

**Federal Ministry of Education and Research**  
**Call for proposals under the Federal Government's Strategy**  
**for the Internationalization of Science and Research**

**Regulations for funding an ideas competition for the establishment and development**  
**of innovative R&D networks with partners in the Danube States**

**8 June, 2015**

**1 Funding purpose and legal basis**

**1.1 Funding purpose**

The Danube region with its 100 million inhabitants is undergoing a deep and lasting transformation. Following the EU enlargements of 2004, 2007 and 2013, most of this region is now part of the European Union. While there are still significant variations in socio-economic development between different countries of the Danube, especially between the innovative regions upstream and those regions which are in developmental transition downstream, the region has considerable potential for integration and growth. The region can build on significant opportunities for research, development and innovation. There is still considerable room for further exploitation of their international potential. This was underlined by the European Commission in its European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) which was endorsed by the European Council on 24 June 2011.

Support for cross-border cooperation is a central element of the EUSDR. It provides a framework for improvements in the socio-economic development, competitiveness, environmental management and resource-efficient growth of the Danube region. The idea is that targeted support for research infrastructures will promote expertise and intensify the networking of producers of knowledge, companies and political decision-makers.

In order to make efficient and targeted use of research and innovation as drivers of successful societal transformation, the countries of the Danube region are called upon to forge better links between national and regional funding possibilities and to utilize the potential of the European Research Area (ERA).

In this context, the aim of this programme of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is to support German universities, research institutions and companies to establish networks with excellent researchers in the Danube States<sup>1</sup> in order to develop joint cooperation strategies and projects. It encourages stronger links between the leading innovative regions upstream and the developing regions downstream, thereby contributing to the successful implementation of the Danube region strategy. This will also promote the further internationalization of existing national competence networks.

The aim is to encourage international links along the entire value-added chain in order to support technology transfer and innovation. The participation of companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)<sup>2</sup>, in the R&D<sup>3</sup> networks is therefore expressly desired.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this call, "Danube States" (excluding Germany), hence target countries, means those countries to which the EU Strategy for the Danube Region refers: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> According to the EU's definition of SMEs: The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises consists of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 people and which have either an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million. Within this category, the following definitions apply: Small enterprises are defined as enterprises which employ fewer than 50 persons and whose annual turnover or annual balance sheet total does not exceed €10 million. Micro

In the above-mentioned context, this funding programme makes an important contribution to the International Cooperation action plan of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research ([http://www.bmbf.de/pub/International\\_Cooperation\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.bmbf.de/pub/International_Cooperation_action_plan.pdf)) and to achieving the goals of the Strategy of the Federal Government on the European Research Area (ERA) ([http://www.bmbf.de/pubRD/Strategy\\_of\\_the\\_Federal\\_Government\\_on\\_the\\_European\\_Research\\_Area\\_\(ERA\).pdf](http://www.bmbf.de/pubRD/Strategy_of_the_Federal_Government_on_the_European_Research_Area_(ERA).pdf)).

## 1.2 Legal basis

Project grants will be awarded in accordance with these funding regulations, the BMBF's standard terms and conditions for grants on an expenditure or cost basis and the administrative regulations under Sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO). There is no legal entitlement to funding. The funding provider will decide freely after due assessment of the circumstances and within the limits of the available budget funds.

Projects can be co-funded by the countries listed under 8 in accordance with their national legal regulations and guidelines on project funding within the limits of the budget funds available.

## 2 Object of funding

Funding will be provided for the establishment and development of R&D networks between Danube upstream and downstream countries and involving German participation. Above all, the project proposals are expected to address the most important parts of the EUSDR (including the flagship projects and / or the Nexus approaches of the Joint Research Centre) or the specific challenges of the Horizon 2020 EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Particular importance is attached to the development of networks in the thematic areas of climate, energy, health, nutrition, safety and security, mobility, communications as well as in the key technologies which are geared to these themes. The High-Tech Strategy of the Federal Government also reflects these priorities. Information about the Federal Government's High-Tech Strategy is available via the BMBF website <http://www.hightech-strategie.de/de/The-new-High-Tech-Strategy-390.php>; information about the Horizon 2020 EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020> and information about the EUSDR is available at [www.danube-region.eu](http://www.danube-region.eu). Innovative approaches are needed for establishing and developing interdisciplinary networks.

The funding period consists of two consecutive funding phases of up to twelve months each. Applications for funding cover both phases. Awarded funding is made available for the second phase upon successful conclusion of the first funding phase and a positive evaluation of the prospects of success of the project's planned continuation.

### - Funding phase 1:

Establishment and development of the network

The funding phase 1 will normally last for up to twelve months and serve to establish the new R&D network or develop an existing R&D network by including partners from the Danube States. The aim is to build sustainable network structures. The network participants are expected to agree on the nature of cooperation within the network by signing, for example, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the end of this phase.

### - Funding phase 2:

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enterprises are defined as enterprises which employ fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover or annual balance sheet total does not exceed €2 million. In general, most SMEs are autonomous since they are either completely independent or have one or more minority partnerships (each less than 25%) with other enterprises. If that holding rises to no more than 50%, the relationship is deemed to be between partner enterprises. Above that ceiling, the enterprises are linked.

Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/sme\\_definition/sme\\_user\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf) and [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Research and Development

### Initiation of specific R&D projects

In funding phase 2, which will normally have a duration of up to twelve months, concrete measures are to be taken to secure the continued financing of the network. For example, this can be a specific call within an EU funding programme or within EUREKA, national or regional funding programme in which the network would like to participate (e.g. European territorial cooperation INTERREG or the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance IPA). Another possibility is joint acquisition by the network partners of R&D contracts awarded by private and/or public contractors. In this case, an expression of interest should be sought from the potential partners, showing that they have a proven interest in cooperating with the R&D network and in awarding R&D contracts.

If SMEs are involved in collaborative projects, there must be evidence showing that they play a central role in the achievement of the project goal.

### 3 Funding recipients

Recipients of funding on the German side may be commercial companies based in Germany, and particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) - as well as other institutions which provide contributions to research and fulfil the funding purpose and funding prerequisites, as well as higher education institutions or non-university research institutions. Research institutions which receive joint basic funding from the Federal Government and the *Länder* can only be granted project funding supplementary to their basic funding for additional expenditure under certain preconditions.

### 4 Prerequisites for funding

Funding will only be provided for proposals that have high potential for realization and success in line with the objectives of this call.

Cooperation between the partners must be laid down in a cooperation agreement.

In their own interest, applicants should familiarize themselves with the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, in the context of the envisaged national project. They should check whether the proposed project includes specific European components which make it eligible for exclusive EU funding. Furthermore, applicants should check whether an additional application for funding can be submitted to the EU in the context of the proposed national project and whether participation in an EU funding initiative will be possible after the conclusion of the project. The result of such checks is to be described briefly in the national application for funding.

A minimum of three partners must be involved in the establishment or development of the R&D network in keeping with the objective to support networking between institutions upstream and downstream in the Danube region:

a. A German partner

in addition, at least one partner

b. from the upstream countries – Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia

and at least one partner

c. from the downstream countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine.

## 5 Type, scope and rates of funding

### 5.1 Funding by the BMBF

Funding will be awarded in the form of non-repayable project grants to German partners.

Grants for universities, research institutions and similar establishments will be calculated on the basis of the eligible project-related expenditure (grants for Helmholtz centres and the Fraunhofer Gesellschaft (FhG) will be calculated on the basis of the project-related costs eligible for funding), up to 100% of which can be covered in individual cases.

Grants for commercial companies will be calculated on the basis of the eligible project-related costs, up to 50% of which can, as a rule, be covered by government grants, depending on the project's relevance to application. The BMBF's policy requires an appropriate self-contribution of at least 50% towards the eligible costs incurred.

German institutions eligible for funding can, as a rule, be funded for a maximum period of 24 months. Maximum amounts of €80,000 will be provided per project.

As a rule, grants may be awarded to cover the following eligible expenditure/costs for the duration of the project:

#### a) Exchange of project participants:

- The following applies to funding for expenditure/costs incurred for travel by German project participants:

Funding is provided for travel by German experts to and from the project partner's location in the target countries specified under 1.1 (if by air: economy class) and for their subsistence expenses in these countries. A standard rate of €94 or €82 respectively<sup>4</sup> per day will be paid for accommodation and meals. The day of arrival and day of departure are counted together as one day.

- The following applies to funding for expenditure/costs incurred for travel by foreign project participants:

Per diem and funding to cover expenditure/costs incurred for project-related local travel by foreign experts from visiting Germany are provided as follows: Visits to Germany will normally be funded for a maximum of thirty days per year by the German funding provider who will pay a fixed rate of €104 per day. The day of arrival and day of departure are counted together as one day.

Contributions to health insurance and any other types of insurance are included in this allowance and must be paid by the grant recipients themselves, where applicable.

#### b) Grants towards non personnel related costs/expenditure incurred e.g. for the establishment of networking/communication platforms, preparation of feasibility studies.

#### c) Grants towards personnel costs/expenditure, that is, project-related costs/expenditure on student, administrative and/or research staff (normally up to the TvÖD 13 salary grade).

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<sup>4</sup> the smaller amount of €82 is applicable for the countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Croatia.

d) Grants towards the costs of events in Germany (e.g. technical equipment, catering, rental of premises, accommodation of guests). These may not be combined with per diem allowances (cf. a). Travel within Germany by German project partners is not eligible for funding.

In well-founded exceptional cases it will be possible to provide grants towards the costs of events in the target countries listed under 1.1 (e.g. technical equipment, catering, rental of premises, accommodation of guests).

In general, the costs of standard basic equipment such as office material, communications, laboratory and IT equipment can not be covered. Since the projects are addressed to the establishment or development of R&D networks or the preparation of R&D projects and not to genuine research, a flat rate for universities and university hospitals cannot be granted.

## 5.2 Funding by the target countries

Partner institutions from the countries listed under 1.1 may receive complementary funding for their joint activities.

Mutual agreements concerning co-funding of projects have been reached with the countries Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Serbia as listed under 8 (hence called partner countries), hence called partner countries. BMBF and the partner countries have defined the details of co-funding in bilateral Protocols on Call Implementation.

Concerning partner institutions from the remaining target countries listed under 1.1 of this call no agreement has been made. However it is recommended to address the resp. funding organisations in these countries in order to check the opportunities for individual complementary funding.

## 6 Other terms and conditions

The *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Kostenbasis des BMBF an Unternehmen der gewerblichen Wirtschaft für Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben* (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the BMBF to Commercial Companies for Research and Development Projects on a Cost Basis – NKBF 98) will be part of the notification of award for grants on a cost basis.

The *Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung* (ANBest-P) (General Auxiliary Conditions for Grants Provided for Projects on an Expenditure Basis) will form part of the notification of award of grants on an expenditure basis.

## 7 Procedure in Germany

### 7.1 Involvement of the International Bureau and request for documents

The BMBF has entrusted the International Bureau (IB) with the implementation of the funding activity:

DLR<sup>5</sup> Project Management Agency  
Internationales Büro

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<sup>5</sup> Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e.V. (DLR) / German Aerospace Center

Heinrich-Konen-Str. 1  
53227 Bonn  
Germany

Website: <http://www.internationales-buero.de/en/index.php>.

For subject-related information, please contact:

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## 7.2 Two-stage funding procedure

The funding procedure consists of two stages.

### 7.2.1 Submission and selection of project outlines

In the first stage, joint project outlines in German or English language must be submitted only in Germany using the PT-Outline electronic outlining tool by 12:00 (CEST) on or before 18 September 2015 (<http://www.ptoutline.de/IWINDORplus>). Project outlines in English language must include a German summary. Since this joint project outline includes also information about the tasks and the requested funding in the countries listed under 8 it is the one and only project outline that is submitted in any country of the Danube region.

The deadline for submissions is not a cut-off deadline. However, it may not be possible to consider project outlines received after this date.

A legal claim to funding cannot be derived from the submission of a project outline.

The project outlines must be structured as follows:

**Part A.)** This information is part of any call for proposals and is entered via a specific web template.

A.I Information required for administrative purposes

A.II Financial statement (for German partners and those of countries listed under 8)

**Part B.)** A project description structured as follows:

B.I Title

B.II Contact details of the project director

B.III Contact details of the foreign partners

- B.IV Summary of the content of the planned activity
- B.V Description of the excellence and originality of the project
- B.VI Definition of the objectives of the measure
- B.VII Research management experience in coordinating international projects and networks and brief overview of the current scientific status of and preliminary work done for the proposed project
- B.VIII Description of existing contacts and cooperations with the target countries in the region
- B.IX Information on the research and innovation potential of prospective partners in the target countries
- B.X Overall concept of the network and planned individual measures for the establishment or development of the network (description of the roles and tasks of the partners in the project)
- B.XI Explanation of the added value of the cooperation
- B.XII Medium and long-term effectiveness of the proposed measures in line with the objectives of this call, in particular compatibility, i.e. information about the aspect of the funding programme which the creation of the network targets.
- B.XIII Detailed work plan and time schedule and, if relevant, distribution of tasks and cooperation with the existing and prospective partners
- B.XIV Structured financial plan with information about own funds made available and funding requirements, structured according to the eligible types of expenses
- B.XV Measures for the protection of intellectual property
- B.XVI Proposals for the evaluation of own measures in line with the monitoring of progress, results and impacts
- B.XVII Reason for funding requirement
- B.XVIII Milestones (Gantt chart)

The project description (Part B) can be uploaded on PT-Outline as a pdf file.

The project outline provides the basis for the thematic evaluation of the project. The project description should therefore include assessable information about all relevant points (see structure of the project description). The description should not exceed 10 pages.

The project outline submitted by the German partner must include at least two letters of intent concerning the participation of a foreign institution from one of the target countries listed under 4 a and b (see also 1.1).

If you have technical questions (unrelated to the content of the call) regarding the web-based application PT-Outline, please contact:

DLR Project Management Agency  
 – Thorsten Krämer / Horst Leiser –  
 Heinrich-Konen-Str. 1  
 53227 Bonn  
 Germany  
 Phone: +49-228-3821 2040

E-mail: PT-Outline-IB@dlr.de

After the deadline a check on eligibility of all cooperation partners that apply for funding will be carried out by the co-funding authorities. In case that one of the partner in the consortium is not eligible the IB will inform the German coordinator within two weeks after the deadline. The

coordinator of the proposal then will be given one week time to revise the proposal in order to achieve that all partners from co-funding countries of the consortium are fully eligible.

The project outlines received will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- Relevance to the thematic priorities specified in sections 1 and 2 and conformance with the specified formal requirements
- Excellence, originality and innovativeness of the project
- Initiation of new partnerships as well as development and intensification of existing partnerships
- Thematic and administrative competence as well as research/innovation management competence of the partners in the participating countries
- Participation of companies, particularly SMEs
- Plausibility and viability of the methodology, the work plan and the time schedule
- Quality of cooperation and added value for the partner institutions as well as the benefits of the proposed measures from the German point of view
- Scientific benefits and prospects for the commercialization of the expected results
- Medium and long-term effectiveness of the cooperation and ensuring of its sustainability (added value of the proposed cooperation)
- Appropriateness and need for the requested amount of funding
- Security of the overall financing of the project for its full duration

Under the joint evaluation procedure of this call, BMBF will undertake the formal and thematic assessment as the lead agency. The co-funding countries listed under 8 will participate in jointly funding the projects according to national funding prioritisation within the limits of the budget funds available.

In case that a proposal selected for funding on German side lacks the co-funding of an involved partner from the region, this proposal should be funded anyway if a) the consortium also fulfils the eligibility criteria of the call without the rejected partner and b) the coordinator confirms that the project can be carried out also without the rejected partner.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of this selection procedure.

Applicants have no legal entitlement to the return of their project outlines.

#### 7.2.2 Submission of formal applications for funding and decision-making procedure

In the second stage of the procedure, applicant institutions whose project outlines have been reviewed positively will be invited – where necessary in coordination with the proposed project coordinator – to present a formal application for funding, which will be decided on after a final evaluation. Formal applications must be drafted using the "easy-Online" electronic application system. (The link will be supplied in the event of a positive evaluation of the project outline.)

Guidelines, leaflets, further information and auxiliary terms and conditions are available at [https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy\\_index.php?auswahl=easy\\_formulare&formularschrank=bmbf](https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=easy_formulare&formularschrank=bmbf).

In all cases, it is essential that the formal application includes a German summary of the project description in accordance with the terms and conditions concerning grants on the basis of expenditure or cost.

Questions concerning the approval and payment of and accounting for funds as well as proof and examination of proper use and, if necessary, revocation of the award and reclaiming of the funds awarded are governed by the administrative regulations pertaining to section 44 of the



Federal Budget Code (BHO) and sections 48 to 49a of the Administrative Procedure Act (VwVfG), unless deviation is permitted under the present funding regulations.

Those project consortia which are successful in their applications for funding will commit themselves to participate in the necessary measures (surveys, workshops etc.) for the purposes of the quality assurance of the funding instrument.

## **8. Procedures in the partner countries**

Funding procedures in the partner countries have to be followed according to national guidelines. Therefore it is highly recommended to contact the below mentioned institutions well ahead of time. The co-funding countries have entrusted the following agencies with implementing the funding programme in Hungary, Republic of Moldova, and Republic of Serbia:

### **Hungary:**

National Research, Development and Innovation Office  
Balázs István Kápli  
Andrássy út 12.  
HU-1061 Budapest  
E-mail: [balazs.kapli@nkfih.gov.hu](mailto:balazs.kapli@nkfih.gov.hu)  
Phone: +36 1 484 2948  
Fax: +36 1 266 0801  
Web: <http://nkfih.gov.hu>

### **Republic of Moldova:**

Center of International Projects of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova  
Dr. Lidia Romanciuc, Director  
1 Stefan cel Mare Ave., off. 440  
MD-2001 Chişinău  
E-mail: [mrda@mrda.md](mailto:mrda@mrda.md), [intprojects@asm.md](mailto:intprojects@asm.md)  
Phone/Fax: +373 22 270 774  
Web: <http://www.cpi.asm.md>

### **Republic of Serbia:**

Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development  
Sector for International collaboration and European integrations  
Ms. Milica Golubovic Tasevska  
22-26, Nemanjina street  
RS-11000 Belgrad  
E-Mail : [milica.g.tasevska@mpn.gov.rs](mailto:milica.g.tasevska@mpn.gov.rs)  
Tel.: + 381 11 36 16 589  
Web: <http://mpn.gov.rs/medjunarodna-saradnja/naucna-saradnja/info?lang=sr-YU>

These organisations inform about type, scope and amount of co-funding applicable on a national level.

## **9. Entry into force**

These funding regulations will enter into force on the day of their publication in the Federal Gazette (*Bundesanzeiger*).

Bonn, 8 June, 2015

Dr Matthias Hack