

WORK PROGRAMME 2007

CAPACITIES

PART 3

REGIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

(European Commission C(2007)563 of 26.02.2007)

Changes to the Capacities Work Programme: Regions of Knowledge Theme

This work programme is an update with respect to the provisional version adopted on 21 December 2006. The changes are minor typographical corrections.

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3. REGIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

Objectives

Strengthening the research potential of European regions, in particular by encouraging and supporting the development, across Europe, of regional “research-driven clusters” associating universities, research centres, enterprises and regional authorities.

I. CONTEXT

Policy context

The “*Regions of Knowledge*” initiative in FP7 will respond to a need at European level to increase the overall capacity of regional players in enhancing science and technology based development. It will enable regions to strengthen their capacity for investing and conducting research and technological development activities, thereby maximising their potential for successful involvement of their operators in European research projects and intensifying the role of RTD in economic development. It will also facilitate the development of innovative “Research-driven Clusters”¹ at a local and regional level. Special attention will be given to supporting the integration of actions of existing regional RTD plans, into the European wide context.

The aim is to increase the capacity of European regions to invest in and develop their commitment to research in a way which can contribute significantly to economic development.

The "Regions of Knowledge" action will also seek to promote synergies between regional and research policies, primarily by producing regional research strategies which regional authorities can integrate into their economic development strategy as a basis for increased and more focused use of the Structural Funds for R&D investment and activities.

Activities will be implemented in close relationship with Community regional policy (delivered through the Structural Funds, which also provides funding for research and innovation activities at regional level) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme.

Action will therefore aim at:

¹ Research-driven clusters : these clusters are concentrations of *research entities (public research entities, universities, not-for-profit bodies), enterprises (large firms, SMEs), regional/local authorities (local government, regional development agencies)* and where appropriate local entities such as chambers of commerce, saving banks and banks, operating in a particular scientific and technological domain or economic sector.

- Improving links between regional authorities, research stakeholders and the local business community not only as partners in the development of particular interests or regional RTD policies, but also as joint partners in national or European initiatives;
- Fostering transnational, including cross-border, cooperations between regional partners (research entities, enterprises, local and regional authorities) in areas or topics of common interest, either related to challenges from the globalisation of markets or the evolution of normative frames in the European context;
- Enhancing transnational, including cross-border, mutual learning of regional actors in developing or creating research driven clusters. Cross border cooperation of Regions of Knowledge is not limited to the eligible cross border regions (NUTS level III) of the Territorial Cooperation Objective of the Cohesion Policy and refers particularly to adjacent regions;
- Mentoring regions with a less developed research profile by more experienced partners through mutual exchange of experience and best practices;
- Developing joint action plans at the European level to increase regional economic competitiveness through research and technological development activities in traditional or emerging business sectors and mobilising financial possibilities afforded by national/regional authorities, the private sector and by Community programmes (RTD Framework Programme, the CIP and the Structural Funds), in order to exploit the synergy between regional, national and Community programmes for research and economic development.

Action will also contribute, where appropriate, to increase the capacity of less-developed European regions, particularly the convergence and the outermost regions, to participate in the RTD Framework Programme and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme.

Approach

Activities proposed under the "Regions of Knowledge" activity will be submitted and the selected projects will be implemented by regional actors involved in existing or new research-driven clusters.

Regional research-driven clusters are concentrations of research entities (public research entities, universities, not-for-profit bodies), enterprises (large firms, SMEs), regional/local authorities (local and regional government, regional development agencies) and where appropriate local entities such as chambers of commerce, saving banks and banks, operating in a particular scientific and technological domain or economic sector.

In cases where the coordinating entity comes from the private sector, it has to prove that it is acting with the agreement (e.g. letter of support) of a public body promoting regional development, e.g. a regional development authority or a regional council.

Special attention will be given to innovative approaches fostering sustainable development of the economic activity. Research entities involved have to be already and demonstrably involved in RTD activities supported by national, regional or European programmes that are closely linked to the relevant economically productive technology areas.

“*Regions of Knowledge*” will support:

- either single research-driven clusters (RDC) which would bring together regional and local actors from different European countries to constitute multinational research-driven clusters (European research-driven clusters) aimed at tackling demand driven or regional problems addressing specific scientific and technological areas or sectors;
- or consortia of research-driven clusters from across Europe dealing with issues of common interest, such as those related to normative development (dialogue among stakeholder), challenges emerging from technological development or globalisation or others.
- where appropriate, “*Regions of Knowledge*” will provide support to foster seedbeds to create new research-driven clusters: the aim is to stimulate regional or local research capabilities around which research driven clusters could be set up.

The consultation process

Previous Expert Group conclusions have been taken into account and a FP7 Advisory Group for "Regions of Knowledge", representing public authorities and research entities has been created and consulted.

Activities

The 2007 Work Programme will develop the following **activities**:

- Activity 3.1. Analysis, mentoring and integration of research actors
- Activity 3.2. Facilitating the emergence of new clusters and mutual information

Other activities

Trans-national co-operation among NCPs – REGIONS - 2007- 3

Description:

Reinforcing the network of National Contact Points (NCP) for the Seventh Framework Programme under Regions of Knowledge, by promoting trans-national co-operation. The action will focus on identifying and sharing good practices. This may entail various mechanisms such as benchmarking, joint workshops, training, and twinning schemes. Practical initiatives to benefit cross-border audiences may also be included, such as trans-national brokerage events. The

specific approach should be adapted to the nature of the theme and to the capacities and priorities of the NCPs concerned.

Special attention will be given to helping less experienced NCPs rapidly acquire the know-how accumulated in other countries.

Proposals are expected to include all NCPs who have been officially appointed by the relevant national authorities. Other participants from the EU and associated countries are ineligible. If certain NCPs wish to abstain from participating, this fact should be explicitly documented in the proposal.

The action should also involve official FP7 contacts from Associated countries. The Commission expects to select a single proposal under this heading.

Funding scheme: Co-ordination and support action (coordination action); indicative budget: 0.4M€. It is expected that the project should last for a maximum of 5 years, and should in any case finish before March 2013.

Expected impact:

- An improved NCP service across Europe, therefore helping simplify access to FP7 calls, lowering the entry barriers for newcomers, and raising the average quality of submitted proposals.
- A more consistent level of NCP support services across Europe.

II. CONTENT OF CALLS

Activity: 3.1. Analysis, mentoring and integration of research actors

Indicative available budget 8.8 M€.

Technical content/scope

The Regions of Knowledge supports innovative research-driven clusters to have more and better RTD investments at regional level. Projects must demonstrate a clear exploitation potential in the regions which are concerned and should help actors in the regions to make the best of EU instruments such as the Framework Programmes, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme or the Structural Funds.

Topics: REGIONS-2007-1

In the 2007 call, proposals should address one or both of the following topics:

- ***Bringing the benefits of research to SMEs***

SMEs operate more and more in international markets and need to adapt to the new economy – in this challenge, and to be aware of the evolution affecting the production systems and markets, to become more competitive, adopting new technologies (developed through research) is key. Only a relatively small number of SMEs are able to carry out their own R&D activities but a very large number of them need to exploit, and indeed are exploiting the results of R&D in their business activities. Some regions have designed successful instruments for bringing the results of both public and private R&D closer to SMEs and adapting them to their needs. Actions aimed at increasing integration of SMEs in regional research driven clusters and awareness about the potential benefits of research in selected business sectors, counselling and networking measures have to some degree been applied in most member states. Most regions would benefit from an exchange of best practices in this respect, but especially regions which have strong SME sectors.

- ***Research and rural economies including economies undergoing structural changes***

The economic functions of Europe's rural areas have changed considerably over the past decades. Agriculture's significance as an employer and contributor to rural regions' economic performance has diminished while new industrial and service activities have emerged alongside a growth in tourism. At the same time, rural economies are adapting to the development of the knowledge economy. Usually, the focus for exploiting knowledge for economic growth has been concentrated in well connected, urban centres. Access to research provision and integration of economic actors into regional research driven clusters are key challenges to allow the development of dynamic rural knowledge economies, especially those related to protected rural areas (natural national or regional parks), the new demands for energy related sustainable agriculture (biomass, biofuels, biodiesel, etc.), and high added value products. The sustainable exploitation of marine resources or new systems of fisheries or alternative fish productions should also be considered. Work under this action could also address the specific challenges posed by the formation of clusters and poles of excellence in a rural context.

Projects should aim to develop the capacity of Europe's rural regional economies to access and profit from research. Regions facing geographical handicaps such as their insularity, remoteness, sparse population or mountainous character will receive particular attention.

Participants

In a Regions of Knowledge proposal participants are:

Consortia of Regional research driven clusters or a single research-driven cluster having multinational partnership ("European research-driven clusters"): these clusters are concentrations of research entities (public research centres, universities, not-for-profit bodies), enterprises (large firms, SMEs), regional/local authorities (local government, regional development agencies) and where appropriate local entities such as chambers of commerce, saving banks and banks, operating in a particular scientific and technological domain or economic sector.

The size of the consortium should typically be at least 6 participants (2 regional research-driven clusters or 6 partners from at least two different European countries associated in an "European research-driven cluster").

Type of activities

This activity will be implemented through Coordination and Support Actions (Support Actions), which will support projects which cover the followings ("mentoring" where appropriate):

- **Analysis, development and implementation of research agendas of regional or cross-border clusters**

Project partners will perform a detailed analysis of the state of play of the identified research-driven clusters or of regional/local capabilities around which research could be carried out. For the selected topic, analysis will involve the identification of relevant issues such as:

- existing regional plans of RTD and development policies in economic sectors;
 - regional RTD public and private actors (engaged and non engaged);
 - the strengths and weaknesses of the regions concerned in terms of their capacity to produce, transfer and use knowledge;
 - economic development needs;
 - existing RTD policy and activities, their evolution and impact;
 - European and international context;
 - synergies and opportunities for mutual learning;
 - mentoring and cooperation possibilities between regional actors involved in research driven clusters.
-
- **Mentoring** of regions with a less-developed research profile by highly developed ones, particularly EU convergence and outermost regions, or mutual learning

Project partners will perform actions as: the organisations of events – including conferences, meetings, workshops or seminars, related studies, exchange of personnel, exchange and disseminations of good practices and, if necessary, the definitions, organisations and management of joint or common initiatives.

- **Initiatives to improve integration**

Project partners will define a joint Action Plan of research and technological development activities to drive economic development in a selected sector/topic which will include appropriate measures such as:

- Increasing research potential and researcher mobility, including intersectorial mobility between research and academia;
- Improving and sharing RTD infrastructure;
- Supporting research projects;
- Enhancing knowledge transfer between firms and between research entities and enterprises, in particular SMEs, through networking;
- Improving availability of and access to SME support services and private financing for RTD;
- Other relevant business support measures;
- In the case of actions on "research and rural economies", the Action Plan could also identify what other measures are necessary to address the specific obstacles to developing the research capacity of the rural area(s) concerned.

The joint Action Plan should also set out a business plan, defining how to finance the joint action plan by using possibilities afforded at national/local level, including from the private sector, or at Community level (Framework Programmes, Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, Structural Funds). The Action Plan should make clear the complementarity between the proposed actions and the EU regional policy programmes of the region(s) concerned.

Note:

Joint action plans' implementation will not be funded by the "Regions of Knowledge" activity per se; participants will consider instead the use of financial instruments such as the Framework Programme, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, the Structural Funds, as well as national and regional resources and financing from the private sector, to implement the action plans.

- **Dissemination activities**

Conferences, workshops, publications, web-based initiatives.

Duration:

Projects are expected to be completed normally within 36 months.

Funding schemes that apply to this activity are Coordination and Support Actions (Support Actions). The Community contribution to be envisaged for projects will be in the order of EUR 1 million.

The Community financial contribution may reach a maximum of 100% of the total eligible cost.

Expected impact:

- A global analysis including a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), a directory of RTD offer and demand and an analysis of the complementarities of the partners involved in the consortium of regional research driven clusters;
- A definition of RTD needs to improve economic competitiveness for this particular sector/topic, setting of a joint action plan identifying the partners, objectives, activities (what to do), responsibilities (who does what) for transnational and cross-regional cooperation, and proposal of a business plan which represents the strategy to finance the joint action plan;
- Facilitating the emergence across Europe of research-driven clusters to promote regional development;
- Where appropriate, delivery of "guidance" solutions for technologically less developed regions, in particular convergence and outermost regions.

Activity: 3.2. Facilitating the emergence of new clusters and mutual information

Indicative available budget 0.8 M€.

Technical content/scope

This Regions of Knowledge activity will provide support to foster seed-beds to create national and/or European research-driven clusters on the basis of support from the public and private sectors, including in emerging Regions of Knowledge such as the convergence and outermost regions, and for activities to promote systematic mutual information exchange as well as interactions between similar projects and where appropriate, with actions of other relevant Community programmes such as enterprise and cohesion policy (e.g. analysis and synthesis workshops, round-tables, publications), as well as the organisation of strategic workshops or the support to expert groups.

Topics – REGIONS – 2007 - 2

In the 2007 call, proposals should address one or both of the following areas, as detailed under Activity 3.1:

- *Bringing the benefits of research to SMEs*
- *Research and rural economies*

Participants

In a Regions of Knowledge proposal for this activity participants are:

- at least 3 participants (one research entity, one public (national/regional/local) authority and one enterprise) or one research driven cluster (for mutual information activities).

Type of activities

This activity will be implemented through Coordination and Support Actions (Support Actions), which will support:

- Facilitating the creation of new Research driven clusters (national and/or European). In this context, attention will be given to emerging Regions of Knowledge particularly the convergence and outermost regions;
- Analysis, workshops, conferences, roundtables, expert group meetings and dissemination activities, including web-based initiatives

Expected impact:

- Involvement of more regions in the "Regions of Knowledge" activities
- Facilitating the emergence across Europe of research-driven clusters to promote regional development
- Mutual learning through information exchanges

Duration:

Projects are expected to be completed normally within 24 months.

Funding schemes that apply to this activity are Coordination and Support Actions (Support Actions). The Community contribution to be envisaged for projects will be in the order of EUR 0.2 million.

The Community financial contribution may reach a maximum of 100% of the total eligible cost.

Indicative budget for the Regions of Knowledge activity for the 2007 Work Programme

2007 M€

- Call *FP7-REGIONS-2007-1* 8.8 M€
- Call *FP7-REGIONS-2007-2* 0.8 M€
- Call *FP7-REGIONS-2007-3* 0.4 M€
- *Expert evaluators* 173 792 €

**ESTIMATED TOTAL BUDGET
ALLOCATION 10.173 792 M€**

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF CALLS

Please note that the call fiche has been updated with respect to the provisional version published on CORDIS on 22 December 2006. There are no substantive modifications.

- **Call identifier:** *FP7-REGIONS-2007-1*
- Date of publication: *22December 2006*
- Deadline: *24 April 2007, at 17 h, Brussels local time*
- Indicative budget: *8.8 M€ from 2007 budget*
- Topics called:

Activity/ Area	Funding Schemes
<i>Regions-2007-1. Analysis, mentoring and integration of research actors</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bringing the benefits of research to SMEs</i> • <i>Research and rural economies</i> 	<i>CSA (Support Actions)</i>

- Evaluation procedure:
 - The evaluation criteria (including weights and thresholds) and sub-criteria together with the eligibility, selection and award criteria, for the different funding schemes are set out in Annex 2 to this work programme.
 - The evaluation will follow a single stage procedure.
 - Proposals will not be evaluated anonymously.
 - Proposals may be evaluated remotely.
- Indicative evaluation and contractual timetable: *Evaluation results are estimated to be available within 3 months after the closure date; contract signature: it is estimated that the first contracts related to a call will come into force 8 months after the closure date.*
- Consortia agreements: *Participants are encouraged, but not required, to conclude a consortium agreement.*
- Particular requirements for participation, evaluation and implementation:

The minimum number of participants:

- *at least 6 participants, from at least two different European countries, involved in consortia of regional research driven clusters or in a European research-driven cluster associating universities, research centres, enterprises and regional/local authorities;*
- *Cross-border and transnational cooperation actions are particularly encouraged.*

Restrictions on participation: *All regions in Member States, including convergence regions, and Associated Countries.*

- The forms of grant and maximum reimbursement rates which will be offered are specified in Annex 3 to the Capacities work programme.

Please note that the call fiche has been updated with respect to the provisional version published on CORDIS on 22 December 2006. There are no substantive modifications.

- Call identifier: **FP7-REGIONS-2007-2**
- Date of publication: 22 December 2006
- Deadline: 24 April 2007, at 17 h, Brussels local time
- Indicative budget: 0.8 M€ from 2007 budget
- Topics called:

Activity/ Area	Funding Schemes
<i>Regions-2007-2. Facilitating the emergence of new clusters and mutual information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bringing the benefits of research to SMEs</i> • <i>Research and rural economies</i> 	CSA <i>(Support Actions)</i>

- Evaluation procedure:
 - The evaluation criteria (including weights and thresholds) and sub-criteria together with the eligibility, selection and award criteria, for the different funding schemes are set out in Annex 2 to this work programme.
 - The evaluation will follow a single stage procedure.
 - Proposals will not be evaluated anonymously.
 - Proposals may be evaluated remotely.
- Indicative evaluation and contractual timetable: *Evaluation results are estimated to be available within 3 months after the closure date; contract signature: it is estimated that the first contracts related to a call will come into force 8 months after the closure date.*
- Consortia agreements: *N.A.*
- Particular requirements for participation, evaluation and implementation:

The minimum number of participants: *at least 3 participants (one research entity, one public (national/regional/local) authority and one enterprise) or one research driven cluster (for mutual information activities).*

Restrictions on participation: *All regions in Member States, including convergence regions, and Associated Countries.*

- The forms of grant and maximum reimbursement rates which will be offered are specified in Annex 3 to the Capacities work programme.

Please note that the call fiche has been updated with respect to the provisional version published on CORDIS on 22 December 2006. There are no substantive modifications.

- Call identifier: **FP7-REGIONS-2007-3**
- Date of publication: *22 December 2006*
- Deadline: *24 April 2007, at 17 h, Brussels local time*
- Indicative budget: *0.4 M€ from 2007 budget*
- Topics called:

Activity/ Area	Funding Schemes
<i>Regions-2007-3. Trans-national co-operation among NCPs</i>	<i>CSA (Coordination Actions)</i>

- Evaluation procedure:
 - The evaluation criteria (including weights and thresholds) and sub-criteria together with the eligibility, selection and award criteria, for the different funding schemes are set out in Annex 2 to this work programme.
 - The evaluation will follow a single stage procedure.
 - Proposals will not be evaluated anonymously.
 - Proposals may be evaluated remotely.
- Indicative evaluation and contractual timetable: *Evaluation results are estimated to be available within 3 months after the closure date; contract signature: it is estimated that the first contracts related to a call will come into force 8 months after the closure date.*
- Consortia agreements: *N.A.*
- Particular requirements for participation, evaluation and implementation:

Restrictions on participation: *Host NCP organisations only*

- The forms of grant and maximum reimbursement rates which will be offered are specified in Annex 3 to the Capacities work programme.

IV INDICATIVE PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE CALLS - 2008

In 2008 the projects are expected to address one or both of the following areas:

- *Maximising the benefits of research and innovation infrastructure for regions' economic development*
- *Commercialising the results of public R&D*