

Information on

Networks of excellence and Integrated projects

TWO NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR FP6

This note follows the text of the Amended proposal for a *Council Decision concerning the specific programmes implementing the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities.* (COM(2002) 43 final)

Further information on these two instruments can be found at:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/nfp/networks-ip.html>

Networks of excellence

The purpose of networks of excellence is to strengthen and develop Community scientific and technological excellence by means of the integration, at European level, of research capacities currently existing or emerging at both national and regional level. Each network will also aim at advancing knowledge in a particular area by assembling a critical mass of expertise. They will foster cooperation between capacities of excellence in universities, research centres, enterprises, including SMEs, and science and technology organisations. The activities concerned will be generally targeted towards long-term, multidisciplinary objectives, rather than predefined results in terms of products, processes or services.

A network of excellence will be implemented by a joint programme of activities involving some or, where appropriate, all of the research capacities and activities of the participants in the relevant area to attain a critical mass of expertise and European added value. A joint programme of activities could aim at the creation of a self-standing virtual centre of excellence that may result in developing the necessary means for achieving a durable integration of the research capacities. A joint programme of activities will necessarily include those aimed at integration, as well as activities related to the spreading of excellence and dissemination of results outside the network.

In pursuing its objectives, the network will therefore carry out:

- Research activities integrated by its participants
- Integration activities which will comprise in particular:
 - adaptation of the participants' research activities in order to strengthen their complementarity;
 - development and utilisation of electronic information and communication means, and development of virtual and interactive working methods;

- short-, medium- and long-term exchanges of personnel, the opening of positions to researchers from other members of the network, or their training;
- development and use of joint research infrastructures, and adaptation of the existing facilities with a view to a shared use;
- joint management and exploitation of the knowledge generated, and actions to promote innovation.
- Activities of spreading of excellence which will comprise, as appropriate:
 - training of researchers;
 - communication concerning the achievements of the network and the dissemination of knowledge;
 - services in support of technological innovation in SMEs, aimed in particular at the take-up of new technologies;
 - analyses of science/society issues related to the research carried out by the network.

In carrying out some of its activities (such as training of researchers), the network will endeavour to ensure publicity by publishing calls for applications.

The size of the network may vary according to the areas and subjects involved. As an indication, the number of participants should not be less than half a dozen. On average, in financial terms, the Community contribution to a network of excellence may represent several million euros per year.

The network proposals should comprise the following elements:

- a general outline of the joint programme of activities, and its content for the first period, broken down into research activities, integration activities, and activities for spreading excellence;
- the role of the participants, identifying the activities and resources that they will integrate;
- the operation of the network (coordination and management of activities);
- the plan for the dissemination of knowledge and the perspectives as regards exploitation of the results.

The partnership may evolve when necessary, within the limit of the initial Community contribution, by replacing participants or adding new ones. In most cases, this will be done through publication of a competitive call.

The programme of activities would be updated yearly and would entail a reorientation of certain activities or launching of new ones not initially foreseen, which could involve new participants. The Commission may launch calls for proposals with a view to the allocation of additional contribution in order to cover, for example, an extension of the integrated activities of the existing network or the integration of new participants.

The Community's financial contribution shall take the form of a grant for integration, the amount of which is determined in relation to the value of the capacities and resources which all the participants propose to integrate. It shall complement the resources deployed by the participants in order to carry out the joint programme of activities. It should be sufficient to act as an incentive for integration, but without creating a financial dependence that might jeopardise the lasting association of the network.

Integrated projects

Integrated projects will be implemented in the seven priority thematic areas of the Framework Programme and, in duly justified cases, in research areas supporting policies and anticipating scientific and technological needs.

Integrated projects are designed to give increased impetus to the Community's competitiveness or to address major societal needs by mobilising a critical mass of research and technological development resources and competence. Each integrated project will be assigned clearly defined scientific and technological objectives and should be directed at obtaining specific results applicable in terms of, for instance, products, processes or services. Under these objectives they may include more long-term or "risky" research.

Integrated projects will comprise a coherent set of component actions which may vary in size and structure according to the tasks to be carried out, each dealing with different aspects of the research needed to achieve common overall objectives, and forming a coherent whole and implemented in close coordination.

They will be carried out on the basis of overall financing plans preferably involving significant mobilisation of public and private sector funding, including funding from EIB and collaboration schemes such as Eureka.

All the activities carried out in the context of an integrated project will be defined in the general framework of an " implementation plan" comprising activities relating to:

- research, and as appropriate technological development and/or demonstration;
- management, dissemination and transfer of knowledge with a view to promoting innovation;
- analysis and assessment of the technologies concerned, as well as the factors relating to their exploitation.

In pursuit of its objectives, it may also comprise activities relating to:

- training researchers, students, engineers and industrial executives, in particular for SMEs;
- support for the take-up of new technologies, in particular by SMEs;
- information and communication, and dialogue with the public concerning the science/society aspects of the research carried out within the project.

The combined activities of an integrated project may represent a financial size ranging from several million euros to several tens of millions of euros. However, the size of projects is not a criterion for exclusion, and access to new instruments is ensured for SMEs and other small entities.

Integrated project proposals should comprise the following elements:

- the scientific and technological objectives of the project;
- the main lines and timetable of the execution plan, highlighting the articulation of the various components;
- the stages of implementation and the results expected in each one of them;
- the role of the participants within the consortium and the specific skills of each of them;
- the organisation and management of the project;
- the plan for the dissemination of knowledge and the exploitation of results;
- the global budget estimate and the budget for the different activities, including a financial plan identifying the various contributions and their origin.

The partnership may evolve when necessary, within the limits of the initial Community contribution, by replacing participants or adding new ones. In most cases, this will be done through publication of a competitive call.

The implementation plan will be updated yearly. This updating may entail the reorientation of certain activities and the launching of new ones. In the latter case, and where an additional Community contribution is needed, the Commission will identify these activities and the participants who will carry them out, by means of a call for proposals.

The Community contribution shall take the form of a grant to the budget, calculated as a percentage of the budget allocated by the participants to carry out the project, adapted according to the type of activity.