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1st Call for Light Project Proposals

B Light 2

**(Fostering cross-border business cooperation of SMEs operating on
different sides of the Hungary-Croatia border)**

Interreg VI-A Hungary-Croatia Programme 2021-2027

Lead Partner: Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovations and Investments (HAMAG – BICRO)

1. Introduction

Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovations and Investments (HAMAG-BICRO), as Lead Partner of the project “Fostering cross-border business cooperation of SMEs operating on different sides of the Hungary-Croatia border” (further referred to as “**B Light 2**”, Project ID: HUHR/2402/B-light2/1.3/001) implemented under the Interreg VI-A Hungary-Croatia Programme 2021-2027 launches the 1st **Call for Light Project Proposals for cooperating Light Partners of Hungary and Croatia**.

The Application Pack (for Light Project Proposals) consists of the following documents:

- Call for Light Project Proposals (announcement – current document);
- Guidelines for Light Partner Applicants;
- Light Project Application form;
- Model Partnership Agreement;
- Declaration of the Light Partner Applicant on non-economic activities
- Declaration on de minimis aid for Light Partners
- Joint Statement
- DNSH statement

Reference number of the call: HUHR/2402/1.3/2601/001

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Programme financing source: European Regional Development Fund

2. Background and objectives

Recognising poor economic performance of the border region, low export-import and weak cross-border business activities between companies, as well as poor innovation performance, the programme strategy of the 2021-2027 Interreg programme aims at fostering cross-border business cooperation between SMEs operating on different sides of the border.

Priority 1 of the Interreg VI-A Hungary-Croatia Programme, within the Specific Objective 1.3 aims at enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments.

The large distances between border crossing facilities bring low economic performance, weak cross-border trade and poor presence on foreign markets. Therefore, complementary business cooperation of SMEs on two sides of the border should be strengthened with focus of joint appearance on each other's and third markets. SME business cooperation shall have a positive effect on competitiveness, generation of value added, and improvement of employment situation.

Due to poor entrepreneurial innovation performance, cooperation-based innovative product-, service- and technology development of SMEs operating in the border area should be promoted in which partner SMEs play a complementary role in the joint innovative development with clear division of tasks according to their professional competences.

Joint innovation of the SMEs in the programme area needs to be supported by the involvement of R&D organisations mainly in cross-border project generation and development.

Given the size of the financial envelope, the specificities of Interreg programmes (for example the nature and size of the planned operations) and the limited experience with financial instruments, the programming authorities chose to use only grants.

The crucial element of the scheme is the built-in territorially targeted project generation support to the SMEs operating in the border area, with involvement of development agencies and enterprise development foundations located in the territory. The 'B Light 2' scheme enlarges the scope of existing SME support schemes (like mainstream national programmes) in the two Member States in a complementary way: the scheme focuses on cross-border innovation and business cooperation activities.

- **Specific objectives that will be pursued are:**
- **Increasing awareness among SMEs in the border region about the role of internationalization as a key driver of innovation.**
- **Establishing operational connections between SMEs on both sides of the border to foster collaborative relationships.**
- **Supporting collaborative development initiatives among SMEs, aimed at fostering innovation.**
- **Offering technical assistance to SMEs in project development and helping them navigate the complexities of cross-border cooperation.**
- **Raising awareness of the significance of cross-border economic cooperation and its role in strengthening the regional economy.**
- **Boosting the number of joint SME business collaborations in the border region, particularly in rural areas with low economic performance.**
- **Promoting cross-border trade among SMEs by providing direct support to economic entities.**
- **Encouraging innovation in the region by supporting cross-border innovation cooperation projects among SMEs.**

Objectives are to be reached through granting cooperation activities of Hungarian and Croatian SMEs through a one-step application system.

3. Funds allocated

The total allocation for the Light Partners within B Light 2 project is EUR 7.502.101,88 (EU contribution).

The SC reserves the right to decide at a later stage on the exact modality of the Call(s) for Light Project Proposals (e.g. two separate consecutive Calls or one continuously open Call with cut-off dates for the submission of LPAs, etc.).

This decision and exact deadlines will be timely communicated by the Lead Partner (HAMAG-BICRO) to all interested applicants.

The indicative allocation for the 1st Call for Light Project Proposals is EUR 3.751.050,94 (EU contribution).

The SC reserves the right to modify the allocation per Call and decide on the Call modality depending on the quality of the LPAs. In case of low-quality LPAs, the SC has the right not to use all available funds of the indicative Call allocation. On the other hand, in case of high-quality LPAs, the SC has the right to finance additional high-quality LPAs to the extent of the available funds for Light Partners.

The **maximum co-financing rate is 80%** for both Hungarian and Croatian Light Partners.

Minimum and maximum size of Light Projects:

	Total eligible costs (100%)	Maximum ERDF co-financing (80%)
Minimum per Light Project	EUR 75,000	EUR 60,000
Maximum per Light Project	EUR 375,000	EUR 300,000

The total value of EU contribution in the Light Project cannot exceed 300.000 EUR regardless of the number of Light Partners.

Value added tax (VAT) is not eligible expenditure

- if the total cost of the project (including VAT) is at least EUR 5.000.000 and it is recoverable under national VAT legislation,
- in case the total budget of the project (including VAT) is below EUR 5.000.000 if it is recoverable under national legislation and is not eligible based on national legislation/rules;
- If it is VAT of a State aid relevant activity, based on Article 7(1) of Regulation (EU) 651/2014

4. Timeframe and submission technicalities

The current call is opened for all Light Partner applicants fulfilling the eligibility requirements of the present Call.

The Light Project Proposal has to be submitted electronically through the B Light 2 Platform operated by the Lead Partner HAMAG-BICRO (<https://cbchb.eu/application/>).

Submission takes place through uploading of the following documents:

- **Documentation in English language:**
 1. **Light Project Application form** (completely filled in English in MS Excel, signed, stamped (if applicable), and scanned in pdf format) – filled in jointly.
 2. **Joint Statement** (filled in, signed, stamped (if applicable), and scanned in pdf format) – for each SME as Light Partner

3. **De minimis declaration** (filled in, signed, stamped (if applicable), and scanned in pdf format) – for each SME as Light Partner
 4. **Pro-forma offers / price quotations / indicative price offer** for external expertise and services costs and equipment costs (not older than 30 days) – for each Light Partner
 5. In case of small-scale infrastructure costs: Light Partners will be required to submit with the LPA the **technical description (brief description of works, cost estimate in excel format) with pro-forma offers / price quotations / indicative price offer** of the planned works according to the national laws and acts for each country if Light Project includes small scale infrastructure costs (not older than 30 days) – for each Light Partner
 6. Curriculum vitae of the Light Project staff (preferably Europass in English) – for each Light Partner
 7. Declaration of the Light Partner Applicant on non-economic activities (filled in, signed, stamped, if applicable, and scanned in pdf format) – for each R&D organisation as Light Partner
 8. DNSH statement (filled in, signed, stamped, if applicable, and scanned in pdf format) – for each Light Partner
- **Documentation in national language:**
 9. **Tax Administration Certificate (Croatia) / tax clearance certificate (issued by the national tax authority, NAV, in Hungary)** (not older than 30 days) – for each Light Partner
 10. **Statute of the R&D organisation or another legal act serving as proof of the legal status** of the R&D organisation in accordance with the definition of a R&D organisation- if the applicant/partner is an R&D organisation.
 11. In case of small-scale infrastructure costs: Light Partners will be required to submit with the LPA the **proof of legal interest (proof of ownership or lease contract valid at least until the end of the Light Project sustainability period)** – for each Light Partner

Submission deadline of Light Project Proposals:

23/11/2026

5. Duration of Light Projects

Duration of the Light Projects shall be at minimum 6 and maximum 12 months. Closure of Light Project may take additional 4 months subsequently to the end of implementation period.

6. Partnership Requirements

One Light Project shall be implemented by minimum 2 and maximum by 4 cooperating Light Partners as defined in GfA. Light Partners shall come from Hungary or Croatia, **at minimum 1 Light Partner from each country.**

Each Light Partner bears responsibility for its own project part. Responsibilities and conditions will be laid down in an Addendum to the Partnership Agreement made between the Lead Partner and the Light Partners after selection of the Light Project in the evaluation process.

7. Eligible applicants and geographical coverage

Eligible applicant Light Partner is:

- **micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)** stipulated in 651/2014/EU Regulation, Annex 1, and
- **R&D organisations** referred to as “research and knowledge-dissemination organisations” under Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014, (Article 2) if they bring innovative added value to the Light Project concerned.

R&D organisations can be eligible Light Partners only if at least two SMEs are also included in the Light Project as Light Partners, at least one SME from each side of the border.

Owner interweaves should be excluded among Light Partners of each Light Project. This means that Light Partners cooperating under a single Light Project should be autonomous enterprises from each other, stipulated under 651/2014/EU Regulation, Annex 1, Article 3. Partner or linked enterprises cannot be granted under a single Light Project.

Each Light Partner should have its seat or branch registered and acting in the **eligible programme area** (NUTS 3 level counties):

Hungarian side:

- Zala county (HU223);
- Somogy county (HU232);
- Baranya county (HU231).

Croatian side:

- Međimurska county (HR 061),
- Varaždinska county (HR 062),
- Koprivničko-križevačka county (HR 063),
- Bjelovarsko-bilogorska county (HR 021),
- Virovitičko-podravskaa county (HR 022),
- Požeško-slavonska county (HR 023),
- Osječko-baranjska county (HR 025),
- Vukovarsko-srijemska county (HR 026).



Detailed professional and financial eligibility rules are laid down in the Guidelines for Light Partner Applicants.

8. Programme language

The official language of the programme is English. Therefore, all communication between the Lead Partner, the territorially competent SME development agencies/business support organisations and regional development agencies (Territorial Partners) and the Light Partners is to be carried out in English, including information in the Light Project Proposal form and the related annexes.