

REGIONS OF KNOWLEDGE Frequently Asked Questions

I. Sources of Information

I.1. Where can I find information on the calls under the Regions of Knowledge?

Regions of Knowledge call infos

The Commission services publish all relevant information on the Regions of Knowledge calls on CORDIS web site <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

Regions of Knowledge additional info about the initiative

More information under Regions of Knowledge could be also found in:
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/capacities/regions-knowledge_en.html

I.2. Where can I get assistance?

Assistance on the content

FP7 Enquiry Desk: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=enquiries>

Assistance on EPSS - online submission

For technical questions on the use of the electronic proposal submission system (EPSS):

[EPSS Helpdesk](#)

Phone: +32 2 233 37 60

EPSS user guide

EPSS user guide is available at

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7SubmitProposalPage>.

Assistance in identifying partners

The Commission's CORDIS server offers a number of services and information sources which may be useful in partner search for participation in Regions of Knowledge calls
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/partners_en.html.

Assistance on IPR issues

The IPR-Helpdesk has as its main objective to provide first line IP related assistance to current and potential EU-RTD contractors, and in particular on Community diffusion and protection rules and issues relating to IPR in international projects. Another objective is to raise awareness of the importance of protecting and exploiting Europe's IPR assets. It operates a free helpline offering first line assistance on IPR related issues:

e-mail: ipr-helpdesk@ua.es

tel. : +32 0 213 41 63

fax. : +32 0 213 41 69

URL: <http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org>

Pre-proposal check on eligibility

A pre-proposal eligibility check will be offered for the Regions of Knowledge calls by Commission services in relation to the eligibility criteria of the call. It shall be operational from the publication of the call until 15 December 2008 at 17:00. Requests for pre-proposal checks shall be sent to the following address: RTD-PRECHECK-REGIONS-2009@ec.europa.eu

Commission européenne, B-1049 Bruxelles / Europese Commissie, B-1049 Brussel - Belgium.
Telephone:(32-2)2991111. Office: SDME 1/30. Telephone: direct line (32-2)2999864: (32-2)2957729.

The only purpose of this service is to pre- check the eligibility of your proposal according to the eligibility criteria of the call. Therefore you may submit a summary of your proposal that provides the necessary information with reference to the eligibility criteria.

General Assistance

Applicants can find assistance in the EU Member States and in the Associated Countries through the National Contact Points (NCPs). Their contact details, including their e-mail addresses can be found at http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html.

II. General Aspects

II.1. What is meant by “regions”?

Regions are defined as sub-national geographical entities. For the implementation of this work programme, regions shall not necessarily be defined along administrative boundaries or according to the European statistical NUTS nomenclature which is used to define different statistical levels of regions at European level.

Projects that will be supported by the Regions of Knowledge may define the geographical scope of the regions involved as best fits the purposes of the project and the type of activities proposed. There are no limits on the size of the regions involved. For example, regions could be large areas (e.g. the German Länder or even national authorities in small Member States made up of only one NUTS 2 region), small areas (e.g. municipalities) or groupings of several administrative areas.

II.2. What is the NUTS classification system?

The abbreviation NUTS stands for the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics. It was established by Eurostat more than 25 years ago in order to provide a single uniform breakdown of territorial units for the production of regional statistics for the European Union.

"NUTS" is a three-level hierarchical classification and subdivides each Member State into a whole number of NUTS 1 regions, each of which is in turn subdivided into a whole number of NUTS 2 regions and so on. Among others, the NUTS nomenclature serves as a reference for the framing of Community regional policies for the purposes of appraisal of eligibility for aid from the Structural Funds. The areas eligible under the other priority Objectives have mainly been classified at the NUTS 3 level. Further information on basic principles and purpose of the NUTS can be found on the web site of Eurostat: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/eurostat/ramon/nuts/basicnuts_regions_en.html

II.3. Can cities participate?

Yes, they can. However, you should always keep in mind the objectives of the calls, the economic and R&D capacity, the institutional competences required and the EU dimension of the projects.

II.4. What is the definition of a "research- driven cluster"?

Research-driven clusters must be composed of at least three types of legal entities (the so-called "triple helix"), namely:

- legal entities conducting research (universities, research organisations and research for-profit bodies and
- business entities (large enterprises and SMEs as defined in the EC recommendation 2003/361/CE of 6 May 2003 (OJ L124/36, 20/5/2003: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2003/l_124/l_12420030520en00360041.pdf) and
- regional/local authorities (local and regional government, regional development agencies). National entities can be accepted to represent regional authorities either in small Members States made up of only one NUTS 2 region or if their organizational structure is broken down at regional level and if their regional representation is located in or is effectively in charge of the same region as the other components of the cluster. Specialised regional entities, like for example regional environment agencies, can be accepted if they are in charge of the design and/or the implementation of the relevant regional policy.

Where appropriate, research driven clusters may involve as well, on top of the three previous categories, local entities such as technology transfer offices, science parks, chambers of crafts, commerce and industry, financial entities (such as banks and saving banks) and also management consultants (specialised consultants active in the technological or economic sector concerned can be accepted as representing the business side of the "triple helix").

II.5. Must the participants in a regional research driven cluster be from the same region?

Yes, the participants in a regional research driven cluster must be from the same region. However, there is no standardised definition of a region for the implementation of this workprogramme, on condition that it is appropriate for the purposes of the project and the type of activities proposed.

II.6. Must the cluster be a legal entity?

Regional clusters taking part into the consortium do not need to have a legal personality. Yet, if a regional research driven cluster has a legal entity, then there is no need for all its members to become part of the consortium; proof will be required that the members of the cluster cover the "triple helix".

If such a legal entity does not exist, a legal arrangement between the members must exist for one member of the cluster to be allowed to legally represent all the others and the envisaged representative must have a clear mandate to represent all other members.

In the absence of both a legal entity and a legal arrangement allowing one member of the cluster to represent all others, then at least one legal entity conducting research, one business entity and one regional/local authority from the cluster shall be direct partners to the European consortium.

In any case, each member of the cluster directly involved in the project's activities should be clearly identified and the cluster itself should always be presented and described in the proposal.

II.7. Who shall coordinate the project?

Proposals under the "Regions of Knowledge" action will be submitted by and the selected projects will be coordinated either by fully-fledged regional research-driven clusters established as a legal entity or by the regional/local authorities (or any regional entity they have mandated to implement their economic development and innovation policy) involved in a participating cluster.

III. Participation

III.1. Can my organisation be involved in several proposals?

There are no limitations to how many proposals or successful projects an organisation can be involved in.

III.2. Can physical persons participate in the call?

Yes.

III.3. What is the minimum number of participants?

The minimum number of participants is defined as follows: Consortia of a minimum of three regional research-driven clusters established in 3 different Members States and/or Associated Countries, consisting each of at least three types of legal entities, the so-called triple helix.

III.4. Must clusters targeted for mentoring join the European consortium?

Yes, on top of the three regional-research driven clusters at the core of the project.

Yet they might not necessarily be already identified as partners at the proposal stage. If this is not the case, the proposal must at least include a commitment to mentor one or a few emerging clusters, the activities foreseen as well as the methodology which will be applied to target and select them. This selection should happen at an early stage in the lifetime of the project to leave enough time for actual mentoring activities.

III.5 Must clusters targeted for international cooperation join the European consortium?

Not necessarily. Most activities (identification of targeted clusters, analysis of complementarities, study visits, meetings, etc) if not all, depending on the maturity of the internationalization strategy, shall be carried out solely by the European cluster partners.

III.6 Is there a maximum number of partners?

No, the number of partners should meet the needs of the project's objective. However, the higher the number of partners, the more challenging the coordination of the project will be.

IV. About the applications process

IV.1. How do I submit my application?

Proposals for Regions of Knowledge are submitted only as an electronic proposal via the web-based Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS), which is reached via the CORDIS call page: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

In case of problem, please contact the [EPSS HELPDESK](#) by e-mail or by phone +32 2233 3760. In exceptional cases, when a proposal coordinator has absolutely no means of accessing the EPSS, and when it is impossible to arrange for another member of the consortium to do so, an applicant may request permission from the Commission to submit on paper. Further information on this exceptional facility can be found at ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/calls/fp7-evrules_en_pdf.zip

IV.2. What should proposals for Regions of Knowledge consist of?

A proposal has two parts:

Part A will contain the administrative information about the proposal and the participants. The information requested includes a brief description of the work, contact details and characteristics of the participants, and information related to the budget ; do not forget **in any case** to enter the funding requested, which may differ from the total costs of the project. The information in part A is entered through a set of online forms.

Part B follows a "template", or list of headings. You should follow this structure when presenting the scientific and technical content of your proposal. The template is designed to highlight those aspects that will be assessed against the **evaluation criteria**. It covers, among other things, the current state of play from an economic and R&D perspective, the nature of the proposed work, the participants and their roles in the proposed project, and the impacts that might be expected to arise from the proposed work. Detailed information and justification of the budget should also be included in this part of the proposal.

Any additional material sent with the proposal (company brochures, supporting documents and reports, videos etc.) will be disregarded. In proposals submitted electronically, other embedded material (audio, video multimedia etc.), attached files or hyperlinks to other documents will be disregarded. Only black and white copies are used for evaluation and you are strongly recommended, therefore, not to use colour in your document.

These are described in greater detail in the Guide for Applicants for Regions of Knowledge calls (<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>).

IV.3. Who shall submit the proposal?

Proposals under the "Regions of Knowledge" action will be submitted by and the selected projects will be coordinated either by fully-fledged regional research-driven clusters established as a legal entity or by the regional/local authorities (or any regional entity they have mandated to implement their economic development and innovation policy) involved in a participating cluster

V. Eligibility Check and Evaluation of Proposals

V.1. Pre-proposal check on eligibility

A pre-proposal eligibility check will be offered for the Regions of Knowledge calls by Commission services in relation to the eligibility criteria of the call. It shall be operational from the publication of the call until 15 December 2008 at 17:00. Requests for pre-proposal checks shall be sent to the following address: RTD-PRECHECK-REGIONS-2009@ec.europa.eu.

The only purpose of this service is to pre-check the eligibility of your proposal according to the eligibility criteria of the call. Therefore you may submit a summary of your proposal that provides the necessary information with reference solely to the eligibility criteria.

V.2. What are the minimum conditions for the composition of a "research-driven cluster"?

Research-driven clusters must be composed of at least three types of legal entities (the so-called "triple helix"), namely:

- legal entities conducting research (universities, research organisations and research for-profit bodies); national entities conducting research can be accepted if their organizational structure is broken down at regional level and if the regional structure involved is located in the same region as the other components of the cluster; and
- business entities (large enterprises and SMEs as defined in the EC recommendation 2003/361/CE of 6 May 2003 (OJ L124/36, 20/5/2003)) and
- regional/local authorities (local and regional government, regional development agencies). National entities can be accepted to represent regional authorities either in small Member States made up of only one NUTS 2 region or if their organizational structure is broken down at regional level and if their regional representation is located in or is effectively in charge of the same region as the other components of the cluster. Specialised regional entities, like for example regional environment agencies, can be accepted if they are in charge of the design and/or the implementation of the relevant regional policy. Where appropriate, research driven clusters may involve as well, on top of the three previous categories, local entities such as technology transfer offices, science parks, chambers of crafts, commerce and industry, financial entities (such as banks and saving banks) and also management consultants (specialised consultants active in the technological or economic sector concerned can be accepted as representing the business side of the "triple helix").

V.3. How many regional research-driven clusters must take part in the proposal?

Regions of Knowledge will support consortia of partners representing at least three regional research-driven clusters from three different European member states and/or associated countries.

Clusters targeted for mentoring within the EU and/or associated countries and those targeted for international cooperation activities come on top of those three.

VI. Scientific and technical aspects

VI.1. What are the types of activities foreseen under a Regions of Knowledge project?

1. Analysis and integration of research agendas, leading to the establishment of a research directory and a SWOT analysis, from a research and an economic point of view
2. Initiatives to improve integration: definition of the joint action plan (JAP) and business plan
3. Accompanying measures to the implementation of the JAP .
4. Mentoring for capacity building in regions with emerging clusters
5. International cooperation with complementary clusters
6. Dissemination activities: website, newsletters, workshops, conferences etc

VI.2. What are the typical steps of a Regions of Knowledge project?

Typical projects should start with an analysis of the regional state of play, from an economic and R&D point of view (existing and potential capacities, policies) – and then carry on with the mutual learning phase, including exchange of best practices, to help devise the Joint action plan together with business plan. This shall be completed during the first half of the project.

During the second half of the project, on top of on-going mentoring and international cooperation activities, accompanying measures to the JAP can be implemented to strengthen the cooperation between the partnering clusters or identify and define research-oriented projects.

Dissemination activities can take place all along the lifetime of the project.

VI.3. Regarding mentoring, shall the targeted clusters and foreseen activities already be detailed in the work programme?

No, the targeted clusters might not necessarily be already identified as partners at the proposal stage. If this is not the case, the proposal must at least include a commitment to mentor one or a few emerging clusters, as well as the methodology which will be applied to target and select them. This selection should happen at an early stage in the lifetime of the project to leave enough time for actual mentoring activities.

In any case the proposal should present the activities foreseen.

VI.4. Which are the expected outputs?

Intermediary outputs shall consist in a directory of RTD demand and offer, a SWOT analysis, from an economic and R&D point of view, for the relevant economic domain or technological sector, together with an analysis of the complementarities of the partners and of the targeted clusters for mentoring and international cooperation activities

The main output of the project shall be the joint action plan to integrate research agendas, together with its business plan, with the foreseen financing sources and a split of responsibilities for carrying out the actions, complete with deadlines and precise targets for actions to be carried out.

The mentored cluster(s) should define its/ their own action plan to become sustainable.

VI.5. Which is the expected impact?

1. Economic competitiveness and growth, through better links between local stakeholders and especially the research and business communities, together with regional authorities, in a particular scientific and technological domain or economic sector
2. More effective investments in R&D at regional level

3. Synergies with other EU policies, especially the Structural Funds and CIP, the Competitiveness and Innovation programme, to maximise the impact of EU policies in support of the Lisbon strategy
4. Involvement of more regions into the ERA

VI.6. What is expected in relation to the European cluster observatory and the European club of cluster managers?

Projects are expected to register the partnering clusters into the European cluster observatory and beneficiary cluster managers are expected to take part into the new association to be created under Europe Innova.

VI.7. Must the partnering research driven clusters be operating in the same scientific,, technological or economic sector?

As indicated in the Work Programme, research-driven clusters are expected to be operating in a particular scientific and technological domain or economic sector. This may be the same domain or a complementing one.

VI.8. Must all four themes be covered in every proposal?

No, proposals can address any of them unless they opt for a cross-disciplinary approach.

VI.9. Can nuclear research be covered as part of the research for economic development?

"Regions of Knowledge" is part of the Capacities programme, based on the EC Treaty; as such, it cannot form the basis to carry out any nuclear research. The only basis for receiving funds for nuclear research at the European level is the Euratom Treaty which is not linked to the Regions of Knowledge initiative.

VII. Financial Aspects

VII.1. Which is the percentage of EC contribution that a proposal could receive under Regions of Knowledge?

The EC contribution for all calls under Regions of Knowledge may reach a maximum of 100% of the total eligible costs, as it is possible for Coordination and Support actions. Yet co-financing is possible and should be inserted in the indicative budget, if any is foreseen, showing a clear demarcation line.

VII.2. Do Regions of Knowledge calls support pure research activities?

Regions of Knowledge calls will not finance research activities within the clusters but rather the operating costs of carrying out the activities within each cluster foreseen in line with the work programme (analysis, , integration of research agendas and definition of a joint action plan, mentoring and international cooperation) and of coordinating activities between the different regional clusters.

VII.3. What type of costs can be funded under a Regions of Knowledge project?

Operating costs such as staff, meeting or travel costs and costs related to dissemination activities as well as to management activities

VII.4. What is the percentage of reimbursement of indirect costs in the case of Coordination and Support Actions?

Indirect costs may be based on a flat rate or actual costs. A detailed explanation of the applicability of these methods of calculation of indirect costs can be found at Annex 3 of the Guide for Applicants. The transitional flat rate of 60% for indirect costs applies only to funding schemes that include research and technological development and demonstration activities, which is not the case for Coordination and Support Actions.

In the case of Coordination and Support Actions, the reimbursement of indirect eligible costs for every beneficiary may reach a maximum of 7% of the direct eligible costs, excluding the direct eligible costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the beneficiary.

VII.5. Is there any upper funding limit for the management activities under Coordination and Support Actions?

No, there is no legal limit.

VII.6. The percentage of EC contribution varies for the different categories of partners (e.g. private, public, non-profit organisations)?

For the Coordination and Support Actions, the eligible costs might be up to 100% for all types of partners (private, public, non-profit).

VII.7 Can cluster partners from third countries be funded under regions of Knowledge?

According to the regulation laying down the rules for participation to FP 7 (art. 29) any entity established in an international cooperation partner country (see annex to the Capacities work programme) may receive a Community financial contribution. Legal entities established in other third countries may be granted a Community financial contribution provided the contribution is essential for carrying out the project.

VIII. Legal Aspects and Contract

VIII.1. Can tasks be sub-contracted?

As a general rule contractors must have the capacity to carry out the work themselves. Subcontracting is derogation to this general rule and is limited to specific cases. Beneficiaries may subcontract minor services and supplies, which do not represent core elements of the project work, which cannot be directly assumed by them and where this proves necessary for the performance of their work under the project.

A. Conditions related to activities subcontracted:

- Subcontracts may only cover the execution of a limited part of the project (Article II.7 of Annex II of the FP7 model contract). Therefore, generally core elements of the project can not be subcontracted. Coordination tasks of the coordinator such as the distribution of funds, the review of reports and others tasks mentioned under Article II.2.3 to GA cannot be subcontracted.- Article II.7 of the FP7 model contract stipulates that: "recourse to the award of subcontracts must be duly justified in Annex I having regard to the nature of the project and what is necessary for its implementation".

- Even though certain services may be performed by a subcontractor, the contractor keeps full responsibility for carrying out the project, retains the intellectual property generated, if any, and must ensure that certain of provisions of the model contract are reflected in the agreement with the subcontractor. (Article II.7 of the FP7 model contract).

For more information on subcontracting please consult:

Model Contract, Annex II: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls-grant-agreement_en.html

Guide to financial issues relating to FP 7 indirect actions:

ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/financialguide_en.pdf

VIII.2. Assistance on IPR issues

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