

ESTABLISHING SCHOLARSHIP BLOCK GRANTS UNDER THE EEA FINANCIAL MECHANISM AND NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM

This memorandum outlines the donor states' views on possible ways of focusing and modelling scholarship funds under the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004-2009.

1. Introduction

The importance of trans-national mobility for students, academics and researchers has been highlighted by Ministers of Education in EU and EEA countries in recent years as part of the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy. Mobility for learning and research purposes contribute to preparing individuals for working life, the internationalisation of education and training systems, as well as promoting research, innovation and the knowledge base.

High standards in education and research are essential to maintain a skilled workforce and an innovative and creative economy. The overall objective of scholarship block grants (or 'funds') established through support from the EEA Financial Mechanism and/or the Norwegian Financial Mechanism should be to contribute to human resource development in the beneficiary states by facilitating mobility. This would enable eligible applicants in the beneficiary states to gain knowledge and experience from abroad, and give educational and research institutions the opportunity to attract foreign students, teachers and researchers.

2. Objectives of scholarship block grants

More specifically, the objectives of the scholarship block grants could be to:

- a. Expand the knowledge base, develop best-practice methods and transfer innovative approaches in education, training and research.
- b. Promote mobility of students, scholars and researchers between the beneficiary states and the EEA EFTA states (in the case of the EEA Financial Mechanism) and the beneficiary state and Norway (in the case of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism).
- c. Promote cooperation and partnerships between educational and research institutions in the beneficiary states and the EEA EFTA states (in the case of the EEA Financial Mechanism) and the beneficiary states and Norway (in the case of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism).

These objectives would also enhance mutual knowledge and cooperation in general between the beneficiary state and the EEA EFTA states/Norway.

3. Directional considerations of scholarship block grants

Scholarship block grants may be developed in various directions, according to the specific needs and wishes of the beneficiary state. Some possibilities in this respect are to:

- a. Support mobility at all levels of education, training and research, targeting long- or short-term training of pupils, apprentices, students, lecturers, researchers, and experts of secondary schools, high schools, universities, and research institutions.
- b. Support mobility of researchers, educational experts and teaching staff, as existing exchange programmes are less developed for these groups than for students. It is desirable to increase cooperation and contact between educational institutions, public administration, and local/regional government within the individual beneficiary states and the EEA EFTA states/Norway. Exchange of academic staff and governmental officials could be one way to facilitate this aspect. Examples of fields that would be appropriate for institutional cooperation are lifelong learning, vocational training, special-needs education, implementation of the Bologna process and higher education reforms, as well as other education- and research-related areas in line with the MoUs.
- c. Ensure flexibility in terms of eligible activities, as this would increase the added value of the scholarship block grants. The scholarship block grants could play an important strategic role in strengthening and supplementing other programmes in education and research within the EU, bilateral agreements as well as other activities under the financial mechanisms. One approach could be to offer additional funding to already established mobility programmes - such as Marie Curie, Erasmus, Comenius, Grundtvig and Leonardo da Vinci - for students, pupils and researchers wanting to study in or collaborate with partners in the EEA EFTA states/Norway. This would ensure conditions enabling more people to make use of the opportunities offered by these EU programmes. Mobility may also be incorporated into other multi-purpose programmes. In this context, the management of the scholarship block grants may benefit from being delegated to an institution with experience from managing similar programmes funded via the EU.
- d. Ensure that eligible costs under the scholarship block grants are aligned with the particular needs of end-beneficiaries. Such costs may include travel, living and working expenses, tuition fees, study or research material, networking and administrative costs.

4. Contact points in the EEA EFTA states/Norway.

Relevant authorities, institutions and organisations in the EEA EFTA states/Norway will be pleased to assist in the development and implementation of projects within the fields mentioned above. Information on national contact points in the EEA EFTA states can be found below.

Iceland: For cooperation with Icelandic institutions, the Office of International Education has been appointed to act as contact point. The Office of International Education will assist, inform and guide interested parties about the scholarship block grants within the EEA Financial Mechanism, potential cooperation and other possibilities in Iceland.

For further information, please visit:

- The Office of International Education: <http://www.ask.hi.is/page/forsidaenglish>

Liechtenstein: The main institutions for education and research in Liechtenstein are:

- Hochschule Liechtenstein (Liechtenstein University of Applied Sciences): <http://www.hochschule.li/english>
- Internationale Akademie für Philosophie (International Academy of Philosophy): <http://www.iap.li/>
- Liechtenstein Institut: <http://www.liechtenstein-institut.li/>
- Universität für Humanwissenschaften: <http://www.unilie.li/>

For a more general overview concerning education, please visit:

http://www.liechtenstein.li/en/liechtenstein_main_sites/portal_fuerstentum_liechtenstein/fl-buw-bildung_wissenschaft/fl-buw-ueberblick.htm

Norway: For cooperation with Norwegian institutions and organisations, the main contact point in the areas of education and training is the Norwegian Centre for Cooperation in Higher Education (SiU). SiU is the National Agency for the Socrates Programme, Erasmus Mundus, the e-learning programme, and, from 2007, the Integrated Programme for Lifelong Learning (ILLP). For research, the Research Council of Norway is the main point of contact. Interested parties may turn to these two institutions for guidance and assistance in starting up and/or carrying out activities within the framework of the scholarship block grants, including finding relevant cooperation partners and hosting conferences and seminars.

For further information, please visit:

- Norwegian Centre for Cooperation on Higher Education: <http://siu.no/vev.nsf/o/English>
- The Research Council of Norway: <http://www.rcn.no/english> or helpdesk@eracareers.no

For more general information on finding partners in Norway, please visit:

<http://odin.dep.no/europaportalen/english/eea/comp/bn.html>