

## FP7-ICT-2009-5

Frequently asked questions (version 1; 30<sup>th</sup> July 2009)

All the documents referred to here are obtained by following links from the ICT web site at <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/>

### **Standard Disclaimer**

These Frequently Asked Questions does not supersede the rules and conditions laid out, in particular, in Council and Parliament Decisions relevant to the Seventh Framework Programme, the ICT Theme, the Model grant agreement or Call for proposals. They are provided as a help to specific questions and present only the current view of the Information desk of the ICT Theme. Readers should not regard these views as a statement of the official position of the European Commission.

### **How does the ICT Theme offer funding?**

We do so only by a series of public calls for proposals. We announce what sort of projects we are interested in in a work programme, and (usually) give a fixed deadline in which proposals must be received. This way, everybody knows what the possibilities are, and everybody gets an equal chance.

### **How do I find out what sort of work the ICT Theme will help to fund?**

You must read the ICT Work programme. This describes in detail the research objectives which the Theme is defining for this call, and the types of projects which can be proposed in each objective.

### **What are these types of project?**

We fund research by two means; the "*Large-scale integrating project*" (IP) and the "*Small and medium-scale focused research project*" (STREP). An IP is intended to be broader in scope and ambition than a STREP. These two types of action are also collectively called Collaborative projects (CP) in some of our documents.

We can provide funds for coordinating existing research projects - either just ICT projects or including other projects also - in order to increase their benefit or impact. This is done by means of a "*Coordination action*" (CA). Other work in support of the ICT Theme can be funded by a "*Support action*" (SA). These two types of action are also collectively called "Collaboration and Support Actions" (CSA) in some of our documents.

We also have a project type designed to support the structuring and shaping of Europe's research capacity. This is the "*Network of excellence*" (NoE).

Fuller details of all these types of project are given in the Guides for applicants, which can be downloaded via the ICT website. There is a separate Guide for applicants for each type of project.

### **Can I propose any one of these types of project for any one of the objectives in this call?**

No, not always. Each objective has specified a particular range of project types it is calling for. They are listed in the ICT Workprogramme.

### **What if I send you a proposal for an IP, say, for an objective which is only calling for CA and SA proposals?**

We will reject it without evaluation, as being out of scope of the call.

**Can I send you a proposal for work, which includes more than one of your objectives. Or maybe even objectives of other FP7 Themes such as Health or Transport?**

Yes, you may submit a cross-objective proposal. But to be evaluated for this call the centre of gravity of the proposal must lie in one of the objectives open in this call. If the centre of gravity of your proposal lies in another Theme's call you should submit it to that Theme. If we receive a proposal where the centre of gravity lies in another Theme's call which is currently open, we will transfer it to them. If the centre of gravity of your proposal lies in an objective which is not covered by any available open call, we will reject it without evaluation.

**What if I send you a "spontaneous" proposal for work in an area not mentioned in this call?**

We will reject it without evaluation, as being out of scope of the call.

**How do I find out how to write a proposal?**

Full details of how to prepare a proposal are given in the ICT Guides for applicants, obtainable from our website. There are five Guides, one for each project type, because the required structure of the proposal is different for each project type.

Remember, just because we have provided five Guides does not mean that all five project types will be possible in the objective which you are targeting. Check the Call fiche for your objective before preparing your proposal, to be sure that such a proposal is indeed being called for!

**I see nine Guides for applicants on your call page, not five!**

We include in this call a number of objectives from our FET proactive initiative. These objectives are asking for IP, STREP, CA or SA proposals, but they have certain special conditions in their evaluation which are different from the rest of the programme (described in the Appendix 5 of the ICT Workprogramme). Therefore we have produced four extra "FET only" Guides, for proposers in the FET Proactive objectives only.

**I have heard that I need some sort of proposer identity number before I can prepare a proposal**

No. We have indeed introduced a system of Participant Identification Codes, in which you register your address and organisational details with us, then you are given a code number which you can use to identify yourself each time you submit a proposal in the future. This is to save you from having to supply all the same information again and again. There is more information about this in the Guides for applicants.

But this arrangement is entirely optional. You can always submit a proposal without applying for a PIC at the proposal stage first.

**How do I submit my proposal?**

You use the Commission's Electronic Proposal Submission Service (EPSS). The proposal coordinator first need to register, to get a password or passwords for him/herself and the consortium partners (these passwords protect the confidentiality of your proposal file while you are preparing it). Then you prepare your proposal via the Internet, on our server, then finally you submit it. How to do this is briefly explained in the Guides for applicants, and there is also a detailed manual for the EPSS which you will be able to download.

### **What should I be aware of when using electronic submission?**

Three key issues:

1. Make sure you have registered for the right call, **FP7-ICT-2009-5**. Registering for the wrong call will mean that we do not receive your proposal.

And also make sure that you have selected your intended project type, IP, STEP, NoE, CA or SA, or if appropriate the special FET Proactive versions of IP, STREP, CA or SA. Registering for the wrong project type will mean that you will be working with a wrong set of forms and instructions.

2. Before submitting, print out your own proposal to check that it is complete, printable and readable. After the call deadline it will not be possible to replace any section of your proposal which is missing or unreadable.

3. You must remember that, even though you are building up your proposal on our computer, it will not be recognised as a completed proposal ready for submission until the proposal coordinator presses the “Submit” button and completes the submission procedure. So don’t forget to press the “Submit” button !

### **What if I find I have registered with the EPSS for the wrong call or for the wrong type of project by mistake?**

Abandon those passwords and register again.

### **What if I have some difficulties, and I am a few minutes late with my proposal. Can I still submit it via the EPSS?**

No. The EPSS service for this call will shut down automatically on the call deadline.

### **What if I am still uploading my proposal when the deadline comes?**

Submission is when you have uploaded the whole proposal **and** have submitted it by pressing the submit button. If your file is still uploading when the deadline comes, you have failed to submit it.

### **Can I send you my proposal by email?**

Proposals sent by email (or fax) are excluded by the legal conditions of the call and will be rejected without evaluation.

### **Call deadlines have sometimes been extended. Will this one be extended?**

We have in the past extended a call deadline when a failure in the EPSS system has meant that applicants were unable to submit their proposal. In the event of a failure of the EPSS service due to breakdown of the Commission server during the last 24 hours of this call, the deadline will be extended by a further 24 hours. This will be notified by email to all proposal coordinators who had registered for this call by the time of the original deadline, and also by a notice on the ICT Call page on Cordis and on the EPSS website. But such a failure is a rare and exceptional event, therefore do not assume that there will be an extension to this call!

If you have difficulty in submitting your proposal, you must not assume that it is because of a problem with the Commission server as this is rarely the case. Immediately contact the EPSS helpdesk for assistance tel: +32 2 233 3760; email [support@epss-fp7.org](mailto:support@epss-fp7.org)

### **How will I know you have received my proposal?**

When you submit your proposal via the EPSS you will see an automatic notice saying that a proposal has been submitted. We strongly suggest that, as soon as your proposal is in complete form, you submit it. The notice will reassure you that all is well with your submission procedure. Then you can continue to work on your proposal, and re-submit it each

time you have a better version. Each new submission will over-write the old one. You can keep on doing this right up to the close of call.

But make that first trial submission ! If your proposal is going to have a submission problem, it is better to discover this while there is plenty of time to call the EPSS helpdesk and fix it, and not just a few seconds before the deadline.

### **Is this notice my official Acknowledgement of receipt (AoR)?**

No. The day after the close of call, we download all the proposals from the EPSS server and an official Acknowledgement of receipt letter is sent by email to each proposal coordinator (the individual named as “person in charge” on the A2 form of participant no. 1).

### **What if I don't get an Acknowledgement of receipt the day after the close of the call?**

The sending of the AoR is entirely automated. There are only four possible reasons for not getting one:

- You did not press the submit button for your proposal before the call closed. This means you have failed to submit a proposal so there is no Acknowledgement of receipt
- You are not the individual named as “person in charge” on the A2 form of participant no. 1. Contact that person for the AoR
- You are that person, but you did not give a correct email address for yourself. Contact the ICT information desk [ict@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ict@ec.europa.eu) for your AoR
- You are that person, and you gave a correct email address, but your organisation's spam filter eliminated our email to you. Check your spam filter for the day or two after the close of this call for mail sent by [FP7Aor@ess-fp7.org](mailto:FP7Aor@ess-fp7.org). Then if you do not find your AoR, contact the ICT information desk.

### **Can I delegate the job of submitting my proposal?**

The proposal is submitted under the user ID and password of the proposal coordinator. So a proposal coordinator could pass the job to someone else by giving them this information. But this is a risky thing to do. The submission of a proposal requires some knowledge of the EPSS system, a detailed knowledge of the contents of the proposal and the authority to make last-minute decisions on behalf of the consortium if problems arise. It is very unwise to delegate this job!

### **Do I have to follow exactly the format for a proposal, which you give in the Guide for applicants and the proposal template obtained from the EPSS?**

Yes you do. The format takes you through, section by section, the information on which your proposal will be evaluated. If you write it in some other way, or fail to supply some of the data, you risk omitting information which is needed in the evaluation, and this will lead to lower scores, or failure.

### **Do I have to write parts of my proposal in an "anonymous" way, as you requested in some earlier Framework programmes?**

No, not for ICT Call 5.

### **Some of the information you require in a proposal is very detailed, and complicated**

Running a large multinational research project is very complicated. Good proposals have always contained this degree of detail. If you find you haven't got this level of information available for your proposal, perhaps you should review your planning !

**Can my organisation be involved in more than one proposal in the call?**

Yes, but beware of spreading your effort too thinly. You are more likely to be successful by putting a substantial effort into one proposal, than in making a sub-standard contribution to several.

**Do projects have to be proposed by a multinational consortium?**

Normally yes. We expect ICT projects will be multinational in scope and ambition. If you plan research which involves only your own national goals, and includes only organisations from your own country, then it is to your own national government that you should turn for support.

**What is the minimum consortium requirement in a proposal?**

Your proposal must contain at least a minimum of three mutually independent participants who are in three different EU Member states or Associated countries.

**The Member states are:** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK.

The current list of Associated countries is given in the Guide for applicants.

**Are there any exceptions to this "three partner" rule?**

These conditions do not apply to Support action SA proposals. Exceptionally, proposals for Support actions may come from any number of participants, including just one, from any country.

*(Nor do they apply to the special Specific International Cooperation Action (SICA) projects. In the case of SICAs, the minimum consortium comprises at least FOUR mutually-independent partners, two from different Member states or Associated countries and two from the target countries which are identified in the Workprogramme. However no objective in this call includes SICA projects.)*

**Can we include participants from countries other than the Member and Associated countries ?**

Yes. For any proposal, when the minimum figures mentioned above are achieved, you may then add further participants from any other country in the world.

**Do the partners which I include from these other countries get funding?**

If their country is on our list of International Co-operation Partner Countries (ICPC), they will get funding also. This list is published in our Workprogramme, but in general it includes all the other countries in Europe, and the developing countries elsewhere in the world.

**Are the participants from these other countries funded to the same level as the EU state and Associated country participants in a project?**

Organisations in ICPC countries can choose one of two methods of funding. They can participate using the normal "eligible cost" method, and in this case they are funded on the same basis and to the same levels as an organisation in a Member state or Associated country. Alternatively, an organisation in an ICPC country can opt for "lump sum" funding. This is an option which is only open to them. There is more information about this in the Guides for applicants.

**What about overseas countries not on the ICPC list?**

Organisations from the industrialised overseas countries, which are not on the ICPC list (main examples are the USA, Canada, Japan, Rep. of Korea, Taiwan, Australia, ...) may also participate in any FP7 project, but whether they are funded or not is subject to a series of conditions listed in the FP7 Rules for participation.

**How can I find possible partners in other EU states and Associated countries?**

Get in touch with your ICT National Contact Point

[http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html)

Use the Idealist service partner search service

<http://www.ideal-ist.net>

**Do I have to notify you in advance that I am planning to submit a proposal?**

When you apply for your EPSS password you will be asked for some basic information about your planned proposal. This is of enormous assistance to us in planning for the evaluation. Please complete as much information as you can, even with only tentative data – nothing you say involves you in any commitment.

**Can you give me any sort of preliminary feedback on my proposal idea, before I do all the work involved in preparing a proposal?**

You can get in touch with the Commission contact person for the objective you are interested in, and discuss your ideas with him/her, and get their informal advice. Their contact details are available from the ICT call page ("European Commission contacts for this call").

Also, for all of the objectives in this call there is a pre-proposal check service. Details about this service are given in the Guides for applicants.

In either case, it is wise to do the check before committing yourself to serious effort in proposal preparation.

**Is there anything else I should do when preparing my proposal?**

Yes. Prepare and sign with your partners a Consortium agreement, dealing with the relations between the partners and the means of settling disputes once the project is running etc. You have to establish a consortium agreement before the work starts, so the sooner the better. We do not need to examine the Consortium agreement and we do not interfere in it, but we do need to be assured that such an agreement has been made.

**Does the Commission offer a model Consortium agreement?**

No. But we do offer advice on what main points the agreement should include, in a Consortium agreement checklist available via our website.

**How does the Commission evaluate the proposals which it receives?**

The Commission evaluates the proposal with the assistance of experienced independent experts specially selected for this task.

**Are all received proposals evaluated?**

All proposals are first checked for eligibility. Only eligible proposals will be evaluated by the independent experts. There are four eligibility criteria in ICT Call 5

- The proposal must have the necessary minimum number of multinational participants
- The proposal must address an objective which is open in the call
- The proposal must be complete (it should contain two parts - see the Guides for applicants)

- The proposal must have been submitted before or at the call deadline via the EPSS Proposals that do not meet these criteria will be rejected without evaluation.

### **How do the independent experts evaluate my proposal?**

They assess it on three criteria covering Scientific and technical quality, Project implementation and Potential impact. They give each proposal a score out of 5 on each of these criteria, and an overall score is calculated by simple addition; this is therefore out of 15. *(A weighting scheme is used in the calculation of the overall score for FET Proactive proposals only. See the ICT Workprogramme Appendix 5)*

### **Where can I see the evaluation criteria?**

They are described in an annex to the ICT Workprogramme and also in the Guides for applicants. When you have a first draft of your proposal, we strongly advise that you give it to trusted colleagues and ask them to evaluate it using the procedures explained in the Guides and the example evaluation forms which are available from the call page. Then improve your proposal based on their recommendations.

### **What are the threshold scores?**

Each of the criteria has a threshold score of 3, which a proposal must reach in order to be considered. There is also a threshold on the overall score of 10. Proposals which fail to reach these thresholds are not considered for funding.

*(Different thresholds apply for FET Proactive proposals. See the ICT Workprogramme Appendix 5)*

### **Is the evaluation based entirely on the information I supply in my submitted proposal?**

Yes in the case of STREP, CA and SA proposals, but No in the case of IP or NoE proposals. For these proposals the independent experts make an initial inspection of your submitted proposal, and if they think it is of adequate quality you will be invited to Brussels or Luxembourg to take part in a hearing. This hearing procedure is described in the Guides for applicants for IPs and NoEs.

### **If I'm invited to a hearing, does that mean my proposal is going to be funded?**

No. The hearing is just an integral part of the evaluation process for these sorts of proposals. Between 40-50% of all proposals of these types are subject to hearings.

### **Are all the proposals which pass the evaluation thresholds funded?**

No. Many more proposals pass the evaluation thresholds than we have the budget to support. The evaluators use the scores which they have given to list the proposal in priority order, and the Commission uses this list, and other advice which the evaluators give in their written reports, to guide its selection of proposals for funding.

### **How will I know the results of the evaluation of my proposal?**

After the evaluation is completed, by the beginning of February 2010, every proposal coordinator (the individual named as "person in charge" on the A2 form of participant no. 1) will receive, both by email and then subsequently by letter, an "Evaluation Summary Report" (ESR), which details the evaluators' findings about their proposal.

### **And how will I know if my project will be funded?**

If your proposal did not pass the thresholds (or was excluded from evaluation on eligibility grounds) you will be able to see this immediately from your ESR.

If your proposal has passed all the evaluation thresholds you will be notified a few weeks after receiving the ESR either that:

- you are now invited to negotiate a grant agreement
- your proposal has been placed on the reserve list (this is in case budget becomes available for you due to other negotiations failing, or being agreed at lower-than-expected costs)
- your proposal was ranked too low to be considered for funding.

### **Can I myself apply to work as an expert in an evaluation? Even if I am not an EU citizen?**

Yes and Yes! We constantly need good experts with experience in information and communication technology (and a good knowledge of English, which is the working language in the evaluation). Apply at <https://cordis.europa.eu/emmf7> . If selected to assist in an evaluation you will be asked to sign a conflict of interest declaration, so that of course you are never involved in the evaluation of one of your own proposals or of proposals competing with it.

### **Where can I get more help with my proposal?**

If you are planning a proposal, you should at once get in touch with your ICT National Contact Point, whom you can identify at [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html). He or she can give you an enormous amount of help.

If you have specific questions about proposing to this call, contact the ICT help desk at [ict@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ict@ec.europa.eu)

If you have technical questions about the contents of any of the objectives open in the current call, a list of European Commission contacts who can advise you is available from our call page.

If you have general questions about FP7, contact the FP7 Information desk <http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=enquiries>

If you have problems with submission, immediately contact the EPSS helpdesk  
tel: +32 2 233 3760      email [support@epss-fp7.org](mailto:support@epss-fp7.org)

### **A final piece of advice?**

Always after each call we are contacted by a small number of applicants who failed to submit a proposal.

- Some say they didn't think that being a few minutes late would matter.
- Some made a mistake with their computer under the stress of submitting at the last minute.
- Some were blocked by verification problems. The EPSS does not allow you to submit a proposal with missing data, over 10 Mbytes in size or containing viruses.
- Some were blocked by technical difficulties. The EPSS Helpdesk can solve most technical problems in a matter of minutes, but there are some applicants who leave themselves only seconds.
- Some were still uploading when the deadline passed, and tell us that the communications link was unusually slow that day, their file took a long time to convert to pdf, they had a power cut at the last minute etc. This might be true, but it is unfortunately irrelevant. It is entirely your responsibility to arrange yourself to submit your proposal in time. *Except for recognised problems on the Commission's server, no other excuses or extenuating circumstances are ever taken into account,*

Make a first submission of your proposal in good time, and then carry out re-submissions to continue to improve it up to the close of call.

**If I have other questions on the rules for FP7 projects?**

Contact the FP7 Information desk

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=enquiries>

or

Contact the ICT Theme Information Desk:

email: [ict@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ict@ec.europa.eu)

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