

TRADE UNIONS FOR A FAIR RECOVERY

*Strengthening the role of trade unions in mitigating the impact
of the COVID-19 crisis*

ETUC Cascading grants scheme – Q&A

(Updated on 12 October 2021)

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Application

Who is eligible to apply?

Cascading grant applicants must be trade union confederations based in an EU Member State, UK, Iceland, Norway or in EU candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). Applicants must also be affiliated to an EU-level social partner organisation.

Must confederations be ETUC affiliates in order to apply for funding?

Beneficiaries must just be a cross-industry trade union confederation representing workers in their national Social Dialogue institutions, and must be affiliated to an EU-level social partner organisation. The cascading scheme is **not** restricted to ETUC affiliates.

Can my application be written in my national language?

Applications must be submitted in English. ETUC is currently unable to offer in-house translation. Please feel free, however, to make use of online translation tools (e.g. DeepL). We understand that some technical points may cause some difficulties in translation, but if we have any points that need further clarification, we will reach out bilaterally.

Can you translate an application document into my national language?

Unfortunately, unless a pre-existing translation is available, then it is not possible to offer translations at this moment. As above, please feel free to make use of online translation tools.

What does 'Work Package' mean?

A work package is a thematic/sectoral element of your overall workplan. This means that, under a given workplan, a beneficiary is not limited to one thematic/sectoral dimension, such as digital trade unionism. If beneficiaries wish to cover two or more different areas (which are not necessarily overlapping) in their capacity-building effort, they can envisage to have a number of work packages (WP) under one workplan. E.g. WP1: preparation meetings ahead of consultations on the national recovery plan, WP2: building digital trade unionism, WP3: researching impact of COVID-19 on non-standard workers, etc.

Is there a minimum/maximum number of work packages or objectives to be met ?

There is no minimum/maximum number of work packages or objectives which your workplan should meet. A work package is a thematic/sectoral element of your overall workplan.

If your workplan has only one work package, only fill out the **Work Package 1 (WP1)** field, and leave the rest blank. If you have more work packages than fields listed, simply use the additional space provided.

Applicants are not expected to produce an entirely new, large-scale, complicated project, but rather design their workplan around their existing COVID-19 recovery plans at national level, and focus on the essential needs and priorities.

We intend to cooperate closely with one or more member organisations, should we also list them as contact points in the application form?

As the application form should be filled out by the project leader – i.e., the national trade union confederation – then the fields requiring details of organisation and contact points must be from your own confederation. If you intend to work with sectoral/regional/local level organisations within your membership, you only need to mention this in the description of your workplan.

How long should workplans be?

Under the current timeline, capacity-building workplans should be between 12-15 months.

Can a workplan be shorter/longer than 12-15 months?

The 12–15-month period is recommended, with 15 being the maximum. If a workplan is slightly shorter, that is not a problem – however, please ensure sufficient time is allocated to completing the workplan and evaluation of outcomes. Workplans **should not** exceed 15 months due to ETUC internal deadlines and reporting requirements with the European Commission. Please note that the 12-15 month period is not the full project cycle. This time is designated for the implementation of workplans. Beneficiaries will still have approximately one month after the end of their workplan to compile results, reports and evaluations.

How will my application be evaluated?

An evaluation committee will be set-up and will process all applications received. The first step will be to check the eligibility of applicants (type of organisation) and the operational and financial capacity of applicants. The workplans of those applicants eligible for funding will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- Overall relevance of the capacity-building workplan in relation to the objectives outlined in the ETUC call for proposals. Activities planned must match the priority objectives and expected results of the call;
- Measures should be in place for disseminating the outcomes of the capacity building workplan, and for ensuring a lasting impact (sustainability of results after EU funding ends);
- Measures should be in place for monitoring and evaluating workplan outcomes.

Unlike the evaluation process within the European Commission, applications in this instance will not be ranked against one another. ETUC will seek to ensure that all applications that meet the eligibility and evaluation criteria receive funding.

Coordination

Can national trade union confederations work together with their member organisations (for instance, branch-level and local level unions)?

Yes. The fund is to be cascaded to national level confederations, who will design their national capacity-building workplans according to their priority needs. These capacity-building workplans could foresee a thematic and/or a sectoral focus, whenever appropriate, and it is up to them to determine how to involve their sectoral and local unions in their capacity-building workplan. As long as activities fall within the eligible categories and the costs are documented by the national confederation, then there is no issue with this.

Can national confederations bring in external experts?

Organisations may use external experts in their capacity-building workplans, and this should be clearly stated within the workplan and budget. As above, organisations are granted a degree of flexibility regarding how the funding is used, however reimbursement is conditional upon activities and costs falling under the eligibility requirements.

Can an external expert be someone within our own organisation?

By external experts, we do not mean staff of the confederation (who are on the payroll of the organisation, under an employment contract), we mean experts who deliver an ad-hoc (sub-contracted) service/job to the confederation, for a specific part of the project/workplan. The external experts then invoice the confederation to claim their fees and be paid for the job delivered. In such capacity-building projects, the external experts would usually be academics (or a trade union institute) drafting a study report, trainers (or a trade union school) running a training seminar, visual agencies/designers producing a website, a newsletter, or any dissemination material (audiovisual/video etc).

When contracting an external expert, beneficiaries should seek good value for money with respect for market prices. In other words, the option offering the best quality-price ratio. For this, beneficiaries should use their “normal procedure for sub-contracting”.

Can we subcontract tasks to our organisations research and/or training institute?

Yes, training and research institutes already linked to your confederation can be sub-contracted as external experts. As above, this must also respect market value prices.

If there is more than one union confederation in a country, is it possible for more than one to apply?

Yes, in the likely scenario that there is more than one confederation within a country then more than one may apply for funding. It is **not** one country, one grant. So long as an organisation meets the eligibility requirements and produces a tenable workplan, then it is eligible to apply for funding.

It ought to be noted, however, that a higher volume of applications may alter the co-financing rate. ETUC's current objective is to finance between 90-95% of national workplans, but the exact figure cannot be determined until all funding requests have been made.

Is it one project per organisation?

Essentially, yes. Nevertheless, the scope of a project remains broad. It is up to each national confederation to determine how the funding will be best used to support national recovery. As such, there may be more than one thematic dimension (or Work Package) to a workplan (e.g., Work Package 1 could focus on enhancing digital capacities and work package 2 addressing impact on a specific group, etc).

How long will it be between applying and implementing workplans?

Applicants are invited to apply by the 29 October 2021. Throughout November and December, applications will be reviewed by the Steering and Evaluation committee, and later finalised by the Validation Committee. This is to ensure the utmost transparency within the process. We aim to launch workplans from 1 January 2022.

Financial

How is the project funded?

The project is funded via the EaSI (Employment and Social Innovation) Funding Programme, whereby the European Commission has released EUR 3,6 million to ETUC, which will be cascaded to national confederations. ETUC will sign a cascading grant agreement with each beneficiary national confederation, and this agreement will set-out the means of providing financial support, which will include a blend of two approaches: the (I) “reimbursement of actual costs” and the (II) “lump-sum approach”, as defined by the European Commission.

What is the maximum we can apply for?

National confederations may apply for a maximum EUR 120,000. **This amount is a maximum, NOT a target !** Once again, applicants are not expected to produce an entirely new, large-scale, complicated project, but rather design their workplan around their existing COVID-19 recovery plans at national level, and focus on the essential needs and priorities.

How will the money be cascaded/when will our organisation receive the funds?

Beneficiaries will receive a first financial instalment at the beginning of their workplans (40%) upon signature of a cascading grant agreement, a second pre-financing (30%) upon validation of a mid-term progress report, and the payment of the balance will be done upon validation of the final activity report and financial statement. This is to ensure that all costs, activities, and projects reimbursed meet the eligibility criteria.

Why are there two methods of reimbursement?

ETUC has opted for this blended approach to mitigate excessive administrative burden within national confederations when it comes to reimbursing the staff costs (the time spent by officers in managing all the events and activities of their workplans).

As such, while services, travel and administrative costs will be a reimbursement of actual costs, while events and activities will be granted a lump sum, dependent upon their size, nature, and scope.

How does the lump-sum approach work?

A realistic and reasonable lump sum has been established for four different categories of activities, each with varying sub-categories depending on whether the event is online, physical and/or (trans)national. This has been carefully devised based on ETUC’s experience in running events and activities.

A lump-sum must only be used to reimburse the work and time invested by their own staff into the organisation and coordination of a capacity-building event/activity. The amount reimbursed will be defined by the type of event in question, attendance, and reporting after the event.

Is the lump-sum approach calculated on a country-by-country basis?

While we recognise that staff costs will vary from one country to another, the lump-sum categories will remain the same for all applicants – the size of reimbursement will depend upon the scope and size of an activity or event held.

Can we incorporate different kinds of activities (listed in Annex 5) into our workplan at different stages?

Yes, you can opt for different activities at different stages of the workplan. The descriptions in Annex 5 are just to illustrate the lump sum amount you would receive in reimbursement for an event.

Is there a cap on cost categories?

There is no cap on cost categories. Applicants may channel the necessary funding into areas where they deem the most necessary.

Can the funding be used to invest in IT equipment?

As this is an action grant, as opposed to an operating grant, the full cost of purchasing IT equipment and other goods is not eligible for reimbursement. Depreciation costs, however, are eligible under this fund. This means that a share of the total cost of equipment purchased to carry-out the workplan (33% of the total cost per year, for the first 3 years after purchase) can be eligible for reimbursement.

Is participation in the ETUC Executive Committee eligible for reimbursement if it constitutes our European-level social dialogue efforts?

Yes. Costs invested in preparation meetings and participation in the Executive Committee or other ETUC networks can be eligible for reimbursement if aligned with the objectives of your workplan.

If one or more member organisation is an active ‘supporting partner’ of our workplan, how would they be reimbursed?

You can definitely foresee an active involvement from some of your members (as “partners”) in the capacity-building workplan, and if these partners are in charge of managing a number of activities, you (the confederation) would be responsible for ensuring that they (the partners), are fully aware of the reporting requirements and commit to keep/compile the adequate documentation, as follows.

Each meeting for which a lump-sum will be requested, must be documented with:

- (I) An invitation and an agenda for the event/activity

- (II) A signed list of participants or a screen capture showing participants' names if the event/activity has taken place virtually
- (III) A brief report, relaying key points and outcomes of the event/activity

In addition, each cost incurred by the partner organisation (meeting rooms, catering, translation etc) must be clearly indicated in an invoice with the exact cost specified.

There are two ways of handling the financial management of the workplan:

(I) Decentralised: each "partner" deals with the suppliers in their WP (requesting the invoices and paying them), and then submits a reimbursement claim to the confederation (the lead beneficiary). This reimbursement claim should cover the total costs incurred and include a financial statement (a breakdown of all the costs incurred with the documentation) covering both the real costs (documented by invoices etc) as well as the lump sums (including the justification docs for each activity carried-out). The confederation (lead beneficiary), having reimbursed their partners, would then claim reimbursement to ETUC (by providing a full, compiled, financial statement, covering the costs incurred directly by them but also by their partners).

(II) Centralised: each "partner" manages the activities on the field, but asks all the suppliers to address the invoices directly to the confederation (lead beneficiary), so that all the payments are made by the confederation from the start. The only cost which the partner could claim from the lead beneficiary is the lump sums for the activities/events carried out by them. The lead beneficiary would then submit a compiled, full, financial statement to ETUC, to claim reimbursement for all the costs.

Themes and priorities

What is digital trade unionism/digitalisation?

In the context of this project, digital trade unionism/digitalisation covers a wide range of possible activities. This can include, but is certainly not limited to, the following:

- Creating a database of your members so you can email, message or even phone them directly
- Creating or improving the facilities for online meetings instead of relying only on physical meetings
- Creating or improving the opportunity for workers to join a union online (for example via your website)
- Creating or improving the opportunities for union members to put questions to the union or seek help via the website or other means (email, messaging, help line etc)
- Creating or improving access to information for members on your website whether about legal rights, the contents of collective agreements, the decisions of the union, the minutes of meetings etc.

Monitoring and implementation

Can my organisation use surveys to monitor the implementation of our workplan?

Yes. Surveys/questionnaires are one way of monitoring the implementation of the workplan. Overall, it is up to your organisation to determine the best way to monitor, whether this is purely via surveys, more routine bilateral conversations, or tracking results at national level. It is dependent upon what you deem to be the most appropriate means to measure success within your national environment.

Surveys, questionnaires and data collection during your workplan will also be important for evaluation purposes at the end of your workplan.