



Guidelines for Applicants

CORNET 17th Call for Proposals

*Opening National and Regional Programmes
for transnational Collective Research
between SME Associations and Research Organisations.*

Closing date: 28th of March 2014, mid-day

Submission via e-mail to eu@aif-ftk-gmbh.de

0. PREFACE

This document describes the rules for submitting proposals for trans-national collective research in the framework of the 17th Joint CORNET Call.

This call is a joint initiative of funding organisations. These organisations (ministries or agencies) will be commonly referred to as '*funding organisations*' in this text. The basic principle in the 17th Joint CORNET Call is that rules, templates and funding conditions of the involved funding organisations remain applicable.

Applicants are strongly advised to contact their national or regional funding organisation well before and during the preparation of project proposals.

The participating funding organisations, the CORNET contact persons in the national / regional funding organisations and the most recent information on the call will be available on the CORNET website: www.cornet-era.net.

The project application has to be sent **by e-mail** to eu@aif-ftk-gmbh.de before the call deadline. After deadline, the CORNET Call Office will check if the application is duly completed. Only applications which are complete at deadline of the call will be accepted.

You will receive an acknowledgement by e-mail from the CORNET Call Office confirming receipt of the complete application. If you have not received confirmation within 72 hours after deadline, please contact the CORNET Call Office (c/o AIF FTK GmbH, Ms Viktoria Cvetković, viktoria.cvetkovic@aif.de).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the Call

This call is organised by CORNET (**CO**llective **R**esearch **NET**working). The partners in CORNET are national or regional ministries and funding agencies from various countries, which wish to facilitate transnational cooperation on the basis of their respective national and regional funding schemes.

CORNET was initiated as an ERA-NET in 2005 and is now a self-sustaining network. For more information on CORNET please visit: www.cornet-era.net.

1.2 Basic Concepts of the CORNET Calls and Collaboration between Programmes

This 17th Joint Call for Collective Research Proposals is based on existing funding programmes for (collective) research in the participating countries/regions. As for the previous CORNET Calls, the added value is to make trans-national collaboration possible for these national/regional programmes, whereby every project participant will be funded by the funding organisation of their own country or region.

This implies that rules for participation and funding in CORNET are basically the same as the ones currently applicable in the national/regional programmes of the various participating countries/regions. **Therefore, different rules may apply to participants within one project consortium.**

An overview of the national/regional programmes and their eligibility criteria can be found on the CORNET website www.cornet-era.net.

Please note that the European Commission is neither involved in the definition or preparation of the call, nor in the evaluation or funding of approved projects.

2. COLLECTIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS

The main eligibility criterion concerning submitted proposals is that they address collective research. The defining characteristics of collective research are:

- It serves the need of a wide grouping of companies, mostly small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).
This grouping is represented by a body such as a federation, a trade association, a sectoral institute, an ad-hoc grouping etc. (herein commonly referred to as '*association*'), which takes a key role in planning and organising the collective research work.
- Knowledge transfer (dissemination) is an integral part of collective research.
It has to be ensured that the results of research are spread throughout the target grouping of companies by suitable measures (e. g. presentations, conferences, training etc.), and that there is a technical and legal path for technology transfer to all interested SMEs of the concerned sector, without discrimination.
- Finally, collective research is pre-competitive.

Collective research is distinct from other forms of enterprise R&D, which may generally be classified as:

- 'corporate': R&D performed by a company for its own benefit;
- 'collaborative' or "cooperative": R&D performed by several companies on a shared-cost basis for their own individual benefit;
- 'contract': R&D contracted by one or several companies from one or several third-party research performers, again to the individual benefit of the contracting company or companies.

--- Such projects are not eligible for funding in the CORNET Call. ---

A second essential criterion is to demonstrate clearly the significant added value, when performing the research on a trans-national scale (more than just having a larger forum for the dissemination of individual results!).

The project should be set up such that the specific competencies of the various countries or regions are combined to build up a level of knowledge and know-how, which could not be obtained by one single participant or by a set of individual participants working in parallel.

There is no thematic focus in the 17th Joint CORNET Call. Consortia from all industrial sectors are invited to submit proposals, dealing with any technology. However, some participating funding organisations might be interested to specifically support project building in selected technical areas.

3. FUNDING

3.1 General

Essential feature of the CORNET funding scheme is that funding is allocated according to the rules of the involved national/regional programmes.

Each CORNET partner (i. e. funding organisation) provides funds to accepted projects on national/regional level. In general, the respective applicant (association) will be funded by the corresponding national/regional agency; no money crosses borders.

Due to the differences between the national/regional funding programmes, there will be (possibly significant) differences in the funding rules and eligible costs for each project participant. It is important that the consortium adopts a clear and open internal communication policy on this, so that participants do not feel disadvantaged during the course of the project. If significant differences exist within the consortium, it is advisable to address this fact in the Consortium Agreement.

3.2 Amount and Terms of Funding

Projects are funded by a grant to the project budget. They should have a maximum duration of two years.

Most of the participating funding organisations have no pre-set budget restrictions for the 17th Joint CORNET Call. An important criterion is that the budget is well balanced in all respects. In principle, no association should have a disproportionately large share, nor should any association have an insignificant contribution. The size of the target group in each of the participating countries or regions can be taken as a parameter to establish a fair balance. In other words, it can be reasonable that a country with a larger market brings in a proportionally larger contribution.

On the other hand, there is no reason to artificially correct an apparent imbalance, e. g. if a specific technical competence is required for the project, which is available in a smaller country, the proportionally larger contribution from this country can be justified.

3.3 Type of activities that can be funded

The main types of targeted activities are:

- Industrial research and development;
- Applied research and development;

In some countries/regions, the following activities can also be funded:

- Demonstrations;
- Technology / knowledge transfer;
- Dissemination workshops and training.

An overview of the types of activities and their funding in the various countries participating in CORNET is on the CORNET website: www.cornet-era.net. Please contact the respective national/regional funding organisation for updated funding information.

3.4 Eligible Costs / Expenditures

Here, too, national/regional rules apply. There are no additional CORNET rules.

Depending on the national/regional rules, funding is based either on costs or expenditures. For detailed information, please contact your national/regional funding organisation.

Typical cost/expenditure categories are:

- Personnel;
- Overhead;
- Travel & subsistence;
- Material, consumables and, if national/regional funding is on cost basis, also equipment depreciation;
- Subcontracting costs / expenditures that are not part of R&D.

In-kind contributions, such as use of plant and buildings, tools, materials, testing, consultancy services, researchers or PhD students etc. are accepted in some countries/regions to a limited extent. In other countries/regions in-kind contributions can be mandatory.

Please check with your funding organisation which costs/expenditures are eligible, and what the funding rates and conditions are.

Generally not allowed are

- market-related costs/expenditures;
- costs/expenditures which are not directly associated with the project;
- costs/expenditures of the project application;
- eligible costs/expenditures which cannot be presented in a traceable/auditable form.

3.5 Timing of Payments

The timing of payments will also be according to national/regional rules. Therefore, participants will not necessarily receive (pre-)payments at the same time.

If some of the participants have approved funding for a period shorter than the full duration of the project (e. g. only one year), and conditional funding afterwards, this should be described in the Consortium Agreement.

4. PROJECT CONSORTIUM

4.1 Preamble

National/regional rules apply also for the composition of consortia. In addition, some new conditions apply due to the trans-national character of the consortia. These additional rules are not in contradiction to the local rules, but they might in some cases be more restrictive.

This chapter describes a number of distinct roles that need to be identified and defined in collective research projects in general. Secondly, the rules for participation in a CORNET project are given for each of these roles.

4.2 Definition of Roles

4.2.1 Associations

The descriptions of associations are defined according to the national/regional programme rules.

For the present purpose of collective research, associations are defined as organisations that have been set up (temporarily) to represent the interests of SMEs in a particular industrial sector. An essential characteristic of an association is that it has a well-defined list of members (SMEs) and well-defined membership criteria and rules. Furthermore, the membership of the association has to include a significant number of SMEs in the related sector.

While associations may have a wide range of activities, the main tasks concerning research will typically include:

- Identifying the research needs of the members;
- Organising collective research based on the identified needs of the members and carried out by a research performer;
- Facilitating technology transfer of the research results to the members.

Examples of associations according to these terms are professional federations and trade associations. In some countries, an ad-hoc grouping of SMEs is considered an association as long as they have a clear membership, are open to other SMEs in the sector to join the group, and strive to represent a significant part of the SME community in their sector.

In some countries, organisations have been set up to focus mainly or solely on the research needs of SMEs in a particular sector, and also to perform the research in-house. Such organisations have a well-defined and representative membership of SMEs in the

concerned sector, and therefore they comply with the definition of association. They play a double role, as association and research performer (see below). Examples are the Collective Research Centres in Belgium or some Industrial Research Associations in Germany.

4.2.2 Research Performers (RTO)

The research performer (or research and technology organisation; RTO) is the organisation that carries out the research defined and requested by the association. In general, the research is based on a quotation, which the RTO submits to the association. RTOs usually are university laboratories, other publicly funded institutes or private non-profit research institutes.

As mentioned above, some collective research centres combine this role with the role of an association.

4.2.3 SME User Committee (SME UC)

An SME user committee (SME UC) is a small group of companies, having a particular common interest in the R&D results of the project. They commit themselves to be available (e. g. twice a year) for active participation in SME UC meetings, organised by the project coordinator for the purpose of monitoring project progress. Within a project it is desirable to organise trans-national meetings. For practical reasons, a share of SME UC meetings can be organised per involved country/region. In this latter case, a coordinator is appointed by the association that is the participant for the country/region.

The role of the SME UC is to advise the project consortium on the relevance of the R&D results and to give direction on how to proceed. Whenever it is planned to test R&D results in a real environment, the SMEs involved in testing have to be members of the SME UC. The SME UC is set up at the beginning of the project and supervises/advises it until the end.

4.3 Rules for Participation in CORNET Projects

4.3.1 Associations

Only associations, as defined above, are eligible to submit a proposal for funding. In case of doubt, please ask your respective funding organisation.

4.3.2 Research Performers

Research performers execute the research work as subcontractors to the associations. They are also formally participants of the project and of the consortium. In case of acceptance of the project, they are required to sign the Consortium Agreement, since they are the main

producers of intellectual property (IP) and potential performers of dissemination activities. These two issues (IP, dissemination) form the main part of the Consortium Agreement.

If needed, other (commercial) contributors can be included as minor subcontractors to one of the participants. In some countries/regions limitations apply for the funding of subcontractors and often quotations have to be requested from more than one potential subcontractor. It is advisable to check funding conditions with the concerned funding organisations, whenever subcontractor work is required.

4.3.3 SME User Committee

An SME user committee (SME UC) is mandatory for CORNET projects, even if the national/regional rules do not prescribe this. Each participating country or region must have at least 5 SMEs in the SME UC.

Members of the SME UC are not participating in the project work, and they are not required to sign the consortium agreement.

Consortia will be required to organise regular SME UC meetings, to take minutes of the meetings, to take the advice on board, and to show at subsequent SME UC meetings how the feedback was integrated in the project plan.

In case national/regional rules exist for (the equivalent of) SME UCs, these rules also need to be respected by the concerned participant(s). In general, travel costs of SMEs in the SME UCs are not funded.

The consortia are free to decide how the SME UC meetings will be organised (per year e. g. either one trans-national meeting for all involved or a series of national/regional meetings), provided that a significant number of SME UC members are regularly involved.

Letters of Intent (LoI) to join the SME UC, signed by a legal representative of the corresponding SME, must be provided with the proposal. The presence of a representative and motivated SME UC will be an important eligibility criterion for CORNET projects.

4.3.4 Project Coordinator

Each consortium nominates one association as project coordinator. During the proposal preparation phase, one of the responsibilities of the project coordinator is to ensure that every association is in contact with its national/regional funding organisation, in order to ensure compliance with national/regional rules. The funding organisation of the project coordinator will provide specific support to comply with the CORNET rules.

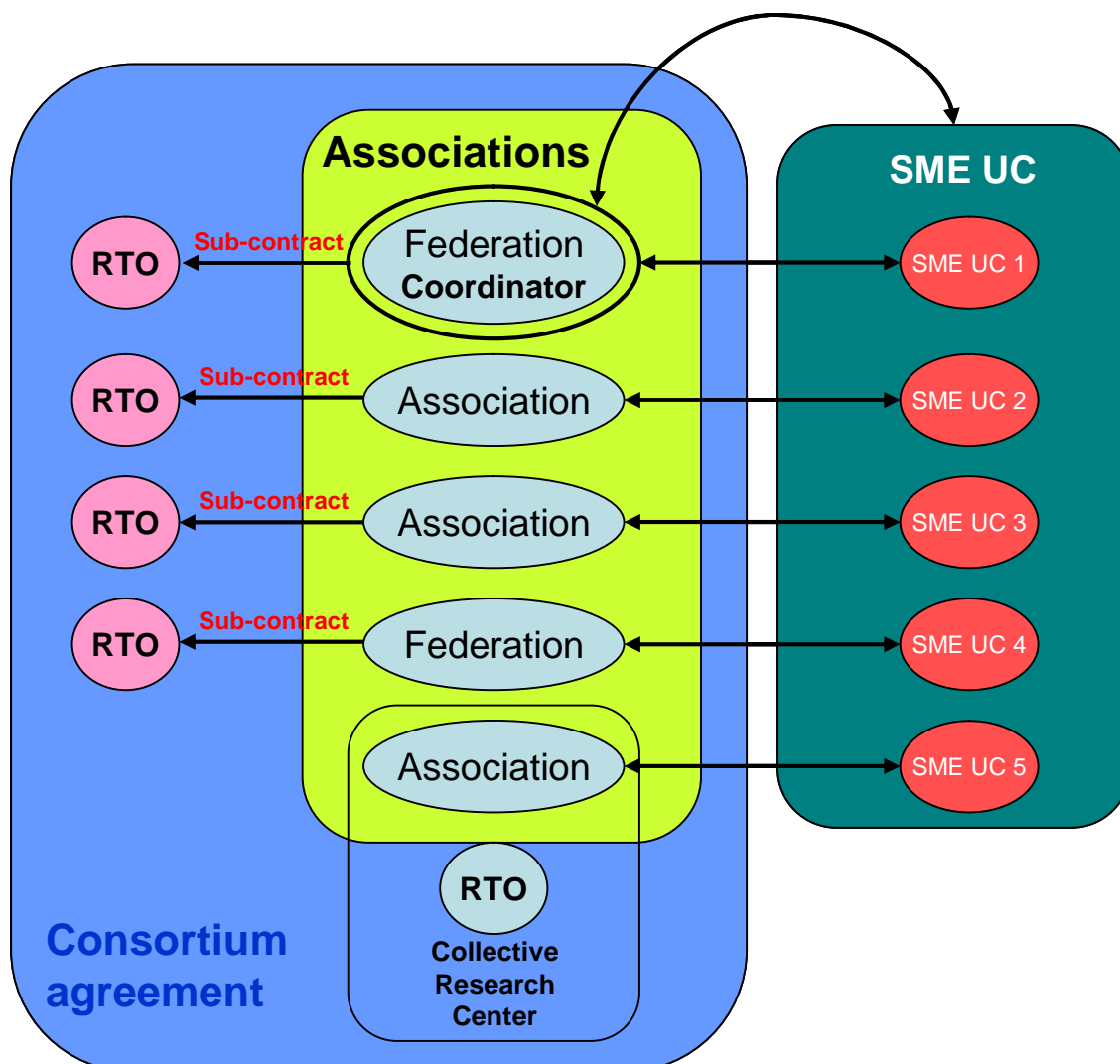
Any association as defined in this section can take the role of project coordinator, **EXCEPT** for the mentioned ad-hoc grouping of enterprises, since it is expected that such an organisation will not be sufficiently established to take that responsibility.

4.3.5 CORNET Project Consortium

A minimum of 2 associations is required, from 2 different countries (not regions) that have a funding organisation participating in the CORNET call. It is however strongly recommended to build consortia with more than 2 partners.

This minimum implies that the associations are also able to carry out the research by themselves. If this is not the case, the minimum requirements additionally enclose research performers. The figure at the end of this section presents the construction of a CORNET project and the involved actors.

The consortium has to be well-balanced (see also section ‘Funding’). This will be an important evaluation criterion.



5. APPLICATION PROCESS

5.1 Timing

Although in many countries/regions projects can be submitted continuously, CORNET collective research project proposals will be submitted according to a deadline.

The deadline for the 17th Joint CORNET Call is 28th of March 2014 at mid-day.

Proposals submitted after that time will not be considered.

5.2 Advice and Assistance

It is highly recommended to discuss the proposal concept, innovation potential, target group, project construction, financial planning etc. with an advisor from your funding organisation before detailed preparation of the proposal, and to interact further during development of the consortium and writing of the proposal.

5.3 Submission of Full Proposal

For the 17th call, one of the project partners (e. g. the coordinating association) submits the full proposal (Application Form and all Annexes) on behalf of the project consortium by e-mail to eu@aif-ftk-gmbh.de. The number of pages of part 4 'Description of the Project' of the completed Proposal Application Form must not exceed a limit of 30 pages. The Proposal Application Form as well as annexed documents should preferably be in Portable Document Format (PDF). The size of each of the documents must not exceed 10 MB.

The number of pages of part 4 'Description of the Project' of the completed Proposal Application Form must not exceed a limit of 30 pages.

In addition to the innovation purpose and the technical project description, the proposal should explicitly address all of the eligibility criteria mentioned in these guidelines and convincingly explain how they are fulfilled. Also a complete and detailed financial plan must be given.

In parallel, all partners have to send a national/regional application form to their own national/regional funding organisation, using the local template and referring to the CORNET project proposal. The same deadline applies for the national/regional submission: 28th of March 2014 at noon – or even earlier, depending on the deadline of the national/regional programme. An overview of the national/regional funding organisations, where these forms are to be submitted, can be found on www.cornet-era.net.

Additional information that may be required by the national/regional funding organisations, but that is not relevant for other agencies or external experts, can be mentioned in the local project proposal.

For the national/regional submission, the national/regional rules apply.

5.4 Language

The CORNET Proposal Application Form should be entirely in English, including all annexes. Exceptions of this rule have to be agreed with all national/regional funding organisations involved in a project proposal.

The national/regional application form will generally be in the national language, unless agreed otherwise with the concerned funding organisation.

6. GUIDELINES TO THE PROPOSAL APPLICATION FORM AND ANNEXES

The number of pages of part 4 'Description of the Project' of the completed Proposal Application Form must not exceed a limit of 30 pages.

1. **General information**
2. **Abstract**
3. **Project Consortium – *Coordinating Association* –
Project Consortium – *Participating Association* –
Project Consortium – *Participating Research Performer* –**

BEGINNING OF LIMIT 30 pages

4. **Description of the Project**
 - I. Economic Relevance for SMEs

a. Targeted Market Sector

Describe the market sector or industrial branch your project is aimed at. Indicate market sectors both at national and international level.

Describe the estimated size of the targeted market sector (number of SMEs in the sector, turnover, employees etc.).

Describe the expected coverage of your project within this sector.

Position your collective research project in the value chain in the sector and explain the pre-competitive character.

Describe the relevance of the project to the sector and the added value to the SMEs.

b. Economic Impact

Describe economic advantages of the project and cost effectiveness.

Describe the job creation and safeguarding potential.

Mention notable social aspects of the project: Impact on level of qualification, working conditions, quality of life, resource efficiency, relevant legislation and regulations etc.

c. The Need

Describe the problem or the need that will be addressed with this project, as identified by the SMEs in the sector.

Make a clear distinction between general background information (that the reader needs to know to understand and position the problem), and the specific description of the need.

II. Research Approach

a. State of the Art and Technological Alternatives

Describe the state of the art worldwide. Mention relevant publications, patents, etc. Focus also on the state of the art in the participating countries/regions.

Mention existing solutions and their shortcomings. State if there are any technological alternatives and mention the advantages or disadvantages compared to the technological developments envisaged in your project.

If this proposal is a follow-on project: Report on the status of work and the results obtained in the forerunner project. Describe how the projects are connected and built upon one another.

This will be the “0-measurement” against which the technological advancement produced by the project will be measured at the end.

b. Innovation Target

Describe what the overall innovation target of the project is, and how this project is expected to solve the problem and satisfy the addressed need of the SME community.

c. Research Method

Describe the research methods used in your project as well as the alternatives to these methods. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods.

d. Expected Project Results

Describe the concrete results expected at the end of your project (new methodology, equipment, processes, standards etc.).

Describe the general outline of the expected economic results of the project. Describe the different levels of the project’s economic results for the SMEs, together with the estimated cost of introduction, the investments required and the estimated total benefit for the SMEs per year.

III. Project Execution

a. Technical and Scientific Methodology

Describe your solution(s), i. e. how the project will work its way towards the target.

Describe the means, technologies and methodologies which will be deployed to reach the targets.

Introduce the different work packages, justify the partitioning of the work into these work packages, and describe the logical, chronological and practical relationships between the work packages.

Describe potential risks linked to the proposed methodology.

b. Detailed work plan and time schedule

Each work package contains tasks, deliverables, time planning with milestones, and the contribution of each participant. Give a detailed description for each work package (WP 1-WP n):

Tasks:

- Describe the work to be done in the respective task;
- Identify the required input;
- Describe the specific objectives;
- Explain the methodology followed and the technical approach to work;
- Indicate what technological challenges you expect;
- Describe the time necessary, and time schedule.

Deliverables:

- Describe the expected outcome and state clearly what type of deliverable it is (document, blueprint, software, system, hardware etc.);
- Identify risks associated with each deliverable, with respect to technical feasibility and timing;
- Indicate when the deliverables need to be available.

Milestones:

- Describe the planned milestones and their place in the critical path of the overall project;
- Describe the decisions that need to be taken at each milestone, give an explanation of the criteria for the go and no-go decisions.

Contribution of each participant:

- Describe briefly the role and the responsibilities of the participants in each of these work packages;
- Give a detailed overview of the planned effort for each partner, preferably on task level; take into account a fair balancing of the workload.

In addition to your description, enclose a work plan and time schedule, containing the activities, time period, workload per work package in person months and the skills of the personnel needed (the template 'work plan' [Excel worksheet] is available on www.cornet-era.net).

IV. Cooperation Framework

a. Overview of Project Consortium

Explain and justify the choice of project participants (associations and research performers). Describe briefly their relevant qualifications. Describe briefly the type of knowledge and expertise that each partner brings into the project. Explain briefly the track-record of the project partners.

Describe the main purpose and goals of the cooperation. Describe in which way the partners will cooperate. Explain why the collaboration between the involved research performers is necessary to reach the set goals. Describe for each partner its role and added value within the consortium (synergy and complementation).

Demonstrate why it would be hard or impossible to reach the goals if only partners of one single country or region would tackle the problem. Describe how the specific competencies of the involved participants from various countries/regions are combined to build up a level of knowledge and know-how, which could not be obtained by one single participant or by a set of individual participants working in parallel.

Describe the interaction with the SME User Committee members.

b. Detailed Description Project Participants

Give a more detailed description for each project participant separately (associations and research performers).

Associations:

- Describe the organisation's expertise and core business with respect to the SMEs and enterprises the association is representing;
- Describe the type of knowledge the organisation brings into the project;
- Position the project within the activities of the organisation; give an overview of the previous research projects, which are in the technology or application domain of this project;
- For previous projects, give an overview of the technological and scientific results and the valorisation results (use of the results by SMEs);
- Describe the managerial expertise of your organisation with regard to R&D projects. *(Only Coordinating Association: Include also information on the managerial expertise of the designated project coordinator.)*

Research Performers:

- Describe the organisation's expertise and main research activities;
- Describe the specific technical expertise and the type of knowledge the organisation contributes to the project;
- Mention relevant publications in the requested area of research (patents, books, publications etc.);

- Describe previous projects (topics) in general – very briefly;
- Position the project within the research activities of the organisation, and give an overview of the previous research projects which are relevant for this project;
- For previous projects, give an overview of the technological and scientific results and the valorisation results (use of the results by t SMEs).

c. Project Management

Describe your project management structure. Define the management instruments, assign roles and responsibilities.

Provide meeting schedules, including the SME User Committee meetings.

It is advised to assign also the role of project risk manager to one of the management board members, to specifically follow up and report on the risk issues identified in the work packages.

d. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Describe how the IPR are dealt with within the consortium, taking into account national rules. Explain how the rights for this knowledge will be distributed. With respect to knowledge protection, outline how the pre competitive character of the project is ensured.

V. Applicability of the Results

a. Dissemination Strategy

Explain what you expect as a result of the project in terms of new technology, products, services, processes and intellectual property rights.

With respect to the pre-competitive character of the project, describe the approach to the distribution of the project results to the final beneficiaries (SMEs) of the project, both on national and international level (workshops, courses, consultations, website, papers, published work, reports, research sample, exhibition to fairs, symposia etc.).

Make a distinction between dissemination measures during and after the project. Indicate the measures for a timely implementation of results after the project.

In addition to your description, enclose a table with the dissemination plan, giving an overview of planned activity, objective and date / time period (the template 'dissemination plan' is available on www.cornet-era.net).

b. Sustainability of the Project Results

Describe which problems will remain to be solved after the end of the project.

Point out who will be in charge of the project follow-up work. Explain how cooperation will continue after the project. Is further cooperation (follow-on projects etc.) intended/planned/possible?

END OF LIMIT 30 pages

5. Overview of Costs

Give a detailed cost breakdown for each project participant separately (associations and research performers).

Explain the organisation's detailed contribution costs briefly. Take care that the project budget, and the requested funding, are in balance with the work programme and the expected results (value for money). A brief explanation should be provided for the most important elements of the budget (labour and subcontracting) as addendum. Explain explicitly how the co financing aside the requested funding will be organised (who supplies the funds and how does the scheme work).

Proposal Application Form and Annexes

To complete the project proposal, seven annexes are added to the Proposal Application Form:

- Dissemination Plan
- Work Plan
- List SME UC
- Letters of Intent (companies forming the SME UC)
- Declaration of Intention (Associations)
- Declaration of Intention (RTOs)
- Draft Consortium Agreement

All document forms are available on www.cornet-era.net. The Proposal Application Form as well as annexed documents should preferably be in Portable Document Format (PDF). The size of each of the documents must not exceed 10 MB.