal. The Excel files: model financial statement - Annex V of the FPA and FORM 8 Description of the survey methodology must also be submitted to the following address: ECFIN-BCS-CALL-Budgets-Methodology@ec.europa.eu .

		In case the settings of the text boxes in the Form 8 do not allow you to print all the text you have written, please provide the missing information on an extra sheet enclosed with your application. For the evaluation of the proposal we will mainly rely on the electronic version of form 8 which, as you say, contains all the relevant information.
20.	Deadline for submitting the documents is not completely clear– is it ok if we send it on 9th October or it should arrive in your office by 9th October?	The deadline for sending the proposals is 9 October 2015. Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the formal requirements and by the deadline set out under Section 5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS. The evidence of the date of sending shall be constituted by the postmark or the date of the deposit slip of the courier service or by means of a dated and signed receipt issued by the receiving official in the Commission central mail department. For detailed information please check Section 3.1 Timetable, Section 5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS and Section 14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS of the "Specifications" of the Call for proposals 2015 ECFIN 016/A4 (follow the link above).
21.	We need some information about outline of the questionnaire for Investment survey in original language. Until now we have sent survey to companies which had 6 questions in accordance with the original questionnaires from User Guide. During the previous years of conducting the investment survey we have seen that some companies had problems to understand question for this survey and we had to spend more time for additional explanations. As we would like to increase response rate in future we would like to ask you if we can divide questions regarding factors influencing investment (demand, financial resources, technical factors and other factors) in two parts – where for example for technical factors we would have one part of question asking about expectation for current year and second part of the question asking about expectation for the next year. We have seen that some of partner institutes have already done so. Is it ok if we send in our proposal that form of questionnaire?	For the March/April wave of the bi-annual investment survey, the questionnaire foresees two questions: 1) annual investment change in the previous year and 2) annual investment change in the current year. For the October/November wave of the survey, the questionnaire foresees four questions: 1) annual investment change in the current year, 2) annual investment change in the next year, 3) structure of investment this year and next year and 4) factors influencing investment this year and next year. It is correct that the latter two questions (investment structure and influencing factors) actually consist of two sub-questions, since both are asking for an assessment for both the current year and the next year. Your proposal is therefore fully in line with the harmonised questionnaire and we invite you to proceed as you suggested, applying this to both the question on the structure of investment and the question on the factors influencing investment.

22.	Can Bank of Albania continue to select the subcontractor through a direct procurement procedure, despite the requirements for an open one? Currently for conducting surveys, Bank of Albania subcontracts the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) through a direct procurement procedure given that: (i) INSTAT is the official statistics institution which has all the legal and technology support; (ii) INSTAT disposes the complete statistical registers enabling businesses and consumers survey framing and sampling; (iv) INSTAT has the necessary human resources whom are well-trained in the fields of statistics and surveys.	According to the Section 11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS of the "Specification" of the Call for proposals 2015 ECFIN 016/A4, where the implementation of the action requires the award of a procurement contract (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 interest and retain the documentation for the event of an audit. Moreover the beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure. Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2004/18/EC12 or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2004/17/EC13 shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules. Sub-contracting, i.e. externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action as described in the proposal, must satisfy the 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, i.e. the core tasks of co-ordinating the action remain with the beneficiary • 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.