

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ESPON 2013 PROGRAMME

Version 23-09-09

FAQ related to procedural issues

Call for Proposal for Applied Research Projects (Priorities 1,2,3 & 4)

- **The worksheet 1.9-Payment forecast of the Application Form includes two categories: A) Programme contribution and B) Partner States' contribution. What does the Partner States' contribution mean?**

The Partner States' contribution refers to the share of the budget of partners coming from one of the 4 ESPON Partner States: Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Lichtenstein.

For example:

LP EU - NL: €200.000

PP EU - UK: €200.000

PP EU - ES: €200.000

PP PS - CH: €200.000

In the first category (A) you should provide the payment forecast for the €600.000 budget of the three EU partners and in the second category (B) for the €200.000 budget belonging to the Swiss partner.

- **What types of bodies are eligible for funding?**

Project partners have to be **public bodies, bodies governed by public law or private bodies**.

You can find the definition of a body governed by public law in the Directive 2004/18/EC, Art. 1. Please take a particularly careful look at Art.1 and at Annex III. The complete text of the directive can be downloaded from here: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/> (select your language) and then Simple search> Natural Number.

According to Directive 2004/18/EC, Art. 1 a body governed by public law needs to fulfil the following criteria:

- (a) Established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
- (b) Having legal personality;
- (c) And financed, for the most part, by the state, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law;
 - Or subject to management supervision by those bodies;
 - Or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public.

The new calls allow for the first time the inclusion of private institutions from ESPON Member and Partner States. According to Article 6 (4) of the Agreement Member States and Partner States are asked to verify that Project Partners under private law meet all the established legal conditions. In particular, Member States and Partner States will have to certify, on the basis of documents provided as part of the application procedure, the solvency of any private partner involved. This condition is considered as an eligibility criterion and proposals including private partner(s) whose solvency will not be positively confirmed will be declared non eligible. The updated list of country specific documents that have to be provided by each private partner is available as download in the application packs on the ESPON 2013 Programme.

In case of doubts about your legal status, please turn to your national ESPON Monitoring Committee Member. Details are available under www.espon.eu.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **ESPON 2013 PROGRAMME**

Version 23-09-09

Additional requirement related to eligible bodies under Priority 4:

Under Priority 4 only the institutions officially nominated by Member and Partner States that are confirmed by the ESPON Monitoring Committee as ESPON Contact Points can apply. The list of officially appointed ESPON Contact Points is updated regularly and available on the ESPON website.

• Do the project coordinator and the project manager have to be directly employed by the Lead Partner or can they be external experts, subcontracted by the Lead Partner?

Each project should **appoint or sub-contract** a project coordinator whose work can be supported by a project manager. A financial manager will have to be appointed or sub-contracted as well (see Chapter 8 of Programme Manual, sub chapter 8.3.4.). This means that they can be either employed by any of the project partners (Lead or Project Partner), or appointed with a service contract on the basis of the applicable public procurement rules. For public procurement rules, please refer to Chapter 8, sub chapter 8.4.4, of the Programme Manual. In all cases, the full administrative, financial and legal responsibility for the operation stays with the Lead Partner.

• How to calculate the applicable percentage for the overheads (= indirect administrative costs)?

Administration costs have to fulfill the following criteria:

- They have to be eligible according to national rules and European regulations (in particular Regulations (EC) no. 1083/2006 Art. 56; no. 1080/2006 Art. 7; no. °1828/2006 Art. 48 to 53);
- They must be calculated on the basis of actual costs and be verifiable, i.e. based on factual elements in the accounting system which can be verified by an auditor. No lump sums, overall estimations or arbitrary keys are allowed!
- They must show a direct link to the operation's activities;
- They must not have been already financed from other EU-funds;
- They must not have been already included in other budget lines or cost items.

In the case of indirect general costs (also called *overheads*) the calculation is done pro-rata on the basis of the actual costs according to a duly justified, fair and equitable method that should remain the same during the whole implementation period. The allocation of the organisation's eligible administration costs to the operation must be done on the basis of the following ratio: the ratio "total number of people employed for the operation / total number of people employed by the organisation". This ratio should be properly documented and periodically reviewed. (See Chapter 8, 8.4.2, page 14 of the Programme Manual).

• In case the real administrative costs of the partner are higher than 25% of the staff costs, can the project partner claim more than 25%?

No. Administration costs (the sum of direct general costs and indirect general costs) must not exceed 25% of the total staff costs. This threshold must be taken in consideration both in the application phase and in the reporting phase. This threshold applies both, at partner level and project level.

• Is there a maximum number of partners?

No. The maximum number of project partners is up to the Transnational Project Group (TPG).

• What is the reasonable number of partners to form a Transnational Project Group?

In order to guarantee a sound and efficient management, a TPG might consider restricting the total number of partners to five. However, a higher number of partners might be necessary as competences can be better covered that way and/or if partners are already experienced in cooperating with one another and have done so successfully.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **ESPON 2013 PROGRAMME**

Version 23-09-09

• **How is it possible to find project partners?**

With the "Partner Café" function on the ESPON website, the ESPON Coordination Unit offers a possibility to institutions that are interested in getting involved in a Transnational Project Group (TPG) to publish their respective information. Based on a "Partner Information Form", available on the ESPON website, interested potential partners can ask for inclusion in an overview of potential partners compiled by the ESPON Coordination Unit. This overview, which includes also the fields of expertise of the institutions, is regularly updated and available on the ESPON website.

• **Is it possible to participate in the project implementation just as an observer?**

No. It is not possible to participate with an "observer" status. Projects can only involve partners that are contributing to the implementation of the project. All partners must be listed in the application form. Only the listed partners are entitled to receive funding from the Programme. Any organisation that contributes to the implementation of a project and receives Programme funding has to be listed as a formal project partner. It is neither possible to participate as a "sub-partner" nor to receive Programme funding through another partner organisation/umbrella organisation officially listed in the Application Form. In all other cases, any form of participation in the project would be considered as sub-contracting by one of the formal partners and requires the respect of national and European procurement rules.

• **Can the number of characters and page limits set in the application form be exceeded?**

No. You have to stick to the number of characters and page restrictions set in the application forms. Exceeding the given limits you risk that the proposal becomes ineligible.

• **Is there a ceiling for the maximum amount of subcontracting costs?**

No, there are no fixed rates or ceilings established by the Programme for budgeting and reporting external expertise and service costs. Normal market rates must be taken into consideration.

In any case the contracting of experts and service suppliers must comply with the public procurement rules applicable to the project partner that is contracting them.

• **For the reporting of the costs, will the procedure stay the same with respect to the ESPON 2006 Programme?**

The procedure will not change, even though the first level control system has slightly changed and has been reinforced by the Member and Partner States, due to the change in the Regulations. As a Lead Partner, you will prepare the project progress reports and submit the claim to the ESPON CU and you will still be responsible for the entire project and for the whole partnership.

• **Can a Project Partner come from a country outside the Programme area?**

No. According to Programme Manual chapter 8 and in particular subchapters 8.3.5 and 8.3.6 this situation is not foreseen. Partners can only be located in Member and Partner States.

• **Can a supplier or expert come from a country outside the Programme area?**

A body located outside the Programme area can participate in a TPG as external expert or supplier of services (and goods) in case its specific expertise is needed by the project. Potential Lead Partners should contact the ESPON CU on this issue prior to including any individual or institution from a Third Country as external expert or supplier of services.

• **Can preparation costs be reimbursed?**

Projects approved by the Monitoring Committee can receive Programme funding for their costs related to the preparation of the project. Preparation costs have to show a direct and

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **ESPON 2013 PROGRAMME**

Version 23-09-09

demonstrable link to the development of the project. Typical preparation activities are the following: development of the project idea and partner search via the Programme website, meetings with the project partners, completion of the Application Form, individual consultation with members of the CU etc. You have to remember to include these costs already in the Application Form, under the following budget lines only: Staff, Administration, Travel and accommodation, External Expertise and services. The preparation costs must have incurred in the period between the publication of the pre-announcement of the call and the date on which the Application Form was submitted. The eligible preparation costs cannot exceed 5% of the total project costs. These costs must be paid out before they are reported in the first progress report. With your first progress report, it will be possible for you to report such costs, according to the general rules applicable for reporting of costs. For more details, please refer to Chapter 8, sub chapter 8.4.1 of the Programme Manual.

• **Who judges/considers the legal status of project partners?**

This is a matter which is to be judged at a national level, by national authorities. The Managing Authority of the Programme cannot take this responsibility of judging if an applicant corresponds to the description given by the directive, since the liability for this evaluation stays with the Member or Partner State.

• **What is the quota of ERDF financing for projects under Priority 1?**

The programme covers 100% of the cost of the implementation of the project.

• **If the project is selected, is it possible that it would not be granted the total maximum amount already mentioned?**

The total budget for the project will have to be distributed among partners according to the share of tasks taken over by each partner. When submitting a project proposal the Lead Partner indicates the total budget for the project and the budget for each single Project Partner. On the basis of what is indicated in the Application Form, the Monitoring Committee will decide the allocation for the project and the granting of financial support from the ESPON 2013 Programme. If your budget is below the maximum amount indicated in the project specifications, your project will be allocated a funding corresponding to the request in the Application Form, unless the Monitoring Committee decides otherwise. The reimbursement of your costs will be done on the basis of regular progress reports. If the amount spent by the project is lower than the budget indicated in the Application Form, the funding from the Programme will be reduced accordingly. For further references please refer to Chapter 8, sub chapter 8.4 Project budget in the Programme Manual.

• **In the Programme Manual Chapter 8.3.4, it is indicated that financial managers of the projects have to attend a compulsory training organized by the ESPON CU. Is the participation compulsory only for the Lead Partners' financial managers, or also for the financial managers of the Project Partners?**

Following the selection of the proposals, the ESPON CU will organize trainings on financial matters. The participation will be compulsory for all the financial managers of both, the Lead and the Project Partners. Please be aware that the travel expenditure of this event has to be covered by each Partners themselves and will be reimbursed with the first financial progress report. Therefore this expenditure has to be foreseen and indicated already in the proposed budget of the application.

• **What are the exact conditions and the timing for the submission of proposals?**

The proposal must be submitted by midnight of the 11th November 2009:

- The e-mail must reach the ESPON CU before the end of 11th November 2009 and;
- The paper-based proposal should be sent by post at the latest by the 11th November 2009 (the official postal stamp will be checked).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ESPON 2013 PROGRAMME

Version 23-09-09

Call for Expression of Interest by Stakeholders (Priority 2)

- **Is there a budget for the stakeholders?**

The ESPON 2013 Programme does not ask the stakeholders to provide co-financing. They should be able to participate in the cooperation by providing the necessary level of input regarding financial administration, dissemination of information, human resources, meeting arrangements.

There is no budget foreseen for the stakeholders, nor is there Programme funding for stakeholders.

- **Is it necessary to have all the stakeholders in meetings with the ESPON CU?**

No, this is not always necessary. The ESPON CU asks the Lead Stakeholder to take part in meetings and to interact with the other stakeholders represented in the partnership.

- **What are the exact conditions and the timing for the submission of expression of interest?**

The Expression of Interest must be submitted by midnight of the 11th November 2009:

- The e-mail must reach the ESPON CU before the end of 11th November 2009 and
- The paper-based proposal should be sent by post at the latest by the 11th November 2009 (the official postal stamp will be checked).

FAQ related to content

Calls for Proposals (Priority 1, Priority 2, Priority 3, Priority 4)

- **How many research projects will be selected per theme?**

One project will be selected per theme.

- **Is it possible to propose project ideas under any of the Priorities?**

No, the themes for the projects under Priority 1 and 3 are defined by the ESPON Monitoring Committee; those under Priority 2 are defined by stakeholders. Submitted proposals should address one of the themes covered by the open call. If proposals do not clearly refer to any of the themes that are included in a call they will be declared ineligible.

- **How often will there be open calls for proposals?**

The timing of calls for proposals is subject to discussion and decision by the ESPON Monitoring Committee.

- **Is it necessary to build up a partnership of at least three partners?**

Projects under Priorities 1,2 and 3:

ESPON projects are generally conducted in a partnership of several bodies from at least three EU Member and/or Partner States, from three different countries taking part in the ESPON 2013 Programme.

However this requirement does not apply to projects under Priority 1, 2 and 3 with a budget of up to € 200.000,00.

Projects under Priority 4:

ESPON projects under Priority 4 must be conducted in a partnership of several bodies from at least three EU Member and/or Partner States, from three different countries taking part in the ESPON 2013 Programme.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **ESPON 2013 PROGRAMME**

Version 23-09-09

- **Is it possible to have two project partners from the same country in a TPG (Transnational Project Group)?**

Yes, this is possible, as long as the TPG stays in line with the TPG requirements mentioned above.

- **Is it possible to combine two projects and have the related research conducted by one TPG?**

No, this is not possible. Each project is conceived as an individual project being dealt with by one TPG each. Nevertheless, cooperation and exchange should take place between different projects whenever there are thematic overlaps and/or TPGs could benefit from data/information used by another TPG.

Call for Expression of Interest by Stakeholders on Targeted Analyses (Priority 2)

- **Will there be an obligation in the project specification for a Targeted Analysis to carry out research in the countries of the stakeholders that are behind the project idea?**

It is not foreseen to include such an obligation in the project specification. However, once the project idea of a group of stakeholders has been selected the latter will be involved in drafting the respective project specification. By this they have the opportunity to ensure that their specific needs for analysis are fully represented in the project specification.

- **Will TPGs (Transnational Project Groups) with partners from the stakeholders' countries be favoured in the selection procedure?**

There will be no preferential treatment of any TPG. TPGs submitting a project proposal need to fulfil the necessary eligibility and evaluation criteria that are outlined in the respective documents. Project proposals will only be assessed on that basis.

For questions concerning the calls send an email to:

content@espon.eu on project content

or

procedures@espon.eu concerning application procedures.