European funding for international scientific cooperation in Environment

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

FAQ 1 : European Union Funding for scientific international cooperation

Question 1.1. Why does the European Union (EU) support scientific international cooperation?

Since the beginning of the 21st century, research, development and innovation form the basis of European economic development. . This is the motto of EU "**Lisbon strategy"**, to position its industry on value added products which can open up new markets and create new employment opportunities.

Considering these objectives, the European Union (EU) can benefit from strategic research partnerships with non-EU countries, in order to broaden its range of competences or enhance trade with these countries via technology transfers.

What's more, international scientific cooperation is essential to tackle issues of mutual concern.

Incidentally, international collaborative research can reinforce diplomatic ties and thus benefit the EU's foreign and neighborhood policy.

Useful link:
More insights on the Lisbon strategy and its monitoring:
http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11325.htm

Question 1.2. What are the EU's priorities for environmental research?

Environment is a leading policy in Europe and every economic activity must take into account its own environmental impact. This sets many challenges addressed through the EU's **6th Environment Action Plan** (**2002-2012**):

- **Fight against climate change;**
- **Nature and biodiversity;**
- **Environment and Health;**
- **Management of natural resources and waste;**

This plan is in line with international agreements such as the Kyoto protocol on GHG emissions and the Long-range Trans-boundary Atmospheric Pollution protocol (LTAP), or the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG),

.
Considering the complexity of these issues, Research is essential not only to develop knowledge but also to transform it into solutions to cope with major environmental threats.

In order to do so, the EU designed the **2nd Environmental Technologies Action Plan** (**ETAP**), which aims to:

- **Promote knowledge and technology transfer;**
- **Improve market conditions to favor these technologies' take-up;**
- **Promote environmental technologies in emerging and developing countries;**

In that respect, international cooperation is a key activity in ETAP in order to favor sustainable development in non-EU countries.

Useful link:
More insights on the Environmental Action Plan
http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l28027.htm

ETAP webpages:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/etap/index_en.htm

Question 1.3.How does the EU finance scientific cooperation?

The EU's main institutions are the European Council, the European Parliament and the **European Commission (EC).**

Inside the EC, Directorate Generals (**DGs) are in charge of implementing EU policies** and, to do so, they can use various instruments (legislative, financial…).

The financial instrument - i.e. the DGs budget - is called a **program**. This budget is used to fund specific actions in order to reach EU policy objectives set out in an **action plan**.

EU Research policy in particular is mainly operated by DG Research. This DG manages the **Research Framework Program** designed to support activities carried out by European R&D players and their partners in non-EU countries.

From 2007 and until 2013, the Seventh Framework program (FP7) will support the implementation of the EU research policy which consists in:

- Supporting exploratory research through the "Ideas" Program (EUR 7 510 000);
- Favoring mobility and training of researchers through the "People" Program (EUR 4 750 000);
- Enhancing R&D capacities of the public and private sector through the "Capacity" Program (EUR 4 097 000);
- **Enhancing collaborative research to reach EU's main policy objectives through the "Cooperation" Program** (EUR 32 413 000).

It is worth noting that the budget for FP7 is 30% larger than FP6, its predecessor.

From Program to project
FP7 funding is distributed via specific procedures namely "calls for proposal". Through such procedure, the EC requests European R&D players to build a project in line with policy objectives.

As far as Environment is concerned, project outputs should have a positive impact on environment indicators e.g. reduction of atmospheric pollution, improvement of waste management, better understanding of climate change mechanisms, etc.

More insights…
A so-called FP7 funded project follows very specific features which are described in FAQ 2 :

Useful link:
Cordis website is the official FP7 website.
All information concerning call for proposals and FP7 funded project can be found there:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

Question 1.4. What are the environmental priorities funded through FP7?

The FP7 Cooperation Program includes **10 themes** among which "Environment" (theme 6). The budget dedicated to environment is EUR 1 900 000 for the 2007 – 2013 period.

This theme supports several research **activities** which are in line with the Environmental Action Plan and with ETAP:

- **Climate change, Pollution and Risks (activity 6.1.);**
  - Pressures on the environment and climate (sub-activity 6.1.1.)
  - Environment and health (sub-activity 6.1.2.)
  - Natural hazards (sub-activity 6.1.3.)
- **Sustainable Management of Resources (activity 6.2.);**
  - Conservation and sustainable management of natural and man-made resources and biodiversity (sub-activity 6.2.1.)
  - Management of marine environments (sub-activity 6.2.2.)
- **Environmental Technologies (activity 6.3.);**
  - Environmental technologies for observation, simulation, prevention, mitigation, adaptation, remediation and restoration of the natural and man-made environment (sub-activity 6.3.1.)
  - Protection, conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, including human habitat improved damage assessment on cultural heritage (sub-activity 6.3.2.)
  - Technology assessment, verification and testing (sub-activity 6.3.3.)
- **Earth Observation and Assessment Tools (activity 6.4.);**
  - Earth and ocean observation systems and monitoring methods for the environment and sustainable development (sub-activity 6.4.1.)
  - Forecasting methods and assessment tools for sustainable development taking into account differing scales of observation (sub-activity 6.4.2.)

Useful link:
Environment theme on Cordis:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/environment/home_en.html

Question 1.5. As a Newly Independent State/African research structure, is it possible to participate in an FP7 funded project?

FP7 was designed to be more efficient than its predecessors in encouraging non-EU countries to participate:

- By opening up most topics (see Question 4.2) of FP7 Cooperation program for their participation
- By proposing **Specific International Cooperation Activities (SICAs)** within the calls for proposals, **dedicated to third countries** where there is mutual interest on the basis of both the Scientific and Technical (S&T) level and the needs of the countries concerned. SICAs topics are inserted in the calls for proposals after consulting International Cooperation Partner Country (ICPC) stakeholders to determine research priorities. They also aim to encourage participation of countries which would lack capacity to participate in other topics of the FP7 Cooperation program. The participation of **at least two** ICPCs and **at least two** EU States is **compulsory** for a consortium wanting to carry out a SICA.

Condition for a non-EU country to participate
The participation of Newly Independent States (NIS) and African states is subjected to the existence of an institutional agreement between a given country and the EU. A country which has signed such an agreement gains International Cooperation Partner Country status (ICPCs)

More insights…
See Question 1.7 for the NIS and sub-Saharan Africa ICPC list.

Useful link
View the complete ICPC list on Cordis
ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/icpc-list.pdf

Question 1.6. What are the first steps to take to participate?

An ICPC research structure can participate in FP7 by identifying a topic (see question 4.2) of interest in the work program. Then they will need to join a consortium since they cannot launch an FP7 project themselves. They can be helped in this process by networks which specialize in assisting research structures to join FP7 projects.

To help research structures get in contact with the appropriate networks, in most ICPCs, teams of **National Information Points (NIPs)** have been created to guide researchers through the various steps towards joining an FP7 project.

Moreover INTERLINK network aims to reinforce links between EU, NIS and Sub-Saharan African Researchers, and encourage them to build projects together.

More insights…
See Question 4.3 on the procedure to join a project.

Question 1.7. Is my country an ICPC?

Cooperation with third countries in FP7 is notably targeted towards the Western Balkan countries (WBC), Eastern European and Central Asian countries (EECA) and Sub-Saharan African countries. The "Europe and Central Asia" group contains both WBC and EECA.

ICPC Countries in Sub-Saharan African countries and countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

	Upper middle income	Lower middle income	Low income
Sub-Saharan Africa	Botswana BWA	Angola AGO	Benin BEN
	Equatorial Guinea GNQ	Cameroon CMR	Burkina Faso BFA
	Gabon GAB	Cape Verde CPV	Burundi BDI
	Mauritius MUS	Congo, Rep. COG	Central African Republic CAF
	Libya LBY	Lesotho LSO	Chad TCD
	Seychelles SYC	Namibia NAM	Comoros COM
	South Africa ZAF	Swaziland SWZ	Congo, Dem. Rep. ZAR
			Côte d'Ivoire CIV
			Gambia, The GMB
			Ghana GHA
			Guinea GIN
			Guinea-Bissau GNB
			Kenya KEN
			Madagascar MDG
			Malawi MWI
			Mali MLI
			Mauritania MRT
			Mozambique MOZ
			Niger NER
			Nigeria NGA
			Rwanda RWA
			Sao Tome and Principe STP
			Senegal SEN
			Sierra Leone SLE
			Somalia SOM
			Sudan SDN
			Tanzania TZA
			Togo TGO
			Uganda UGA
			Zambia ZMB
			Zimbabwe ZWE
Europe & Central Asia	Russian Federation RUS	Albania ALB	Kyrgyz Republic KGZ
		Armenia ARM	Tajikistan TJK
		Azerbaijan AZE	Uzbekistan UZB
		Belarus BLR	
		Bosnia and Herzegovina BIH	
		Georgia GEO	
		Kazakhstan KAZ	
		Macedonia, FYR MKD	

		Moldova MDA	
		Serbia and Montenegro YUG	
		Turkmenistan TKM	
		Ukraine UKR	

The table above presents the New Independent States and African countries which are registered as **International Cooperation Partner Countries** (ICPCs).

In this table, ICPCS are classified according to three income groups.

- low-income country;
- lower-middle-income country;
- upper-middle-income country;

This classification will be important when dealing with financial issues of an FP7 project (see FAQ 3 :).

FAQ 2 : Features of an FP7 funded project

Question 2.1. What is a European research project?

An EU project is a way to structure research activities funded by FP7. The following key words characterize a project:

- **Project objectives in line with EU policy**

EU projects must have objectives which participate to the implementation of a specific EU policy. For Environment, since the annual call for proposal launched by the Commission reflects the EU environmental priorities, a project will be selected if it addresses specifically one given topic listed in the **work programme of the call** (see **Question** 4.2**)**.

In a project proposal, the objectives can be scientific, technical, socio-economical (etc.) but in any case **their relevance to the environmental policy** must be clearly stated.

- **Partnership and consortium**

An EU project is rarely carried out by a single legal entity. In particular, the Cooperation programme of FP7 supports partnership among:

- Different types of entities: research labs, companies (groups or SMEs), NGOs, etc…
- Different countries: EU member states, associated states (e.g. Norway, Switzerland, Iceland…), ICPCs.

To be eligible for participation in the project, each entity must demonstrate its added value to the project objective but it does not necessarily need to be a research-oriented organisation in itself.

- **Tasks and Work Packages**

In an EU project, objectives are reached through the implementation of a sequence of tasks called “Work Packages”. They have to be described in detail in the project proposal and must be relevant to the purpose of the project. Task and Work Package implementation responsibility must be attributed to a given partner in the description of work. The corresponding workload must be estimated as precisely as possible beforehand.

- **Deadlines**

Objectives are reached through different identifiable **steps**, which also have to be defined and **scheduled** on a **timetable** in the project's description. The EC can hold unjustified delays against the Consortium and can potentially withdraw funding pledges.
Steps which mark the end of a phase in the project thus enabling it to move forth, or turning points at which decisions are needed, are called **Milestones**.

Milestones can be, for example:

1. Receiving equipment
2. Sending off samples to be studied
3. Supplying a partner or a sub-contractor with equipment or raw materials
4. Conception of a prototype, receiving or sending it off to a partner or a sub-contractor
5. Demonstrating a hypothesis (so it can be confirmed or put aside)
6. Finishing a website and putting it online

- **Concrete results**

FP projects must provide concrete outputs which are called **deliverables**. It must be tangible, since it is a proof that the related task has been carried out.
Deliverables can be:

- Experimental results
- Prototypes
- Scientific articles
- Conference or workshop proceedings
- Website
- …

As the Seventh Framework Program is funded with public funds, a reasonable number of non-confidential deliverables, suitable for publication, should be foreseen.

- **Budget and EC contribution**

According to the Work plan and related workload, each partner has to estimate his costs in order to calculate the EC contribution

- More insights on financial issues in FAQ 3 :

Science but also Management
In a EU project, the scientific and technical work plan is formalized with a legal document which binds the partnership and the Commission.

Therefore, when joining an EU project, one be aware and must not forget that he will have some managerial duties in addition to his scientific tasks which of course must remain the **core of the project**.

Useful link
A database of projects funded by earlier FP6 is available on Cordis:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp6/projects.htm

Question 2.2. What type of activity can be included in an FP7 project?

An FP7 project can include various **activities**. In order for the consortium to optimize each member's area of expertise, each of these **activities** will generally be carried out by the most appropriate partner(s).

Activities are divided into three categories:

1. **Research and technological development activities (RTD):**

Activities directly aimed at creating:

- New knowledge;
- New technology and products;
- "Scientific coordination" is also considered as RTD;

2. **Demonstration activities:**

Activities designed to prove the viability of new technologies that offer a potential economic advantage, but which cannot be commercialised directly (e.g. testing of products such as prototypes).

3. **Other activities:**

Those which are not covered by the two types of activities mentioned above. These activities are necessary to support the research process and the project management:

- **Management activities:** for example the costs to organize a call or a tender to choose a beneficiary or subcontractor. This type of activity falls mainly to the Coordinator.
- **Dissemination** e.g. the establishment of a website, the presentation of the project during conferences or workshops, the drafting of a scientific publication …
- **Networking activities** e.g. the organisation of a seminar for networking
- **Studies on the socio-economic impact** e.g. assessment of the expected socioeconomic impact of the foreground or analysis of the factors that would influence their use
- **Training activities**, for which EC co-financing may cover the salary cost of those providing the training, but not the salary costs of those being trained.
- **Intellectual property (IP) related activities** e.g. the filing and prosecution of patent applications, patent searches, legal advice, or the payment of royalties to a **third party** (an entity which is not part of the Consortium) for IP rights which are needed to implement the project
- **Promotion of the IP** the project generates for IP exploitation such as feasibility studies for the creation of spin-offs or "take up" activities regarding the process of validation for technologies and solutions which are not yet commercially established.

In FP7, a combination of these three types of activities leads to different types of project identified as "**funding schemes"** by the Commission**.**

In a given call for proposal, the Commission specifies the funding scheme to be used for **each given topic** in the work program.

- **More insights on the work program in Question 4.2**

The four types of **funding schemes** in the **Cooperation Program** are:

- **Collaborative projects:** any project aiming at developing new knowledge, new technology or new products. This also includes demonstration activities. Collaborative projects can range from small scale or medium-scale to large scale projects depending on their scope, number of partners involved, expected impact and estimated budget.
- **Networks of Excellence:** in this funding scheme, research organisations integrate their activities in a given field of research in order to set up a perennial scientific cooperation.
- **Coordination and support actions:** activities aimed at coordinating or supporting research activities and policies. One objective of such type of project can be to achieve a technological roadmap for future Research activities.
- **Research for the benefit of specific groups:** research projects where most of the research and technological development are outsourced to RTD performers for the benefit of specific groups, in particular SMEs or NGOs. RTD performers can be public or private research organisms or even High Tech SMEs.

National Information Points can help researchers with these funding schemes and their specificities.

Question 2.3. As an International Cooperation Partner Country, what role can I play in an EU project?

ICPC members are mainly partners
When dealing with issues of global interest such as water supply or impact of climate change, for instance, scientists and engineers from ICPC countries are integrated into a consortium for their scientific added value (just like for EU partners), their knowledge and expertise on local environmental problems specific to their geographic area which have specific geological or meteorological conditions.

Therefore, the main role expected from an ICPC member is to carry out a scientific task according to the work plan defined prior to the project course. He will therefore be referred as a "**partner**".

ICPC partner might be Task or Work Package Leader
In the case of multiple ICPC partners integrated in a project, one of them can coordinate the scientific or technical tasks to be implemented at the local level. This can facilitate the communication with EU partners and with the coordinator of the project. He will be referred to as a "**Task leader**" or "**Work Package leader**". This position has the advantage to enhance the visibility of the partner within a consortium which can be sometimes very large (up to 30 – 40 partners for large scale collaborative projects). However, it entails extra time-demanding management duties and responsibilities which have to be estimated beforehand.

ICPC partner cannot be Coordinator
The coordinator of a project is the organism which has generally initiated the idea of the project and which has taken the global responsibility to submit the proposal to the Commission. If the project is selected and funded, it will be globally managed by the same organism which will be responsible for the project before the Commission. It is not possible for an ICPC to be Coordinators.

FAQ 3 : Funding ICPC partners of an FP7 project

Question 3.1. What are the payment mechanisms in FP7 for ICPC structures?

To get funded by the Commission, ICPC beneficiaries participating in FP7 project have the choice between two payment modalities:

- Being reimbursed on the basis of actual costs;
- Being reimbursed on the basis of lump-sums.

The "lump sum" option is a new feature of FP7.

It was designed by the Commission in order to facilitate participation of ICPC to EU projects. Indeed, reimbursement of actual costs - which is the most common payment mechanism compulsory for all EU and associated countries - is a relatively heavy procedure where detailed cost statements (kind of invoice) have to be established on a periodic basis (see Question 3.5).

Most often, ICPC structures are lacking administrative resources (both technical and human) enabling them to complete such procedure.

However, ICPC structures will be free to choose which mechanism they want to use but they have to be aware of the advantages and drawbacks of each system (see Question 3.7).

The maximum contribution from the EC for the project will remain the same for both.

Question 3.2. How does the lump sum mechanism work?

The lump sump mechanism involves two steps:

- the estimation of the "lump sum" overall budget spent by an ICPC partner to carry out his tasks
- the calculation of the EC contribution

Question 3.3. How is the overall budget estimated in the "lump sum option"?

As mentioned previously (see Question 1.7), the Commission has defined 3 categories of ICPC countries according to the average income level of the countries.

- Low-income countries
- Lower middle income countries
- Upper middle income countries

For each group, a single average lump sum has been calculated and will be used to evaluate the global budget spent by an ICPC structure in a given project.

In the table below, the average lump sum is fixed for any researcher **working full time on the project**, per year (in euros):

Country's Income category	Average lump sum for a full-time activity (€/year)
Low-income	8,000
Lower middle income	9,800
Upper middle income	20,700

When the researcher is not working full-time on the project, these amounts must be reduced proportionately. This amount includes **every type of costs** (e.g. his travel fees). This means that under the lump sum mechanism, a researcher has more freedom to spend his budget, e.g. to buy necessary equipment

Example:
An SME from Benin (categorized in low-income country group). The SME has chosen a lump-sum, in a 3-year collaborative project with **6 researchers working on the project full-time and 3 working part-time at 50%**

- The total "Personnel effort" of the SME on the project is:

Total personnel effort = 3 years x 7.5 researchers/year= 22.5 person.year

- Total budget estimated by the EC with the lump sum mechanism

Total budget = 22.5 researcher/year x € 8,000 /year = €180, 000

Conclusion: the SME from Benin is considered as spending an overall maximum budget of **€180,000** to carry out the tasks described in the **Grant Agreement**.

Link to the FP7 model Grant Agreement: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls-grant-agreement_en.html#standard_ga

Question 3.4. How is the EC contribution calculated with the "lump sum option"

Once the maximum overall budget has been estimated (see Question 3.3), the maximum EC contribution that will be attributed to the ICPC structure has to be calculated. It will depend on:

- The funding scheme the ICPC partner is involved in;
- The type of legal entity of the ICPC partner.

The **maximum** funding rates in the table below are then to be applied to the overall maximum budget estimated. It will give the maximum EC contribution.

The latter amount is an upper limit and can be reduced if the ICPC partner does not justify the actual personnel effort during the course of the project.

Funding Scheme	Non profit public bodies, secondary and higher education establishments, research organizations and SMEs	All other legal entities
Collaborative project	75%	50%
Network of Excellence	75%	50%
Coordination and support action	100%	100%
Research for the benefit of specific groups (e.g. SMEs, NGOs)	75%	50%

Example:

The same SME from Benin involved in a collaborative project spends an overall maximum budget of **€180,000** to carry out the tasks planned in the project.

Referring to the table above, the reimbursement rate for an SME in a collaborative project is 75%

Thus:

EC Funding for the SME: = € 180,000 x **0,75 = € 135,000**

A **maximum** EC funding of €135,000 will be provisioned in the Grant Agreement for this partner. This amount will be allocated if the partner reports an actual personnel effort of at least 22.5 person.year in the **researchers' time sheets** (see Question 3.8)**.**

Question 3.5. How does the reimbursement of actual costs mechanism work?

The "**reimbursement of actual costs**" mechanism follows the general rules listed below:

- Maximum grant is based on an estimation of eligible costs prepared by the partners and negotiated with the EC, to which the reimbursement rate is applied **according to the activity and to the type of legal entity participating;**
- Supporting documents proving the payment of the costs by the beneficiaries must be kept **for all costs** and **for up to five years after the end of the project**;

- EC services and other entities authorized by the Grant Agreement may carry out audits on the premises of the beneficiary to verify its compliance with this requirement;
- The EC contribution **cannot give rise to any profit for any beneficiary**;

To be considered eligible costs must be:
- Proven to be necessary to the achieving the objectives set out for the project;
- **Actually** incurred. This means **they must be real and not estimated**, **budgeted or imputed**. They are referred to as "**actual costs**";
- Generated only once the project has **officially started**;

EC contribution calculation for the "reimbursement of eligible costs" mechanism
The EC contribution which will be attributed to a partner depends on the type of activities (see Question 2.2) he is carrying out **within the project**. It also depends on its type of legal entity.

Indeed, Research or demonstration activities are subjected to different co-financing rates. And for a given activity a public research institute will not be allowed the same co-financing rate as a private industrial group.

The sum of EC contributions for every entity involved in the project will determine the total EC contribution to the project

The different and official funding rates determined by the Commission are listed in the table below.

LEGAL ENTITY / ACTIVITY	Non-profit public bodies, secondary and higher education establishments, research organizations and SMEs	All other organizations
Research and technological development activities (RTD)	75%	50%
Demonstration activities (DEMO)	50%	50%
Coordination and support activities (CS)	100%	100%
Other activities (OTHER)	100%	100%

EC contribution = $Rate_{RTD}$*$Cost_{RTD}$+$Rate_{DEMO}$*$Costs_{DEMO}$+ $Costs_{CS}$+ $Costs_{OTHER}$

Question 3.6. *How are actual costs calculated?*

To calculate costs, one must recall that 2 main categories exist for the Commission:

1. **Direct costs which can be directly attributed to the project. It covers:**

- Personnel wages (for both technical and management activities): these costs must be calculated precisely according to the personnel effort reported in **time sheets** (see Question 3.8) by each person involved in the project are determined
- Travel costs upon justification (e.g. boarding pass, bus or train ticket with the dates of travel).
- Durable equipment specific to the project.
- Consumables;
- Costs which satisfy the criteria detailed in the **Grant Agreement (GA).**
- Subcontracting (upon justification of invoices)

Focus on the Travel cost category
These costs encompass includes travel and subsistence allowances during the trip. The way these allowances are calculated remains up to each contractor depending on its accounting usual methods.
One can quote out that subsistence costs can be attributed as Per Diem. In that case, one can refer to the European standard Per Diem which is regularly updated on Europa, the EU's official website.

To retrieve the current Per Diem in each country, please visit the following webpage:
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/per_diems/index_en.htm

Calculation of global direct costs
Usually, in a partner's budget direct costs are calculated as shown below:

Direct Costs = Personnel Costs + Travel Costs + Other Costs +Subcontracting

2. Indirect Costs
Indirect costs, also called overheads, are all the structural and support costs of an administrative, technical and logistical nature which are cross-cutting for the operation of the partner's organism.

Examples of indirect Costs:
- Hiring or depreciation of buildings and plant,
- Water/gas/electricity invoices,
- Insurance,
- Communication and connection costs, postage, etc.
- Costs connected with horizontal services such as administrative and financial management, human resources, training, legal advice, documentation,
- etc.

Calculation of Indirect Costs
Calculating real indirect costs is no easy task in general.

Therefore, for ICPC partners who opted for the reimbursement of actual costs, we will only mention the possibility to use a flat rate of 20% to evaluate these indirect costs.

Based on the total amount of Direct Costs, the overall indirect Costs are calculated as shown below:

Indirect Costs = 0.20 × (Direct Costs – Subcontracting)

There are of course other solutions to calculate Indirect Costs but this one is the easiest and applicable to any partner.

Useful reference
For extensive explanation on eligible costs and indirect cost, please read "Article II.15 of GA – Identification of direct and indirect costs" in the financial guidelines available at the following address:
ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/financialguide_en.pdf

Question 3.7. What are the advantages and drawbacks of the lump sum mechanism for ICPC?

Advantages:

Unlike the beneficiary of the reimbursement of eligible costs, the beneficiary of an EC contribution in the form of lump-sums will have **no obligation** from the Commission to:

- Submit certificates on financial statements, **even** if the EC contribution is above the threshold of € 375,000.
- Separate **direct** cost from **indirect** costs
- Separate **eligible** from **non-eligible** costs

This mechanism is definitely lighter than the reimbursement of actual costs mechanism.

Drawbacks:

The beneficiary will still need to report to the Commission the hours worked on the project. Therefore the partner organism will keep a record of the working hours for each person through **time sheets** (see Question 3.8). However, this remains an easy administrative duty compared to the other funding mechanism.

EC contribution taking the form of a lump sum is merely based on the time a team of researchers spend on a project, and not on other specific costs (such as travel or equipment) and on the estimated average wages. This method does not take into account the different level of wages among the team.

Therefore, this mechanism can substantially underestimate the actual overall budget of the partner.

Note:
Whether a partner opts for lump sum or actual costs, unforeseen costs for carrying out the project may arise if provisional budgeting has been insufficient.
It is worth being aware that the EC never provides extra funding after the GA has been signed!

Question 3.8. What is a time sheet? What does it look like?

The time sheet is one of the most important and compulsory administrative document that any partner has to fill in carefully **regardless of the funding mechanism for which the partner opted.**

It registers, day after day, the working hours which have been devoted to the various tasks of a project. It must be as precise as possible in order to facilitate the periodic reporting towards the Work Package leader and the Coordinator.

This document has to be filed by the partner organism since it can be requested by the Commission or external auditors during and after the project course.
An example of time sheet is suggested below:

TIME SHEET				
RESEARCHER NAME *Organism NAME* *Grant Agreement number* *Project TITLE*				
YEAR **MONTH(*)** **Complete the time spent on the project**				
Work Package and task reference	**Number of working hours**	**ACTIVITY TYPE****	**DAY (DD/MM)**	**LOCATION (Home or visiting Country)**
TOTAL	*0*			

Question 3.9. When do partners receive the funding?

At the start of the project

The pre-financing will be received by the coordinator at the beginning of the project and in any case within 45 days of the entry into force of the Grant Agreement (unless a special clause stipulates otherwise).

The coordinator will then distribute it to the other beneficiaries who have signed the Grant Agreement**,** the contracting document enabling one to receive EU funding and which details the payment schedule and modalities.

During the project

Interim payments will follow after approval of the **periodic reports** made to the Commission and will be calculated according to lump sums modalities or on the basis of the accepted eligible costs and their corresponding reimbursement rates.

Interim payments and pre-financing will be limited to 90% of the maximum and total EC contribution.

At the end of the project

The final payment will be transferred after the approval of the final reports and consists of the difference between the calculated total EC funding minus the amounts already paid.

The Guarantee Fund (GF)

The Guarantee Fund covers both the EC and the Consortium's financial risks during the implementation of EU projects. It functions as an insurance contract by the beneficiaries to guarantee the financial losses of the projects. The GF is the property of the beneficiaries, and each one will contribute to the GF. The sums are transferred into the GF by the Commission, in the name of the beneficiaries, and will be subtracted from the **pre-financing**. The GF will totalise 5% of the maximum EC contribution to the project.

This GF is a new feature of FP7 and prevents the partners from collective financial responsibility before the Commission if one partner leaves the consortium with no prior notice and without reimbursing undue funding.

Useful link:
The FP7 financial guidelines are available
ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/financialguide_en.pdf

FAQ 4 : Participating to an FP7 project

Question 4.1.What are the basic requirements to join an FP7 project?

It is necessary to distinguish between requirements which are **compulsory** to be allowed into a consortium and requirements which are **strongly recommended** in order to avoid troubles during the implementation of a project.

Compulsory: Partner must be a legal entity
To join an FP7 project, a candidate must be a 'legal entity', meaning any natural or legal person which has legal personality and may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations. It may have been created either:

- Under the national law of its place of establishment;
- Under EU law;
- Under international law;

In the case of natural persons, references to establishment are considered to refer to habitual residence.

Compulsory: Partner must prove its financial viability
In order to be financially viable, a legal entity must be:
Liquid: able to cover its short-term commitments;
Solvent: able to cover its medium and long-term commitments;
Profitable or self-sufficient: generating profits, or able to prove its self-financing capacity.

Strongly recommended: a partner should be fluent in English
English is nearly always the common language used in consortia and most Commission documents are not translated in any other language. Every candidate must then be able to speak, understand, write and read English so that no important communication problems can arise from this issue. Interpreters can be hired but their costs will not be considered, for this use, as eligible costs by the Commission.

Strongly recommended: a partner should have easy access to information and communication technology equipment
The communication between the members of the consortium is a strong factor of success. Just as English mastering, it is highly recommended that the candidate is equipped with a reliable internet connection and a reliable telephone line.

Question 4.2. What are the first steps to take to benefit from FP7 funding?

FP7 funding is distributed through a series of call for proposal. For Environmental projects, there is one call for proposal per year.

A call for proposal is characterized by:
- A launch date and a closure date
- An overall budget
- A work program
- Information on the evaluation procedures

The work program:
On the launch date, the lists of topics which are eligible for funding is officially released. It is called "the work program". One topic addresses one specific RTD issue. The topics enclosed are also structured in a precise way since they specify:
- The content/scope of the project
- The funding scheme used for the project (see FAQ2.2)
- The expected impact the project will have
- **Other information: this field is particularly relevant for ICPC partners since it mentions if the topic is targeted as a SICA.**

Here are two examples of **topics** in the 2008 work program:

ACTIVITY/ AREA	TOPICS CALLED	FUNDING SCHEMES
ACTIVITY 6.1. CLIMATE CHANGE, POLLUTION AND RISKS		
Sub-activity 6.1.1. Pressures on environment and climate (EUR 42 million)		
1.1.1. (area)	**ENV.2008.1.1.1.1 Sea-Level Rise: Trends in contributions from continental ice, processes and links to climate change**	Collaborative project (large-scale integrating project)
1.1.2.	**ENV.2008.1.1.2.1 Climate-chemistry interactions in the stratosphere related to ozone depletion**	Collaborative projects (small or medium-scale focused research projects)

Orientations of work programs to come over the next years are described at the end of the document describing the current work program (see the last link in the next rectangle)

Thus, to take a first "step into the FP7 process":

- ICPC researchers must be aware of the launch date of an annual call for proposal
- They must retrieve the annual work program as soon as possible after the launching of a call.
- They must search for a topic of interest relevant to their research activities throughout the work program.
- They must search for an existing consortium initiating a proposal for the topic they have identified in the work program since they cannot launch an FP7 project themselves.

Useful links:
Calls are published on the **Cordis website**, which is dedicated to facilitate participation of candidates to a FP7 Project.
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

To stay updated of the call for proposal, one can visit regularly the following Cordis page:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm

Teams of National **Information Points (NIPs)** have been created to guide ICPC researchers through the various steps towards joining an FP7 project.
To search for the closest "NIP" to your home country, visit Cordis:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/third-countries_en.html

You can directly access current FP7 work programs in order to already identify a topic of interest on the following Cordis page. One can thus see if the current call or the next includes a topic which will generate project proposals in which his participation could be considered:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/wp_en.html#cooperation

Question 4.3. How can an ICPC structure proceed to find a consortium?

It is usually upon the launching of a call for proposal (see Question 4.2) that the coordinator, or project initiators, are looking for partners. If, as an ICPC researcher, one has identified a relevant topic for his research activities in a given work program, he should start searching for on-going initiatives.

In order to join an FP7 project, an ICPC researcher should:

- **Draft his scientific profile** in accordance with the objectives of the topic he has identified in the work programme. This profile should be as clear as possible concerning the activities that the ICPC researcher could carry out in a future project. An FP7 project involves several partners and so require complementary expertise, an unclear profile can thus mislead the reader on the researcher's area(s) of expertise.
- **Disseminate this profile** to whom could be interested and towards his professional contacts (networks) located in European countries firsthand.
- Register this profile in the Cordis partner search database (see below the useful links)

In addition:

- **National Contact Points (NCP)** in EU member states and National Information Points (NIP) outside the EU can also help find a coordinator and partners.

- The **"Interlink"** network aims to reinforce links between EU, NIS and Sub-Saharan African Researchers, and encourage them to build projects together. A dozen of FP7 NCPs are involved in the Interlink network.

Interlink Contacts in Sub Saharan Africa:
Ms Renee Le Roux, NRF (ZA) : Renee@nrf.ac.za
Dr Andrew Enow, ICSU (ZA): a.enow@icsu-africa.org
Pr. Pius Yanda, University of Dar Es Salaam (TZ): yanda@ira.udsm.ac.tz
Dr Paul Vermande, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF): vermandepaul@wanadoo.fr

Useful links:
Cordis partner service
http://cordis.europa.eu/partners-service/

FP7 National Contact Points located are registered in a Cordis database; they can be helpful to link ICPC researchers with EU researchers. Find out more about their role and contact details on the following webpage:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html

Question 4.4. Which information should an ICPC partner provide when taking part to a proposal?

At the submission phase, a proposal consists in 3 main parts:

- A technical description of work planned
- A financial proposal coherent with the description of work
- Administrative information concerning each partner

Thus, like any other partner, the ICPC partner should provide two types of information:

- Scientific information (e.g. his added value to the project) useful for the drafting of the description of work
- Administrative and financial information

Scientific information must be relevant to the project proposal
In order to submit a successful proposal, the technical description of work must be as convincing as possible regarding the topic addressed in the work program. The proposal drafting should demonstrate that the project will undoubtedly improve existing state of the art and aim to establish new Best Available Technologies.

Therefore, the list of work packages and tasks must be described accurately and must be proven coherent with the overall objectives in the proposal. Moreover, the expertise of each partner for carrying out his tasks should also be demonstrated thanks to his scientific background. No one, but the partner himself, is able to provide the necessary scientific arguments to make his part of the proposal a convincing one. These arguments will determine the amount of the EC contribution during the negotiation phase. They are thus decisive for the consortium to obtain a contribution sufficient for every partner to carry out his tasks as described in the description of work.

Thus, all partners, ICPC partners included, should support the Coordinator of the proposal in the drafting process by sending him as many information as possible on their scientific activities and expertise relevant to the project.

Budget information should be estimated in accordance with the work load
Each partner must also provide an accurate estimation of the costs which will be tied up for the implementation. These costs will relate to:

- The work load (in person.month) : to be estimated on the basis of the tasks to be implemented
- The numbers of trips planned
- The necessary equipment
- Etc.

For more information on financial aspects, please refer to FAQ 3 :

Administrative information will commit the ICPC organism to the proposal
In order to officially take part in a proposal which is to be submitted in the frame of a given call, any partner must provide the Commission with basic administrative and legal data:

- Its legal name
- Its legal address
- Its legal registration number
- Its Value Added Tax number

Legal entities that have provided their data previously for another proposal are exempted from this procedure, **providing data has not been modified.**

Electronic submission
All these information are provided through a web platform also called "Electronic Proposal Submission Service (EPSS)".
The Coordinator of the proposal is responsible for providing all partners with login and password so that everyone can fill in the online administrative forms.
At the submission stage, no supporting documents will be requested.

Useful links
More information can be found in the « Guide for Applicants » which are released upon launching of each call. This guide will be available on Call page on the Cordis website: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm

Question 4.5. What are the evaluation criteria?

The evaluation phase starts after the deadline for submitting project proposals is reached (closure date of the call)

The evaluation is performed by a group of 4 to 5 independent experts who grade proposals addressing the same topic according to the following criteria:

- Scientific and technical excellence (score /5)
- Expected impact (score /5)
- Quality of the management (score /5)

In the case of a proposal addressing a SICA (see Question 1.5), it is obvious that the relevance of the ICPC partners and of their role within the consortium will be major assets to get the highest score possible.
Some non-SICA topics also mention that including (a) partner(s) from a given ICPC is an asset or even that it is compulsory.

Useful links:
Details about evaluation phase are always available in the annual work program to be published on the Call page of the Cordis website:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm

Question 4.6. If the project is selected for funding, how long before it starts?

Call for proposal procedures take quite a long time. If a proposal is selected, then the negotiation phase begins. It is important not to start working on the project at that stage since a negotiation can fail for various reasons. The funding of the proposal may depend on how the consortium is willing to accept changes. During this phase, the partners will have to provide the Coordinator with extra data and documents to prepare the Grant Agreement requested by the Commission services in the Negotiation Mandate.
At this stage, the Commission will verify if partners within the consortium have sufficient financial and human resources to carry out their tasks.

If everything goes right, the Grant Agreement can be signed between the Commission and the consortium and the project can start.

It is worth noting that, on average, an FP7 project starts one year after the project proposal is submitted to the Commission.

Useful links:
Full documentation about negotiation phase is available at the following address:
ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/negotiation_en.pdf