



NCP_WIDE.NET

How to participate in
the Spreading Excellence and
Widening Participation activities

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INTRODUCTION

The following Guide contains recommendations for participants planning to submit proposals for Teaming, Twinning, ERA Chairs and COST calls and to implement the projects resulting from those calls. A special section is dedicated for newcomers, operating especially in the low performing regions. It includes recommendations on how to improve one's position and visibility.

The Guide includes sections on how to initiate the preparation of a proposal, its submission and eventually its execution. This includes collection of information, possibilities for partner search, how to browse the Participant Portal, mobility issues, planning and structuring the proposals, as well as many implementation issues.

We wish you a pleasant reading and successful applications under Widening actions.

Widening NCPs' Team



1. GENERAL INFORMATION: FOR WHOM WIDENING ACTIVITIES ARE?

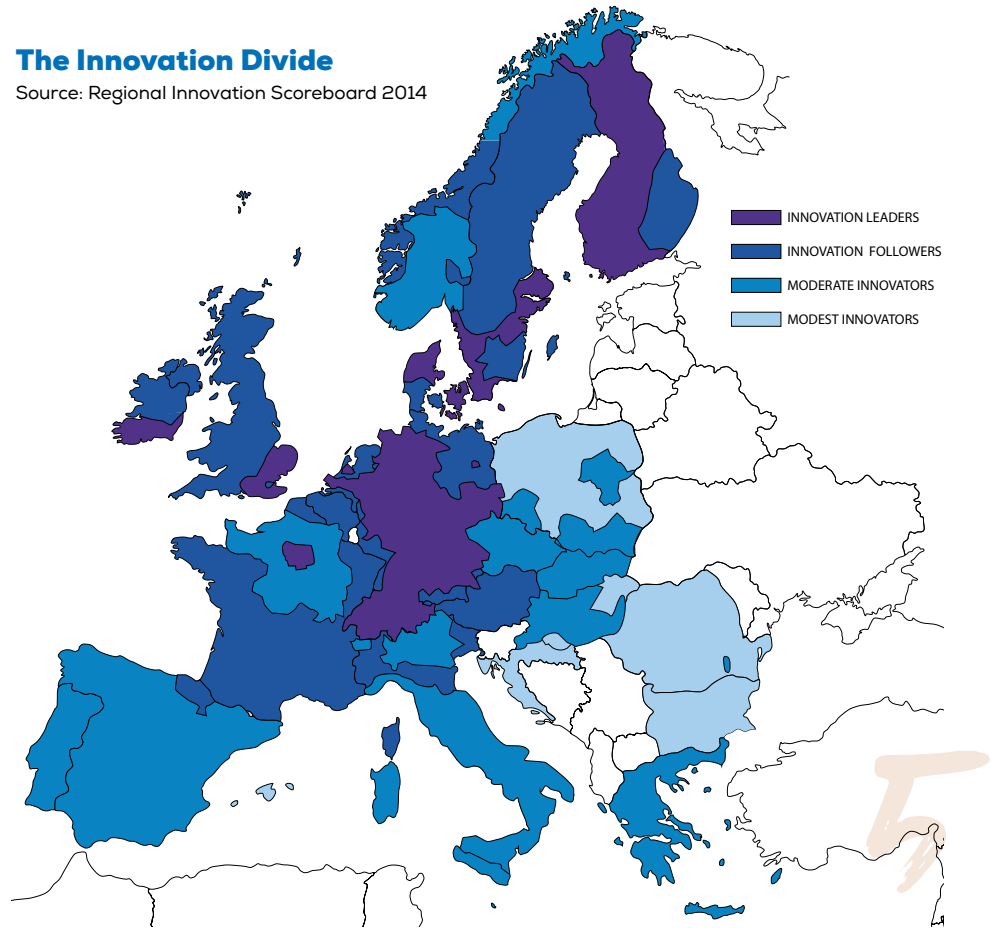
WIDENING ACTIVITIES BACKGROUND

The continuing financial crisis has increased the constraints on public R&D budgets. For the entire EU-28, the ratio of the R&D intensity (R&D investment as a percentage of their GDP) was 2,01 % in 2012. It is estimated that out of the EU's 266 regions, only 10,5% had an R&D intensity above 3%, which remains a target within the Europe 2020 strategy. Limited resources to be effective, must be invested in first class research and innovation system, capable of transforming ideas into innovation spurring development and deployment of technologies for the sake of industry and society.

Despite serious efforts by the European Union and the Member States, significant gaps remain among European regions in terms of research and innovation performance (please see the graph Innovation divide). This is due to different levels of economic development and deep structural differences linked to many diverse factors (geography, specific localisation issues, socio-economic and cultural aspects, etc.).

The Innovation Divide

Source: Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2014



The EU, in the new financial framework running from 2014 until 2020, is determined to deal with these challenges through promoting the integration of different policies in support of research and innovation, first and foremost the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and Horizon 2020 – the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

► ESIF are an important part of the EU budget (35% or 350 bn euros) and a major source for low R&I performing countries in particular to invest in R&I and in the attractiveness of Member States and their regions (incl. digital infrastructure, environment, transport, labour market).

► The differences in research and innovation performance are also mirrored in the participation in Horizon 2020. Therefore, Horizon 2020 provides tailored support for low-performing EU Member States through "Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation".

SPREADING EXCELLENCE AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The aim of the programme „Spreading excellence and widening participation“ is to maximize investments in research and innovation which will enable the European Union to function in a more streamlined and homogeneous way, allowing the individual strengths of each Member State to be optimized. There is a significant evidence pointing to the fact that the pathway to economic growth and competitiveness is strongly connected to the scaling up of investment in research and innovation.

In order to address these challenges, Horizon 2020 introduces specific measures for Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation. These measures are targeted at low-performing Member States in terms of research and innovation called also informally called „Widening“ countries and they will be implemented by the Member States in parallel to the European Structural and Investment Funds for the 2014–2020 financial framework.

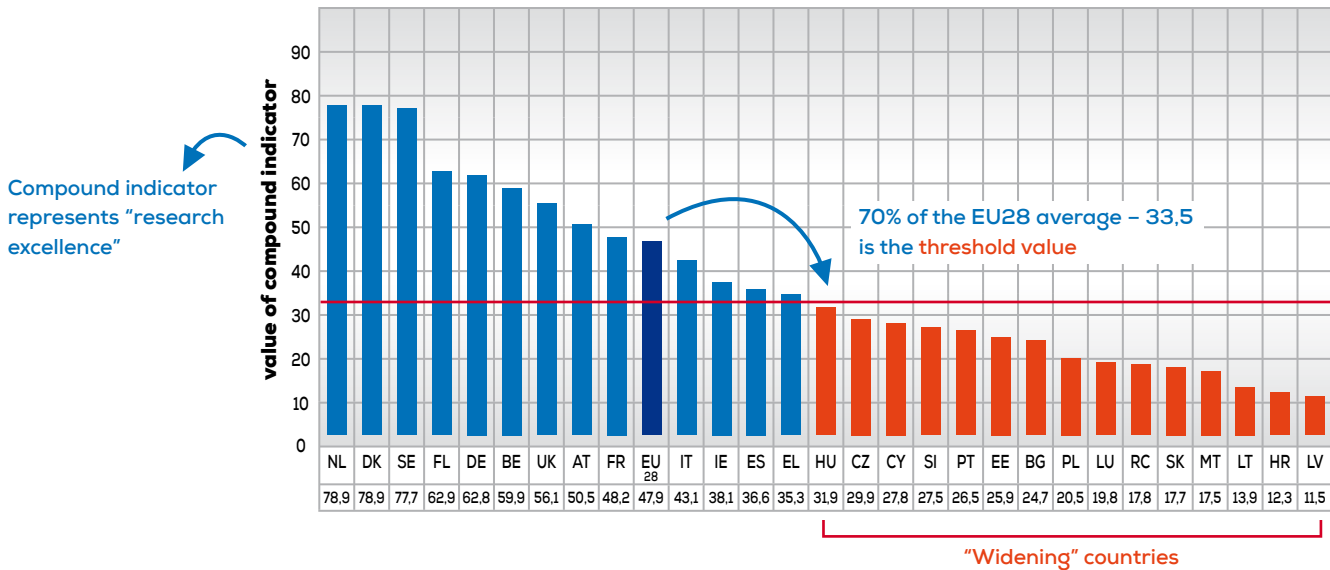
WIDENING COUNTRIES VS NON-WIDENING COUNTRIES

It is commonly believed that research excellence is a key factor for research and innovation performance and for successful participation in Framework Programmes. Therefore, the European Commission in order to close gaps remaining among European regions in terms of research and innovation performance and to serve the ultimate objectives of Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation actions decided to target areas which are underperforming in terms of research excellence.

The Composite Indicator of Research Excellence (with a corrective threshold of 70% of the EU average) has been selected to distinguish those countries identified as „low R&I performing“ or „Widening“ countries.

Performance in the compound indicator “research excellence”

Source: NCP_WIDE.NET Project



„Widening” countries are:

► Member States: **Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.**

► Associated Countries^[1] (subject to valid association agreements of third countries with Horizon 2020): **Albania, Armenia^[2], Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland^[3], Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.**

[1] European Commission, Work Programme 2016–2017: Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation

[2] Association Agreement with Armenia is expected in the first semester of 2016.

[3] European Commission, Swiss participation in Horizon 2020

WIDENING IN THE CONTEXT OF SMART SPECIALISATION STRATEGY

Research and Innovation constitutes an important thematic objective in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The idea is to strengthen the research and innovation capacities of national and regional actors and build a „Stairway to excellence” in less developed regions and low-performing research, development and innovation Member States and regions. To take advantage of ESI funds, all Member States and regions had to develop national and/or regional “research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation” (RIS3) involving national or regional stakeholders from public administration, the scientific community, the private sector and citizens (“quadruple helix”), which may include, for example ESIF managing authorities, universities and other higher education institutions, industry, social partners, environmental and other societal associations. “Smart Specialisation” strategies set priorities in order to build competitive advantages based on novelty (i.e. social and technological innovation) by developing and matching existing capabilities in a region or Member State with business needs. The main challenge for the Member States and regions is to design and implement “Smart Specialisation” strategies and to use ESI

funds to unlock the potential for excellence in research and innovation, in a complementary manner that creates synergies with the Horizon 2020 Programme.

„**Smart Specialisation**” platform of the Joint Research Centre (JRC)

<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

BROADER PERSPECTIVE

Various sub-programmes of Horizon 2020 can be used in a way that allows synergies. This is possible as they often have common objectives. This is especially evident with the Widening programme, European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). Naturally, there are similarities between these actions, as all of them are aimed at enhancing scientific capacity. ERC grants are designed to support breakthrough and unique research projects, MSCA are aimed at enhancing mobility of scientists, their careers and popularisation of science, while Widening is used for expanding knowledge of whole research centres. Therefore, Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation could be a first step to build capacity and ultimately improve participation in ERC and MSCA.

ACTIONS UNDER WIDENING

The guide focuses on the successful participation in the Horizon 2020 Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation initiative. Thus, the following actions will be explained in-depth:

- ▶ Teaming for Excellence (CoEs)
- ▶ Twinning (institutional networking)
- ▶ ERA Chairs (bringing excellence to institutions)
- ▶ COST (stimulating cross border science networks)

WIDENING

TEAMING

Creation of new (or significant upgrade of existing) Centers of Excellence in low performing Member States and regions. The Partners – 2 parties in each Teaming project:

- the participant organisation (COORDINATOR) from a low performing Member State (for example a research agency at national or regional level, or a regional authority);
- an institution of research and innovation excellence (public or private) or a consortium of such institutions (from all EU28 or AC);

TWINNING

Strengthening a defined field of research of a knowledge institution in a low performing Member State or region through linking with at least two internationally-leading counterparts in Europe.

Proposals: Will have to outline the scientific strategy for stepping up and stimulating scientific excellence and innovation capacity in a defined area of research as well as the scientific quality of the partners

involved in the twinning exercise Funding for:

- expert visits and short-term on-site or virtual training;
- workshops & conference attendance;
- organisation of joint summer school type activities;
- dissemination and outreach activities.

Equipment & researchers' salaries will NOT be funded

ERA-CHAIR

The ERA Chairs actions will support universities or other eligible research organisations to attract and maintain high quality human resources and implement the structural changes necessary to achieve excellence on a sustainable basis. An ERA Chair holder should be an outstanding researcher and research manager in the given field of research, with a proven record of effective leadership. They should establish their own team and help the research organisation to significantly improve its research performance and to be more successful in obtaining competitive funding.

COST ACTION

COST aims to enable breakthrough scientific developments leading to new concepts and products. It thereby contributes to strengthening Europe's research and innovation capacities.

- Build capacity by connecting high-quality scientific communities in Europe and worldwide
- Provide networking opportunities for Early Stage Researchers (ESR)
- Increase research impact on policy makers, regulatory bodies and national decision makers as well as on the private sector.

European Research Council (ERC)

European Research Council (ERC)

The European Research Council supports frontier research, cross disciplinary proposals and pioneering ideas in new and emerging fields which introduce unconventional and innovative approaches. The ERC's mission is to encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields of research, on the basis of scientific excellence.

1 researcher; 1 host institution; 1 project;
1 selection criterion: scientific excellence

No consortia, no co-financing

Applications can be made in any field of research, including social sciences and humanities

Independent researchers from anywhere in the world, of any age and career stage can apply

Host institutions must provide conditions for the researcher to direct the research and manage its funding

The grant is 'portable' to another host institution, if the grant holder wishes so

Research must be carried out in one of the 28 EU member states or associated countries

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

RISE

Aims to promote international and inter-sector collaboration through research and innovation staff exchanges, and sharing of knowledge and ideas from research to market (and vice-versa) for the advancement of science and development of innovation

Participants must be from at least three different countries, at least two of which are MS/AC

If all participants are in the same sector, one participant country must be a third country

Secondment period – 1 to 12 months
– does not need to be continuous

Activities of the programme: Networking, Sharing of knowledge, Joint research and innovation, New skills acquisition, Workshops, Conferences, Career development of staff

Innovative Training Networks

The Innovative Training Networks (ITN) aim to train a new generation of creative, entrepreneurial and innovative early-stage researchers, able to face current and future challenges and to convert knowledge and ideas into products and services for economic and social benefit. ITN will raise excellence and structure research and doctoral training, extending the traditional academic research training setting, and equipping researchers with the right combination of research-related and transferable competences. ITN supports competitively selected joint research training and/or doctoral programmes, implemented by partnerships of universities, research institutions and businesses. It will provide enhanced career perspectives in both the academic and non-academic sectors through international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral mobility combined with an innovation-oriented mind-set.

COFUND

Aims at stimulating regional, national or international programmes to foster excellence in researchers' training, mobility and career development, spreading the best practices of MSCA. Supports new or existing programmes for international, inter-sectorial and interdisciplinary research training and transnational and cross-sector mobility of researchers. 2 streams: doctoral programme, fellowship programme.

Doctoral programmes

Supports Early-Stage Researchers

Doctoral enrolment mandatory

Training and secondment opportunities with partners, particularly the non-academic sector will be advantageous

Fellowship programmes

Supports Experienced Researchers

Not open to permanent employees of the host organisation

Regular selection rounds allowing fair competition

Cross-sectoral mobility encouraged

INDIVIDUAL GRANT

There are two types of Individual Fellowships:

1. European Fellowships

Held in the EU or associated countries.

Open to researchers either coming to Europe or moving within Europe.

Can help to restart research careers after a break such as parental leave.

Can also help reintegrate researchers coming back to Europe.

2. Global Fellowships

Fund secondments outside Europe for researchers based in the EU or associated countries.

There is a mandatory one-year return period.

European and Global Fellowships can also include a secondment period of up to 3 or 6 months in another organisation in Europe, where this would boost the impact of the fellowship.

This action is meant to support the best, most promising individual researchers from anywhere in the world.

Only experienced researchers can apply. This means you will have your doctoral degree or at least four years' full-time research experience by the time of the call deadline.

2. TEAMING

AIMS AND CONTENTS OF THE ACTIONS

Teaming aims to support the **creation of new or upgrading of existing Centres of Excellence** in low R&I performing Member States and Associated Countries on the basis of partnerships with internationally renowned institutions. These **long-term partnerships** help to increase scientific capabilities, access established networks, strengthen the international outreach and increase participation in Horizon 2020. Teaming offers opportunities for participating organisations in the regions of EU Member States and countries associated to Horizon 2020. The combination of financial investments and structural reforms is aimed at improving the system of research and innovation and culture of a region and its domestic actors. Since the overall budget of Teaming is limited in the face of these huge structural challenges, it is hoped that the projects financed will attain a "lighthouse function", hence spreading out to other parts of the EU and inspiring similar activities.

It is of crucial importance to **define the strategic position** of the newly estab-

lished Centers of Excellence in the regional, national and European research and innovation landscape. Teaming projects are to build on specific local-regional strengths and make positive impacts on regional development (meeting regional-specific challenges, economic development, ultimately better living conditions). Therefore, the challenge is to embed the Centres of Excellence into **comprehensive Smart Specialisation Strategies, that is** to intelligently combine available resources in the frame of integrated national and regional strategies for research and innovation. Complementary to Horizon 2020 funding, the successful Centres of Excellence are **supported through national and/or regional sources**, for instance from the European Structural and Investment Funds, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) or other public and private funds. Therefore, Teaming serves as prime example for a strategic alignment of different policies in support of research and innovation in a specific regional setting.

Collaborative projects like "Teaming" can be an important driver for promoting internationalisation of businesses, fostering tech-

nology transfer and for creating knowledge-based regional economies and societies. Such partnerships can only be successful when **providing benefits not only for emerging R&I organisations**, but also for institutions leading in their field. The latter can gain from such collaborations in many ways, including increased international visibility, enhanced capabilities through joint learning, creativity and development of new approaches, increased mobility (inwards and outwards) of qualified scientists, and access to new "markets" of knowledge, of science-to-business connections and of research partners in Europe. As a result, the new centres would assume certain research and innovation functions in a spirit of sharing roles across Europe in a complementary way, i.e. through smart specialisation.

Teaming has already **sparked immense interest** among many research institutions in all Member States and Associated Countries both in terms of creating or upgrading such a Centre and being an advanced partner. In the call for the first phase (deadline: 17 September 2014), out of 169 applications 31 projects have been selected for fund-

ing. Projects from 14 of the “Widening” target countries participate in this first phase, teaming up with top research institutions from non-Widening countries.

RULES FOR APPLICATIONS

Teaming projects involve two successive Coordination and Support Actions. The funding instrument imposes specific requirements on the consortium, the application process, the implementation and the applicable costs.

- ▶ The Teaming consortium involves two types of parties:
 - **Applicant organisation (coordinator):** from a Widening countries – research organisation, university, research funding agency or national/regional authority (necessary involvement for financial + structural support)
 - **Partner:** from an EU Member State or Associated country (also the Widening countries) – one/several public/private research organisations / universities with international reputation
- ▶ Application and implementation of Teaming involves **two successive dependent phases:**

1st phase

Application

- long-term vision and R&I strategy based on strength-weakness-analysis
- 12 month action for producing business plan for the Centre of Excellence

Implementation

- development of a business plan for the creation of the centre
- duration: 12 months/grant: max. 0,4 million EUR

2nd phase

Application

- restricted call addressed to the participants successful in Phase 1
- competition of the business plans in form of a proposal
- letter of commitment from national/regional authorities or other private sources to commit financial resources

Implementation

- creation/upgrade of the centre
- duration: 5-7 years/grant: max. 15 million € – complementary regional/national resources (infrastructure, equipment) particularly from ESIF and IPA II

- ▶ Applicable costs

Eligible costs for reimbursement from Horizon 2020 include administrative and operational expenses including personnel costs (i.e. salaries) of employees (researchers, managers etc.). As Teaming is a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), the Horizon 2020

Source: DLR Project Management Agency

contribution should not be used for funding particular research projects. Equipment and consumables are eligible only as minor part of Horizon 2020 funding. Infrastructure costs are not eligible for reimbursement through the H2020 funding. Such costs are expected to be supported by other types of funding including, for instance ESIF or IPA II funds.

HINTS & TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

Teaming projects provide huge challenges and opportunities. For achieving the Teaming “spirit” consult the work programme text, verify the successful projects of the first phase based on experience so far and exchange closely with local/regional EU funding experts and the National Contact Points. The following characteristics are essential for a successful participation in Teaming:

As a coordinator, involve your NCP in the preparation of your Teaming proposal, and ideally get feedback from the NCPs of the countries of partners. Experience shows that success rate is higher when involving the NCPs. As a principle, no proposal should be submitted without having consulted your NCP.

- ▶ the focus of the project
 - Ensuring the right balance between **long-term vision** (5–7 years) and **concrete measures for the first phase** (business plan, 12 months)
 - Embedding the centre into regional/national **Smart Specialisation Strategies**
 - Strategically linking Horizon 2020 costs and ambitious regional/national investments

- Striking the **balance between excellent research and contribution to socio-economic development**
- Demonstrating long-term **opportunities for economic development**
 - linkage with businesses and other research entities and thereby facilitating knowledge and technology transfer
- Ensuring **long-term autonomy** of Centres of Excellence, for instance regarding scientific orientation, recruitment of personnel, etc.
- Addressing the overall goal of Teaming (i.e. leading to CoE well integrated in excellent networks but independent, that is with full autonomy and an effective/efficient management or business model)
- ▶ the composition of the consortium should:
 - **Involve the leading research entities** at an early stage for ensuring a joint vision, to achieve mutual benefits and exchange know-how
 - establishing **true joint venture cooperation** which will continue beyond the duration of the Teaming project

- Have a clear division of the roles of both types of parties, their interests, benefits, tasks and responsibilities
- Take into account that the main beneficiary should have a central role and strong self-commitment of **regional/national/local authorities**, particularly for ensuring substantial financial contributions, investment in researcher education and skill development, attractive local-regional conditions, etc.
- ▶ the implementation plan of the project should
 - have clear strategy of handling resources, carefully differentiating between **activities and costs eligible for funding**
 - feature relevant **qualitative and quantitative indicators** to assess the expected long-term impacts
 - take into account **horizontal aspects**, i.e. expertise in business plan development, innovation, technology transfer, researcher education, IP management

PlantaSYST

Establishment of a Center of Plant Systems Biology and Biotechnology for the translation of fundamental research into sustainable bio-based technologies in Bulgaria

DESCRIPTION

The overall objective of PlantaSYST is to establish a new Center of Plant Systems Biology and Biotechnology (CPSBB) in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The specific objectives of the CPSBB are: highest research quality and productivity in the fields of plant systems biology and biotechnology; new vegetable varieties with enhanced tolerance to stresses, improved yield stability, and nutritional qualities; new technologies for plant breeding. The objective

of the one-year CSA is to develop a comprehensive business plan for the establishment and sustainability of the CPSBB.

COORDINATOR:

Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

PARTNERS:

Maritsa Vegetable Crops Research Institute, Plovdiv, Bulgaria; Institute of Microbiology –

Laboratory of Applied Microbiology, Plovdiv, Bulgaria; University of Potsdam, Potsdam, Germany; Max Planck Institute of Molecular Plant Physiology, Potsdam-Golm, Germany.

BUDGET:

Approved: 500,000 EUR for the 1st stage;
Planned: 15,000,000 EUR for the 2nd stage

DURATION

1st stage – 12 months; 2nd stage – 84 months



CONTACT DETAILS

Coordinator:
Assoc. – Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev,
e-mail: tsangech@uni-plovdiv.bg;
gechev@uni-potsdam.de

PROJECT WEBSITE

www.plantasyst.eu

OPEN QUESTIONS

What was your motivation to apply for the project?

We realized the need for establishing a research structure that would gain a leading role in plant science in Europe with a particular focus on horticultural crops, for strengthening the cooperation between the five PlantaSYST partners and a possibility to exploit the rich potential of Plovdiv while contributing to Plovdiv's development.

Main challenges during proposal preparation

Establishing a new research structure is an exceptionally complex task, posing various challenges of different nature: scientific novelty and excellence, working closely with local and central government officials, solving financial issues, and long-term planning.

Your advice for applicants

To have an excellent idea and motivated and supportive partners, to have sufficient time to develop it, and to follow the EU guidance attentively.

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3. TWINNING

AIMS AND CONTENT OF THE ACTIONS

The main focus of twinning is on building extensive networks for excellence, particularly through knowledge transfer and exchange of best practices between project partners and research institutions. Like other Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation initiatives, Twinning aims at closing the research and innovation performance gaps and disparities between European regions and strengthening a certain research area in a university or research organisation from a low R&I performing Member State, by coupling it with at least two leading international research counterparts in other Member States and/or Associated Countries.

Thanks to the Twinning initiative, researchers from Widening countries will have the opportunity to build partnerships and exchange know-how, experiences and benchmarking, thus strengthening a certain field of research (which ideally is linked with relevant local/national Smart Specialisation) and increase its potential for research excellence and capacity to innovate. Funding will be dedicated to the following actions:

staff exchanges, expert visits, workshop and conference attendance, on-site/virtual training, organisation of joint summer school activities.

Twining will:

- ▶ Enhance the S&T capacity of the linked institutions, focussing on the university or research organisation from the Widening Country;
- ▶ Help raise the research profile of the institution from the Widening country as well as the research profile of its staff;
- ▶ Enhance the reputation, attractiveness and networking channels of the coordinating institution;
- ▶ Improved capability to compete successfully for national, EU and internationally competitive research funding opportunities.

RULES FOR APPLICATIONS

Eligibility

The applicant organisation (coordinator) where a defined field of research aims to be strengthened as a result of the Twinning action should be established in a Widening country.

Minimum 3 partners should be involved in the project, among which two must be internationally-leading research counterparts from non-Widening countries.

The eligibility and admissibility conditions are described in part B and C of the General Annexes of the General Work Programme.



Proposal

Before starting a preparation of a Twinning application, first check the eligibility conditions as well as the list of countries eligible for funding under Horizon 2020.

In order to prepare a successful and high-scoring proposal, you need to clearly outline the scientific strategy for stepping up and stimulating scientific excellence, innovation capacity in a precisely defined area of research. Great importance is also put on emphasising the scientific quality of the partners involved in the twinning exercise. Such a strategy should include a comprehensive set of measures to be supported. These should include at least a number of the following: short-term staff exchanges; expert visits and short-term on-site or virtual training; workshops; conference attendance; organisation of joint summer school type activities; dissemination and outreach activities.

To be considered **admissible**, your proposal must:

- ▶ be submitted in the electronic submission system before the given deadline
- ▶ be readable, accessible and printable
- ▶ be complete – all documents required and indicated in standard admissibility conditions and related requirements (General Annex part B) must be attached
- ▶ include a draft plan for the exploitation and dissemination
- ▶ not be longer than 70 pages
- ▶ involve a minimum of three project participants, whereby one of them – the coordinator – must come from a Widening country, and at least two internationally-leading research intensive counterparts must be coming from a Member State or Associated Country other than that of the applicant for coordinator.

Duration

The duration of a Twinning project can be up to 3 years.

Budget

The Commission considers proposals requesting a contribution from the EU of up to EUR 1 million.

Ineligible costs

- ▶ infrastructure costs,
- ▶ equipment,
- ▶ research costs (including consumables)



Evaluation

Grant proposals will be evaluated by experts, on the basis of the three criteria “Excellence”, “Impact” and “Quality and efficiency of the implementation”. Each criterion will be scored out of 5. The threshold for individual criteria will be 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10.

There are different measures that are relevant for each criterion.

Excellence:

- ▶ pay attention to the quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures
- ▶ your objectives must be clear and achievable;
- ▶ the proposed methodology must be credible

Impact:

- ▶ Think carefully about the extent to which the outputs of the project would contribute to each of the expected impacts mentioned in the work programme
- ▶ Propose a good exploitation, dissemination and communication plan of the project results (including management of IPR), and manage research data where relevant

Quality and efficiency of the implementation:

- ▶ the proposed work plan must be effective and must include extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables
- ▶ Describe clearly the management mechanisms and structures. Do not forget about risk and innovation management
- ▶ Be sure that the allocation of tasks is properly done and all participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role
- ▶ Show the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise

Instrument

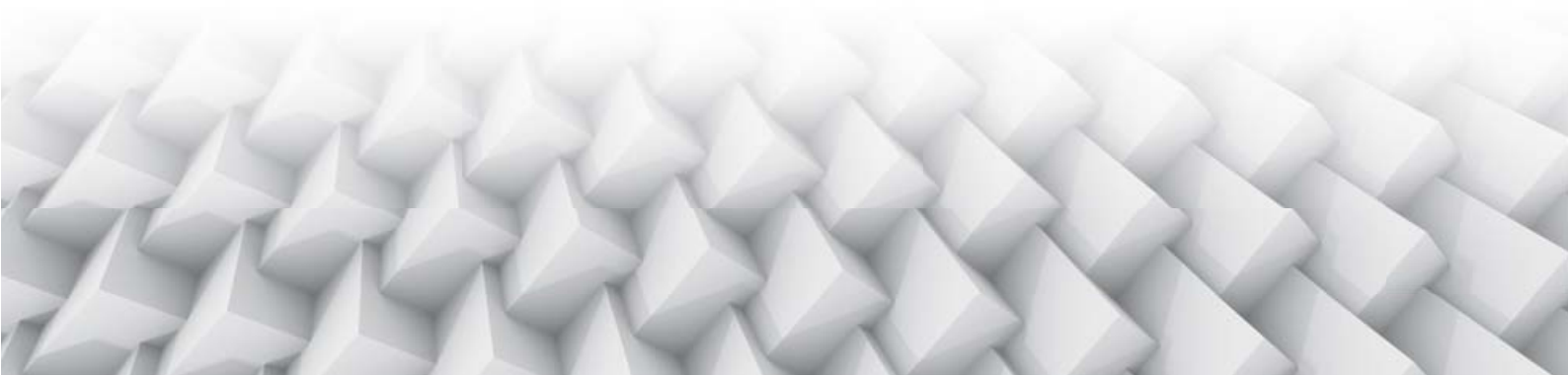
Coordination and Support Action (CSA)

HINTS & TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

The Twinning instrument brings great range of opportunities and benefits, hence it is attractive for many applicants. Thus, to be successful, the beneficiary must pay attention to the following aspects:

1. Define well a field of research – too wide: lack of focus; too narrow: lack of impact
2. Choose carefully your counterparts – they must be “internationally-leading”, complementary and motivated
3. Project proposals will have to present a scientific strategy for intensifying and stimulating scientific excellence and innovative capacity in a specific area of research
4. Project proposals should illustrate quantitatively and qualitatively a range of expected impact on the institution (project coordinator) and then show the potential impacts on regional and national level
5. Set-up realistic time frames for each task included in the Work Packages
6. Make sure you have sufficient resources to fulfil all conditions
7. Pay attention to the language of your proposal – it must be simple and understandable for everybody. Be clear, coherent and concise
8. Prepare a cost and resources allocation, be business-oriented and show how you improve thanks to this project
9. Read carefully the evaluation criteria and be in line with the call objectives
10. Highlight the relation of your field of research with regional or national Smart Specialisation Strategy

Last but not least: involve your NCP in the preparation of your proposal, ask the ones who already obtained funds for tips and hints.



EXAMPLE OF A TWINNING PROJECT

ERA of ART

Epigenetic Risk Assessment of Assisted Reproductive Technologies

DESCRIPTION

Assisted Reproduction Technologies (ART) provide response to infertility and to the cultural shift to postpone parenthood. Later childbearing and ART has been associated with an increased risk of the epigenetic disorders in offspring. The general objective of the project is to become the European Centre of Excellence for Epigenetic Risk Assessment (ERA) of ART (ERA of ART). To do this, we created a link between the Institute of Genetics and Animal Breeding of the Polish

Academy of Sciences (IGHZ PAN), Julius-Maximilians Universitaet Wuerzburg and the Universita Degli Studi di Teramo. The strategic priorities are: quality of research, integration, enhancement of human potential, increase of innovation capacity, increase of IGAB PAS visibility.

COORDINATOR:

Institute of Genetics and Animal Breeding of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IGHZ PAN), Poland;

PARTNERS:

Julius-Maximilians Universitaet Wuerzburg (UNI WUE), Germany

Universita Degli Studi di Teramo (UNITE), Italy

BUDGET

1 176 700 €

DURATION

36 months



CONTACT DETAILS

Institute of Genetics and Animal Breeding
of the Polish Academy of Sciences
(IGHZ PAN),

Postępu 36A Street, Jastrzębiec,
05-552 Magdalenka;

<http://www.ighz.edu.pl>,

email: c.tomasik@ighz.pl

PROJECT WEBSITE

<http://eraofart.ighz.edu.pl>

OPEN QUESTIONS

What was your motivation to apply for the project?

While applying for the Twinning project, we wanted to strengthen our capacity in epigenetic risk assessment of ART, which is a novel promising interdisciplinary research area. We knew that only working together with the best leaders in this discipline (UNI WUE and UNITE) can bring promising results.

Main challenges during proposal preparation

It was difficult to select one smart specialisation with the highest potential (it will not satisfy needs of the whole institution).

There were challenges related to creation of the project Advisory Board including key stakeholders, feasibility of dissemination and exploitation plan, as well as elaboration of coherent set of measures within twinning activities.

Your advice for applicants

Start from development strategy of your institution, refer to national and regional innovation strategy, find partners – leaders in a given field, and also include various stakeholders such as SMEs. Impacts should be verifiable (indicators), so consult them with experts from NCP.

4. ERA CHAIRS

AIMS AND CONTENT OF THE ACTIONS

The principal **objective** of the ERA-Chair Instrument is to effectively contribute to the balance of the European Research Area. An ERA Chair proposal will induce a strategic reflexion on the institutions' future and should explain how it will impact the group's/centre's future far beyond the timeframe of the project.

The ERA-Chair **instrument** is designed to provide the beneficiary with funding to attract or engage a high level academic/researcher and his or her team. This recruitment will help to enhance an existing area of excellence in science and thus will contribute to the institution's capacity to compete with other Centres of Excellence through better internationalisation and higher capacity to attract funding. The ERA Chair holder should be an outstanding academic who has the skills to raise standards as well as attract more high-level staff and funding from other sources such as EU research funding or regional funds.

An ERA-Chair proposal must ensure that, **throughout the project**, the institution guarantees:

- ▶ Strategic tackling of problems and actions (SWOT analysis)
- ▶ Proper recruitment process to attract the right person (terms of reference of the position and recruitment process)
- ▶ The expansion of capacity of existing excellent research lines
- ▶ The strengthening of the innovation activities in close collaboration with the regional and industrial partners
- ▶ Contributing to the regional/national smart specialisation strategy (or equivalent)
- ▶ Improvement of the human potential in the field
- ▶ Improvement of indicators connected with research excellence
- ▶ The capacity to get funding and synergies between different funding instruments.

RULES FOR APPLICATION

Eligibility and admissibility conditions

The eligibility and admissibility conditions are described in part B and C of the General Annexes of the General Work Programme, with the following exceptions:

1. The ERA Chair applicant organisation must be based in a Widening country and must have the status of a research organisation, university, research funding agency or national/regional authority (necessary involvement for financial + structural support)
2. ERA Chairs proposals must be submitted by a single applicant as it is a **mono-beneficiary action**. The applicant organisation must satisfy the conditions set out in point 1 above.
3. The requested EU contribution shall not exceed a maximum of EUR 2.5 million for a period of up to 5 years.

ERA Chair holder

- ▶ ERA Chair holders should be recruited among outstanding researchers and research managers in the given field of research, with a proven record of effective leadership.
- ▶ The position of the ERA Chair holder must be open to all EU and non-EU nationals. The appointment of an ERA Chair holder will be undertaken by the host institution at the beginning of the action and must follow an open, transparent and merit-based recruitment process that will be monitored by the European Commission.
- ▶ The ERA Chair holder shall be designated as a full time position (permanent or non-permanent) in accordance with the national legislation of the institution hosting the grant but part-time arrangements may also be applied, if deemed beneficial for the action.
- ▶ The ERA Chair holder should have a position within the organisation/university, professor or similar, that will allow her/him to make appropriate resource allocation decisions, supervise team members and freely apply for research funding in order to raise the level of research excellence of the team and the institution.

Grant Duration:

maximum of five years

Eligible Costs:

- ▶ Human Resources Costs of the ERA Chair and his/her team members (e.g. their salaries, recruitment costs, administrative costs, travel and subsistence costs);
- ▶ Contribution towards measures aimed at facilitating structural changes in the institution (e.g. costs for trainings, meetings, publications and managing IPR;
- ▶ Although the action does not focus on equipment, these costs may be accepted if they constitute a minor part of the total H2020 funding requested and may be deemed necessary to fulfil the action's specific scope and objective.

Ineligible Costs:

since this is not a measure to fund research, the following cost categories will be considered ineligible:

- ▶ Infrastructure costs;
- ▶ Research costs (including consumables).

EU Contribution:

maximum of EUR 2.5 million for a period of up to 5 years.

Instrument:

Coordination and Support Action (CSA)

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS:

The recruitment process must be thoroughly described in the proposal. **The profile of a chair** should be coherent with the excellence of the proposal. The process of recruitment should take into account the main concerns of the European Research Area: it must be open and transparent, follow rules which are aligned with the Researcher's Charter and the Code of Conduct for recruitment of researchers. All the various aspects of the recruitment, research plans and organisations should follow principles of equal opportunities and gender balance.

Contingency plan: since we are talking of a low performing country, there is the possibility of not having any application to the recruitment open call. It is important to have a contingency plan for the need to open a new recruitment process.

The applicant should always consult the institution's management office before submitting a budget. The commission will accept national rules for recruitment provided that they are the same for every funding source.

All proposals must be coherent etc.

HINTS & TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

The SWOT Analysis – creating a vision and tackling the right problems and actions

Even though it is not compulsory, every institution interested in applying for funding should be able to develop a long-term (dynamic) action plan.

Through a SWOT analysis the institution will reflect on its present situation as a result of past actions and on the desired future – create **a vision**:

- ▶ What/who is the group/centre at a given moment?
- ▶ How did the group/centre arrive to what it is in a given moment?
- ▶ Where does the group see itself? **What's the vision? What's the mission?**

SWOT stands for **S**trengths, **W**eakness, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats. The acknowledgment of these dimensions of the institution's existence will allow your client to, via a logical framework, understand what the beneficiary should aim for, as in the following example:



SWOT	Item (e.g)	What is important	How to do it	Activities	impact
Strengths	Institution Excellent in a specific field	To guarantee that more people know about the excellence in the field	Networking Publishing Conferences	Contact partners Go to conference Publish several documents	Better known, more consortia, more submissions, bigger success
Weaknesses	The science is very good but not enough knowledge in a specific technique	This knowledge will allow a further step in research	Learn new techniques	Hire human resources Travel to place where this technique is used and learn	Better science in the future
Opportunities	Creation of national expertise	Show the relevance and importance of your project at the EU and national level in the long-term	Define a strategy to develop national expertise and raise institution's visibility at an international level	Share, disseminate	Become an unavoidable partner for consortia in the specific field
Threats	Subject to "brain poaching"	Develop contingency plans	Define a strategy to get new human resources	Apply for fellowships and offer positions Apply MSCA Offer centre as host institution for MSCA and ERC	New human resources will make the acquired knowledge remain sustainably in the institution

The logical framework of a SWOT analysis allows the client to identify the vision, build up an action plan, organise the work packages and activities that will make a coherent ERA-Chair Project



EXAMPLE OF AN ERA CHAIR PROJECT

M-ITI ERAChair

A unique „constellation” of critical technical researchers who approach Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and technology design from the “Human” side

DESCRIPTION

Leapfrog HCI-DI aims to expand the research and innovation potential of the Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute (M-ITI) through hiring of an ERA Chair in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Design Innovation (DI). The project will unlock the full potential of interdisciplinary research in interactive technologies, while strengthening innovation and knowledge transfer activities in close collaboration with local and global industrial partners and contributing to the smart specialisation strategy of Madeira. To this end, Leapfrog will:

- 1) Upgrade the RDT capacity and capability by expanding the human potential and fostering a critical mass of researchers with inter-disciplinary expertise in human-computer interaction (HCI),
- 2) Improve M-ITI's innovation potential and impact at the regional, national and European levels, through design-driven innovation.
- 3) Raise international awareness and connect M-ITI to the global knowledge networks; work with mentoring institutes based at prestigious universities in Europe and continue the partnerships with the Carnegie

Mellon University (CMU), which includes joint research and advanced training programs. M-ITI will thus be better integrated ERA and improve the participation in the regional R&D+I system and in H2020.

COORDINATOR

University of Coimbra

BUDGET

2 118 781, 00 €

DURATION

60 months

CONTACT DETAILS

Christopher Csikszentmihályi

PROJECT WEBSITE

<http://erachair.m-iti.org>

OPEN QUESTIONS

What was your motivation to apply for the project?

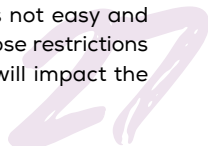
We wanted to keep M-ITI competitive as an international research centre in Portugal. With the crisis we had lost a lot of talent and we thought the ERAChair was a unique opportunity to try and reverse the brain drain. We were also interested in expanding the research areas of M-ITI looking more at the growing importance of art and design in the development of new technologies. These are unconventional interdisciplinary areas for which funding is hard to find, particularly at the national and institutional levels. The ERAChair seemed open to these different agendas of looking at the opportunities to develop excellence research from the periphery and not copying the traditional areas that are hard for Portugal and Madeira to compete.

Main challenges during proposal preparation

It was a pilot call so we couldn't access any previous proposals or even talk to colleagues with successful projects. We had to create the proposal from scratch and tried to convey our ambitious plan to develop interdisciplinary research in informatics and design in a place like Madeira. This led to a very original, honest and ambitious proposal which characterises what M-ITI is all about. We are glad the evaluators saw the potential and we think the results are doing justice to our ambitious plan. We have also gladly shared the proposal with colleagues from many other Portuguese institutions, which we guess helped the success of Portugal in the last calls. We all can win by sharing our experiences and helping Portugal to become even more competitive in the Horizon 2020 calls.

Your advice for applicants

The ERA Chair is an institutional development grant. When preparing a proposal you need to put the institution first and really think about how you want the institution/research group to be in the next 5 to 10 years. This is not an ERC grant, it's not an individual proposal. To write a successful ERAChair proposal you need to involve the entire institution, talk to your colleagues and staff, develop an honest swot analysis and then envision an ambitious institutional development strategy. Then we would also suggest thinking carefully about your "dream ERAChair" and listing several people that might be attracted by the grant. Talk to them and ask them what would make them move to your institutions and what resources would be essential to make that move a successful institutional development. Recruiting talent for a country like Portugal is not easy and the grant should consider those restrictions in particular also how they will impact the governance of the institution.



5. COST ACTIONS

AIMS AND CONTENT OF THE ACTIONS

COST (CO-operation in Science and Technology) is a pan-European intergovernmental framework dedicated to networking activities for European researchers. It funds networks across borders and often across scientific disciplines, interlinking nationally funded researchers and innovators.

A COST Action is a scientific or technological network with the duration of four years and an initial minimum participation of five COST Member Countries.

COST Actions are organised through a range of networking tools:

- ▶ Action Management Committee & Core Group meetings.
- ▶ Working Groups meetings.
- ▶ Short-Term Scientific missions.
- ▶ Training Schools.
- ▶ Workshops & Conferences.
- ▶ Dissemination

RULES FOR APPLICATIONS

COST actions are managed from COST Association, apart from H2020 and have slightly different procedures.

Participation is open to researchers:

- ▶ in universities, research centres, large and small, public and private organisations from all 36 COST Member Countries and its Cooperating State
- ▶ from any science and technology field
- ▶ at any career stage
- ▶ having any original, innovative idea

Eligibility Criteria for a Proposal application:

1. Represent a network of proposers from at **least 5** COST Member Countries or Cooperating State with researchers, engineers or scholars having a **registered e-COST profile**
2. Be coordinated by a Main Proposer in a COST Member Country or Cooperating State
3. Be **anonymous**, hence not contain any reference to the names and/or institutions of the participants in the network of proposers

4. Address science and technology challenges destined only for **peaceful purposes**
5. **Respect word or page limits** as described in the SESA Guidelines
6. Be written in **English**, the working language of the COST Association
7. Not be identical with another submitted proposal

Network of Proposers:

- ▶ **At least 5 proposers (one Main Proposer plus at least 4 Secondary Proposers)**
 - affiliated to legal entities based in at least 5 different COST Countries and/or Cooperating State
- ▶ **Main Proposer acts as coordinator and contact point for the COST Association**
 - also in charge of inviting and accepting Secondary Proposers to the Network
- ▶ **All proposers must have a registered and updated e-COST profile and specify their scientific expertise**

A COST Grant funds scientific activities under the following budget lines:

1. Meetings.
2. Training Schools.
3. Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM).
4. Dissemination activities and Publications.
5. Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities (OERSA).

Budget lines 1–5 come under the collective heading: ‘science expenditure’. The Management Committee of an Action can rearrange the budget allocation for approved activities listed under ‘science expenditure’.

6. Financial Scientific and Administrative Coordination tasks (FSAC)

Budget line 6 is a fixed percentage contribution afforded to support Grant Holder’s in administering and coordinating the approved scientific activities.

General Non-Eligible Expenses under the COST Grant System (CGS)

Identifiable indirect and direct taxes and duties, including Value Added Tax (V.A.T.)

VAT is not a fee and is a non-eligible expense under the CGS, irrespective of whether the Grant Holder institution is subject to pay VAT or not. VAT cannot be claimed nor can it be reimbursed and must be paid using sources other than COST funds.

- ▶ Taxes normally applicable according to national law with respect to the reimbursement of flat rates or fixed grants are not to be considered under the CGS due to the nature of COST funds. COST is exclusively funded by European public money and travel, accommodation and meal reimbursements paid to eligible COST Action participants are not taxable and cannot be deducted from amounts due.

COST Open Call is one-stage submission process (online tool):

http://www.cost.eu/participate/open_call

New Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval (SESA) procedure follows the subsequent phases:

- ▶ **SUBMISSION:** by a Main Proposer on behalf of a network of proposers
- ▶ **EVALUATION :**
 - External Remote Evaluation by Individual External Experts
 - Revision and Quality Check by Ad hoc Review Panels
- ▶ **SELECTION:** COST Scientific Committee (SC)

APPROVAL: COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)

Proposals are evaluated only on the basis of the evaluation criteria

S&T EXCELLENCE	IMPACT	IMPLEMENTATION
▶ Soundness of the challenge	▶ Scientific, technological and/or socio-economic impact	▶ Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan
▶ Progress beyond the state-of-the-art and innovation potential	▶ Measures to maximize impact	▶ Appropriateness of management structures and procedures
▶ Added value of networking	▶ Level of risk and level of potential innovation/breakthroughs	▶ Network as a whole
▶ Total Mark for the section: 25 points	▶ Total Mark for the section: 20 points	▶ Total Mark for the section: 20 points
TOTAL MARK AWARDED: 65 points		OVERALL THRESHOLD: 45 points

Proposal Sections

SECTION		
GENERAL FEATURES	Online tool Mandatory	▶ Key Expertise needed for Evaluation ▶ OECD Fields/Subfields of Science and Technology plus Research Areas
TECHNICAL ANNEX	PDF Mandatory	▶ MAX 15 Pages ▶ Anonymity ▶ Figures and Pictures–Copyright
REFERENCES	Online tool Optional	▶ 500 words ▶ Anonymity
COST MISSION & POLICIES	Online tool Mandatory	▶ 500 words ▶ Excellence and Inclusiveness ▶ International Cooperation ▶ Industrial Dimension
NETWORK OF PROPOSERS	Online tool Mandatory	▶ Minimum 5 researchers from 5 COST Member Countries and/or Cooperating State ▶ Statistical Information that will be used for evaluation

Technical Annex

SECTIONS	SUB-SECTIONS
S&T EXCELLENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Challenge▶ Objectives▶ Progress beyond the State-of-the-art and Innovation Potential▶ Added value of networking
IMPACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Expected Impact▶ Measures to Maximize impact▶ Potential for Innovation versus Risk level
IMPLEMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Description of the Work Plan▶ Management Structures & Procedures▶ Network as a whole

HINTS & TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

COST Policies aiming at:

- ▶ Excellence & Inclusiveness: Geographical coverage, Early Career Investigators (ECR), Gender balance. In the proposal make focus on activities to be implemented within the COST Action as:
 - Encouragement of researchers targeted by these policies to leadership role in the Action: Action Chair, Vice-Chair, Working Group leader
 - Encouragement of institutions from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs) gaining experience in management of international research projects enabled and trained (Acting as grant holders)
 - Customized networking tools, such as STMSs and Training schools dedicated to Inclusiveness Target Countries' researchers
 - Promotion of meeting locations in ITCs
 - COST Actions Monitoring/Final Assessment adapted to help follow-up how COST Actions fulfilling COST Policies
- Openness: All fields of S&T, all kind of participation, Academia, SME/ Industry, and All countries.

EXAMPLE OF A COST PROJECT

NanoSC

Nanoscale Superconductivity

DESCRIPTION

The main objective of the Action is to streamline science and technology in the field of superconductivity and to contribute to the development of novel applications of nanostructured superconductors beneficial to European industry and society. The Action will create a strong network of teams and institutions working in the field of nanoscale superconductivity and nanopatterned superconducting materials. It encourages and stimulates the efficient use of joint resources and exchanges of researchers in this scien-

tific field. The Action tries to link academic institutions with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and other industries throughout Europe. It will have a scientific impact at many different levels. A further benefit will be in technology dissemination among the end users and facilitation of joint academic-industrial projects to target specific industrial problems and applications. The aim of the Action is also to enhance various training activities, by fostering personnel secondment and the search for common objectives. Finally, the Action broadens the scope of education programs on superconductiv-

ity by encouraging the study, and providing specific training courses and interdisciplinary programs at the interface between exact and material sciences.

COORDINATOR AND PARTNERS

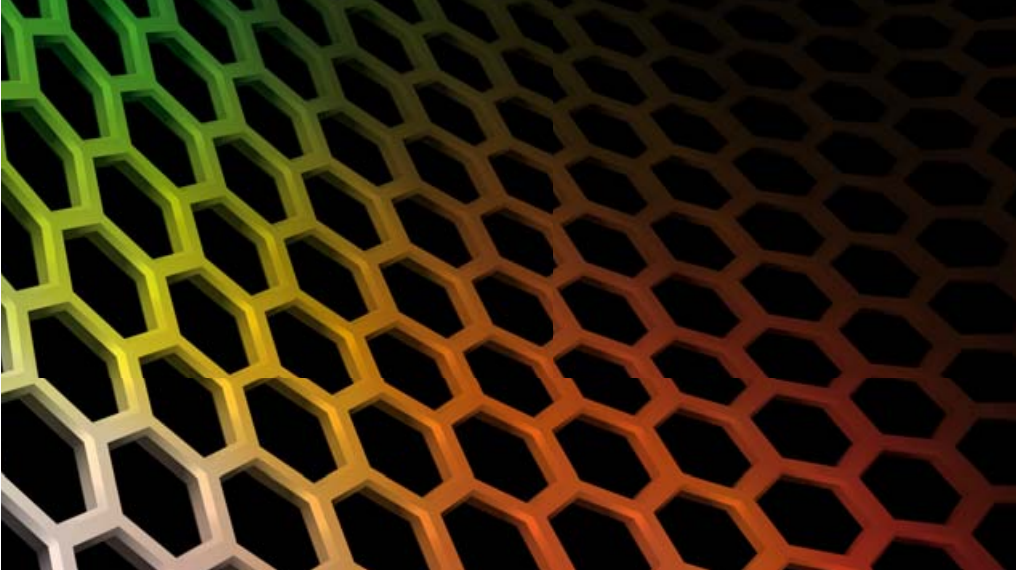
80 organisations (149 participants)

BUDGET

400 000 €

DURATION

48 months



CONTACT DETAILS

Coordinator: Prof. Victor Moshchalkov,
Delegate coordinator: Prof. Teresa Puig
(teresa@icmab.es)

PROJECT WEBSITE

<http://nanosc-cost.eu/>

OPEN QUESTIONS

What was your motivation to apply for the project?

Our motivation was to participate in a network of Research Groups – world leaders in Superconductivity to increase collaborations and promote future projects and internships for exchange of students.

Main challenges during proposal preparation

Compilation of a common strategic action with excellent research ideas where funds were attributed to networking presented a main challenge. It needed to meet all participants' interest for the contribution of their own research funding.

Your advice for applicants

COST actions are an opportunity to participate in a large consortium with a common theme opening up perspective of the field. There are a lot of benefits resulting from the networking and the knowledge derived from it, among them are the potential to get competitive European funds and capacity building. It is worth trying since the benefit is very large.

6. PROPOSAL PREPARATION STEP BY STEP

HOW TO START

Horizon 2020's main principle is scientific excellence. It provides support to top-quality solutions and project ideas. Organisations from all over European Union, as well as Associated Countries and beyond, strive to receive funding from this programme. Therefore, make sure that your project idea is innovative on European, or even global, scale.

The point of reference for evaluation of the innovativeness of a given solution is the current situation in the relevant scientific area in Europe and around the world. The concept of your proposal should fulfil the targets outlined in the Work Programme as well as the stipulations of the call's description. This includes the impact of your project on your organisation, the market niche or society.

Read the following documents:

- Work Programme Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation
- Guide for Applicants
- FAQs

WHICH ROLE TO CHOOSE: COORDINATOR OR PARTNER

International project consortia constitute a majority in the Widening actions.

If not described differently in previous detailed section the minimum number of partners required for a project consortium in this type of calls is 3 organisations from 3 different associated or member countries. European Commission evaluates the quality of the consortium, the experience they have, both in a given field or in implementation of similar projects. EC also verifies the competences of the partners, which are necessary for the implementation of the project in a proper way. It is best to build consortia with experienced organisations that are successful in Framework Programmes.

The Coordinator of a project is a position that requires responsibility, a lot of commitment and experience. The Coordinator is responsible for the preparation of the proposal and this is a task that requires a lot of time and resources. Moreover, Coordinator's experience and competences also will be screened by the evaluators and should be relevant for

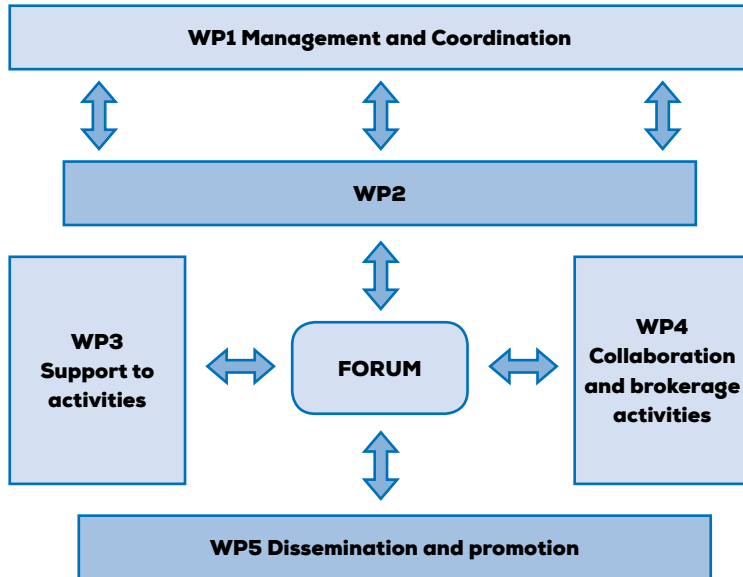
successful project implementation. It is worth to remember that the coordination of projects of this type requires specific financial and legal knowledge. A good specialist can be found on the market or can be trained. The NCP network offers free training in this field. Various webinars organized by the EC also constitute a source of valuable information. One needs to remember that attending these requires staff to be drawn from their daily jobs.

Note that it is recommended that the Consortium Agreement should be signed during the grant agreement preparation phase.

HOW TO STRUCTURE A PROPOSAL

The way you present your project is a fundamental factor in reaching for funding. While preparing your proposal, follow the template of the proposal and remember to address all of the issues indicated there. The evaluators will be looking for answers to the questions from the template. Thus, one should never omit the points listed in the template. Remember to duly present the key points of

your work. Mark them, add titles, use bold fonts, etc. Include tables, pictures, infographics and diagrams, especially the ones that describe the management model. The basic diagrams that should be included are Gantt and Pert diagrams. The Gantt diagram is the best tool for showing the fact that your project has been scheduled properly.



Pert Chart of the Work Packages

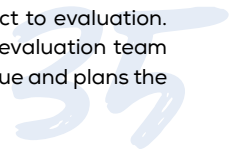
HOW TO PLAN AND WRITE THE PROPOSAL

If you decide to apply for a grant under one of the Widening activities, plan it well in advance. This allows to elaborate the concept properly and create a valuable consortium as well.

Having verified the fact that Horizon 2020 is a good option for your organisation's development, and after identifying the appropriate call, one may start building the proposal.

All successful proposals require careful planning and sufficient resources and Horizon 2020 is no different in this matter. Make sure that your organisation, as well as the organisations in the consortium are capable of not only performing the activities (especially research activities), but also that it has the financial liquidity that will allow seamless implementation. Some funding instruments require the partners to cover a part of the cost of the project. It is also worth to note that the payments are made in instalments and that these will be made against the consortium's periodic reports. This means that in certain cases the payments may be delayed.

It is essential that your consortium includes top-notch partners. Make sure that you include parties with institutional experience (preferably, with experience in Framework Programmes) and with able staff. The consortium's capability to overcome the challenges listed in the call's description is one of the elements subject to evaluation. Thus, it needs to be made clear for the evaluation team what resources, understanding of the issue and plans the consortium has.



All proposals to Horizon 2020 follow a similar structure, laid out in the proposal template of the call. Each of the sections of that document contains hints on what the author should describe in order to convince the expert evaluators that the project will fulfil the objectives of the call. It is strongly advised that the proposer follows these instructions, but also that each of the sections is given sufficient attention, this includes areas such as Gender Balance, Ethics, etc.

Due to the fact that the evaluation team has time constraints to browse through your proposal, it is advised that the contents of your proposal are written clearly, without unnecessary technical jargon and that they are as specific as possible. Any illustrations, charts, diagrams, text arrangement etc. are welcome as long as the proposal meets the technical requirements (font size, page limit, etc.).

HOW TO SUBMIT THE PROPOSAL

In order to submit a proposal, you should register an account in the Participant Portal's submission system, obtain a PIC number and fill in all the required data into the forms there.

The proposals are submitted to the EC via a special electronic system accessible via

the Participant Portal. In order to set up an account of an organisation, one must first register in the ECAS system. There, an organisation must be added via the my organisation(s) tab. The registration requires several steps and information, such as taxpayer's numbers, business activity number, etc. The proposer will also be required to declare the type of his or her organisation (for example: non-profit organisation, public body, international organisation, research organisation, large research infrastructure). It is well advised to learn about the types of organisations and the conditions in a given call for those types, as this may severely affect implementation, funding and other areas of the project.

After the electronic registration procedure has been finalised, the organisation will be assigned a temporary PIC (*Participant Identification Number*). The organisation is then subject to a validation procedure. This, however, only occurs in case of organisations whose proposals have been retained for funding. The temporary PIC allows you to submit your proposal.

The electronic system contains all of the information relevant for the potential beneficiary of the Horizon 2020 programme. It contains the most up to date template of the proposal, as well as allows access to all project management and reporting tools.

Please make sure that you submit only the final version of your proposal, as no corrections are allowed after the deadline.

Please note that your proposal constitutes an element of the Grant Agreement and that all of the stipulations and declarations formulated within will need to be fulfilled for the full implementation of the project.

Remember not to wait to the very last moment with the submission of the proposal. It's easy to make a mistake when in a rush. The submission system may also be overloaded near the deadline.

HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL BE EVALUATED

Provided your project fulfils all of the eligibility criteria (it is submitted on time, the consortium has the correct composition, completeness of the proposal, relevance to the call, etc.), it will be subject to the evaluation process. For this purpose, the European Commission recruits a number of external evaluators, who have a relevant background and experience. To avoid conflict of interest, the evaluators have to pass a verification

procedure. This helps to avoid tampering, but also allows the most suitable individuals to evaluate projects in their field of expertise.

The proposals are evaluated according to 3 different areas, each of which are classified on a scale of 1-5. These areas are:

▶ **Excellence**

Your proposal must formulate clear and pertinent objectives. Moreover, your research approach must be credible. A major element of this area is the quality of the solution your project proposes. In other words, your proposal has to introduce a solution that is not only convincing, but unique and advanced. It is also essential that your solution has a clear advantage over other existing solutions. The novelty of the project must be duly explained.

▶ **Impact**

Your proposal needs to fulfil the objectives set out in the work programme. The evaluators will estimate the capacity of your solution for advancing a given area of knowledge. It is essential that the technology the project intends to improve helps the competitiveness of companies in a given sector. It is worth to mention any environmental and social impacts that the project may have in Europe. It is also worth to note that the beneficiaries are expected to communicate with wide

audiences that benefit from the project. This means that a work package designed for this purpose is often required.

▶ **Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation**

The evaluators will value the coherence and effectiveness of your plans on how to implement the project. It is required that you appropriately allocate your resources and tasks. The composition of the consortium also falls into this category. The evaluators will look for projects where the consortium members do not have overlapping competencies, as well as projects where each partner plays a strictly identified role. It is worth to present a clear and well composed management structure, so that your project operates effectively.

The European Commission, when ranking the proposals, applies a number of thresholds. These are usually the following: at least 3 points in each of the areas are required to be ranked, also a total of at least 10 points is also required. Depending on a call, various methodologies for counting points and ranking can be applied. After all of the proposals have been evaluated, a special meeting takes place, where a ranking list is adopted. Afterwards, the proposers are sent Evaluation Summary Reports, where they are informed on their performance and scoring. The proposer has 30 days to file a complaint.

All evaluation criteria are equally important and scored. Address them properly!

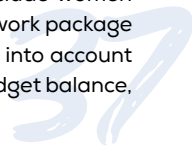
HINTS & TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

▶ **Think and write in English!**

The variety of the English language used in Brussels is often referred to as „Bruenglish“ or „Brussels Speak“, as it often makes use of jargon of the EC. Nowadays, English is lingua franca of R&I. Therefore, the proposer needs to use the same terminology as the EC. We strongly advise against writing of your work in your native language and then translating it into English. The reason for this is not the fact that the translation may be unfaithful to the original, but because the project will be implemented in an international consortium, as well as in cooperation with the project officer and each of the parties must understand the text in the same way.

▶ **Gender and geographic balance**

The EC also encourages to include women in the work as coordinators or work package leaders. It is also worth to take into account the issue of geographic and budget balance, which is evaluated.



► **Avoid common mistakes**

It is important that enough attention is paid to risk and impact analysis. These elements are commonly neglected. Excellence cannot be the only factor that drives your project. Dissemination and communication plans are also very complex issues. Leaflets may be not enough, as the EC wants the consortium to disseminate the results. Moreover, Intellectual Protection is another important issue that needs to be planned carefully.

SPECIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEWCOMERS

► **Take the evaluation criteria seriously**

The evaluation criteria in the *Widening* programme are the same as in all Horizon 2020 projects. Proposals are evaluated against their scientific quality (*excellence*), the breadth and scope of their effects (*impact*), and management quality (*implementation*). Good proposals will respond to these criteria as defined in the proposal template.

► **Be in line with the objectives of the call**

The Teaming call, for example, supports the creation or extension of existing centres of excellence. These are centres focused on research in national priority domains. Make sure that your idea fits basic specifications of the call text.

► **Make sure their partners were committed**

The *Widening* programme supports a close collaboration between research groups from different parts of Europe. As this peer learning idea is fundamental, the project proposal must convincingly demonstrate that all partners have committed to working together in case the project is funded. This could be done by including support letters in the proposal.

► **Be smart ... and “specialised”**

EU funding can be used most effectively if only projects that are meaningful to a region or country are funded. The European Commission has coined the concept of Smart Specialisation, a process that invites countries to define priority areas for regional economic development, and to follow-up how these goals are achieved. Project proposals from the Horizon 2020 *Widening* part gain credibility when mentioning how they tie into their country's or region's Smart Specialisation Strategy. The more concrete the reference, the more convincing it will be.

► **Do not serve dinner... without forks and knives**

One of the most frequent shortcomings of project proposals are insufficient detail in aspects such as communication and dissemi-

nation, intellectual property rights, or open access to research data and results. It is not enough to prepare a delicious dinner, if you forget giving your guests forks and knives. In other words, project proposals that understood the importance of all aspects of *impact* stand good chances of being funded.

► **Go out there, and ask questions**

Preparing a *Widening* project proposal, as preparing many other Horizon 2020 proposals, is a project in itself! It requires bringing together partners, contributors, and knowing who can provide advice when necessary. Do not be shy – contact your National Contact Point or other relevant authorities in charge of *Widening* projects. Their support can save you time and money – and lead to success.

7. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECTS

MAIN LIST – GRANT AGREEMENT PREPARATION PROCESS

If, after evaluation, your proposal has been retained for funding, you will be sent the 'Evaluation Summary Report' and asked to help prepare a Grant Agreement (GA). This must be done using the Participant Portal's [My Projects](#) page to enter the necessary data and to sign online.

Important points:

- ▶ Since there is no longer a negotiation period, the GA must be as close as possible to its final form.
 - ▶ The grant agreement must not differ from the proposal;
 - ▶ You may correct shortcomings identified by the experts in the 'Evaluation Summary Report, within the GA preparation time;
 - ▶ All signatures for the grant agreement, accession form, or 'Declaration of Honour' are electronic;
 - ▶ The GA must be signed at the latest 3 months after starting the grant preparation.
- ▶ In the case of a collaborative project, and unless otherwise specified, a Consortium agreement must be signed by all parties involved prior to the GA.

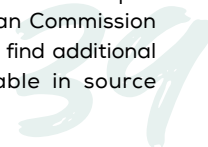
There are 4 main areas you need to prepare:

1. Legal, administrative and financial information from all prospective beneficiaries (project participants) and any third parties:
 - a. All beneficiaries must be given access to the project at the Participant Portal.
 - b. All beneficiaries must have a Participant contact (PaCo) or a Primary coordinator contact (PCoCo) in the case of a coordinator, a Legal entity appointed representative (LEAR) and a Project Legal signatory (PLSIGN), who must sign a declaration of Honour at the Participant Portal.
 - c. If applicable, linked third parties must enter the Participant Identification Codes (PIC).
 - d. The financial capacity of coordinators in projects with requested EU

funding of equal or superior to EUR 500,000 will be checked.

2. Streamline the 'Description of the Action' (DoA) in Annex 1 to the grant agreement and the 'Estimated budget for the action' (Annex 2) so that they match the proposal, as well as any relevant information in the invitation to prepare the grant agreement, and, if applicable, the ethics review report, and the security scrutiny report;
3. Establish the key points of the grant agreement (project starting dates, milestones and deliverables, reporting periods, amount pre-financing, need for consortium agreement, and, if applicable, ethical issues, third parties linked to the beneficiaries, in-kind contributions provided by third parties, subcontracting);
4. Verification of the beneficiary's financial capacity.

For more information on GA preparation visit the Guide for Grant Agreement Preparation available on European Commission website. Moreover, you may find additional information in FAQ available in source of information.



CAN I ADD OR DELETE SOME ACTIVATES DURING PROJECT'S IMPLEMENTATION PHASE?

The short answer is: not without an amendment to your Grant Agreement. In other words, any alterations that involve changes to the work packages and/or deliverables and milestones will require an amendment. This will require approval of the Project Officer. However, minor changes such as transferal of funds from one task to another can be made, subject to approval by the project coordinator.

WHAT ABOUT REPORTING?

All project reporting is done online via the participant portal. The project coordinator is responsible for the submission of technical and financial reports that are part of the periodic reports (to be submitted during the project) in addition to a final report at the project end. All project beneficiaries, including the coordinator, will be required to contribute to these reports. The reporting periods are established in the GA under Article 20 and should be strictly complied with. Each period report covers only the reporting period in question whereas the final report must encompass the project in its entirety.

In order to submit a report, you should head to the participant portal and login. Then go to: My Projects → **MP** action button (MP = Manage Project). Here you will be able to access and fill-in all reports:

- ▶ **Financial Statement:** All beneficiaries – including the coordinator – must fill in their own financial statement (always submit actual costs), electronically sign it and submit it to the coordinator. Only the Project Financial Signatory (PFSIGN) is able to electronically sign and submit the statement, so make sure you have assigned an FSIGN user to your project in your organisation. Read more in H2020 Online Manual in section My Area - User account & roles, subsection Roles & access rights.
- ▶ **Technical Report:** Part A – each beneficiary should update the tables on an ongoing basis in the continuous reporting module. The information in the tables is then automatically compiled to create part A. Part B – must be prepared outside the grant management tool. When all project participants have filled-in the reports and are ready to submit, the Technical part can be finalised by the Coordinator's Contact Person clicking Accept & Include.

Once all participants have finalised the technical and financial reports, the coordinator must review and explicitly approve the periodic report. If needed it is possible to send back a financial statement to a partner for further changes, or unlock the technical part of the report for further changes.

Now that the report has been submitted, the Commission will either accept the report and start preparing the interim payment or ask for changes to it, which means that the process described above starts again. Read more in H2020 Online Manual in section Grant management, subsection Reports & payment requests available on Participant Portal or contact your local NCP if you have any doubts.

The final report consists of 2 parts – both of which must be completed in the grant management system (no need to upload any documents):

- ▶ **Final technical report:** a publishable summary of the entire project (giving an overview of the results, their exploitation and dissemination, and the conclusions about the project and its socio-economic impact);
- ▶ **Final financial report:** a final summary financial statement that is automatically created by the system and corresponds to the request for payment of

the balance. For cases where beneficiaries/linked third parties request a total contribution of EUR 325,000 or more, it must be accompanied by a certificate on the financial statements (one certificate per beneficiary/linked third party).

HOW WILL THE PROJECT BE REVIEWED AND AUDITED?

You can encounter the following processes during the implementation of your project – the Commission may:

- ▶ **Carried out reviews** on the proper implementation of the action (including assessment of deliverables and reports), compliance with the obligations under the grant agreement and continued scientific or technological relevance of the project. Reviews normally refer mainly to technical implementation of the project (i.e. its scientific and technological relevance), but may also cover financial and budgetary aspects or compliance with other obligations under the GA. Reviews may be started up to 2 years after the payment of the balance and may include on-the-spot visits or review meeting (on Commission premises or anywhere relevant for the project). On the basis of the review findings, a review report will be prepared.

- ▶ **Audits:** The European Commission may order an audit of your H2020 grant during the project or at any time up to 2 years after the final payment. It can be a direct audit (with the Commission's own staff) or an indirect audit (with external, persons or bodies appointed by the Commission). In the case of an audit, you will be notified 30 days in advance.

We strongly recommend that you keep all documents pertaining to the project up to 5 years after the project end. These must be provided during reviews and audits.

EFFECTIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

To effectively manage your project we advise you to keep records of all your activities. In order to do so, the use of time-sheets by all involved in the project is essential. However, employees working 100% on the project do not need to submit detailed timesheets. For all participants and coordinators in particular, it may help to keep a map of all major project events, such as milestones, deliverables and reporting periods. All participants should keep thorough records of the activities

and these must be kept up to five years after the project end.

WORKING ACROSS CULTURES

H2020 projects are necessarily international. This means that you will be dealing with multiple nationalities and as task leaders and project coordinators, you will be required to oversee the work of people that are not located close by. Good human relations work wonders in these cases and close contacts with all parties involved, including the Project Officer, help immensely.

It is important that all parties involved in the project regularly check their project's portal and are updated in any changes or updates to procedures or rules.

8. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

EU OFFICIAL PORTALS

Participant portal

H2020 Online Manual

SUPPORT BY THE NCPs

Contact list of NCP's

WEBSITE OF THE NCP_WIDE.NET PROJECT

<http://www.ncpwidenet.eu/>

ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS:

H2020 General Annexes
(part B and C)

EVALUATION RULES

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2016_2017/annexes/h2020-wp1617-annex-h-esacrit_en.pdf

COST VADEMECUM

www.cost.eu/Vademecum

COST SUBMISSION, EVALUATION, SELECTION AND APPROVAL (SESA) GUIDELINES

<http://www.cost.eu/module/download/49617>

LINKS FAQ:

General FAQ:

<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/faq.html>

Frequently asked questions for Teaming (FAQ) (updated November 2015)

<https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/4054-widespread-01-2016-2017.html>

Frequently asked questions for ERA Chairs (FAQ) (updated April 2013)

http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-chairs-faq_en.html

PARTNER SEARCH PLATFORMS:

NCP Networks

Several thematic NCP Networks provide partner search facilities with details on partner profiles and active partnership requests from international organisations.

CORDIS Partner Service

The CORDIS Partner Service from the European Commission is an interactive platform with different tools to promote your expertise and to find the right partners.

Enterprise Europe Network

The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is a business-support network of 600 member organisations in 50 countries that aims to facilitate transnational business-business and business-academia innovation partnerships. It publishes technology profiles to help identify suitable partners.

9. NCP_WIDE.NET PROJECT

The objective of the NCP_WIDE.NET project is to create a transnational network of National Contact Points (NCPs) for Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation under Horizon 2020 so the purpose of the network is to facilitate transnational co-operation between NCPs, with a view to identifying and sharing good practices and improving standards of support to programme's applicants.

Special attention is given to helping less experienced NCPs who require the know-how accumulated in other countries. This can be transferred onto the members of the network, through mentoring visits, an e-learning platform for trans-national activities of the Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation NCPs, and to create a network of NCPs exploiting the synergies of distributed knowledge, collective development and trainings. The focus is also on enhancing and equalling the level of expertise, professional services, diminishing disparities among widening and non-widening countries and increasing participation of less experienced countries in the field of Teaming, Twinning, ERA Chairs and COST projects.

Our methodology to meet the previously established goals includes, in particular:

- ▶ transfer of knowledge,
- ▶ capacity building,
- ▶ workshops and trainings addressed to NCP needs expressed during the self-evaluation exercise,
- ▶ networking meetings,
- ▶ trans-national collaborative events,
- ▶ as well as mentoring visits dedicated to less experienced NCPs.

The project consortium includes 37 representatives from EU member states and associated countries, providing activities to NCP_WIDE.NET project members and non-members alike. We focus on the NCPs' capacity building and exchange of practices, as well as supporting NCP expertise concerning Widespread activities. We enhance NCP collaboration and foster synergies. Lastly, we put an emphasis on dissemination activities regarding the project through the Project Portal, promotion via social media, promotion during transnational brokerage events, joint workshops and cooperation with other networks.

You are welcome to visit our project Portal – one stop shop for Widening activities:

www.ncpwidenet.eu

