

Orientation paper prepared in connection with the FP7 2013 Work Programme for Research for the benefit of SMEs

Important notice:

This paper is made public at an early stage in the adoption process of the work programme to provide potential applicants with the currently expected main lines of the 2013 work programme. It is a working document not yet endorsed by the Commission and its content does not in any way prejudice the subsequent modifications by the Commission, nor the final decision of the Commission.

The final adoption and the publication of the work programme by the Commission are expected in mid-July 2012 via <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/page/capacities>.

Only the adopted work programme will have legal value.

Information and topics indicated in this orientation paper may not appear in the final work programme; and likewise, new elements may be introduced at a later stage. No essential information, such as indicative budgets, will be provided by the Commission until the final work programme is adopted.

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RESEARCH FOR THE BENEFIT OF SMEs

Objectives:

To strengthen the innovation capacity of European SMEs and their contribution to the development of new technology based products and markets by helping them outsource research, increase their research efforts, extend their networks, better exploit research results and acquire technological know-how, bridging the gap in the innovation chain from idea to market through European level collaboration.

I CONTEXT

Political landscape

Against the backdrop of the current economic situation and increased global competition, the Union has defined a strategy to support growth and job creation, Europe 2020. In particular, it foresees “reinforcing the competitive advantages of our businesses, particularly in manufacturing and within our SMEs”, “to promote technologies and production methods that reduce natural resource use” and “to promote the internationalisation of SMEs”.

The Innovation Union is one of the several flagship initiatives supporting the implementation of the EU2020 strategy. It defines political guidelines for a new broad European innovation policy, which will lead to more concrete initiatives within the Member States and the regions but, of course, also within the Commission. It comprises the whole innovation chain from ideas to market. For the first time research and innovation are at the top of the political agenda.

The Innovation Union places particular emphasis on innovation and support measures for SMEs stating “...to ensure simple access and stronger involvement of SMEs in future EU research and innovation programmes, in particular those with high growth potential...¹.”

The work programme 2013 aligns with, and contributes towards, the objectives of Europe 2020, the Innovation Union Flagship, and other EU policies. There is a determined focus on fostering new ideas, supporting world class teams tackling significant societal challenges, and on ensuring that the fruits of our investments can be properly exploited.

¹ COM(2010) 546 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Europe 2020 flagship initiative - Innovation union.

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FP7 Capacities Work Programme: Research for the Benefit of SMEs - working document,
June 2012, not legally binding

In this way the work programme provides for a smooth transition towards the new research and innovation programme for 2014-2020, Horizon 2020.

The Commission also recognises the crucial role that SMEs play in terms of economic growth and job creation:

Between 2002 and 2010, net employment in the EU rose substantially, by an average of **1.1 million new jobs** (or 0.9%) each year. **85%** of total employment growth was attributed to **small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)** and SMEs have a much higher employment growth rate (1% annually) than large enterprises (0.5% a year).²

Access to appropriate sources of finance is one of the most significant constraints on business-led innovation in Europe. This leads to insufficient private sector R&D spending, which is the main reason for Europe's R&D investment gap and more crucially to a lack of financial support at the commercialisation phase for young innovative companies. The financial market crisis has aggravated the situation hitting SMEs³ the hardest.

The Practical Guide to EU funding opportunities for Research and Innovation therefore aims at helping potential applicants for EU funding for research and innovation to find their way to relevant information on funding opportunities: http://cordis.europa.eu/eu-funding-guide/supporting-id_en.html

Approach for 2013

This 2013 work programme *Research for the benefit of SMEs* endeavours to enhance the research and innovation capacities of European SMEs which have little or no research capacity themselves to turn innovative ideas into products and services with clear future market potential in line with the aims of the Innovation Union. The global challenges Europe faces create new opportunities for new innovative ideas to compete in these new markets.

The *Research for the benefit of SMEs* programme's focus is on the outsourcing of research by SMEs to specialised 'RTD performers' (research service providers i.e. universities, research centres, other research performing companies etc.) but can also include outsourcing by research performing SMEs who need to complement their core research activities. Two types of measures - 'Research for SMEs' and 'Research for SME Associations' - constitute the core activities of the programme.

Following the test 'Demonstration Action' launched in the 2011 work programme the 2013 SME work programme continues to promote and increase this activity. In response to the experiences in the first round, this action is now limited to projects already having taken part

² http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/performance-review/pdf/do-smes-create-more-and-better-jobs_en.pdf

³ SME/ business support: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/activity/business/index_en.cfm

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in Research for SMEs and Research for SME Association schemes in the FP7 Capacities Programme.

These specific measures are complemented by activities in the 'Cooperation' programme. There, however, research performing SMEs participate in the projects as part of a consortium of research organisations. A target has been set so that at least 15% of the funding available under the 'Cooperation' programme should go to SMEs. The Commission will continue the quantitative and qualitative monitoring of SME participation in the Framework Programme against the objectives set.

What does the 2013 work programme concretely include?

One call for proposals with 4 activities detailed as follows

1. Research for SMEs
2. Research for SME Associations
3. Demonstration activity
4. Coordination and support action – supporting action

A coordination and support action – expert contracts is also included in the work programme.

1. Research for SMEs scheme

The objective of this scheme is to directly support SMEs in the project to outsource their research activities.

This is a highly competitive programme with a high number of proposals, which demonstrates the interest of SMEs for the scheme and the economic return they expect to generate.

The scheme aims at supporting SMEs in need of outsourcing research activities to RTD performers such as universities, research centres or research performing SMEs. 'Other enterprises and end-users', which belong to the same value chains as the participating SMEs, can participate, if it is in the interest of the project.

Projects aim at creating new knowledge or achieving results with a clear exploitation potential to improve or develop new products, processes or services which meet the needs of the participating SMEs. This scheme can assist SMEs in acquiring technological know-how and accessing international networks for their medium to long-term business development and follow a bottom-up approach, meaning that the research can originate in the entire field of science and technology in all industrial sectors.

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2. Research for SME Associations scheme

The objective of this scheme is to indirectly support SMEs through their associations /groupings to outsource research activities. This scheme targets SME associations which act on behalf of their members to identify and address common technological problems and to promote the effective dissemination and take-up of research results. Projects may address, among others, pre-normative research issues, new business, management, production and service models, technological problems related to the development and implementation of legislation, that cannot be addressed by the 'Research for SMEs' scheme and which meet the needs of the SME members of the SME associations. It also follows a bottom-up approach.

Projects include research, technological development and demonstration activities and are encouraged to include other activities such as training, to facilitate the dissemination and exploitation of results.

The two above schemes provide financial support to SMEs or SME associations to outsource research and technological development, with the view to enable their acquisition of intellectual property rights, preferably ownership of all project results. This is a different approach from that of collaborative projects in the Cooperation programme where participant cooperates on equal terms with regard to the research undertaken and acquire only access rights to the intellectual property rights generated by them.

3. Demonstration activity

The objective of this activity is to prove (demonstrate) the viability of a new solution (itself a successful outcome of a research project) that offers a potential economic advantage but which cannot be directly commercialised as further technological or other developments are required.

The 2013 work programme continues with the test action introduced in the 2011 Work Programme, aimed at funding demonstration projects. SMEs often need to follow up research projects with work linked to 'demonstration' or production of prototypes before actually commercialising goods and services but funding for this kind of activity is not readily available. Activities could e.g. include testing of prototypes, scale-up studies, performance verification and implementation of new technological and non-technological solutions.

This action could also include detailed market studies and business plans. There are no thematic restrictions.

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4. Coordination and Support Action- supporting action

The Commission, in its proposal for the SME support in the forthcoming programme Horizon 2020, has put strong emphasis on the development of a direct face-to-face mentoring and coaching support to SMEs desiring to innovate. Such a support function is expected to be present during the full lifetime of the innovation project and would include various aspects, in particular the development of strategic innovation plans with the SME.

Such coaching facilities exist at various levels and degrees at national level. The first aim of the project is to screen the currently available models and methodologies, to select a few examples which could service as best practices and to develop one or several scenarios for a workable approach to be linked to the SME instrument proposed under Horizon 2020, including suggestions for quality control of the coaching provided.

Secondly, the project could also contain direct actions to test and validate the developed scenario(s) with view of the possible future rolling-out, comprising training of and dissemination to possible actors.

5. Coordination and Support Action – expert contracts⁴

In line with article 13, paragraph 3 of Decision No 743/2008/EC, a final evaluation shall be carried out by the Commission at the end of the Eurostars Joint Programme. The final evaluation should examine the Eurostars Joint Programme at programme and project level. Special emphasis will be put on the economic impact of the programme, in particular with respect to article II.3 of the Annex I of the above mentioned decision. The evaluation shall also look into the governance of the programme.

Innovation dimension

This work programme contains innovation measures in support of activities closer to market such as demonstration activities within the Research for SMEs and Research for SME Associations projects, as well as the stand alone demonstration activity.

⁴ In accordance with Articles 14(c), 17 and 27(5) of Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013)

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Dissemination activities

The overall aim for each of the activities mentioned above is for the participating SMEs to innovate and become more competitive in a global market. Therefore dissemination and exploitation of the project results must include concrete actions as an integral part of the project and demonstrate the economic impact on the SMEs. Projects must have a strong focus on exploitation with clear future market potential. Projects are expected to actively disseminate project results to the relevant public and professional audience, using multiple communication pathways including the use of new media (such as web sites, wiki pages, videos, etc), preserving the industrial and commercial interests of the benefiting SME.

For research for SMEs, dissemination activities are usually implemented by the SME participants in the project. In the case of the SMEs Associations however they are implemented through their Associations. As the Associations act as multipliers of the results via their network they must show a dissemination plan for their members. Other activities such as training, to facilitate the dissemination and exploitation of results are strongly encouraged.

It is expected to see dissemination and exploitation directly as a result of these projects.

International cooperation

Although international cooperation is not the main aim of this programme, it can play a role. SMEs can outsource work to RTD performers from any country, including third countries, if these have the right expertise and the research activity provided is cost-effective. This may also be helpful to SMEs to expand their markets. In addition, information and good practices based on the European experience in relation to SMEs and research can be disseminated to third countries in order to enable them to create the necessary structures and support mechanisms for the creation of viable and effective SME support activities.

Modalities of Implementation: The Research Executive Agency

Calls for proposals under this work programme are implemented by the Research Executive Agency (REA) according to the provisions of the Commission decision C/2008/3980 of 31/07/2008 "delegating powers to the Research Executive Agency with a view to performance of tasks linked to implementation of the specific Community programmes People, Capacities and Cooperation in the field of research comprising, in particular, implementation of appropriations entered in the Community budget". It is anticipated that the management practices of REA should lead to a shorter time to grant for successful proposals with respect to previous calls.

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II CONTENT OF CALL

This section describes all the topics for which proposals will be called in this work programme. This concerns only the content of the calls.

For all practical modalities related to these calls, please refer to section III 'Implementation of calls'. For actions not implemented through calls for proposals, please refer to section IV 'Other actions'.

How can I ensure that my project meets the objectives of this programme?

Based on the results of an impact assessment study on SME participation in FP5 and FP6, it has been shown that SMEs get more out of a project if its objectives are really in line with the SME needs in terms of final exploitation of the results. A strong commitment and active involvement of the SMEs will ensure the project meets its objectives. The SMEs needs of the project will be carefully examined during the evaluation from concept to exploitation thus helping to provide strong guarantees that the research and innovation ambitions of the SMEs and the RTD-performers will be reconciled from the outset.

It should also be highlighted that for all of the three activities, Research for SMEs, Research for SME Associations and Demonstration activity, the project must include a convincing business case on how investment in the research or demonstration will lead to a clear benefit for the SMEs. This is also of particular importance to the 'demonstration activity'. The guide for applicants, which also acts as manual for the evaluators of the project proposals, will reflect this in particular emphasising the importance of a clear description of management and commercial exploitation of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) (both background and foreground). **This point will be further elaborated under the heading 'Transaction'.**

As in the 2011 and 2012 'Research for the Benefit of SMEs' work programmes, in this 2013 work programme, the inclusion of demonstration activities in the research projects themselves is encouraged. Analysis of past experience shows that for the 'Research for SMEs' scheme up to 6% of costs on average do relate to demonstration. It is expected that under this work programme, the demonstration element as part of future SME-specific R&D-projects should gain importance. For the Demonstration activity it is critical that there should be a clear route to exploitation and commercialisation.

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Activity: 2.1 Research for SMEs

Technical content/ scope

'Research for SMEs' supports small groups of innovative SMEs in solving technological problems and acquiring technological know-how. Projects must fit into the overall business and innovation needs of the SMEs, which are given the opportunity to subcontract research to RTD performers in order to acquire the necessary technological knowledge. Projects must render clear innovation and exploitation potential and economic benefits for the SMEs involved.

The aim is that the participating SMEs become more competitive and their capacity to collaborate with the 'research community' is enhanced, forging closer industry / academia links. A strong emphasis is therefore placed on the economic impact of the results achieved in the project on the SMEs themselves. The economic 'benefit for the SMEs' is crucial in such projects.

Topics

'Research for SMEs' is a bottom-up scheme: the projects may address any research topic across the entire field of science and technology⁵.

Participants

It is required that participants of 'Research for SMEs' projects are from the following three categories:

1. SME participants:

SMEs are the direct beneficiaries of the scheme: they outsource their research needs by subcontracting the research to RTD performers. The level of EU funding is substantial but will cover only part of the total costs of the project. In practice, however, the grant should suffice to cover all the costs of the outsourced research and demonstration activities.

They must be SMEs as defined by Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC⁶.

⁵ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the EURATOM Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, should be submitted to relevant calls under the EURATOM Framework Programme (2012-2013).

⁶ OJ L 124, 20.5.2003, p.36 http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index_en.htm).

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However, SMEs that are research centres, research institutes, contract research organisations or consultancy firms are not eligible as SME participants. They are eligible to take part as RTD performers or 'Other enterprisers and end users'.

The project results (Foreground) generated in the project shall be at the benefit of the participating SMEs and they have rights of use and dissemination. Projects are centred on the economic interest of the SME participants which will take an active role by defining their specific technological needs and will ensure that the research performed complies with their requirements. No decision in the consortium shall be taken against the collective interest of the SME participants. They will provide input and will contribute to the research activities where appropriate and will take-up and exploit the research results to their own best advantage.

2. RTD performers:

RTD performers are legal entities carrying out research and technological development activities for the benefit of the SME participants. Examples of RTD performers are universities, research organisations and industrial companies, including research performing SMEs.

3. 'Other enterprises and end-users' (including SMEs):

SMEs have to keep a predominant role in the consortium. However, 'Other enterprises and end-users' may participate by making a particular contribution to the project and in addressing specific needs of the SME participants involved. The 'Other enterprises and end-users' must be independent of any other participant.

Type of activities

The projects may consist of up to four different types of activities from which research and technological development activities and/or demonstration activities are compulsory.

Research and technological development activities form the core of the project and the RTD performers should perform the bulk of these. SMEs should focus on initial specifications, and on testing and validation of project results and the preparatory stages for further use. Knowledge management and IPR protection should support the SMEs in protecting and using the research results to their best advantage, leading to a clear economic impact.

Demonstration activities are designed to prove the viability of new technologies that offer a potential economic advantage, but which cannot be commercialised directly (e.g. testing of product-like prototypes). Demonstration activities are an important step of a project on its way towards commercialization and should therefore typically be a distinct element of a project.

Other activities to facilitate the take-up of results by the SMEs, in particular training and dissemination:

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- Training activities are aimed at technical and managerial staff from the participating SMEs. Training should focus on results/technologies generated by the projects. Training activities should normally not exceed 10% of the total eligible project costs.
- Dissemination activities targeted to the relevant public and professional audience, using multiple communication pathways including the use of new media (such as web sites, wiki pages, videos, et) as well as conferences and publications.

Management activities, over and above the technical management of individual work packages, provide an appropriate framework bringing together all project components and maintaining regular communications with the Commission.

Co-ordination tasks may not be subcontracted. The organisation acting as coordinator must have the necessary capacity and competence to ensure effectively the coordination tasks. The co-ordinator of a 'Research for SMEs' project should preferably be one of the SME participants. This role may be entrusted by the SMEs in duly justified cases to a RTD performer or an organisation specialised in professional project management. The latter will participate in the project under the category 'Other enterprises and end-users' in support to the SMEs.

Resources and duration

Applicants are strongly encouraged to form small consortia which fit the purpose of the proposed project. The size of the consortium should typically be 5, but generally not exceeding 10 participants.

Accordingly, the overall budget of the project should typically be between EUR 500 000 to EUR 1 500 000 and the duration of the project should normally be between 1 and 2 years.

Funding Scheme

'Research for the benefit of specific groups (in particular SMEs)'

The calculation of the European Union contribution for projects is built upon the reimbursement, in whole or in part, of eligible costs (based on maximum rates of reimbursement specified in the grant agreement for different types of activities within the project) and shall not exceed the maximum European Union contribution determined by the FP7 rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions⁷.

The financial support of the European Union in accordance with Article 33 of the FP7 rules for participation will be capped at a value not exceeding 110% of the estimated price to be

⁷ Regulation (EC) No1906/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013) – OJ L391, 30.12.2006.p1.

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invoiced by RTD providers to SME participants and/or 'Other enterprises and end users' participants as agreed amongst them prior to grant agreement signature in compliance with Article 120 of the Financial Regulation⁸. Within this limit, the effective reimbursement of eligible costs will be subject to the applicable rates of the various activities (see Annex 3). Should the actual invoices be lower than the initially estimated price, the financial support of the European Union will not exceed 110% of their actual value.

RTD performers will charge eligible costs only under 'management activities' and 'other activities' (including training and dissemination). Resources they use for 'research and technological development activities' and/or 'demonstration activities' will be invoiced to the 'SMEs' participants and/or 'Other enterprises and end-users' participants at an agreed price. The price and payment modalities agreed between RTD performers and 'SME' participants should reflect the value of the intellectual property rights and knowledge acquired: the price of a licence should normally be lower than the price for ownership.

RTD performers are protected against the insolvency of an 'SME' participants and/or 'Other enterprises and end-users' participants to honour the financial commitment towards them. In such a situation, RTD performers may be authorised to charge their eligible costs related to unpaid invoices for direct reimbursement by the European Union. This reimbursement shall be subject to the funding rates applicable for 'research and technological development activities' and/or 'demonstration activities' in accordance with Article 33 of the FP7 rules for participation and within the above-mentioned cap.

'SME' participants and 'Other enterprises and end-users' participants will charge eligible costs under the various available activities to the project. The payment of RTD performers' invoices will be considered as an eligible cost and be reimbursed at the funding rate applicable for 'research and technological development activities' and/or 'demonstration activities'.

The SMEs are held responsible for the funds managed within the project. Sufficient safeguard measures should be agreed between them and the RTD Performers allowing the former to recover from the RTD Performers any funds in case of non-delivery of results, etc.

The transaction

In these projects SME participants are provided with the necessary funds to buy research from RTD providers (universities, research centres, etc.) which are called RTD performers in the programme. This is done by subcontracting against market conditions in a customer/seller-relationship laid down in the so called 'transaction'.

⁸ Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1995/2006 13 December 2006 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities – OJ L248, 16.9.2002.p1

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The SME participants remain at all times responsible for the outcome/results of the project. Therefore they have to ensure adequate management of the funds provided and for the quality of the work delivered to them by the subcontractors (RTD performers).

The RTD performers offer a research service for which they must be remunerated by the SME participants and/or 'Other enterprises and end-users'. In return the SME participants receive ownership and/or user rights to the Foreground generated in the project. All participants must agree on the appropriate conditions with respect to remuneration of the RTD performers and rights relinquished to the SME participants, and in the best interest of the SME participants, before submitting the proposal. This is referred to as 'the transaction'.

By default, the preferred option is that the SME participants obtain the full ownership of the Foreground and the RTD performers are remunerated accordingly. The consortium may reach a different agreement in their own best interests, as long as the SME participants are provided with all the rights that are required for their intended use and dissemination of the project results. This should, however, be clearly reflected in the remuneration of the RTD performers. The way in which the Intellectual Property Rights are distributed should be clearly addressed in the project proposal and not to be decided at a later stage in the Consortium Agreement, as it has consequences for the impact of the project for the SME participants.

Further detail on how to prepare a project proposal and apply the funding scheme is presented in the brochure "Research for SMEs & Research for SME Associations at a glance" which can be consulted at http://ec.europa.eu/research/sme-techweb/index_en.cfm?pg=publications on the SMETechWeb: http://ec.europa.eu/research/sme-techweb/index_en.cfm. Model proposals are also available on the website of the NCP SME Network <http://www.ncp-sme.net/publications/model-proposal>.

Expected impact

Projects under 'Research for SMEs' aim at contributing to the innovation of products, processes and services and at strengthening the competitiveness of SME participants. This programme will also contribute to improving industrial competitiveness across the European Union. The proposed Science & Technology approach should take into account the SME demand (need for a solution to a problem) and not only the state-of-the-art in the technology domain and demonstrate the capability and commitment of the consortium to implement a tangible RTD work plan at a high quality level with a clear path towards the response to the SME needs.

The expected outcome should be innovative including new or improved products, processes or services with a distinct market potential. Project proposals: should include a comprehensive business case and demonstrate a clear economic impact for the SME participants, improving their competitiveness by creating new or expanding existing markets. Collaboration and networking at EU level should enhance their access to markets and customers.

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The expected impact should be clearly described both at qualitative and quantitative level, providing where possible an indication of the economic impact, e.g. on turnover, employment, target markets and market improvements as well as expected patent applications or licence agreements. A dedicated strategy for the use of the research results is expected to ensure optimal and rapid innovation impact.

Projects shall follow basic ethical principles and include provisions for communication and dissemination of results. They should highlight any relevance to EU policies (i.e. environment, energy, health, etc), encourage gender equality initiatives (i.e. gender action plans according to the size of the project), foster dialogue beyond the research community, explore wider societal issues and address possible synergies with education.

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Activity: 2.2 Research for SME Associations (SME-AGs)

Technical content/scope

‘Research for SME Associations’ supports SME associations to develop technological solutions to problems common to a large number of SMEs in specific industrial sectors or segments of the value chain through research, for example, to develop or conform to European norms and standards, and to meet regulatory requirements in areas such as health, safety, environmental protection and energy efficiency. Projects must be driven by the SME associations which outsource research to RTD performers for the benefit of their members and must involve a number of individual SMEs.

Topics

‘Research for SME Associations’ is a bottom-up scheme: the projects may address any research topic across the entire field of science and technology⁹.

Participants

It is required that participants of ‘Research for SME Associations’ projects are from the following three categories:

1. SME associations/groupings (SME-AGs):

SME associations/groupings are legal persons having SME members and representing the interests of SMEs and/or physical persons having the same kind of activities. Examples of these are sectoral industrial associations, national or regional industrial associations and chambers of industry and commerce.

Projects are centred on the economic interest of the SME members of the SME AGs. The SME-AGs take an active role by defining the specific technological needs and ensuring that the research performed complies with their requirements. They provide input and contribute to the research activities where appropriate. The SME-AGs are the direct beneficiaries of the scheme by investing in research activities carried out by the RTD performers. The level of public funding is substantial but will cover only part of the total costs of the project. In practice, however, the grant should suffice to cover all the costs of the outsourced research and demonstration activities.

⁹ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the EURATOM Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications should be submitted to relevant calls under the EURATOM Framework Programme (2012-2013).

The SME-AGs normally retain the ownership of any project results (Foreground). No decision in the consortium shall be taken against the collective interest of the SME-AGs. They ensure the broad uptake, use and dissemination of the research results by their SME members to their best advantage.

2. RTD performers:

RTD performers are legal entities carrying out research and technological development activities for the benefit of the SME-AGs and in the interest of their SME members. Examples of RTD performers are universities, research organisations and industrial companies, including research performing SMEs.

3. 'Other enterprises and end-users' (including SMEs):

The scope of their activity will be focused on validation, take-up, training and dissemination activities, but not on research activities.

SME-AGs have to keep a predominant role in the consortium. However, 'Other enterprises and end-users' (including SMEs) may participate by making a particular contribution to the project and in solving specific problems or needs of the SME-AGs involved and the SMEs they represent.

Type of activities

The projects may consist of up to four different types of activities from which research and technological development activities and/or demonstration activities are compulsory.

Research and technological development activities form the core of the project and the RTD performers should perform the bulk of these. SME-AGs and their SME members should focus on testing and validation of project results and the preparatory stages for further use. Knowledge management and IPR protection should support the SME-AGs in protecting and using the research results to the best advantage of their members, leading to a clear positive economic impact.

Demonstration activities are designed to prove the viability of new technologies that offer a potential economic advantage, but which cannot be commercialised directly (e.g. testing of product-like prototypes). Demonstration activities are an important step of a project on its way towards commercialization and should therefore typically be a distinct element of a project.

Other activities as appropriate and directly related to the project's objectives that facilitate the take-up of results by the SMEs, in particular training, dissemination and networking:

- Training activities contribute to the professional development of the persons concerned, in particular technical and managerial staff from the participating SME-AG and their (SME) members. They aim at fostering the take-up and use of project results in larger

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groups of SMEs concerned. Training activities focus on results/technologies generated by the projects and can be carried out by:

- RTD performers towards SME-AG technical and managerial staff ("Train the Trainer" formula) and/ or towards SMEs,
- SME-AG staff towards technical and managerial staff of SME members.

Training activities should normally not exceed 15% of the total eligible project costs.

- Dissemination activities targeted to the relevant public and professional audience, using multiple communication pathways including the use of new media (such as web sites, wiki pages, videos, etc.) as well as conferences and publications. Projects include activities to effectively disseminate the research results to the members of the SME associations, and if appropriate, more widely. Furthermore, dissemination to policy makers, including standardisation bodies, is encouraged to facilitate the use of policy relevant results by the appropriate bodies at international, European, national or regional levels.

Management activities, over and above the technical management of individual work packages, provide an appropriate framework bringing together all project components and maintaining regular communications with the Commission.

Co-ordination tasks may not be subcontracted. The organisation acting as coordinator must have the necessary capacity and competence to ensure effectively the coordination tasks. The co-ordinator of a 'Research for SME Associations' project should preferably be one of the SME-AGs. This role may be entrusted in duly justified cases to a RTD performer or an organisation specialised in professional project management. The latter will participate in the project under the category 'Other enterprises and end-users' in support to the SME-AGs.

Resources and duration

Applicants are strongly encouraged to form small consortia which fit the purpose of the proposed project. The size of the consortium should be typically between 5 and 15 participants; the SME end users group should be limited to 2 to 5 members necessary to achieve the objectives.

The overall budget of the project should typically be between EUR 1 500 000 to EUR 3 000 000 and the duration of the project should normally be between 2 and 3 years.

Funding Scheme:

'Research for the benefit of specific groups (in particular SMEs)'

The calculation of the European Union contribution for projects is built upon the reimbursement, in whole or in part, of eligible costs (based on maximum rates of reimbursement specified in the grant agreement for different types of activities within the

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project) and shall not exceed the maximum European Union contribution determined by the FP7 rules for participation¹⁰.

The financial support of the European Union in accordance with Article 33 of the rules for participation will be capped at a value not exceeding 110% of the estimated price to be invoiced by RTD providers to the SME Associations and/or 'Other enterprises and end users' as agreed amongst them prior to grant agreement signature in compliance with Article 120 of the Financial Regulation¹¹. Within this limit, the effective reimbursement of eligible costs will be subject to the applicable rates of the various activities (see Annex 3). Should the actual invoices be lower than the initially estimated price, the financial support of the European Union will not exceed 110% of their actual value.

RTD performers will charge eligible costs only under 'management activities' and 'other activities' (including training and dissemination). Resources they use for 'research and technological development activities' and/or 'demonstration activities' will be invoiced to SME-AGs at an agreed price. The price and payment modalities agreed between RTD performers and the SME-AGs should reflect the value of the intellectual property rights and knowledge acquired: the price of a licence should normally be lower than the price for ownership. RTD performers are protected against the insolvency of the SME Associations and/or 'Other enterprises and end-users' to honour the financial commitment towards them. In such a situation, RTD performers may be authorised to charge their eligible costs related to unpaid invoices for direct reimbursement by the European Union. This reimbursement shall be subject to the funding rates applicable for 'research and technological development activities' and/or 'demonstration activities' in accordance with Article 33 of the rules for participation and within the above-mentioned cap.

SME associations and 'Other enterprises and end-users' will charge eligible costs under the various available activities to the project. Subject to an agreement between SME-AGs and their SME members, the payment of RTD performers' invoices by SME members will be considered as eligible costs for them and be reimbursed at the funding rate applicable for 'research and technological development activities' and/or 'demonstration activities'.

The transaction

In these projects SME AGs are provided with the necessary funds to buy Research from RTD providers (universities, research centres, etc.) which are called RTD performers in the programme. This is done by subcontracting against market conditions in a customer/seller-relationship laid down in the so called 'transaction'.

¹⁰ See footnote 6.

¹¹ See footnote 7.

The SME AGs remain at all times responsible for the outcome/results of the project. Therefore they have to ensure adequate management of the funds provided and for the quality of the work delivered to them by the subcontractors (RTD performers).

The RTD performers offer a research service for which they must be remunerated by the SME-AGs and/or 'Other enterprises and end-users'. In return the SME-AGs receive ownership and/or user rights on Foreground generated in the project. All participants must agree on the appropriate conditions with respect to remuneration of the RTD performers and rights relinquished to the SME-AGs, and in the best interest of the SME-AGs and their SME-members, before submitting the proposal. This is referred to as 'the transaction'.

By default, the preferred option is that the SME-AGs obtain the full ownership of the Foreground and the RTD performers are remunerated accordingly. The consortium may reach a different agreement in their own best interests, as long as the SME-AGs are provided with all the rights that are required for their intended use and dissemination of the project results. This should, however, be clearly reflected in the remuneration of the RTD performers. The way in which the Intellectual Property Rights are distributed should be clearly addressed in the project proposal and not to be decided at a later stage in the Consortium Agreement, as it has consequences for the impact of the project for the SME-AGs and their SME-members.

Further detail on how to prepare a project proposal and apply the funding scheme is presented in the brochure 'Research for SMEs & Research for SME Associations at a glance' which can be consulted at http://ec.europa.eu/research/sme-techweb/index_en.cfm?pg=publications on the SMETechWeb: http://ec.europa.eu/research/sme-techweb/index_en.cfm. Model proposals are also available on the website of the NCP SME Network <http://www.ncp-sme.net/publications/model-proposal>.

Expected impact

Projects under 'Research for SME Associations' aim at developing new or conforming to existing European norms and standards, meeting regulatory requirements and policy objectives in areas such as health, safety and environmental protection, research into new business, management, production and service models, or solving technological problems common for larger groups of SMEs that could not be addressed under 'Research for SMEs'.

The proposed Science & Technology approach should take into account the state of the art in the targeted technology domain and demonstrate the capability of the consortium to implement a tangible RTD work plan at a high quality level. Projects should lead to a clear economic impact for the SME members of the SME-AGs involved in the project, thus contributing at programme level to improving industrial competitiveness across the European Union.

The readiness to meet regulatory requirements and/or to influence norms and standards will give SME-AGs and their SME-members a competitive advantage in creating new or

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expanding existing markets. Collaboration and networking at EU level is expected to enhance their access to markets and customers geographically and sectorially.

The expected impact should be clearly described both at qualitative and quantitative level, providing an indication of the expected consequences for the SME-AGs concerned. This should cover the implications concerning compliance with regulatory requirements, but also economic impact, e.g. on turnover, employment or target markets as well as expected patent applications or licence agreements. A dedicated dissemination and exploitation strategy is expected to ensure that a large group of SMEs benefit from the results post project completion.

Projects must respect basic ethical principles and include provisions for communication and dissemination of results. They should highlight any relevance to EU policies (i.e. environment, energy, health, etc), encourage gender equality initiatives (i.e. gender action plans according to the size of the project), foster dialogue beyond the research community, explore wider societal issues and address possible synergies with education.

Activity: 2.3 Demonstration activity

The call for project of Demonstration Activity aims at helping participating SME to increase impact of their projects or to explore new ways of using the acquired knowledge from their research for SME or SME association project. Nevertheless, all research for SME or SME association projects are not expected to be followed by a separate Demonstration Activity project.

The demonstration activity is targeted to SMEs having participated or still participating in a 'Research for SMEs'/Research for SME Associations' project in the FP7 Capacities Programme. The aim is to guarantee that the benefits of supporting demonstration activities will go directly to the SMEs involved which are ready to fully exploit the results of such project. The consortium will have to prove that the results from the demonstration activity are ready and suitable for exploitation.

Technical content/scope

Demonstration projects must be centred on the needs of the SMEs to carry out demonstration activities before being able to enter the market. Activities can include testing of product-like prototypes, scale-up studies, performance verification and implementation of new technical and non-technical solutions. However, the demonstration projects are not meant for further research and development activities. This phase could also include detailed market studies/business plans or market strategies.

Topics:

The Demonstration activity is a bottom-up scheme: the demonstration projects may address the entire field of science and technology¹².

Participants

The SMEs shall have a predominant role in the consortium. The participation of other actors, like SME end-users, SME associations, large companies and/or partners specialised in dissemination of innovative results is possible.

Applicants are encouraged to form small consortia fit for the purpose of the proposed demonstration project.

Type of activities

The demonstration projects can consist of up to three different types of activities from which demonstration activities are compulsory.

¹² Research proposals within the scope of Annex I of the EURATOM Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, should be submitted to relevant calls under the EURATOM Framework Programme (2012-2013).

Demonstration activities are designed to prove the viability of new technologies that offer a potential economic advantage, but which cannot be commercialised directly (e.g. testing of product-like prototypes).

Management activities over and above the technical management of individual work packages provide an appropriate framework bringing together all project components and maintaining regular communications with the Commission.

Other activities to facilitate the take-up of results by the SMEs, in particular training and dissemination:

- Training activities aimed at technical and managerial staff from the participating SMEs. Training should focus on results/technologies generated by the projects.
- Dissemination activities targeted to the relevant public and professional audience, using multiple communication pathways including the use of new media (such as web sites, wiki pages, videos, et) as well as conferences and publications

The emphasis of this activity is with the demonstration part. Management and other activities shall only represent a small part of the project. Sub-contracting shall be limited to specialised tasks (such as market studies, support to IPR and use of external testing facilities) and duly justified.

Resources and duration

The overall budget of a project should typically be between EUR 500 000 to EUR 3 000 000. It is expected that the duration of a project would be in the range of 18 to 24 months.

Funding Scheme:

Collaborative Projects¹³.

Expected impact: Projects under the scheme for demonstration aim at bridging the gap between research and market. The concept is to prove the viability of a new solution (itself an outcome of a successful research project) that offers a potential economic advantage, but which cannot be directly commercialised.

The expected impact should be clearly described both at qualitative and quantitative level, providing an indication of the expected economic impact, e.g. on turnover, employment or target markets as well as expected patent applications or licence agreements.

Projects ensure to respect basic ethical principles and include provisions for communication and dissemination of results.

¹³ In line with the upper funding limits defined in Article 33 of Regulation (EU) No 1906/2006 of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013)

*FP7 Capacities Work Programme: Research for the Benefit of SMEs - **working document,***

June 2012, not legally binding

Other information / Specific Features: The participants should demonstrate that the research results which lead to the demonstration activity originate from a 'Research for SMEs/'Research for SME Associations' project in the FP7 Capacities Programme and that these results are ready and suitable for the exploitation phase through the demonstration project.

DRAFT

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Activity: 2.4 Coordination and Support Action – supporting action

Technical content/scope

The Commission, in its proposal for the SME support in the forthcoming programme Horizon 2020, has put strong emphasis on the development of a direct face-to-face mentoring and coaching support to SMEs desiring to innovate. Such a support function is expected to be present during the full lifetime of the innovation project and would include various aspects, in particular the development of strategic innovation plans with the SME.

Such coaching facilities exist at various levels and degrees at national level. The first aim of the project is to screen the currently available models and methodologies, to select a few examples which could service as best practices and to develop one or several scenarios for a workable approach to be linked to the SME instrument proposed under Horizon 2020, including suggestions for quality control of the coaching provided.

Secondly, the project could also contain direct actions to test and validate the developed scenario(s) with view of the possible future rolling-out, comprising training of and dissemination to possible actors.

Members of existing European support networks dedicated to SMEs are particularly encouraged to participate.

It is expected that the duration of a project shall not last longer than 12 months.

A maximum of one proposal will be selected for financing.

Funding Scheme:

Coordination and Support Action (Supporting Action) – call for proposal.

Expected impact:

The objective is to assist in the development of improved support services for SME participants proposed under Horizon 2020, in particular mentoring and coaching, in order to boost the innovation capacity of the SMEs and to increase the impact from the support provided.