

VP / 2013 /010 – Questions and answers

PROGRESS: Delivering on skills for jobs and growth

1 – General

Q) What languages will this call be published in?

A) English, French and German.

Q) How can I find partners to work with on the Call for Proposals VP/2013/010?

A) We suggest the first step is to contact the relevant European federations or networks active in the field that you wish to work in.

Q) Do you have a database for this purpose?

A) Unfortunately not.

Q) Is there any possibility to submit a basic outline of a proposal for 15 January 2014 and then submit a more detailed proposal at a later date?

A) No this is not possible: 15 January 2014 is the final deadline for submissions.

Q) What types of concrete activity are eligible under this project?

A) The objectives and the types of eligible activities are presented in point 3 of the call.

Q) Is there a limit to the number of applications we can submit?

A) No, you can submit multiple applications, but each application can only relate to one sector.

Q) Will there only be one project per sector/strand?

A) No, the result will depend of the quality of all received applications. In theory, we hope to have a balanced distribution of the available budget between the different sectors and strands. This remains to be seen however – it is possible that some strands will have no accepted projects.

Q) Should only the lead applicant should sign the *Declaration on Honour* or should all co-applicants sign it too?

A) All applicants (lead & co-applicants) must fill and sign a *Declaration of honour*.

Q) Can the lead applicant designate access to the ECAS submission for the co-applicants for the uploading of documents? How should this be done?

A) As Lead-applicant or coordinator, you must send the templates and other requests of documents or information to your co-applicants. These co-applicants must send to you the documents requested by post (original signature). After that, you must complete the on-line application and also send the paper version (original plus copy) to the Commission.

Q) Does an original signature need to be provided on all documents at the application stage or can we provide scanned copies and the originals only when the application is approved?

A) As indicated in the checklist of documents, the original signature must be present where specified for all applicants (lead and co-applicants).

Q) Is it mandatory to scan and upload those signed documents to the ECAS/SWIM or, is it sufficient to attach them all to the printed version of the proposal?

A) It varies according to the document: for several documents (legal, financial, mandate, commitment and declaration on honour) you must upload but also send the original plus a copy. For other documents such as the CVs and balance sheets, you must only send the paper version.

Q) Is there a template for the *Letter of Mandate*? Where is it?

A) The *Letter of Mandate* is available in the SWIM application form (Please click here to download the template of *Declaration of honour*. Please save it on your computer and complete it on the official letterhead paper of the applicant organisation. Then attach it to your application by clicking the Browse button. You should also return it by post, duly signed, stamped and dated, together with all other requested documents.).

Q) Is there a template for the *Declaration of honour*? Where is it?

A) Yes. This is in the SWIM application pack.

Q) Is there a template for Annexe F1 or F2?

A) No. The *Description of the action* (F1) is a kind of summary of the project to upload directly in SWIM web form without any specific template. This description must be close to the information given in section E3. The *Detailed work programme* (F2 - point 8) is a 'free' document to upload via the SWIM web form.

Q) What does it mean when point 8 of the *Description of the action* states “The paper version must be identical to the electronic version” in the *Checklist of documents to be submitted* (6.4.2)?

A) This detailed work programme must be consistent with the information introduced in section E.

Q) How and where should the *Budget explanation for the project* be submitted?

A) In the SWIM application form there is a button for uploading a document. You must save your *Budget explanation* and then upload this document through the SWIM form.

Q) Regarding the subcontracting of activities, is it necessary to fill in the *Contracts for Implementing the Action* form and attach it at the time of the application itself, or can this form be attached later?

A) You must indicate your intention to subcontract any activities and also indicate an estimated budget for this at the time of application. If the budget is above 60.000€, you must add a copy of the draft tender specifications (as indicated page 21).

Q) According to point 6.4.2 of the call and point 3 of the check list of documents to be submitted, the *Declaration of Honour* must be sent by the applicant, co-applicant and affiliated entity. The format of the *Declaration of Honour* must be filled out with the amount of the grant. Should we enter the amount of the grant for each co-applicant or the total amount of the grant?

A) This must be the total amount of the grant.

Q) Do partners need to provide a letter of guarantee or is their financial capacity deduced from financial documents (balance sheet, bank statement)?

A) All applicants must have the capacity to produce a guarantee.

Q) Should the *Financial and Operational Capacity* and *Occupational Structure* documents need to be submitted only by the project leader or should co-beneficiaries complete them too?

A) These documents should be submitted both by the project leader and the co-beneficiaries.

Q) Must operational capacity be proved using previous Commission-funded projects, or can it be demonstrated via other projects?

A) It is not necessary for operational capacity to be demonstrated in previous Commission-funded projects.

Q) As the Call for proposals says that "outsourcing of project management is not allowed" is it possible to subcontract the services of an external expert for general coordination and/or financial and technical reasons?

A) The outsourcing of core project coordination is not allowed (see page 12 of the financial guide).

Q) Does your team offer any pre-proposal checks / screening of initial project concepts?

A) Unfortunately we cannot provide these, no.

Q) Is it possible for the partnerships to generate a profit from this project?

A) No profit generation is possible.

Q) Is there a contact point for each of the participating countries of the program?

A) You can find the contact list for the PROGRESS programme here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=984&langId=en>

Q) As there appears to be no mention of a Programme rate in the Guidance, do we use the current exchange rate as published by the EC on a given date?

A) All budgetary information must be presented in Euros. There is no guidance on which date to take the rate from.

The exchange losses are ineligible (see page 14 of the financial guidelines for other non-eligible costs).

Q) How many projects are expected to be approved under this Call?

A) There is no definite number of projects that will be approved under this Call. It will depend on the quality of applications received.

Q) Is it possible to fund travel costs for a preparatory meeting under the budget of this project?

A) No, there is no provision of costs associated with a preparatory meeting available through this project.

2 – Relating to Specific Sections of the Call

Section 3.1

Q) As the average grant size within this Strand is €900 000, would applying with a smaller scale project also be viable?

A) As pointed out in the Call, the expected average size of a grant awarded under this strand would be in the range of €900 000 per project. Then it is only an indicative amount.

Q) In the Green jobs section the priority activities are described. Is one project supposed to address all the priority activities or just some of them?

A) All priorities can be covered for each of the three sectors. Again, the more priorities covered, the more chance you will have of success (see award criteria – i).

Q) In the Green Jobs strand, one of the priority activities is training of trainers. However, our specific target is to train the company workers who seek apprenticeships. We would like to include this target group (workers of companies, including of SMEs) into the project – is that acceptable? If we do so, will we be expected to include the trainers as our target group alongside the companies' workers?

A) The objectives, specific actions and priorities of the Green Jobs strand are described in the call. The proposals submitted will be ultimately evaluated against the award criteria which are presented in the point 6.4.4 of the call and this includes the extent to which the proposed action meets the objectives and priorities of the call.

Q) Can the target group of our project be the workers of companies who seek to gain apprenticeship within the *Green Jobs* strand?

A) Yes.

Q) Can the main objective of the Project be "training companies' workers"?

A) Yes, although the proposals submitted will be ultimately evaluated against the award criteria which are presented in the point 6.4.4 of the call and not addressing the call's priorities may result in a low score and thus rejection of the proposal.

Q) Do projects presented under the *Green Jobs* strand necessarily have to focus only on one of the three target sectors, or may they cover all three sectors?

A) A project can only focus on one of the three target sectors.

Q) Could proposals addressing the severe skills shortage within offshore (wind) energy be considered under either the 'construction' and/or 'Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning' sector?

A) It depends on the prevailing type of skill that will be addressed in the project, e.g. if it will be more construction-related then this should be under 'construction'.

Q) Could you please provide us with a more specific understanding of sectoral goals that project proposals should achieve within all the three targeted sectors (construction, recycling and electricity/gas/steam)?

A) Please consult p. 31. of Call VP/2013/010 for the list of priority activities.

Q) Is it correct that for *Green Jobs* there is a minimum requirement of partners from two EU member states?

A) Yes, there is a minimum requirement for partners from two EU Member States in the *Green Jobs* strand. But as indicated in the award criteria, the quality of the partnership and the transnational dimension will be important elements for the evaluation of the application. The more partners you work with, in more Member States, the more chance you will have.

Q) Is there a specific type of partners or a certain consortium structure that is expected and you are aware of?

A) No, there is no expected structure but a consortium with different types of partners seems more in line with the topics presented in the call.

Q) In the Green Jobs sector, will there be only one project that is awarded a grant of €900 000 or will it be possible to have several funded projects in this sector?

A) Competition will be open to several proposals for each sector and the expected average size BY PROJECT AND by sector will be €900.000. The competition will be based on the award criteria.

Q) If there are two partners from non-EU Progress participating countries (like Turkey and Serbia for instance), are two partners from the 28 Member States still required?

A) Yes, there must also be two partners from the 28 Member States.

Section 3.2

Q) In the ICT and the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs strand it is stated that "[...] actions must not include direct financial support to jobseekers and companies such as paying their travels costs, accommodation, etc."

Could the jobseekers have a monthly/daily allowance provided during the job placement?

A) This grant will not cover any kind of direct financial support, therefore any kind of wage subsidies will not be considered an eligible cost.

Q) We are planning to organize training for unemployed people and we anticipate grants for training participants so that they would be able to participate in case they do not have income to pay for meals, transport etc. Are we allowed to provide such support through this project?

A) Direct payments such as grants for training participants are not an eligible cost and can therefore not be included in your budget proposal. However, additional services outside the budget can be provided by the (co-) applicant organization(s).

Q) Could the project include indirect financial support in order to make mobility easier for potential candidates, for example through an specific instrument designed within the project?

A) The design and implementation of a relevant instrument to facilitate the mobility of the potential candidates can be considered eligible. The restriction relates to direct financial support to the candidates.

Q) Must each project result in a job placement or apprenticeship for 100 jobseekers?

A) Yes this is correct.

Q) Can a share of the placements be in the country of origin of the jobseekers?

A) If the evidence shows also some opportunities for a local matching, it can be included in the total number of the achieved placements. Nevertheless, the transnational dimension of the project will be assessed under the award criteria.

Q) If the foreseen placements fail, with detailed justifications provided, will there be a budget reduction and if so, of how much?

A) No automatic deduction has been established. However the measures undertaken and the results will be thoroughly examined and compared to the work programme, and the adequacy of the results and costs relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation will be assessed.

Q) What kind of partnerships are expected under this strand?

A) The partners should be relevant actors on the labour market from public, private and third sector (organisations such as employment services, companies including SME's, chambers of commerce, training and education providers, social partners, NGO's, career centres from tertiary education organisations e.g. universities, polytechnics; welfare institutions, municipalities, or other labour market organisations providing a broad range of client and job placement services at national, regional or local level).

Organisations should work together by relying on their specific strengths and expertise. The project must include organisations preferably from both public and private sector and from at least two Member States.

Section 3.3

Q) How does action 3.3. *Personal and Household Services (PHS)* relate to the home help programmes existing in municipalities?

A) Action 3.3 is not related to programmes developed by municipalities. This action is devoted to the collection and exchange of good practices, not supporting these programmes.

Q) Can one project address just the child care sector or is it necessary to cover LTC, cleaning, remedial classes, etc. as well?

A) It seems better to cover all PHS but it is also possible to cover only several aspects.

Q) What are the indicators for the project result? How many people should we provide training for or facilitate job-access to?

A) In the area of Personal and household services, the aim of this call is not to support training (as under section 3.2 ICT and the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs). The main aim is to collect good practices through EU28.

Q) Is it possible to include training activities and actions to promote the creation of new companies and the support of entrepreneurs?

A) No this is not eligible under this strand.

Q) Are consultancy related costs considered eligible costs for this programme ?

A) Yes, following several conditions indicated in the Financial Guidelines, see 4.2.2.1 or 4.2.2.3.

Section 3.4

Q: Will the Commission guarantee the sustainability of financing for European Sector Skills Councils?

A: Commission services have indeed indicated that the Commission aims to support the establishment of sector skills councils for a period of at least 3 years. This indicative duration is motivated by the fact that collaborative structures at EU level are difficult to establish, particularly in the challenging area of bridging activities from the labour market and from the education/vocational training sphere. However, the Commission has always made clear that the financing from the Progress programme and from its successor EaSI, is and will remain on a competitive basis and remains subject to the availability of budgetary resources.

In order to meet some of the concerns regarding sustainability in the current call the maximum duration of projects was increased from 12 to 18 months. For the future, the possibility of financing the European Sector Skills Councils under the EaSI programme through Framework Partnership Agreements for 3 years is under consideration. Such Framework Partnership Agreements would be the basis for annual grants, depending on the implementation of the yearly activity plans and on the availability of funding.

The Commission is committed to carry through and support the potential of European Sector Skills Councils. Nevertheless, the long term sustainability of such structures ultimately depends on the value added they will provide to the key stakeholders in the sector, both at European and at national level.

Q) Does the feasibility and mapping study under section 3.4 *European Sector Skills Councils* have to have a particular recognition at EU level or could it be a study carried by the applicants to the Call for Proposals VP/2013/010?

A) The European Union has financed feasibility studies for European Sector Skills Councils under two successive calls for proposals (VP/2011/008) and (VP/2012/009). Projects for Call for Proposals VP/2013/010 are only eligible in those sectors in which an EU-financed study has already been completed.

Q) Which sectors have already conducted and finalised a feasibility and mapping study, as referred to under section 3.4 *European Sector Skills Councils* of the Call for Proposals VP/2013/010?

A) The following sectors have conducted a feasibility study for running a EU sector skills council: Textile, Leather and Clothing; Commerce; Electricity; Gas; Construction; Agriculture; Audio-visual and Live Performance; Shipbuilding; Furniture; Nursing; Fisheries; Chemical; Automotive; Steel. You can find more about the feasibility studies on the respective websites of the European social partners conducting the projects.

Q) We note your current call for proposals (VP/2013/010) does not include the financing of feasibility studies to establish new European Sector Skills Councils. Do you propose a call for assisting in the feasibility to set up new Sector Skills Councils in the future?

A) Given that a number of sectors have already completed feasibility studies, while only a very limited number proceeded to establishing a European Sector Skills Council, the Commission will not in the short run finance additional feasibility studies. Such a decision might be taken at a later date based on an analysis of the impact of the established European Sector Skills Councils. Please note however that a new feasibility study financed by the EU (from a 2012 call) for setting-up a European Sector Council on Skills and Employment for the Sport and Active Leisure sector is starting this year.

Q) Is the call restricted just to those organizations that conducted the feasibility study? Or it will be open to all those organizations interested in proposing a project based on the study made even if not involved in it when it was made?

A) The call is open to any organisation interested in proposing a project in the sectors already covered by a feasibility study. This includes organisations which did not participate in the feasibility studies.

Q) Can an eligible entity submit a proposal by itself, all alone, with no partners?

A) A partnership is required for the *European Sector Skills Councils* strand. The call requires that the partnership should encompass sector specific organisations with a role in long-term matching of supply and demand on the labour markets (employers' organisations and in particular SME representatives, employment services, research institutes or technological platforms, trade unions and education, training and guidance providers,..) and the call requires that the partnership should encompass European umbrella organisations as well as national organisations from at least 10 EU Member States or from EU Member States accounting for more than 50% of workforce in the sector across the EU. Moreover, the quality of the partnership is an award criterion.

Q) In strand 4, *European Skills Sector Councils*, should several countries (at least 10) analyse one sector's skills needs, or can one Member State analyse the skills and needs for a particular sector in their country?

A) The council is a network, involving social partners, of at least ten Member States for one sector.

Q) Is it sufficient that the consortium in strand 4 of this call is composed of the social partners which represent the European Industry and Workers national associations?

A) The call emphasises the involvement of national level partners, while the feasibility studies have already identified the main relevant organisations at national level. National partners from at least ten Member States (or from Member States representing 50% of the sector's workers across the EU) are expected to be included in the consortium composed for the proposal addressing the Call.

Q: Is the combination of meetings organised by the sectoral social dialogue committees with the meetings of sector skills councils possible? Which would be the guidelines/basic prescriptions from the point of view of EU Commission's financial services for avoiding double financing?

A: Provided that the beneficiaries provide sufficient safeguards against double financing in their reporting, the organisation of meetings of sector skills councils on the side of meetings of social dialogue would be possible. The Commission services will release in due time a vademecum explaining how the eligible costs for participation should be distinguished from the costs directly covered for the sectoral social dialogue committees.

3 - Applicant Entities

Q) Can the same lead-applicant present two project proposals, for two different strands, under this call?

A) Yes that is possible.

Q) We would like to know if we could participate as partner in one project and as lead applicant in another project.

A) Yes that is possible.

Q) Is it possible to participate in this Call for Proposals (VP/2013/010) and another Call also run by the Commission?

A) Yes that is possible.

Q) Are private companies (i.e. HR consultancy companies) eligible as project leaders / partners under this call?

A) Yes, profit-making organisations are eligible but, as indicated in the financial guidelines, "grants are subject to the principles laid down in the Financial Regulation, in particular the principles of co-financing, prohibition of double financing and non-profit".

Q) Can this Call VP/2013/010 support investments?

A) No this call for proposals is not planned to support investment.

No call for proposals issued by the Directorate General in charge of Employment issues can support investments, except in terms of human capital (training for example).

Q) Who can participate in this Call VP/2013/010?

A) This call of proposals is limited to the EU Members States or other PROGRESS participating countries - EFTA/EEA countries (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) and EU candidate countries

(F.Y.R. of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey). In order for actions to be eligible, they must be fully carried out in the EU Member States or other PROGRESS participating countries

Q) Can cities or municipalities participate in and lead a project?

A) A city or municipality can be seen as a public authority but the partnership dimension of the project remains very important.

Q) As we are active in more than one action covered by the referenced call, we would like to know if one entity can submit more than one proposal as a leading organisation, or as one of the members of a joint application.

A) Yes, an organization can submit several applications.

Q) Could a social cooperative (non-profit) be a project leader?

A) Yes.

4 – Partnerships

Q) What should the partnership consist of? Are there different formats in the different sections?

A) Yes, there are different formats. In the different sections, some indications are given but for all sections the quality of the partnership is a crucial criterion.

Q) Is there a mandatory minimum number of partners on a project?

A) No but in some sections there are indications concerning the importance of establishing a partnership with several organisations.

Q) Do the partnerships have to be composed of partners coming from different countries? If yes, is there a minimum of countries that have to be included?

A) The transnational dimension of the partnerships is an award criterion, as is the quality of the partnership.

The more partners you work with, in more Member States, the more chance you will have.

Q) Where should information about the associate organisations that will be involved in the project be entered?

A) There is a request for letters of commitment in section F of the SWIM Application. Here, the associate organisations must be considered as Third Parties. You must also describe the roles of the different organisations in the detailed work programme.

Q) Is it compulsory that all the companies involved are part of the same NACE code or is it possible to also involve companies from other sectors?

A) It is not compulsory that all the companies are part of the same NACE code.

5 – Financial Issues

Q) I would like to know if the eligible actions and costs can include building construction or building renovation.

A) No, unfortunately not.

Q) What is the minimum amount of funding for a project implemented under this programme?

A) There are only indications concerning the average amounts by project.

Q) Is there a list of eligible costs?

A) In the financial guidelines there are some indications concerning the eligible costs.

Q) Will the partnership have to advance funds or will the EU provide a sum at the outset to provide activation costs?

A) Generally there will be a pre-financing payment of 30% at the entry into force of the grant agreement following its signature. When a guarantee is required, the pre-financing payment will be subject to receipt of the guarantee.

Q) What is the highest sum that can be awarded to one project – can it be a higher amount than the cited expected average grant size, for example in the case of a project with a large number of partners?

A) The amount indicated in the text of the call is the "expected average size" - a higher sum is possible, although the "expected average size" gives you an indication of the scale of projects that we expect.

Q) We would like to clarify if the salary cost of workers could be considered as co-financing for the VP/2013/2010 call for proposals?

A) You will find an answer to your question in the Financial Guidelines page 9. The staff costs under specific conditions are eligible direct costs that therefore can be considered as part of the contribution by the applicant. The costs of staff (permanent or temporary staff working under an employment contract with the beneficiary/ies or an equivalent appointing act) and assigned to the implementation of the action, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, are eligible. 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. The salary costs should not exceed the average rates corresponding to the beneficiary's/ies' usual policy on remuneration. In addition, they should not be higher than the generally accepted market rates for the same kind of task.

Q) Can the cost of freelancers be considered a part of the staff cost?

A) The cost of freelancers must be considered as costs of services.

Q) If salary costs should not exceed the average rates fitting to the action, should this average be calculated in according rates within the Member State or in accordance with the EU average?

A) The reference will be the Member State's market if the "worker" works in the Member State for a company based in this Member State.

Q) Can the Lead Applicant cover the 20% co-financing of the whole project or do all the co-applicants need to participate equally (20%) in the project?

A) This 20% can be comprised of revenue generated by the action itself and the contributions of co-applicants, affiliated entities and/or third parties. You are free to decide on the internal organisation of contributions.

Q) Is the partnership obliged to take on 20% of the total cost of the project as a monetary contribution or could this 20% be contributed in the form of the (paid) working hours of staff engaged on the project?

A) The maximum rate of co-financing by the Commission is 80%. The rest (20%) is the contribution of all applicants or third parties and the revenue generated by the action. This 20% includes the cost of employing staff (see the Financial Information 4.2.2.1).

Q) When working with experts/consultants, employed on service-based contracts rather than full-time employment contracts, who are named specifically as responsible for Management/Coordination of the project and/or Administration/Implementation of the project, should they be listed as part of the G.1 Staff costs (based on the gross contract value per day) or G.3 under external expertise?

A) These experts/consultants must be considered as external experts (G3) because their relations with your organisation are based on service contracts.

Q) If an SME needs to subcontract any service above 60 000 €, must the SME launch a call for tenders, or can the SME freely subcontract a service no matter its price?

A) The SME must launch a competitive tender based on the draft tender specifications.

Q) Will a guarantee be required? How much will the guarantee be?

A) Indeed, a guarantee will be requested. The guarantee must cover the pre-financing payment (30% or 40%) as indicated in section 7 of the financial guidelines.

Q) Is the amount of the guarantee based on the total budget or the grant?

A) The guarantee will be 30% or 40% of the grant.

Q) It is stated that if the grant amount exceeds €750 000, an external audit must be submitted. If an applicant entity is leading a project receiving a grant of over €750 000 with a group of co-applicants, and consequently, the applicant entity's budget is less

than €750 000, should that applicant entity submit an audit? Should the lead and co-applicants submit individual audits?

A) The main element for this answer is in the text (page 21), which explains that the threshold applies to each co-applicant in line with their share of the action budget. If your share is below €750 000, no external audit is required.

Q) Which entities must submit an external audit report?

A) For grant requests over EUR 750 000: an external audit report produced by an approved auditor, certifying the accounts of the applicant organisations for the last financial year available (not necessary for public bodies or international organisations). This threshold applies to each co-applicant in line with their share of the action budget. The external audit report should be submitted in English, French or German.

Q) It is required to supply a list of projects in which we have received funding from the European Commission. Do we have to list all projects?

A) No, only those that relate to the subject of your proposal.

Q) We are uncertain as to the nature of the audit report: is it a copy of the annual financial report of the company/applicant(s) or is it an audit report of the project budget to be submitted?

A) It is an external audit report produced by an approved auditor certifying the accounts (see page 21 of the call).