FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

The Czech–Norwegian Research Programme (CZ09)

Contents

1. Where to find relevant information regarding the administration of the project?

The task of the project beneficiary is to inform all partners about the requirements and formalities of the programme.
The Czech and Norwegian partners are provided with three relevant websites containing information:

I. Website of the programme provider (The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports - MEYS)
Links: http://www.msmt.cz/vyzkum-a-vyvoj/czech-norwegian-research-programme

http://www.msmt.cz/vyzkum-a-vyvoj/norske-fondy

- Information of the Ministry, updates, calls, documents, templates, notifications etc.
- Most funding conditions were described in the Call documentation, please refer to the Guide for Applicants, published together with the Call.

- Contact persons: Štěpán Obrtlík (stepan.obrtlik@msmt.cz), Jan Aschermann (jan.aschermann@msmt.cz), Klára Musilová (klara.musilova@msmt.cz).

II. Website of the donor partner of the programme (Research Council of Norway - RCN) www.rcn.no/eea

The Norwegian partners may contact RCN with request for help and arrangement of contact with the Czech authorities.

- Contact: Aleksandra W. Haugstad (awh@rcn.no)

III. Website of EEA and Norway Grants (Financial Mechanism Office) www.eeagrants.org

- Annex 12 Regulation – a crucial document for bilateral research programmes of EEA / Norway Grants

Link: http://eeagrants.org/Results-data/Documents/Legal-documents/Regulations-with-annexes/Norway-Grants-2009-2014/(offset)/10

The legislation of majority of the principles of this programme is based on the **Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism** 2009–2014, including annexes. **Annex 12 of the aforesaid Regulation** includes the principles for implementation of bilateral research programmes. The principles of Annex 12 were designed in similar fashion to the principles of EU FP7 and are to be understood and applied in similar fashion.

If you are uncertain in the area of reporting, required documents on costs, or audit regulations, see the aforesaid annex (visit the programme website for specific information and templates for periodic reports).

A summary of basic and framework documents is available on the MEYS website.

2. When do projects start and finish? Is extension of a project possible?

The *Decision on the provision of institutional support to the international cooperation project in the field of research and development within the framework of the Czech–Norwegian Research Programme CZ09 file no. MSMT-28477/2014*[1] (*project contract*; issued by the programme operator (MEYS) for the project promoter, which coordinates other project participants) states:

*"The Project promoter shall begin project implementation in accordance with the time schedule of the call for proposals, **on 15 July 2014 at the earliest,** or at the starting date specified in Annex 1, but no later than 60 calendar days from the date of issuance of this Project Contract."*

The project promoter shall inform the programme operator about the official launch of the project.

The Project Contract on the project also determines the end date of the project. It is possible to begin project implementation even before signing the contract – but only after the decision on financing was made, i.e. July 15, 2014/July 8, 2015. **The costs are eligible from the start date of the project, which is communicated to the Ministry by the project promoter!**

The projects cannot be extended beyond April 30, 2017.

Attention! Costs incurred and activities carried out after April 30, 2017, will not be funded by the programme (see Guidelines of the National Focal Point on Eligible Expenditures: http://www.eeagrants.cz/Eligible+Expenditures). For example, this includes personnel expenses associated with the execution of the final report of the project incurred after April 30, 2017. Such expenses will be paid for by personal funds.

[1] Attention! Reference numbers (Ref no.) in different Project Contracts may vary.

Exception: Within 30 days from the end date of the project may be included amount eligible those costs that are related to project activities carried out prior to the official end date of the project (for example, salaries and social charges, and payments related to activities in April 2017 due in May 2017; e.g. an invoice for an event that took place on April 28, 2017 due on May 20, 2017).

In terms of administration, the programme will be implemented until December 31, 2017, in order to complete final reports of the projects and programmes.

3. Funding of projects

How will the delayed project launch in 2015 effect the project's budget?

The delayed project launch means that most projects have less time for implementation than the project proposal states, in some cases. The obligation to ensure results specified in the project proposal is stated in the Project Contract, therefore project participants should attempt to implement project activities in a shorter amount of time.

Do we have to return financial support that was not spent in the calendar year for which it was allocated?

No, institutional support is intended for the entire duration of the project, and money that are is spent in accordance with the plan of 2014 should be transferred to the following year (see link: http://www.msmt.cz/vyzkum-a-vyvoj-2/statement-on-the-method-of-reporting-expenses-for-norwegian).

We recommend drawing funds (payments) received by the project promoter/partner first!

When can we receive the next payment of the institutional support?

The project promoter may apply for next payment of approved financial support after fulfilling their obligations towards the programme operator (MEYS) determined by the Project Contract and, at the same time, after spending 70% of the financial means from the previous year.

Example: Projects that fail to fulfil such obligations and do not spent 70% of the 2014 allocations in the first periodical term may apply for the next payment to the programme operator during the course of 2015.

4. Flexibility of the budget

Is it possible to transfer funds between the individual cost categories of the budget in the given calendar year?

In some cases and under certain circumstances, it is possible. The following conditions apply:

- The percentage of indirect costs must not be changed!
- Direct costs may be altered to a certain extent and, in some cases, with prior approval of the Programme Operator (MEYS). The conditions for budget flexibility are defined in Provision no. 4 of Article 4 of the Project Contract, and foresee two approaches to these alterations:

A. Without prior approval of the Ministry:

Every entity may transfer up to CZK 60,000 (aprox. NOK 17,000) between the individual cost categories in the given calendar year without the obligation to request prior approval from MEYS. This provision does not apply to personnel and capital expenditures!

B. With prior approval of the Ministry:

In case of transfers larger than CZK 60,000 (from CZK 60,000.01), the project promoter must send a written request for redistribution of financial resources to the Ministry by November 15 of the given calendar year latest. The sooner, the better.

Alterations of personnel and capital expenditures must always be approved by the Ministry prior to their execution.

5. What is the deadline for applying for a change in the budget?

Applications for budgetary changes shall be submitted by November 15 of the given calendar year (see Article 4, Paragraph 4 of the Project Contract). The sooner, the better.

6. Reporting on the project

Project promoters shall submit reports on project implementation every twelve months.

The first Project Periodic Report (PPR) will be submitted by the project promoter to the Ministry on January 31, 2015, at the latest. **The deadline for submitting periodic reports in the subsequent years is January 31, 2016/2017.**

Each project promoter is responsible for the determination of their own internal deadlines for submitting reports of their partners in order to complete and submit PPR by the aforesaid deadline.

The forms and templates for annual reports are available on the website of the Ministry. See link: http://www.msmt.cz/vyzkum-a-vyvoj-2/reporting.

The presence of signatures of all entities on the title page is not necessary. **Only the project promoter and the principal investigator must sign the title page of the report. The project promoter also signs Appendix I of the Project Periodic Report (PPR).**

Financial data in Annex I of PPR are presented in Czech Crowns (CZK). The specific currency rate of NOK/CZK for the given project is presented in Annex I of the PPR as well. Norwegian partner's costs will be converted into CZK pursuant to the specific rate of the day the Norwegian partner receives payment from the beneficiary, unless otherwise specified in the relevant Project Contract on the project (for example, a fixed exchange rate is used throughout the whole implementation of one project).

A template for timesheets is available from the contact persons but is not mandatory for those who already have an established method of recording working time used on the project. The Ministry will not require timesheets as appendices to PPR.

Financial Audit

On behalf of the project promoter and other participants of the project, the principles of financial reporting and audit are defined in article 5.3. of Annex 12 of the Regulation. The section states:

Costs incurred by project promoters and project partners shall be supported by receipted invoices, or alternatively by accounting documents of equivalent probative value and bank account records. This documentation must be collected and archived in accordance with national legislation.

Together with annual project reports, the project promoters and project partners shall present a certificate of costs (audit certificate) in accordance with Article 5.3. of Annex 12 **only if the threshold limit of 375,000 EUR is exceeded**. The exchange rate is CZK 25.69 to EUR 1. **Therefore, the audit threshold is CZK 9,633,750.**

According to Article 5.3 of Annex 12, the certificate of costs shall not be presented in the event that the total programme subsidy to the beneficiary or other project participant is lower than EUR 375,000/CZK 9,633,750.

7. Checklist – what information the Norwegian partners submit for periodic reports?

Information of their institution for the beneficiaries on the factual parts of the project implementation that should be included in the PPR.

Annex I (the relevant xls file worksheet), costs in individual items of the partner's budget.

a) **A statement of the actual expenditure incurred by the Norwegian partners** (*Financial Statement by Norwegian Partner*) – form of a FP7 Form C equivalent (formal statement that the costs listed in Annex I are true and necessary for project implementation);
b) **An accounting record** documenting incurred costs for the given reporting period (according to processes of the organisation).

Both documents shall contain a signature of an authorized person responsible for financial management of the organisation**, and a stamp of the organization.** A template of the Statement (a) is available at the website of the programme.

A certificate of costs (audit report) is necessary only if the project promoter/partner spends EUR 375,000 or more on the project implementation (see above).

8. Exchange rate

For the purposes of execution of the Project Periodic Report, the Norwegian partners will report the expenditure actually incurred in NOK (*Financial Statement by Norwegian Partner*). However, the financial data in the statement of expenditure (Annex I of PPR) are listed in CZK. Therefore, Norwegian partner's costs will be converted into CZK pursuant to the specific rate of the day the Norwegian partner receives payment from the project promoter, unless otherwise specified in the relevant Project Contract on the project (for example, a fixed exchange rate).

The amount of funds received in NOK will be documented by a bank statement of the Norwegian partner.

The exchange rate, declared in Annex I of PPR, will vary in different periodical terms of 2014-2017 (does not apply in cases of fix-term projects determined by the Project Contract where the rate remains unchanged throughout the whole course of project implementation).

9. Where can we find more financial resources for our cooperation?

All financial resources of the Czech-Norwegian Research Programme have been allocated to support projects. Other funding opportunities exist in the EEA and Norwegian Scholarship Programme, which finances mobility between the Czech Republic and Norway. Students and researchers may participate in this programme.

Applications for the calls are submitted by the Czech subject (e.g. university) in cooperation with the Norwegian side.

In contrast to the call for programme CZ09, where one university could have submitted several individual applications, the calls for scholarship will receive one application from each university on behalf of all faculties which are interested in mobility. If you work at a university, refer to your Erasmus programme coordinator or a person responsible for the exchange programmes of Mobility CZ07 (NAEP Agency of The Centre for International Cooperation in Education of MEYS – Link: http://www.naep.cz/index.php?a=view-project-folder&project_folder_id=103&)

See calls for the CZ07 programme at:

http://www.dzs.cz/cz/norske-fondy-a-fondy-ehp/vyzva-c/

No additional calls to promote projects in the CZ09 programme, analogous to the main call on November 29, 2013, are planned. Negotiations on a new EU EEA agreement have been ongoing since the beginning of 2014. Meanwhile, the third financial mechanism on the national level is in the state of development.

10. What is the Project Contract?

The Project Contracts were issued by the Programme Operator (The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) in favour of the project promoters representing the consortium on September 12, 2014 (in case of project 7F14442 on April 22, 2015/in case of reserve projects on August 13, 2015 and August 27, 2015).

The English version of the Project Contract was published on the MEYS website, thus it could be consulted by the Norwegian partners. The Czech version is available HERE.

The Project Contract is related to the Partnership Agreement and all matters relating to the partners and their roles in the project are governed by this Agreement.

The Annex 1 of the Project Contract is the approved project proposal. The budget of the project is also part of the Project Contract as Annex no. 2.

11. Are changes to the Partnership Agreement possible?

Changes to the Partnership Agreement are necessary in case:

– the partner withdraws from the consortium
Please bear in mind there are formal requests for the minimum number of partners from both countries (one Czech and one Norwegian entity). Also, the results and outputs of the project cannot be altered without a serious reason.

– the legal status/eligibility of any partner changes

Any changes that affect the provision of support (subsidies) must be reported to the Ministry within seven calendar days from the date when the project promoter/partner attained such information. In the event of changes made to the Partnership Agreement, the Ministry shall receive one signed original.

12. Remuneration in terms of personnel expenses

Personnel costs within projects are in keeping with the National Focal Point Guidelines for eligible costs (although they are not discussed in detail here) and are always understood as costs that must be duly planned and approved, be proportionate to the expected volume of work, and in the payment phase, be documented by links to the work performed that must contribute to the achievement of the project objectives.

In this sense, it is necessary that any bonuses beyond regular salary expenses are always documented by the work performed beyond the regular duties and have had a clear impact on achieving/increasing the project targets or outputs.

The Certification Authority of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic clearly states that in case the project objectives are not fully achieved and the beneficiary depletes all planned salary funds (personnel costs), such funds can be, in part, considered ineligible.

13. What are conditions for publicity of a project?

The publicity obligation of project promoters and project partners arises from applicable documents of the Norwegian Finance Mechanism 2009-2014 – in particular the Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 (hereinafter the Regulation) and its Annexes 4 and 12 – and from the Project Contract on the provision of institutional support to the international cooperation project in the field of research and development within the framework of the Czech–Norwegian Research Programme CZ09 (hereinafter the Project Contract; in particular Article 5 Paragraph 5; Article 12 Paragraphs 5 and 17).

The publicity obligation also applies to the program operator (MEYS)!

Summary information is available HERE.

14. Are the publishing results entered into the RD&I IS?

Yes, they are. Released publications and other achieved results are entered by Czech project promoters into the Information Register of R&D results (RIV). This obligation is established by the Act on the Support of Research, Experimental Development and Innovation and Government Regulation No. 397/2009 Coll., on Research, Experimental Development and Innovation Information System.

15. How long is the project documentation archived for?

According to Annex 12 - Regulation, the project promoters and all project partners are obliged to archive **all documents related to the project for 10 years** beginning January 1 of the subsequent year from approval of final report of the programme by the Financial Mechanism Committee/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway via Financial Mechanism Office (FMO).

16. Are computers and software items eligible costs?

Procured **standard office, computer and communication technology/equipment/devices and software, or standard laboratory equipment and real estate**, are considered to be ineligible costs in accordance with the 2013 Call (see Guide for Applicants 1.8.3). **The ineligibility remains valid for the full duration of the project!**

17. Is it possible to use travel funds for presentation of results at conferences that do not take place in Norway and the Czech Republic?

Yes, it is possible. However, it must be **an active participation at an event directly related to the project implementation and with dedication to the Norway grants and the programme operator (MEYS).** For the purposes of an audit, the participation must be documented by business travel records, including a programme of the event, presentation or invitation (see conditions for publicity and costs eligibility).

18. Is it necessary for the billed overheads in the calendar year to always correspond to the approved percentage from the Project Contract?

The amount of indirect costs must be adhered to (for example, according to PIC code) in each year of the project implementation as stated in Annex 2 of the Project Contract. **The total percentage of indirect costs must not be altered. It must not be increased in the individual years of the project implementation!**