

Lecture 4. Preparing to make a proposal

The secret to success in FP6 is careful preparation. This can and should start well before a call for proposals is issued.

This lecture describes the preparation process and the main rules for participation:

- ⇒ General advice
- ⇒ Who can participate
- ⇒ Choosing the instrument
- ⇒ Consortium building
- ⇒ Horizontal issues
- ⇒ References

General advice

Careful advance preparation will not only ensure a proposal with the best chance of success, but will save time and rushing to meet call deadlines. Broadly you could think of the preparation in three stages.

- ⇒ Study the general documents to understand the objectives of the Framework programme and see if you are able and willing to contribute to them
- ⇒ Study the relevant Work Programmes (and Calls for proposals if published) to find out if your particular subject area is applicable to FP6 and to see what instruments and evaluation criteria are to be used so that you can select the type of project you are going to propose
- ⇒ Form a partnership with complementary organisations and create an outline of your proposal including basic principles of contractual relationship, project management and Intellectual property rights (IPR) issue.

All these stages can be substantially completed before a call for proposals is issued. Then the call with its associated deadline will simply be the trigger to finalise the details and submit the proposal.

Who can participate

Legal entities

Participants in FP6 have to be 'legal entities', for example:

- ⇒ research institutes
- ⇒ universities
- ⇒ public and private companies
- ⇒ physical persons (individual people)

Eligible countries

In principle a legal entity from any country in the world can participate in FP6. However, different rules for participation and funding apply to different groups of countries. The following table gives an indicative overview for the main specific programme 'Integrating and strengthening the ERA'. Exact specifications and exceptions from the general rules are contained in the work programmes and calls for proposals. Special rules apply for the Marie Curie actions on mobility, training and excellence recognition.

Participant's country of establishment	Participation	Financing
European Union Member States: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, The Slovak Republic, United Kingdom	No restriction	No restriction
Associated Candidate Countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey	No restriction	No restriction
Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland	No restriction	No restriction
International organisations of European interest	No restriction	No restriction
Russia, New Independent States, Mediterranean Countries, Western Balkans, Developing countries	No restriction over and above the minimum consortium composition	Within the limits of the budget available for specific measures in support of international co-operation
Third countries having a co-operation agreement: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russia South-Africa, Ukraine, USA	No restriction over and above the minimum consortium composition	If Community contribution is necessary and foreseen by the Work Programme
Other third countries	If participation is foreseen or if it is necessary for carrying out the project	If Community contribution is foreseen by the Work Programme or if it is essential for carrying out the project
Other international organisations	No restriction over and above the minimum consortium composition	If Community contribution is foreseen in the Work Programme or if it is essential for carrying out the project

Choosing the instrument

Instruments are the means of Commission intervention – the structures and parameters that have been agreed at the political level within which projects can be funded. FP6 introduces three new instruments, as well as adaptations of existing instruments. You are not free to choose among all available instruments of FP6 for a given topic. The work programmes and calls will define which instruments are available for which topics.

To make a conscious decision if one of the available instruments in your topic is suitable for your ideas you have to understand their basic features and underlying concepts.

Network of Excellence (NoE)

NoEs are multipartner projects aimed at strengthening scientific and technological excellence on a particular research topic by integrating at European level the critical mass of resources and expertise needed to provide European leadership and to be a world force in a given domain. This expertise will be networked around a joint programme of activities aimed primarily at creating a progressive and durable integration of research capacities of network partners while at the same time advancing knowledge on the topic.

NoEs are more than just schemes for the co-ordination of research and information exchange; and the research itself is not their main focus either. Participating institutions have to invest seriously in **structural change** aiming at a durable integration of their research capacities. This requires the commitment of all levels of decision-making in an institution, including top management, supervising and financing bodies.

The **main result** should be a **durable restructuring and reshaping** of the way research is carried out in Europe in a given area.

The financial regime for NoEs has been built on the following principles:

- ⇒ a **grant for integration**, as a **fixed amount** to support the joint programme of activities
- ⇒ to be calculated taking into account (a) the degree of integration proposed by the consortium, (b) the number of researchers that all participants intend to integrate, (c) the characteristics of the field of research concerned and (d) the joint programme of activities
- ⇒ to be disbursed in **installment**, with payment depending primarily on the network's progress towards achieving a durable integration and on condition that the costs incurred in implementing the joint programme of activities are greater than the grant itself

Details on calculation of the grants will be provided in the model contracts. NoEs will be applied in the 7 priority thematic areas and in the specific programme for nuclear research. They may also be used, in duly justified cases, in research areas supporting policies and anticipating scientific and technological needs.

Integrated Project (IP)

IPs are multipartner projects to support objective-driven research, where the **primary deliverable is generating the knowledge required to implement the thematic priorities**. IPs should bring together a critical mass of resources to reach ambitious goals aimed either at increasing Europe's competitiveness or at addressing major societal needs. They must contain a research component and may contain technological development and demonstration components, as appropriate, as well as perhaps a training component. A project may be at any point in the research spectrum. A single project may indeed span large parts of the spectrum, *i.e.* from basic to applied research.

Integration within an integrated project may take several forms:

- ⇒ **Vertical integration** of the full "value-chain" of stakeholders from those involved in knowledge production through to technology development and transfer
- ⇒ **Horizontal integration** of a range of multidisciplinary activities
- ⇒ **Activity integration** : integrating various research activities from fundamental to applied research and with other types of activity, including take-up activities, protection and dissemination of knowledge, training, *etc.*, as appropriate
- ⇒ **Sectoral integration** of actors from private and public sector research organisations, and in particular between academia and industry, including SMEs
- ⇒ **Financial integration** of public and private funding, with overall financing plans that may involve the European Investment Bank and co-operation with Eureka

Funding will take the form of a grant to the budget, as a contribution to costs incurred, with specified maximum rates of support for the different types of activity within the project.

IPs will be applied in the 7 priority thematic areas and in the specific programme for nuclear research. In duly justified cases they may also be used in the research areas supporting policies and anticipating scientific and technological needs.

Programmes implemented jointly by several Member States (“Article 169”)

This instrument requires co-operation at the level of national governments. It aims at integrating whole national or regional programmes on a particular topic by their joint implementation, *e.g.* through harmonised work programmes and common, joint or co-ordinated calls for proposals. Each possible arrangement requires a joint initiative of a number of Member States, possibly represented by their national programmes, and the European Commission in order to generate a proposal. Specific implementation structures will have to be set up. It may be used in all FP activities. The expected Community contribution is from some tens of millions of Euros upwards.

Specific Targeted Research Projects (STREP) and Specific Targeted Innovation Projects (STIP)

STREPs and STIPs are multipartner research, demonstration or innovation projects. They are an evolved form of the shared-cost RTD projects and demonstration projects used in FP5. Their purpose is to support research, technological development and demonstration or innovation activities of a more limited scope and ambition than IPs. The Community contribution may range from hundreds of thousands of Euros to a few millions of Euros and is paid as a grant to the budget (percentage of total costs of the project). There must be a minimum of three participants from three different Member States or Associated States of which at least two are from Member States or Associated Candidate States. Different minimum numbers may be specified in the calls for proposals. Special conditions for minimum numbers of participants apply for the “Specific international co-operation activities (INCO)” part of the programme (to be specified in the work programme).

STREPs are used in implementing the priority thematic areas, in other areas supporting Community policies and anticipating scientific and technological needs, in specific international co-operation research activities, and in research activities developing harmonious relations between science and society. STIPs are used in activities exploring, validating and disseminating new innovation concepts and methods at European level.

Coordination Action (CA)

CAs are multi-partner actions intended to promote and support the networking and co-ordination of research and innovation activities. They are a reinforced form of the concerted actions/thematic networks used in FP5. They will cover the definition, organisation and management of joint or common initiatives as well as activities such as the organisation of conferences, meetings, the carrying out of studies, exchanges of personnel, the exchange and dissemination of good practice, setting up common information systems and expert groups. EU funding is given for the costs of co-ordination (not for the research) in the form of a grant to the budget of up to 100% of the budget. There must be a minimum of three participants from three different Member States or Associated States of which at least two are from Member States or Associated Candidate States. Different minimum numbers may be specified in the calls for proposals. Special conditions for minimum numbers of participants apply for the “Specific international co-operation activities (INCO)” part of the programme (to be specified in the work programme).

Specific Support Action (SSA)

Support activities are more limited in scope than the accompanying measures of the previous Framework Programmes. These projects aim to **contribute actively** to the implementation of activities of the work programme, the analysis and dissemination of results or the preparation of future activities, with a view to enabling the Community to achieve or define its RTD strategic objectives. Therefore, a significant emphasis has been placed on Support Actions:

- ⇒ to promote and facilitate the dissemination, transfer, exploitation, assessment and/or broad take-up of past and present programme results (over and above the standard diffusion and exploitation activities of individual projects);
- ⇒ to contribute to strategic objectives, notably regarding the European research area (*e.g.* pilot initiatives on benchmarking, mapping, networking, *etc.*);
- ⇒ to prepare future community RTD activities, (*e.g. via* prospective studies, exploratory measures, pilot actions, *etc.*);

as opposed to awareness and information exchange activities, *e.g.* annual Workshops and Conferences, that would take place anyway without Commission support. The latter activities will not be welcome if they do not **serve** the programme's strategic objectives, (in the sense of the European Research Area, improved co-ordination, public awareness, preparation of future Community initiatives, *etc.*). SSAs can be proposed by a single participant or by a consortium of several participants. The activities of a specific support action will be supported through a grant to the budget of up to 100% of the budget or, if necessary, as a lump sum.

Specific research projects for SMEs

The Commission wishes to encourage the participation of SMEs in all Framework programme activities. While SMEs can participate in any project consortium, it is recognised that SMEs that do not have research facilities need special routes to participate in FP6. The following instruments are foreseen to meet this need.

- **Co-operative research projects (CRAFT)**

They are projects whereby a number of SMEs (minimum three SMEs from two different countries) having specific problems or needs assign a significant part of the required scientific and technological research activities to RTD performers. These activities may also be carried out by innovative and high-tech SMEs in co-operation with research centres and universities. The SMEs retain ownership of the results.

- **Collective research projects**

They are carried out by RTD performers on behalf of industrial associations or groupings in sectors where SMEs are prominent. The aim is to expand the knowledge base of large communities of SMEs and thus their general standard of competitiveness. The ownership of the results lies with the industrial associations.

Other instruments used to implement the “Structuring the ERA” programme

There are a number of other instruments adapted to the specific objectives in the “Structuring the ERA” part of FP6.

These are:

- ⇒ Marie Curie actions on mobility, training, knowledge transfer and excellence recognition
- ⇒ Specific actions to promote research infrastructures

Consortium building

The core research work of the Framework Programmes is undertaken by projects that are structured as a collaboration between a group of partners who share tasks and responsibilities. This means that finding the right partners and setting up the collaboration or consortium is a key preparatory task. Partners need to be complementary to each other, but they must share an interest in the common problem that they are going to tackle in their research. Moreover, the consortium has to establish management structures and procedures adapted to the type and the complexity of the project. This will also be an important criterion in the evaluation of proposals.

Under FP6 all participants forming the consortium are entering into a contract with the Commission. Before this contract can be signed the consortium agreement should be in place.

Partner sources

It is best if the partners in a project are well known to each other and have worked together previously. However, this is not always possible, especially when seeking complementary skills and expertise. Your profile can be published on the CORDIS Partners service, which will advertise the fact that you are looking for a partner. Searches can be made of the existing profiles to see if there is someone already looking for your type of organisation for their project, or is willing to join your project. It is also possible to search for previous Framework Programme projects to see who are the experienced actors. Other sources are your local National Contact Point (NCP) for the subject area you are interested in, your local Innovation Relay Centre (IRC) or Euro Info Centre (EIC). Another possibility is to look on CORDIS at the Expressions of Interest database or at the database of projects funded by previous Framework Programmes. The Commission often runs information days for specific parts of the Framework Programme and these can introduce you to partners among the delegates as well as being useful in their own right.

Diversity and complementarity

One of Europe's greatest assets is its rich cultural diversity. Projects that bring together researchers from very different parts of Europe can take advantage of the different perspectives and the range of skills that are potentially available. In addition, partners who are concerned with complementary aspects of the research will make a stronger consortium than partners who are too similar and may even find themselves competing. Diversity up and down the supply chain will help to ensure that the necessary enabling technologies are available and that the results of the research are taken forward into application. This last aspect is a very important factor in demonstrating a consortium that can do more than produce good science. By selecting partners from research and industry it will help to bridge the gap between these cultures and smooth the way from research to exploitation. Partners from different research or industry sectors might further help to broaden the project and achieve critical mass.

At the same time, cultural differences can also be an obstacle if partners fail to understand them and allow for them. Good communication, clear agreement, and careful joint planning are essential if diverse partners are to work together in a coordinated way. No single culture is the 'right' one and ways have to be found to accommodate diversity and to work with it to achieve the benefits.

Other than the minimum number of transnational partners there is no set prescription for what makes a good consortium and no advantage to be gained by having a certain number of partners or types of partner. What matters is that the partnership is the right type and size to achieve the project objectives. In particular under FP6 IPs and NoEs there is the need to ensure a 'critical mass' so that the research and the integration has momentum and a lasting effect.

Teaming agreements

As an FP6 project will be a major commitment with financial and legal implications it is important to ensure that all the project partners have a clear understanding of the nature of the collaboration and are fully committed to it. For the project itself, this understanding will be covered by the Consortium Agreement which is a legally binding agreement that sits alongside the consortium's contract with the Commission.

In the early stages of formulating a collaborative consortium the Consortium Agreement has not yet been formed. However, it is often the case that 'teaming agreements' are made. These cover aspects such as confidentiality, non-competition, background IPR, *etc.* in order that the

prospective partners have some basic rules for their early stage interactions. There are no EU 'rules' for teaming agreements. Clearly they should not conflict with the eventual Consortium Agreement and Commission contract, but they can be made to cover any of the risks and fears of the partners in the early tentative stages of consortium building.

Contracts

▪ **Between the partners**

To fix the conditions and modalities of co-operation between partners, the conclusion of a consortium agreement is obligatory for most of the actions (in particular for Networks of Excellence and Integrated Projects). The European Commission will not be a party within this agreement and will not have to give its approval to it. It will however provide a checklist with points potentially to be covered by a consortium agreement.

▪ **Between the Commission and the partners**

For proposals selected for funding, the European Commission will conclude a contract establishing rights and obligations of all participants. This concerns in particular provisions for the scientific, technological and financial monitoring, for the updating of objectives, changes in consortium membership, payment of the Community financial contribution and rules for dissemination and use of knowledge. The contract will be concluded between the European Commission and all participants.

Liabilities

The partners in a consortium are jointly and individually liable for the implementation of the contract. This means that if one contractor fails to perform their duties or to pay any financial reimbursement due to the Commission then the other partners are responsible for meeting those obligations.

Tools

There are a number of ways to aid the consortium building and management process. There are commercially available project planning and group working tools. You should review all the tools potentially available, particularly those for good planning and communication, and those with which the partners may have prior experience, and use what seems to fit your requirements.

Horizontal issues

As well as the stated scientific and technological objectives there are a number of fundamental issues that affect all EU-sponsored research. Project proposers need to be sensitive to these issues as they could weaken or even disqualify a proposal.

Ethics

The Commission aims at promoting responsible research in Europe and keeping the rapidly advancing progress in science in harmony with the ethical values of all Europeans. There are important pieces of national and European legislation and international conventions, as well as international declarations and codes of conduct that are relevant to research activities

Many research areas pose complex and sensitive ethical issues, for example:

- ⇒ Use of human embryos
- ⇒ Stem cell research
- ⇒ Protection of animals
- ⇒ Protection of personal data
- ⇒ Human rights

- ⇒ Cloning
- ⇒ Clinical trials
- ⇒ Patenting of biotechnology
- ⇒ Genetically Modified Organisms

All projects must take into account the ethical issues that touch upon their work and have the means in place to ensure that ethical guidelines are followed.

Wider societal implications

The effects of science on society can be positive and negative, and can sometimes be either positive or negative depending on how the research is ‘owned’ by society. It is to some extent the responsibility of scientists to ensure, through techniques such as good communication and public debate, that society understands and is receptive to their work.

Involvement of SMEs

The involvement of SMEs in projects is an important factor in ensuring that research is relevant to the needs of industry (99% of businesses are SMEs) and that the research results will be exploited. For most projects the involvement of SMEs would be beneficial. There are also specific SME activities for specifically SME-led projects.

Innovation

Framework Programme research is never undertaken for its own sake, but for the benefits that it brings to industry and society. The application of scientific knowledge to everyday life we call ‘innovation’ and this is an essential follow-on from a project in order to ensure that the potential benefits are realised. Innovation is increasingly integrated with projects. More information on innovation can be found in the Innovation and SME Programme.

International cooperation

The European Research Area is intended to be open to the world. Proposers should think about involving partners not only from other EU countries but also from third countries outside the EU. This is especially important where the research has critical applications in third countries – for example water management, agriculture, or power generation, or where those third countries can bring knowledge to a project or share in knowledge generated.

FP6 is open to all countries and EU funding for FP6 participants from third countries may even be available under the INCO action of the cross-cutting activities of the ‘Integrating and Strengthening’ Programme.

Gender issues

Women are very under-represented in science and technology, which means that Europe is missing out on a valuable resource. The EU has therefore set targets for the involvement of women, and monitors the number of women researchers in Framework projects.

As well as involvement of women in science there are gender aspects to research itself. Some research, for example in the medical field, can apply specifically to men or women. Research in many fields may have the quality of being conducted predominantly by, about, and for one sex or the other.

Indications of relevant gender issues and suggestions on how the gender dimension can be integrated into different areas of research are available in the Synthesis Report of the gender impact assessment studies that were carried out during the Fifth Framework Programme.

Complementary funding

Framework Programme funding should fit alongside Structural Funds (available in the ‘objective’ areas) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) schemes so that there is a coordination and complementarity between them. While a Framework Programme project cannot be financed from another EU source, as this would be ‘double funding’, a project can be complemented by activities funded from other sources. For example pilot industrial implementations and trials within EU regions could be funded by the European Regional Development Fund, or an SME involved in a project could be funded under an EIB venture capital scheme for the commercial exploitation of its results.

References

- FP6 Rules for Participation: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/find-doc.htm#sp>
- International cooperation (INCO) website on CORDIS on participation of third countries: http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/inco_policies.htm
- Network of Excellence: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/instrument-noe>
- Integrated Project: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/instrument-ip>
- Article 169: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/instrument-169>
- Specific Targeted Research Project: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/instrument-strp>
- Coordination Action: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/instrument-ca>
- Specific Support Action: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/instrument-ssa>
- SME TechWeb: <http://sme.cordis.lu/home/index.cfm>
- Marie Curie actions: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/mobility.htm>
- CORDIS partner search facility: <http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/partners.cfm>
- CORDIS FP6 NCP service: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/ncp.htm>
- Database of FP6 Expressions of Interest: http://eoi.cordis.lu/search_form.cfm
- Consortium agreement checklist: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/working-groups/model-contract/pdf/checklist_en.pdf
- Database of FP5 projects: http://dbs.cordis.lu/search/en/simple/EN_PROJ_simple.html
- Innovation Relay Centre (IRC) website: <http://irc.cordis.lu/>
- Euro Info Centre (EIC) website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/networks/eic/eic.html>
- FP6 model contract: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/find-doc.htm#modelcontracts>
- IPR-Helpdesk web service: <http://www.cordis.lu/ipr-helpdesk/en/home.html>
- Science and Society website on CORDIS: <http://www.cordis.lu/science-society/home.html>
- Science and Society website on Europa: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/index_en.html
- Science and Ethics website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/ethics/ethics_en.html
- Women and Science website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/women-science/women-science_en.html
- Ethical rules for FP6: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/ethics/rules_en.html
- Specific SME activities: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/sme.htm>
- Innovation and SME Programme: <http://www.cordis.lu/innovation-smes/>
- International cooperation (INCO) website on CORDIS: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/inco.htm>
- International scientific cooperation policy website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/iscp/index_en.html
- Synthesis Report “Gender in Research”: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/pdf/women_gender_impact_fp5_en.pdf
- Website of the European Investment Bank (EIB): <http://www.eib.org/>