



Guidelines for Applicants

START Call 2

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1. Key data to the 2nd Call of START – Danube Region Project Fund

Volume of the total START funding for the 2 nd Call:	€ 450.000,00
Possible START funding per project:	€ 10.000,00 – € 20.000,00
Planned number of supported projects:	24
Possible project duration:	6 – 8 months
Planned start of project implementation:	1 st of Nov./Dec. 2015 1 st of Jan./Feb. 2016
Latest project completion deadline:	31 st of July 2016
Restricted thematic Call for the following Priority Areas → Detailed summary, see Annex I	PA 02 Energy
	PA 03 Culture & Tourism
	PA 04 Water Quality
	PA 05 Environmental Risks
	PA 09 People & Skills
	PA 10 Institutional Capacity and Cooperation

2. Background

At the moment, project idea owners are suffering from a **lack of funding** to initiate and to implement projects with relevance for the Danube Region. **Priority Area 10: Institutional Capacity and Cooperation (PA 10)** coordinated by the City of Vienna, has been entrusted by the European Commission to set up a **new pilot initiative**, "START - Danube Region Project Fund", (hereinafter referred to as "START") in order to address this need. The operational implementation of START is ensured by **EuroVienna EU-consulting & -management GmbH**, affiliated entity of the City of Vienna (hereinafter referred to as "Implementing Body - IB").

3. Objective and main principles of START

Objective

- The **objective of START**, in accordance with Commission Decision C(2013) 6180 of 27.09.2013, is to "*kick-start project development in the Danube Region and to facilitate the financing of transnational projects*".
- START is meant to help organisations and institutions in the Danube Region to develop and implement their project ideas. The provided support is in the form of **Seed Money**, meaning that beneficiaries receive an early pre-financing for their projects. The "Seed Money character" of START will especially enable organisations having limited financial resources, to implement their project ideas, like NGOs or local associations.



An instrument for the EUSDR

START aims to support projects:

- From the entire **Danube Region** which covers the following 14 Countries:

EU Member States		EU Accession Countries	
1	Austria	1	Bosnia and Herzegovina
2	Bulgaria	2	Montenegro
3	Croatia	3	Serbia
4	Czech Republic	Non-EU Member States	
5	Germany (Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg)	1	Moldova
6	Hungary	2	Ukraine (Danube Region)
7	Romania		
8	Slovak Republic		
9	Slovenia		

- Addressing issues from **all Priority Areas (PA)** of the EUSDR:

Pillars	Priority Area	
Connecting the Region	PA 1A	Mobility – Waterways
	PA 1B	Mobility – Rail – Road – Air
	PA 02	Energy
	PA 03	Culture & Tourism
Protecting the Environment	PA 04	Water Quality
	PA 05	Environmental Risks
	PA 06	Biodiversity, landscapes, quality of air and soil
Building Prosperity	PA 07	Knowledge Society
	PA 08	Competitiveness
	PA 09	People & Skills
Strengthening the Region	PA 10	Institutional Capacity and Cooperation
	PA 11	Security

For more information about the priorities and main targets of each area, please visit the EUSDR webpage: www.danube-region.eu/about/priorities and see **Annex I to this document**.

A pilot initiative

As START is a pilot-initiative, a **flexible approach** is used and adaptations may be brought during implementation, to best reflect the needs that may occur and provide the most appropriate support.

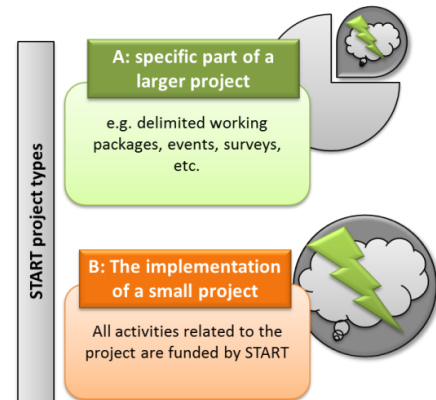
4. Set up of a START Project

4.1 Type of projects

START is designed to support two different types of projects:

A. A specific part of a larger project:

For larger projects, whose total value and duration goes beyond the framework of START. The Fund supports the implementation of a **specific phase or work package(s)** of the overall project. By the end of the START support, these work packages will be completed. Applicants must justify that START support will bring the overall project a major step forward. Whether the remaining part of the project is to be financed by the EU, national, private donors or own resources, is not relevant for the START application.



B. The implementation of a small project:

For small projects, START co-finances implementation of the entire project (incl. preparation activities, if any). By the end of the START support, all project activities are completed and project objectives are reached.

4.2 Types of activities

Within the two types of projects mentioned above (A and B), START can support **two types of activities:**





4.3 Types of indicators

The application form provides a set of **pre-defined indicators** for each project activity. At least one indicator must be defined per activity, max. 4 are possible.

For each project activity, all defined indicators must be described in the section "Description".

- **N° of project concepts**
- **N° of project budget plans**
- **N° of project applications**
- **N° of external meetings** and **total meeting hours** (sum of all meetings) – this applies to meetings where external participants are invited to attend and are organised by the project partners
- **N° of workshops** and **total workshop hours** (for all workshops) – this applies to workshops or trainings etc. organised by the project partners
- **N° of events** and **total number of participants** (for all events) – this applies to larger events e.g. conferences, networking events organised by the project partners
- **N° of studies** and **total pages of all studies** – this applies to e.g. studies, reports, position papers, etc. The number of copies distributed is not requested.
- **N° of surveys** – this applies to surveys e.g. conducted with a questionnaire etc.

In addition, one **project-specific indicator** can be defined for each project activity.

The implementation of planned indicators must be documented in the midterm and final report.

4.4 Project duration

The projects duration can be **6, 7 or 8 months**. Projects might start **1st of Nov./ Dec. 2015 or 1st of Jan. / Feb. 2016** and must be completed latest by **31st of July, 2016**.

4.5 Budget & financing

- The START contribution to an individual project can range from **€ 10.000,00 to € 20.000,00**.
- START co-finances up to **90%** of the total project budget.
- The **remaining minimum 10%** must be provided by the **project partners** and / or any other **Third Party** (other donors, e.g. ministries, public or private institution) that is not involved in the project implementation) and cannot come from other EU sources.

Project Budget example 1:

START contribution	€ 18.000,00	90,00%
Partners Contribution	€ 1.000,00	5,00%
Third Party Contributions	€ 1.000,00	5,00%
Total project budget	€ 20.000,00	100,00%

Project Budget example 2:

START contribution	€ 20.000,00	80,00%
Partners Contribution	€ 5.000,00	20,00%
Third Party Contributions	€ 0,00	0,00%
Total project budget	€ 25.000,00	100,00%



4.6 Official language

The official language of START is **English**. The application documents, reports and other documents are to be completed in English. The Grant Agreement will also be in English.

4.7 Main conditions to be fulfilled

4.7.1 Basic eligibility criteria

Eligible Applicants (Lead Applicants and all Project Partners)	<u>Eligible applicants are:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bodies established under public or private law, having legal personality including small organisations, non-governmental and civil society organisations. International organisations are also eligible. Organisations having their seat in the Danube Region (eligible countries see also p.3) <u>Not eligible are:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual persons Priority Area Coordinators
Project partnership (Lead Applicant and project partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project partnership must consist of the Lead Applicant and min. 2 - max. 3 additional Project Partners The Lead Applicant and the Project Partners need to come from at least two different Danube Region countries. The Lead Applicant and each Project Partner must have an active role in the implementation of the START project and must have personnel listed in the Project Budget Plan in order to be eligible In case of selection, the Lead Applicant will act as "Lead Partner" of the project partnership and will sign the Grant Agreement. The Lead Partner will be responsible for management, communication, implementation and coordination of all activities among the partners.
Geographic scope of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project activities (incl. travel and all meetings necessary for the project implementation) must take place in the Danube Region.
Thematic scope of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A project proposal can be submitted in all Priority Areas of the EUSDR Some PAs have restrictive thematic focuses for eligible project proposals; a detailed description of the thematic focuses is provided in Annex I.
Public interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects have to reveal public interest. START does not support projects with a predominant commercial interest.

START Applications 2nd Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Applicants can only submit <u>one</u> START application within the 2nd Call • In case a Lead Applicant submits an application for START funding, they <u>cannot</u> act as Project Partner for another START application • It is possible to be Project Partner in more than one START application • In case a project received START funding in the 1st Call, an application for the same project within the 2nd Call is not possible • It is not possible to apply for START and TAF-DRP support at the same time for the same project
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4.7.2 Quality criteria

Relevance for the EUSDR and the Priority Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects need to contribute to the objective(s) and /or action(s) of the selected Priority Area, as defined in the EUSDR Action Plan: http://www.danube-region.eu/component/edocman/action-plan-eusdr-pdf.
Macro-regional dimension of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported projects shall have a macro-regional dimension (in terms of partnership/location of activities) and / or impact. • A project implemented locally can also be considered as relevant, if it has an impact on the EUSDR.
Added-value of START Expected change to the status quo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • START support is aimed at projects which could not be implemented without START funding. • Project activities need to improve the status quo of a situation. • If the project is a specific part of a larger project or at its preparatory stage, the details on the overall project need to be provided.

Beside the basic eligibility and quality criteria the IB will ensure, as far as possible, that selected projects are **from all Danube Region countries and address all Priority Areas of the EUSDR**.

5. Application Procedure

The application documents are available for download on the PA 10 - Institutional capacity and cooperation webpage: <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/start-call2> from the 20th of May until the 6th of July 2015.

The application documents must be completed according to the guidelines, signed by the legal representative of the Lead Applicant's organisation and submitted through an **Online Application Tool** that will be open **from 6th to 8th of July 2015, 12:00 AM (CET)**. The link to the online tool is stated in the application form.

The following **4 documents** must be uploaded to the Online Application Tool:

- **Completed Application Form** as **open Word file** (all pages)
- **PDF - scan of printed and signed Application Form** (all pages, as one single document)
- **Completed Project Budget Plan** as **open Excel file** (all pages)
- **PDF - scan of printed and signed Project Budget Plan** (all pages, as one single document)



If one of the following criteria applies, the application will not be assessed:

- The application is incomplete
- Mandatory fields in the Application Form or the Project Budget Plan are not filled in
- The application contains inconsistent information
- The application was not submitted via the Online Application Tool
- The application was submitted after the deadline

Timeline for the application procedure

20 th of May 2015	Launch of the 2 nd Call – application documents can be found at: http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/start-call2
6 th to 8 th of July 2015, 12:00 AM (CET)	Online submission of applications: Applicants must register for the Online Application Tool and upload the complete application

6. Formal check by the IB

All applications submitted via the Online Application Tool will be formally checked by the IB.

The following criteria will be checked:

- Is the application complete and submitted correctly?
- Is the applicant (partnership) eligible?
- Is the project eligible? (location, requested amount)

Incomplete applications or applications where formal criteria are not fulfilled will not be subject to further assessment. **Applicants concerned will be informed.**

7. Pre-selection of applications by the PACs and their Steering Group

PACs receive all applications relevant for their Priority Area (PA) and conduct the pre-selection procedure with their Steering Group according to the following criteria:

- Relevance of the partnership
- Relevance of the project for the EUSDR and the identified Priority Area
- Macro-regional dimension or impact of the project
- Quality of the application (consistency, clarity, feasibility of the project)

PACs inform the IB about the results of their assessment and forward a ranking list of the pre-selected projects for final check.

8. Plausibility check of pre-selected applications

The plausibility check of best ranked projects is conducted jointly by PAC10 and the IB.

The applications are assessed in relation to the following plausibility elements:

- Adequacy between project objectives, planned activities and budget
- Expected change of the status quo
- Are the planned indicators and the targets realistic?
- Is the timeline for implementation of activities plausible?



As START targets the entire Danube Region and all Priority Areas, the geographic and thematic balance will be considered within the assessment, as well as the budget available for the 2nd Call.

The IB reserves the right to verify the legal existence of Lead Applicants by requesting official documents of the organisations.

9. Final Decision

PAC 10 will send the final selection list to all PACs for their comments. After consulting the PACs, PAC 10 will send a decision letter to each lead applicant informing them whether the START application is selected or is not selected for funding. **In case of rejection, assessment details can be provided.**

10. Contracting

10.1 Grant Agreement

A **Grant Agreement** will be concluded between the IB and the selected Lead Applicant ("Lead Partner") incl. the following 4 Schedules (Annexes to the Grant Agreement).

- Schedule 1: Project Description
- Schedule 2: Project Budget Plan
- Schedule 3: Eligibility Rules & Declaration of Expenses
- Schedule 4: Content Report

Schedule 1: **Project Description** and Schedule 2: **Project Budget Plan** are based on the application documents and will be adapted in regard to the eligibility rules, changes to the project content and changes to the project budget. After all open issues are clarified the Grant Agreement will be sent to the Lead Partner for signature. The agreement must be signed and returned to the IB within four weeks. In case the Grant Agreement is not returned in due time, the funds will be reallocated to other projects.

This Grant Agreement confirms the final commitment of the EU grant to the project and forms the legal and financial framework for the implementing the project.

10.2 Partnership Agreement

The Project Partners have to provide full support to the Lead Partner to ensure successful implementation of the project. In order to guarantee high quality and fulfilment of project objectives, it is recommended, but not required, to conclude a Partnership Agreement between the Lead Partner and additional Project Partners. The Partnership Agreement formalises the division of mutual responsibilities and rights of partners.

11. Project Implementation

11.1 Main conditions

The Lead Partner and all Project Partners must implement the activities foreseen in the **Project Description**. The Project Description must be in line with the budget calculated in the **Project Budget Plan** and the conditions set in the Grant Agreement.



11.2 Reporting

The documentation of the project activities and project costs (real costs and unit costs) is conducted via an **Online Reporting Tool**. Details on the eligibility of expenses are provided in the document "**Eligibility Rules & Declaration of Expenses**".

Two mandatory reports are required:

- **Midterm report:** halfway through the implementation of the project (exact date will be defined in the Grant Agreement), the Lead Partner has to deliver a midterm report. The report outlines the project activities, outputs and incurred expenses for the reporting period. The report is due within 2 weeks after the end of the 1st reporting period.
- **Final report:** one month after the project is completed (exact date will be defined in the Grant Agreement), a final report has to be submitted. The final report summarises the project activities, outputs and total expenses incurred for the entire project period.

A copy of each report will be forwarded by the IB to the supporting PAC. The Lead Partner and all Project partners are expected to provide any information requested by the PACs during and or after the project implementation. This is specified in the Grant Agreement. Each report must be documented (activities and costs) via the Online Reporting Tool. In addition, required **originals (e.g. invoices) must be sent** to the IB by postal mail together with the final report.

11.3 Payments

The payment to the Lead Partners will be composed of one or two **pre-financing payments** and a **final payment** as follows:

- A **pre-payment of 50%** of the START amount will be paid after signing the Grant Agreement by the IB and the Lead Partner. This pre-payment provides the cash-flow necessary to begin project activities.
- A **second pre-payment of 25%** can be requested by the Lead Partner after submission of the midterm report. The second pre-payment will only be paid if at least **30%** of the approved project budget has been spent and declared. The IB reserves the right to conduct sample or detailed checks on invoices and documentation of unit costs, before releasing the second pre-payment.
- The **balance** will be paid after validation of the final implementation report and related expenses by the IB. The value of the pre-payment(s) will be deducted from the final payment.

In any case, it is not possible to receive a higher amount than approved in the Grant Agreement, even if the project declares higher total costs.

11.4 Recovery

The IB reserves the right not to pay the grant or part of the grant and/or to request reimbursement of amounts unduly paid, especially in following cases:

- if no expenses are proven at the midterm report and no explanation is provided by the Lead Partner, the IB reserves the right to stop the project and to request reimbursement of the pre-payment;
- if the final certified costs are lower than the pre-payments, the difference must be reimbursed by the Lead Partner to the IB.

11.5 Modifications

Modifications in the content and the duration of the project as well as a budget increase are not foreseen.

In case the Lead Partner encounters difficulties in the implementation phase, they must contact the IB as soon as possible.



11.6 Control and audit

Lead and Project Partners do not need to have their costs certified by a controller or auditor.

After the project is concluded and the final report is delivered (including all original invoices and documents), the IB will check the final report and verify the reported outputs and the declared costs according to the eligibility rules specified in the document **"Eligibility Rules & Declaration of Expenses"**. The Lead Partner will be contacted if clarifications regarding the outcomes of the project or the project costs are needed. If the Lead Partner fails to bring clarification, the IB reserves the right to determine the final amount of the grant and to reimburse solely the documented costs according to the reported activities and the eligibility rules.

In addition to the controls by the IB, project reports and expenditure will be verified by an external auditor contracted by the IB for this purpose.

11.7 Ex-post availability of documents

After validation of costs, the IB will return the original documents to the Lead Partner. The originals of all financial and accounting documents concerning the activities financed under the Facility need to be kept available until **seven years** after the date of the final payment, e.g. in case of audits and verifications by the IB, the European Commission or the European Court of Auditors.

12. Follow-up and monitoring

The Lead Partner needs to ensure the sustainability of the project activities. If deemed necessary, PACs may request Lead Partners to provide a follow-up report.

ANNEX I - Overview of thematic focuses for the 2nd Call of START