

Lecture 5. Making and submitting a proposal

Submitting a proposal requires careful following of a set of rules that are designed to ensure that the competitive process is open, transparent, and fair.

This lecture describes the main points:

- ⇒ Understanding the work programme
- ⇒ Understanding the Call for Proposals
- ⇒ Using the Guides for Proposers
- ⇒ References

Understanding the work programme

The individual work programmes are the detailed implementation plans for the specific programmes of FP6. They specify the concrete scientific-technical, economic and societal objectives of each thematic priority. They give a broad background to the thematic activity, and the detailed technical content of the activity. They project a 'road map' of the planned calls for proposals. They also indicate for each call the instruments that will be available and the evaluation criteria that will be applied (in annex B). Understanding the objectives of the work programme is essential for preparing a good proposal.

Each thematic activity has its own work programme, so the best way to access them is *via* the activities page <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm> and click on the relevant activity from where you will see a page that contains a downloadable work programme.

Understanding the Call for Proposals

The proposal process is triggered by the call. Calls are published official invitations for researchers to submit project proposals for a specific area of the Framework Programme by a specific date, usually about three months after the call. Calls specify very clearly what is required. Proposals that do not meet the specifications in the call will be disqualified.

Calls are published in the Official Journal of the European Union http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/search/search_oj.html. Immediately afterwards the call and any documents relating to it are published on CORDIS FP6 calls for proposals service <http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/calls.cfm>. If you want to be automatically notified of calls you should carefully set up a CORDIS Rapidus 'News' profile on CORDIS. Sometimes this will also give advance notice of calls that are imminent.

In addition to the description of the thematic areas, topics or research objectives, calls comprise information on the following items:

- ⇒ Closure date(s)
- ⇒ Indicative budget and its distribution per area and/or instrument
- ⇒ Minimum number of participants
- ⇒ One-stage or two-stage submission and evaluation procedure
- ⇒ Non-standard evaluation criteria
- ⇒ Indicative delays for evaluation and selection of proposals

In the call you can identify the research area in which you are interested for submitting a proposal. For exhaustive information on the scientific objectives of the programme and the expected results you have to read the related work programme. We suggest you to check the entire document for an overview of the strategy of the thematic priority or horizontal area.

Using the Guides for Proposers

Besides the official Call for Proposals, the Commission publishes Guides for Proposers giving practical information and advice on how to prepare and submit a proposal. There is a separate Guide for Proposers for each instrument in each call. Guides for Proposers are distributed only in electronic format *via* the respective CORDIS call page.

The following issues are discussed in the guides.

The structure of a proposal

Proposals for FP6 consist of two parts:

- ⇒ **Part A** being a set of administrative forms with basic information on the proposal and the participants to be encoded in a structured database for further computer processing
- ⇒ **Part B** being a text file with the description of the project and the consortium

The guides contain the administrative forms for part A and recommendations on how to write part B.

Methods of proposal preparation and submission

Electronic Proposal Preparation and Submission

The preferred method for preparing and submitting proposals in FP6 is by using the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS).

The EPSS is one part of a planned modular electronic management system for all aspects of the Framework Programmes. It exists in an offline and an online version.

▪ Using the online EPSS

This web-based system functions similar to an Internet banking application. Only a standard web browser is necessary, there is no need for additional software installation on the computer of the user. The EPSS provides a secure joint working platform for all participants in a consortium.

To use the system, the coordinator has to register to receive a login and password, accessing a call- and instrument-specific instance of the system *via* the respective CORDIS call page. For reasons of security, logins and passwords are sent by post. It is therefore advisable to register well in advance of the deadline of the call. On the proposers' own risk, an advance copy of login and password by e-mail or fax can be requested. In any case, it is recommended to change passwords on first use of the system.

▪ Using the offline EPSS

For proposers not wanting or not able to use the online system, there is also an offline variant of the EPSS. To use it, a special software (called EPT) has to be downloaded from the Internet and installed on the computer of the user. In addition, a call- and instrument specific set of forms and templates has to be downloaded. Access to the software is *via* the respective CORDIS call page. The offline EPSS produces a special package of files for part A and part B of a proposal that can be uploaded to the online EPSS (login and password for online EPSS required).

Please note that you are strongly recommended to use on-line electronic submission.

Financial aspects

The Guides for Proposers (in the notes to the administrative forms), give a summary on the rules for establishing the budget of a project. The following aspects are covered.

▪ The cost reporting models

Depending on the legal status and the accounting system of a participant, one of three available models for reporting of costs has to be chosen:

- ⇒ Full Cost (FC)
- ⇒ Full Cost Flat-rate (FCF)
- ⇒ Additional Cost (AC)

- **The maximum percentage of Community contribution**

This percentage varies with the type of activity and with the cost reporting model applied by the participant.

More detailed information on financial aspects can be found in the FP6 model contracts and in the FP6 Financial Guidelines.

The option of pre-proposal check

For some calls, the Commission establishes the possibility to check on the appropriateness of a proposed action and the eligibility of the proposal consortium on the basis of a short sketch of the proposal. The advice given by the Commission is strictly informal and non-binding.

The availability of pre-proposal check is announced in the Call for Proposal.

Help and assistance in proposal preparation

The first address for getting direct help and assistance, on the spot and in proposers own language, are the systems of National Contact Points (NCPs), established in all EU Member States and in the countries associated to FP6. In addition, the European Commission operates infodesks for the different thematic priorities and activities of FP6.

Other helpdesks, for specific issues like intellectual property rights, legal questions, are also available.

References

- FP6 work programmes (general part): <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/find-doc.htm#wps>
- FP6 activity codes: http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/list_areas.cfm
- CORDIS FP6 calls for proposals service: <http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/calls.cfm>
- Official Journal of the European Union: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/search/search_oj.html
- Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS): <http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/subprop.cfm>
- Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS) helpdesk: <mailto:support@epss-fp6.org>
- Administrative proposal forms for paper submission: http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/sub_paper.cfm
- Working document on cost models: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/working-groups/model-contract/pdf/cost_model_en.pdf
- FP6 model contract: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/find-doc.htm#modelcontracts>
- CORDIS FP6 NCP service: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/ncp.htm>
- European Commission FP6 Infodesks: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/infodesks.htm>
- Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) website and helpdesk: <http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org/>