

Trade Unions and Transnational Projects

Alex MARTIN, February 2021

Why launch an EU project?

Why launch a project? Where does a project start?

Interesting call for proposals? Your organisation could do with some extra funding?

Starting point:

You launch a project because it will help you **respond to a strategic need of your organisation**. Project initiation starts with a “**strategic needs**” analysis.

What resources would help you address the needs that your organisation is experiencing?

- Do you need to strengthen your expertise in a specific field?
- Do you need to raise awareness and build public support for a specific issue?
- Do you need to train your TU officers? Or to produce a guide for TU reps?
- Do you need to formulate policy recommendations / have an input in a legislative process?

Project initiation phase

Only then will you be able to:

- **define** the project idea (key objectives, target groups, expected results)
- **test** the project idea (previous efforts to address the issue? check with colleagues/experts, including ETUC/ETUI/ETUFs, do a feasibility check)
- **develop** the project idea (draft an outline of the workplan, plan for sustainability / long-term project impact: how will the benefits of the project be sustained and exploited after the project funding is over)
- **Share** the project idea with project partners (essential that all partners are clear about what to expect from the project, but also about what contribution the project will expect from them (in terms of expertise and resources - staff time))

Then you can look for **securing the adequate funding support for the project.**

Many different EU funding programmes (DG EMPL but not only):

It will depend on the topic/focus and type of project you envisage !

Application process

Project funding is usually operated through the following process:

- publication of a **Call for proposals** (by the EC), which includes relevant information: priority objectives, eligibility criteria, deadlines, admin & financial aspects
 - submission (online + by post) of a **project proposal** (work programme + budget estimation) defined by the applicants
 - **Evaluation committee** at the Commission (usually around 4 months)
 - **Grant agreement** signed with the successful applicants / beneficiaries
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- Important to read carefully the call guidelines: make sure that your project responds to both your priority needs but also the priorities of the call you apply to!
 - ONLINE Platform: Participant Portal originally developed for the Horizon 2020 Research Programme will now used for a large number of funding programmes.
NEW: DG EMPL will start using it from this year on (so no more SWIM portal)!

What type of Grant?

The successful applicants sign a grant agreement with the EC.

Project funding: **Action Grant** – for a specific action which is carried out in addition to (not part of) the usual activities of your organisation (= most ETUC projects are action grants).

Not the same as an Operating Grant: funding for the full operations of an organisation or a network.

Co-financing principle (own contributions from beneficiaries) – in DG EMPL, EU fund usually covers 80% - 90% of the project

Eligibility of TU organisations

TUs are often de-facto organisations with **no** legal personality, BUT to be eligible for EU funding, beneficiaries (in principle) must have a legal personality.

A **Derogation** was introduced in the DG EMPL calls (Article 131 of Financial Regulation):

- Entities with no legal personality are eligible if their legal representative signs a declaration that (s)he is in a capacity to undertake legal obligations on behalf of the organisation.
- The EC requests other guarantees: information about the financial and operational capacity of the beneficiaries, balance sheets, proof of past projects, etc.

This « recognition » is now accepted by a number of other DGs, after long explanations & discussions...

Understanding award criteria

No matter what funding programme, the award criteria will include:

- Relevance of the proposal (clearly defined project rationale, relevance vis-à-vis the EU policy agenda and the strategic priorities of the call)
- Quality of the proposal (coherent, appropriate and realistic work programme, SMART objectives, methodology)
- EU added-value and impact / transnational dimension
- Quality of the partnership, including the degree of involvement and commitment of the partners
- Cost-effectiveness of the action (cost benefit ratio)
- Quality of the arrangements to publicise the action & disseminate the results (visibility)

Diverse sources of funding

Rights, equality and citizenship Programme (managed by DG JUST - see the 'funding' section in the webpage):

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2014-2020/rec/index_en.htm

- Promote non-discrimination
- Promote equality between men and women
- Combat racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance
- Combat violence

AMIF (asylum Migration and Integration Fund) managed by DG HOME

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en

*ETUC Projects: **Labour INT** (including FISASCAT Milano) and **UnionMigrantNet** (including FISASCAT and municipalities of Milano, Trieste, Pordenone)*

Diverse sources of funding

Projects in **Third countries** (EuropeAid DevCo or DG NEAR):

Geographical Instruments: IPA (Instrument de Pre-Adhésion) managed by DG NEAR: Regional programmes (West Balkans) but also decentralised funds, managed by national authorities (Turkey project).

ETUC Projects: TUs Capacity building in the Balkans / Turkey: involving Youth in TUs

Thematic Instruments: IEDDH / EIDHR: Projects in the field of Democracy and Human Rights in third countries (EuropeAid):

<https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/103464>

ETUC Projects: promoting democratisation of Social Partners organisations in Maghreb and Middle east

Note: most EuropeAid calls include a 2-stage application procedure + Logical Framework Approach

Diverse sources of funding

Employment and Social Affairs – see the ‘funding’ section in the webpage of DG EMPL:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en>

- **Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI):** PROGRESS, EURES
- New Call (published last 15 Feb 2021 under EaSI): **Strengthening the role of Social Partners efforts in mitigating the economic and Social impact of the Covid-19 Crisis**
 - ETUC will apply and will set-up a cascading grant mechanism to support national TU organisations
- **The prerogative “Social Dialogue” Budget Lines** (which are the main source of funding for ETUC/ETUFs projects)

Social dialogue budget lines

Should be implemented in 2021 via **4 calls for proposals** (calls not published yet):

- 1) VP/2021/**001**: Support for Social Dialogue (TU projects must involve employers): budget usually around 8M + 5M increase this year (**deadline: June**)
- 2) VP/2021/**002**: Information and training measures for workers organisations – usually around 4.5M for projects (operating grant for ETUI EZA) (**deadline: June**)
- 3) VP/2021/**008**: information, consultation and participation of workers at company-level: approximately 7M (**deadline July/August**)
- 4) VP/2021/**004**: improving expertise in the field of industrial relations (4.5M) (**deadline: July/August**)

Example of ETUC projects

VP/001 - 'Social Dialogue' Budget line:

- Joint Projects of the EU Social Partners (BE, SMEUnited (UEAPME) SGI Europe (CEEP)
- ETUC interpretation guide for the transposition of the EU Social Dialogue framework agreement on Digitalisation (signed in December 2019)

VP/002 - 'Trade Union' Budget line (workers' organisations):

- Collective bargaining – including Pay transparency (equal pay for work of equal value)
- Involvement of TUs in ESIF funds (putting the partnership principle in action)
- EST – ETUC Semester Toolkit (TUSLO network Trade Union Semester Liaison Officers)

VP/008 - 'company-level' Budget line

- More democracy@work: workers' information, consultation participation rights
- Platform workers: strengthening social dialogue and workplace representation of non-standard workers – with a special focus on workers in digital labour platforms
- CISL project: equipping workers reps @company-level on addressing the Just Transition

What kind of projects?

National-level: whether you are a cross-sectoral confederation or a branch federation, you can be the lead applicant (or join as a co-applicant) in such projects. Important to liaise with your EU-level organisation !

Overarching objective of the budget lines:

To help strengthen the capacity of Trade Unions to “contribute to addressing the overarching EU employment and social policy challenges” as laid down in particular in:

- Political Guidelines presented by Ursula von der Leyen in “A Union that strives for more – My agenda for Europe” and the Commission Work Programme 2021
- The EPSR (European Pillar of Social Rights)
- Commission communications “A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions”, “The European Green Deal”, the “European Digital Strategy” and “European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience”

In the VP/001 ‘support for Social Dialogue’ budget line: your project has to contribute to the priorities, activities & results of EU Social Dialogue.

What kind of projects?

Pre-requisite:

Projects must have a clear **European dimension** and a strong link to developments at EU-level in the field of social rights / social dialogue / industrial relations .

The purpose of these budget lines is to **stimulate social partners collaboration on a transnational level** (as opposed to the ESF which focuses on national-level capacity building projects).

For 01 and 02 calls: a '**genuine involvement**' of a European-level Social Partner organisation, as a formal partner in the project (a simple letter of support is no longer sufficient !):

- ETUC
- ETUFs (IndustriAll, UNI Europa, EPSU, EFFAT, EFBWW, ETF, etc...)
- BusinessEurope, SMEUnited, SGI Europe

What kind of projects?

Eligible project activities:

- Transnational cooperation events between trade unionists (seminars, conferences, short trainings, workshops, expert working groups)
- Reports and studies (collection of information, questionnaires & interviews, case studies and analyses)
- Means of communication / dissemination (publications, websites, newsletters, e-tools, short video productions)

Administrative and financial aspects

Since 2014 : longer & larger projects encouraged

- Increased co-financing rate: the Commission's grant now covers up to 90% of the total cost of a project.
- Minimum grant requested: 108,000 EUR / or indicative amount of grant between 150 and 500K EUR (as it is in the 02 Budget Line).
- Increased eligible duration of projects: 24 months

Since 2015 : multi-beneficiary approach

Since 2016: New provision on starting date of the projects

on the 1st day of the month following the date of signature of the agreement.

Since 2021: New platform for DG EMPL grants

Application process and managing of the grant agreement process will take place on the EU Participant Portal (for Funding and Tenders)

Administrative and financial aspects

Project implementation according to the Grant Agreement and the financial regulations

Pre-financing (40%) transferred upon signature of the agreement

Beneficiary must respect sound financial management (show evidence and proofs of expenditure incurred)

Second pre-financing may be requested (if 70% of the 1st amount spent)

Final activity report and financial report (after which the balance is paid by the EC)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me:

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