



EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia"

Co-funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Implemented by German Development Cooperation GIZ under the umbrella of the Private Sector Development and TVET South Caucasus Programme

EU4Business "Innovative Tourism Ventures and Businesses" Grant Scheme

Call for Proposals

Applicants' Manual



Yerevan, May 2021





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1 EU4BUSINESS ITTD - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia" (ITTD) project is cofunded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is being implemented by German Development Cooperation GIZ under the umbrella of the Private Sector Development and TVET South Caucasus Programme. The project started in November 2019 and will run until April 2023. The project is part of the EU4Business initiative (www.eu4business.eu) of the European Union. It has an overall objective to ensure shared and balanced inclusive growth in tourism and technology industries. This will be achieved through a) support to transformative, innovative tourism ventures in the Northern regions of Armenia, b) support to high tech and innovative entrepreneurs, c) international knowledge exchanges for high tech researchers to translate research to businesses and 4) networks for the benefit of entrepreneurship skills for students and general population groups.

The EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia" project follows two main directions: development of ventures in innovative tourism and technology. Methods used will be competitions for grants, technical assistance by experts, community and stakeholder participation, and the entrepreneurial eco-system development.

The first component - EU4Business "Innovative Tourism for Armenia" - is focused on the development of enhanced tourism offerings, especially in the Northern regions leading to good jobs, sustainable and competitive businesses and responsible tourism value added. It foresees the conceptualisation and implementation of three grant schemes focusing on tourism-related and driven community and regional development initiatives and private tourism ventures and businesses. Furthermore, it includes the strengthening of the RA Tourism Committee, including supporting data driven tourism marketing activities.

The second component - EU4Business "Technology Development for Armenia" - is focused on the transformative creation and development of tech SMEs to enable diversification of economic growth. To this end it will support the entrepreneurship ecosystem and technology start-ups through a grant scheme approach as well as through innovation partnerships between science, education and businesses including supporting an increased participation in Horizon 2020 / Horizon Europe grants.





2 GRANT SCHEME OBJECTIVES and TARGET GROUPS

The general objective of the EU4Business "Innovative Tourism Ventures and Businesses" Grant Scheme is to support Armenia's three northern regions' regional and economic development by providing financial and technical support to ventures, early-stage startups and established businesses to implement projects creating and/ or further developing advanced tourism products or services with focus on competitiveness and sustainability.

The Grant Scheme seeks to improve and diversify the tourism offer in the three northern regions also in terms of innovativeness and quality to develop a pipeline of high-value tourism ventures and enhance offered tourism products.

The Grant scheme also seeks to contribute to the creation of thematic and/or geographic clusters of private sector companies to better exploit their potential through cooperating and combining resources to take advantage of market opportunities.

The target groups for this Grant Scheme are:

- Existing SMEs with growth potential
- Newly created/early-stage enterprises registered as a private business legal entity •
- Social enterprises registered as a private business legal entity •

The legal status of the business must be Limited Liability Company (LLC), Closed Joint Stock Company (CJSC), Open Joint Stock Company (OJSC).

3 SIZE OF GRANTS, CO-FINANCING REQUIREMENT, PROJECT PERIOD

The most viable and ready-to-implement projects will be awarded as follows:

Max. amount per grant: up to 32.000 EUR* •

Min. amount to be requested: 20.000 EUR

- Number of grants: up to 30
- Selection: by independent jury
- Co-financing requirement: min 15% (cash contribution) of requested amount •

*To be announced in AMD, equivalent to EUR, on the day of the announcement of the Call for Proposals (the following link will be used for exchange rate). The budget amount will be adjusted to the exchange rate and should not fall below the equivalent of 20.000 EUR or exceed the equivalent of 32.000 EUR on contract signing date.

The term of project grant financing is up to 12 months from execution of the Grant Contract.



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4 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS and ELIGIBLE COSTS

Applicants must meet **minimum eligibility requirements** for their proposals to be considered:

- Legal entity registered in Armenia as LLC, CJSC, OJSC
- Armenian citizen or permanent residency
- Applying organisations must not be in liquidation or bankruptcy procedures

Eligible costs under this grant programme include:

- Project related business development costs, i.e. for marketing and sales, legal advice, accounting, communications
- Project related technical equipment, materials, hardware, software, licences, certificates •
- Project related re-design, renovation and/or small scale, structural expansion •
- Project related consultancy services •
- Project related logistics (transportation, conference facilities and services, translation, etc.) •
- Project related travel allowances based on GIZ rules •
- Project related external technical assistance* costs
- Project related admin staff cost (full or part time) on mandatory basis**
- Project related operational costs*** such as salaries (based on employment contract), office rent, ٠ accounting, legal services, utilities, communications, supplies, admin staff member
 - on an optional basis up to 30% of the total requested amount*

*Technical assistance costs are considered costs spent for external expertise and supposed to cover trainings, coaching and other measures to build capacity and develop skills of the applicant's staff or beneficiaries in the frame of the proposed project.

Technical assistance will be provided to the Grantees through the Tourism Innovation Academy's (TIA) 8month pre-acceleration and acceleration programme. Participation in minimum 70% of offered activities for Grantees is mandatory. Failure to meet the required extend of participation in the TIA's programme may, at the EU4Business ITTD project's absolute discretion, result in cancellation of the grant agreement and reclaim of payments made in the frame of the awarded grant.

**Admin staff member should be responsible for financial reporting, budgeting, financial monitoring of the grant. He/she should work closely with EU-ITTD project's admin staff and act in compliance with EU-ITTD project's rules and regulations.

***In case the operational costs are higher than 30% in the budget, the application will be rejected. In case the budget allocation is not correct and after correction/redistribution the operational costs are higher than 30% in the budget, the application will be rejected.



Non-eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- VAT and customs duties¹
- interest or debts owed to any party, credits to third parties
- expenditures and provisions for possible future losses or debts
- purchase of land or buildings, including any renovations and any other expenditures that are not related to the project purpose or identified in the budget
- purchase, rent or lease of products or services suitable for military or dual use

5 TARGET REGION

The Grant Scheme's **target regions are Armenia's three Northern regions Shirak, Lori, and Tavush**. Proposed projects are supposed to be implemented in either one or several of the three regions. Applicants can also be registered outside the target region.

6 PROJECT DIRECTIONS and POSSIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Proposals are supposed to address one or more of the following directions (list not exhaustive):

- promote innovativeness and follow innovative approaches
- keep and increase productivity and competitiveness
- create jobs and generate additional or alternative income
- aim for sustainable and inclusive economic development
- support post-crisis and post-conflict economic recovery
- answer changed demand, i.e. address domestic market, safety and security topics, incl. hygiene measure and standards etc.
- address seasonality
- address environmental topics
- improve skills and qualifications
- encourage or leverage additional financial contribution

¹The GIZ EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia" Project is VAT exempted according to the RA Government Decree Nr. 1112-N of 23.09.2009. Using the Grant funds, the Grantee shall carry out a VAT and Customs duties exemption procedure for the Grant funds. (Note: the Co-financing part can't be exempted from VAT and Customs duties).





Project activities could aim for/ address/ include the following areas/activities (list not exhaustive):

- innovative technology-based solutions to drive digital transformation and to develop smart products based on AR/VR solutions, artificial intelligence, etc.
- technologies optimizing business processes, improving business management systems and ecommerce platforms
- tech-solutions to upgrade products or offer and/ or provide improved access to markets, networks, consultancy, education, and qualification
- forward-looking business concepts and product development contributing to the development of Winter tourism, Eco and Adventure tourism, Wine and Culinary tourism, but also other directions and to answer changed demand*
- thematic and/or alternative accommodation concepts
- integration of local produce and delicacies
- approaches to facilitate accessible and inclusive tourism
- innovative solutions focusing on social impact and/or rural development
- business concepts dealing with environmental topics, energy efficiency, cleantech solutions, green and sustainable approaches, circular economy etc.
- solutions that address the negative consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic and Post-Conflict situation for the tourism industry
- qualification and education
- marketing/re-branding solutions
- safety and security topics incl. hygiene measures, standards, certifications
- rehabilitation, conversion of post-industrial sites into tourism attraction

The project will be considered innovative if it

- is new to the market
- is new to the region (Lori, Shirak, Tavush) or a specific place
- applies a new business model
- uses new technological, marketing, organizational approaches or introduces new products or services





*Thematic Tourism Cluster Approach and Potential Membership of Awarded Projects

Awarded projects that are relevant to one of the EU4Business ITTD project's thematic cluster directions will be asked to get registered as a cluster member of an established cluster organization for at least one year and benefit from the offered services and cooperation opportunities with no costs involved.

The thematic clusters per region will be:

- Shirak Region: Winter and Outdoor Tourism Cluster
- Lori Region: Eco and Adventure Tourism Cluster
- Tavush Region: Wine, Spirits and Food/Culinary Tourism Cluster

7 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS / Q&A SESSION

Interested applicants are expected to examine the Applicants' Manual in detail before preparing and submitting their applications. Applications that are submitted late, incomplete, or are non-responsive may result in the rejection of the proposal.

Issuance of this Call for Proposal does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia" project, nor does it commit the project to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

Applications can be submitted in English or Armenian to the email address <u>tourism@tourismtech.am</u>, however we strongly encourage to submit the applications in English language to ease evaluation procedures. Applicants need to indicate in the subject line the grant programme they are applying for (e.g. Innovative Tourism Ventures and Businesses Grant Scheme).

Hand-written Proposals will not be accepted.

Original documents will be requested upon necessity.

Deadline for application submission and receipt is June 24, 2021, 23:59 Yerevan Time.

GIZ EU4Business ITTD project reserves the right to accept or reject applications received after the deadline.

GIZ EU4Business ITTD project reserves the right to inform about the selection results only to shortlisted applicants/winners.





The application package includes the following documents

No.	Document(s)	Information
1	Project Description Submission Form (to be submit- ted as a word document)	Template attached to the an- nouncement as a separate annexe
2	Budget Submission Form incl. showing co-financing funds (to be submitted as an excel document)	Template attached to the announcement as a separate annexe
3	Self-Declaration Form incl. declaration on providing the required co-financing funds, accepting Technical Assistance requirements, and commitment to register as a cluster member in case of being asked	Template attached to the announcement as a separate annexe
4	CVs of the project team members demonstrating competency and any experience relevant for the execution of the proposed project	No special format is required
5	Organisation's registration letter	Scan of the original registration letter

Question & Answer Session

Questions regarding the Call for Proposals and application process may be sent in English or in Armenian by e-mail and clearly indicating the name of the Call for Proposals in the subject line (e.g. Grant Scheme "Innovative Tourism Ventures and Businesses") during the time period of **June 7 – June 11, 2021** to the address **tourism@tourismtech.am**. **Questions will be answered by email only**. All questions and answers will also be compiled and published anonymously within 5 days after the end of the Q&A period.





8 **GRANT SCHEME TIMELINE**

The timeline as planned for application submission, selection, and implementation will be as follows:

May 27, 2021	Opening date for call for proposal (4 weeks)
June 7-11, 2021	Q&A period (1 week)
June 24, 2021	Closing date for Call for Proposal
June 25 - July 4, 2021	Admin/eligibility check
July 5 - July 23, 2021	Evaluation by selection jury (3 weeks)
July 26 – August 8, 2021	Due diligence review of pre-selected applicants (2 week)
August 9 - 15, 2021	Final announcement of this grant scheme's winners
until August 31, 2021	Contract signing
September 31, 2022	Contract end date (up to 12 months Implementation period)

9 **SELECTION PROCESS**

All submitted proposals will be assessed according to the following steps:

STEP 1: Administrative evaluation based on the following criteria:

- 1. Deadline for sending in application package met
- 2. Application documents/ package complete (incl. self-declaration)
- 3. Budget correctly devised
- 4. Operational costs threshold met
- 5. Provision of CVs of project team members demonstrating project-relevant competency and experience





STEP 2: Technical Evaluation by Selection Jury

The actual evaluation of the applications and selection of the winners after administrative evaluation will be carried out by an independent Selection Jury. It will be focused on capacities of applicants, as well as on the quality of their project proposals crosschecked with submitted supporting documents. All eligible project proposals will be evaluated by each selection jury member and an average note will be calculated as basis for ranking of the project proposal. The Selection Jury's decision is final. Legal recourse is excluded.

The **Selection Jury** of the EU4Business "Innovative Tourism Ventures and Businesses" Grants Scheme will be comprised of national and international members incl. 1 from GIZ Armenia with backgrounds in tourism, economic development, community development, social entrepreneurship, and innovation promotion from public and private sectors.

Minimum 30% of selected projects will be reserved for **women-owned or women-led** businesses/ ven-tures/ teams.

The award of the grant must be accepted in written and by email during 7 working days after the notification. If GIZ does not receive the written confirmation/ acceptance until the deadline, the project will revoke its decision to award the grant to the applicant based on the applicants failure to meet a set deadline and will be given to the next candidate in the reserve list.





10 EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be evaluated based on the below mentioned **evaluation criteria**.

Note: Evaluation Criteria will be weighted.

No.	Evaluation Criteria	Min score (1)	Weight	Total
		Max score (5)		
	Competitiveness and Innovation of the Project			
1	Level of innovativeness (new and/or more effective approaches, methods, solutions, new technological applications)		3	
2	Likelihood to improve productivity and raise competitiveness of involved stakeholders		3	
3	Likelihood to provide improved offer and attract more visitors to the area the project is proposed for		2	
4	Sustainability of the business model and commercial potential		2	
	Team Composition, Feasibility and Cost Effectiveness			
5	Implementing team's composition and competence level		2	
6	Feasibility and relevance of the project related to the Grant Scheme's objectives		3	
7	Benefit-cost analysis of the proposed project activities		2	
	Social and Economic Impact of the Project			
8	Social and economic impact on involved community(s)		1	
9	Likelihood to create benefits for other actors along the tourism value chain		1	



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11 CONTRACT and PAYMENT MODALITIES

Contract Negotiation and Signing

Based on the decision of the selection jury, GIZ Armenia will start negotiations for signing a contract. The contract annexes will include detailed budget breakdowns, as well as a project implementation timetable with agreed specific milestones to be accomplished during the duration of the contract period.

Co-financing

The co-financing fund provided by the Grantee for the implementation of the project in an amount stipulated in the grant contract must finance project-related activities only. Prior to signing the contract, the Grantee should present to GIZ a bank statement on availability of their first contribution for deposit into the bank account dedicated to the project.

Disbursements of Grant Funds

Disbursement of grant funds will be done in form of advance payments on monthly basis and be subject to satisfactory performance in accordance with the contract. An advance payment cannot be more than 50% of the total grant amount. If at least 80% of the previous funds have been settled before the next disbursement date, the next advance payment can be requested. After the first advance payment, further advance payment calls have to be accompanied by a financial report proving the use of previous payment, incl. co-financing/own funds (contractor should provide payments orders, invoices, contracts, hand overacceptance acts, original bank statements and all other supporting documents), which should be in compliance with grant scheme requirements.

Retention Amount

With respect to the last advance payment, GIZ will withhold minimum 10% of the total budget from the last advance payment and would release such Retention Amount to the Grantee only upon satisfactory review of the final Progress and Financial Reports.

Monthly contributions by the Grantee

The Grantee's monthly contribution must be equal to at least 1/12th part of its total matching requirement; however, the Grantee, may contribute more than 1/12th of such amount (overpayment amount), in which case, the Grantee's contributions for subsequent months would be adjusted to account for any overpayments so that the Grantee's total contributions will be equal to its original commitment. Exceptions related to the $1/12^{th}$ part of the Grantee's monthly contributions are possible in justified cases. However, in this case the total co-financing amount needs to be spent 3 months before the contract end date.

Travel Expenses

Travel expenses shall be reimbursed only if the expenses claimed for and the duration of the business trip were necessary for implementing the project and the expenses incurred were appropriate.





General conditions

Grantees are not entitled to pass on the funds received or any part thereof to other recipients. More details on the timeframes will be settled in the contract agreement for each project based on project specifications. The grant recipients are not entitled to receive or apply for any other funding to carry out the action/work programme which is the subject of this grant application.

The contract will start on September 01, 2021 (earliest) and end on September 30, 2022 (dates can vary depending on the actual contract start and end date). All payments for the costs incurred within this period should be done by the contract end date. Costs incurred and paid outside of this period cannot be financed from the grant. All costs arising out of the agreed grant period are ineligible and can't be reimbursed or calculated as co-financing. Thus, none of the expenses done before the contract start and after the contract end dates will be accepted.

The final financial and narrative reports should be presented within two weeks after the contract end date.

When awarding contracts for supplies and services to be financed from the grant, the Grantee shall observe the regulations laid down in the Republic of Armenia and the provisions specified in the Grant agreement which constitute minimum standards.

Grant funds will be transferred to a Grantee's bank account (a separate account used for the grant only is preferable) and all Grantee's payments related to the project should be paid through a bank account.

Cash payments will be accepted as expense only in exceptional justified cases.

All Grant administration procedures (financial management; reporting; procurement, etc.) will be guided by the EU4Business project's Administration Team. A Local Subsidy Manual will be provided with the signed contract.





12 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, REPORTING and MONITORING

Immediately after the financing started, the Grantee shall start implementing the projects based on timeline and milestones included in the contract. The Grantee shall present to the EU4Business project financial reports, justifying the performed expenses with respective invoices, statements, and other supporting documents, monthly in English or Armenian, however the grantee is strongly encouraged to submit it in English to ease the reporting procedures.

After the first tranche and prior to disbursement of subsequent tranches to the Grantee, GIZ will conduct monitoring activities to assess the project's progress of the implementation as well as to ensure that the expenditures made are in accordance with the approved project budget for the given period.

Monitoring methods will include:

- Review of all project related transactions documents to verify that financial expenditures are in accordance with the approved project budget. In addition, monthly progress reports will also be reviewed.
- If necessary, announced, and random field/ project site visits will be organised to verify if the project's milestones were reached. Also, during field/ project site visits further needs for individual mentoring of the grant projects will be discussed, planned, and agreed on if needed.

Upon review and approval of the reports, as well as the results of field/ project site visits, Grantees, which comply to their contracts, will be eligible for the next disbursement.





13 CONFIDENTIALITY and AVOIDANCE OF CONFLICTS of INTEREST

Conflict of interest shall be interpreted but in no way limited to the following: any past, present or prospective economic, financial and private direct and/or indirect (through relatives or partners) interest, as well as ownership or other links of the Grantee with the staff of GIZ, the EU4Business Innovative Tourism and Technology for Armenia project or EUD.

It is expected that the Grantee's staff and members will always adhere to the highest ethical standards in all matters.

Where a Grantee's staff or member or shareholder/participant directly and/or indirectly (through relatives or partners) has an economic, financial and/or private interest in any other association or other organisation (including any vendor of goods or services) with which the Grantee has entered into, or is considering entering into, any contract or other transaction, such staff member shall disclose in writing to EU4Business ITTD project all material facts as to the relationship or interest. Individuals with conflicts of interest must recluse themselves from participating in any part of the decisions related to the transaction giving rise to the conflict.

Each case of fraud, waste or misuse of project resources or property identified by the Grantee's staff shall be reported in writing to its direct supervisor. Should the supervisor fail to undertake any action for suspending such fraud, waste or misuse, the issue shall be submitted to GIZ in writing by the same staff with sending a copy of such notification to the person having committed an act of fraud, waste or misuse.

All organisers, technical experts and members of the selection jury who have access to the Application Packages and business plans shall sign a Non-Disclosure Statement that extends for 1 year after the public announcement of the winner of the Competition.

GIZ shall undertake reasonable efforts to ensure that all participating organisations and team members retain all rights to ideas and intellectual property, as applicable.



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14 COMMUNICATION and VISIBILITY

As an EU co-funded project, operating under the EU4Business initiative of the European Union, and implemented by German Development Cooperation-GIZ, the EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia" project adheres to EU visibility guidelines stipulated in "Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Actions" and EU4Business Visibility Manual, which is part of the General C&V guideline of EU-funded and co-funded projects in Armenia:

These rules are likewise binding for the granted project's contractors and beneficiaries who represent an activity/project funded by EU through the EU4Business ITTD project.

General Rules

To ensure that EU and EU4Business visibility guidelines and rules are followed, all the communication and visibility related documents and material produced within the project and by its beneficiaries such as agendas, press releases, press briefings, announcements, flyers, posters, banners, visuals, etc., must be sent to the EU4Business project for approval at least 14 days prior to their publication! The EU4Business project in its turn shall upload them on the EUDIGITOOL portal run and managed by EUD for final approval of the mentioned documents and materials before they could go public.

It is obligatory that all the mentioned communication and visibility documents and materials bear the EU4Business logo, GIZ logo and Partner Logo, positioning them on the top left corner of a document/poster/cover picture, etc.

The high-resolution logos will be provided to the Grantee separately.







Besides the logos, it is obligatory to use the standard paragraph below on all major correspondence, invitations, documents, etc. describing the EU4Business Project in English and Armenian:

The EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia" project is cofunded by the European Union and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by German Development Cooperation GIZ through the Private Sector Development and TVET South Caucasus Programme. The project is part of the EU4Business initiative of the European Union.

ԵՄ-ն բիզնեսի համար նախաձեռնության «Նորարարական տուրիզմի և տեխնոլոգիաների զարգացում Յայաստանի համար» ծրագիրը համաֆինանսավորվում է Եվրոպական միության և Գերմանիայի դաշնային հանրապետության տնտեսական համագործակցության և զարգացման նախարարության կողմից։ Այն իրականացվում է Գերմանիայի միջազգային համագործակցության ընկերության (ԳՄՅԸ) «Մասնավոր հատվածի զարգացում և մասնագիտական կրթություն և ուսուցում Յարավային Կովկասում» ծրագրի կողմից.

Note – The project should always be presented in its full name, without any abbreviation – *EU4Business* "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia" Project. Where it is not possible to use the full name of the project due to space limitation or need to avoid too many recurrences then *EU4Business project* may be used instead.

Additionally, for presentations, publications, reports or filmed products, the following disclaimer must be used:

This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the XXX project and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

Սույն իրատարակությունը տպագրվել է Եվրոպական Միության ֆինանսական աջակցությամբ: Սույն իրատարակության բովանդակության բացառիկ պատասխանատվությունը կրում է XXX և այն ոչ մի կերպ չի կարող արտահայտել Եվրոպական միության տեսակետները.

Rules for content

Press releases, information highlights, articles, etc. must clearly depict EU's contribution to the project/initiative through its EU4Business project. Thus, the **content** and most importantly the **headlines** must be agreed and approved with the EU4Business project before they could be released/published!

Typography

As per EU4Business C&V guideline, it is recommended to use **Calibri** fonts for publications and **Nexa** for websites funded by the EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia" project.





15 ANNEXES

Annexe 1. Project Description Submission Form

To apply for this call for proposals the applicant needs to provide information about the organisation involved in the action and the proposed project as listed in the Project Description Submission Form.

Please download the Project Description Submission Form as attached to the announcement, fill in and include into your application package.

Annexe 2. Budget Submission Form

Please download the Budget Submission Form as attached to the announcement, fill in and include into your application package.

Annexe 3. Self-Declaration Form including declaration on providing the required co-financing funds

Please download the Self-Declaration Form as attached to the announcement, fill in and include into your application package.