

Proposals in IST Call 6
FP6-2005-IST-6

Frequently asked questions (version 1.0; 22nd December 2005)

All the documents referred to here are obtained by following links from the IST web site at <http://www.cordis.lu/ist/>

Standard Disclaimer

These Frequently Asked Questions does not supersede the rules and conditions laid out, in particular, in Council and Parliament Decisions relevant to the Sixth Framework Programme, the IST Priority, the Model contract, Call for proposals or the Evaluation Guidelines. They are provided as a help to specific questions and present only the current view of the Information desk of the IST Priority of the Directorate-General for Information Society of the European Commission. Readers should not regard these views as a statement of the official position of the European Commission.

How does the IST Priority offer funding ?

We do so only by a series of public calls for proposals. There is no behind the scenes way of getting funding. We announce what sort of projects we are interested in, and (usually) give a fixed deadline in which proposals must be received. This way, everybody knows what the possibilities are, and everybody gets an equal chance.

How do I find out what sort of work the IST Priority will help to fund ?

You must read the IST Priority Workprogramme Fourth Update. This describes in detail the objectives which the Priority is trying to achieve from this call and the instruments which can be proposed.

Instruments.....?

These are the different types of project which the Priority will fund. They are called instruments because we use different "contractual instruments" (types of contract) for each one, which have differing terms and conditions.

What are these types of instrument ?

We fund research projects by two means; the "Integrated project" (IP) and the "Specific targeted research project" (STREP). An IP is intended to be broader in scope and ambition than a STREP.

We can provide funds for co-ordinating existing research projects - either just IST projects or including other projects also - in order to increase their benefits or impact etc. This is done by means of "Co-ordination action" (CA) contracts. Other work in support of the Priority can be funded by "Specific support action" (SSA) contracts.

We also have an instrument designed to support the structuring and shaping of Europe's research capacity. This is the "Network of excellence"(NoE). Networks of excellence are however not included in IST Call 6.

Fuller details of all these types of instrument can be found via the IST website.

Can I propose any one of these types of instrument for any one of the objectives in this call ?

No. Each objective has specified a limited range of instruments it is calling for. They are listed in the call text and in the IST Workprogramme Fourth Update.

What if I send you a proposal for an IP, say, for an objective which is only calling for CA and SSA proposals ?

We will reject it without evaluation, as being out of scope of the call.

Can I send you a proposal for work, which includes more than one of your objectives. Or maybe even including objectives of other FP6 priorities such as Life Sciences or Nanotechnologies ?

Yes, you may submit a cross-objective proposal. But to be evaluated for this call the main weight - or centre of gravity - of the proposal must lie in one of the objectives open in IST Call 6.

If the main weight of your proposal lies in another Priority's call you should submit it to that Priority. If we receive a proposal where the main weight lies in another Priority's call, we will transfer it to them.

If the main weight of your proposal lies in objectives which are not covered by any available open call, we will reject it without evaluation.

What if I send you a "spontaneous" proposal for work in an area not mentioned in this call ?

We will reject it without evaluation, as being out of scope of the call.

How do I find out how to write a proposal ?

Full details of how to prepare a proposal are given in the IST Guides for proposers, obtainable on our call page. There are four Guides, one for each instrument type open in this call, because the required structure of the proposal is different for each instrument type.

Remember, just because we have provided four Guides doesn't mean that all four instruments will be possible in the objective which you are targeting. Check the Call text for your objective before preparing your proposal, to be sure that such a proposal is indeed being called for !

How do I submit my proposal ?

On the IST call page you will find the link to the Electronic Proposal Submission Service (EPSS). The proposal coordinator first need to register, to get a password or passwords for him/herself and the consortium partners. These passwords protect the confidentiality of your proposal file when you are preparing it, and then are needed again when you submit the proposal. You may prepare your proposal online or offline, then you submit it electronically. How to do this is explained in the Guides for proposers, and there are also detailed manuals for online and offline proposal preparation which you can download.

Is it better to choose the online or offline preparation method ?

We strongly recommend you choose the online preparation method, in which you and your partners access our computer via the Internet, and you prepare your proposal in a shared space there.

The offline method requires the proposal coordinator himself/herself to download the special proposal preparation tool (EPTool) and run it on their own computer, where the proposal is assembled by importing and exporting files between partners. This requires rather more computing knowledge, there are risks of more technical difficulties caused by

incompatibilities between all the different computers used, and it has no real advantage compared with the online method.

What should I be aware of when using electronic submission?

Three key issues:

1. Make sure you have registered for the right call, **FP6-2005-IST-6**. Registering for the wrong call will mean that we do not receive your proposal.

And also make sure that you have selected your intended instrument. Registering for another instrument will mean that you will be working with a wrong set of forms and proposal preparation instructions.

2. Before submitting, print out your own proposal to check that it is complete, printable and readable. After the call deadline it will not be possible to replace any sections of your proposal which are missing or unreadable.

3. Proposers who are preparing their proposal online must remember that, even though it is already stored on our computer, it is not recognised as a complete proposal ready for submission until the proposal coordinator presses the “Submit” button. So don’t forget to press the “Submit” button !

What if, by mistake, I register for the wrong call or for the wrong instrument ?

Abandon those passwords and register again.

What if I have some difficulties, and I am a few minutes late with my proposal. Can I still submit it via the EPSS ?

No. The EPSS service for this call will shut down automatically on the call deadline.

What if I am still uploading my proposal when the deadline comes ?

What if you were delivering the proposal by hand, and you were still in the taxi when the deadline came.....? Submission is when you have uploaded the whole proposal **and** submitted it by pressing the submit button. If your file is still uploading when the deadline comes, you have failed to submit a proposal.

Can I send you my proposal by email ?

You can send it; but we won’t evaluate it. Proposals sent by email (or fax) are excluded by Call text section 5.

Call deadlines have sometimes been extended. Will this one be extended ?

We have in the past extended a call deadline when a failure in the EPSS system has meant that proposers were unable to submit their proposal. In the event of a failure of the EPSS service due to breakdown of the Commission server during the last 24 hours of this call, the deadline will be extended by a further 24 hours. This will be notified by email to all proposal coordinators who had registered for this call by the time of the original deadline, and also by a notice on the Call page on Cordis and on the Call page on the EPSS. But such a failure is a rare and exceptional event, therefore do not assume that there will be an extension to this call!

If you have difficulty in submitting your proposal, you must not assume that it is because of a problem with the Commission server as this is rarely the case. Telephone the EPSS helpdesk +32 2 233 3760 for assistance !

How will I know you have received my proposal ?

When you submit your proposal via the EPSS you will promptly receive back an email saying

that a proposal has been submitted. We strongly suggest that, as soon as your proposal is in complete form, you submit it. The email message coming back to you will assure you that all is well with your submission procedure. Then you can continue to work on your proposal, and re-submit it each time you have a better version. Each new submission will over-write the old one. Keep on doing this right up to the close of call.

But make that first trial submission and get that email ! If your proposal has submission problems, it is better to discover them while there is plenty of time to call the EPSS helpdesk, and not a few seconds before five o'clock on the last day.

Is this my official Acknowledgement of receipt ?

No. The day after the close of call, we download all the proposals from the EPSS server and an official Acknowledgement of receipt letter is sent by email to each proposal coordinator (the individual named as "person in charge" on the A2 form of participant no. 1).

What if I don't get an Acknowledgement of receipt after the close of call ?

The sending of the AoR is entirely automatic. There are only four possible reasons for not getting one:

- You did not press the submit button for your proposal before the call closed. This means you have failed to submit a proposal so there is no Acknowledgement of receipt
- You are not the individual named as "person in charge" on the A2 form of participant no. 1. Contact that person for the AoR
- You are that person, but you did not give a correct email address for yourself. Contact the IST information desk ist@cec.eu.int for your AoR
- You are that person, and you gave a correct email address, but your organisation's spam filter eliminated our email to you. Contact the IST information desk ist@cec.eu.int for your AoR. And fix your spam filter !

Can I delegate the job of submitting my proposal ?

The proposal is submitted under the user id and password of the proposal coordinator. So a proposal coordinator could pass the job to someone else by giving them this information. BUT the submission of a proposal requires some knowledge of the EPSS system, a detailed knowledge of the contents of the proposal and the authority to make last-minute decisions on behalf of the consortium if problems arise. It is not wise to delegate this job !

Can I submit my proposal on paper, and not electronically using the EPSS ?

In exceptional cases, a proposal coordinator may request permission from the Commission to submit on paper. This should be done by writing to an address which is given in the Call text, well in advance of the call deadline. The request must be accompanied by an adequate explanation of why the exception is being sought (it is not sufficient merely to make the request). Proposers take the responsibility for ensuring that such requests for exemption and the associated procedures are completed in time for them to meet the call deadline.

Do I have to follow exactly the format for a proposal, which you give in the Guide for proposers and the proposal template obtained from the EPSS ?

Yes. The format takes you through, section by section, the information on which your proposal will be evaluated. If you write it in some other way, or fail to supply some of the data, you risk omitting information which is needed in the evaluation, and this will lead to lower scores, or failure.

Do I have to write parts of my proposal in an "anonymous" way, as you requested in the last Framework programme ?

No.

Some of the information you require in a proposal is very detailed, and complicated...

Running a large multinational research project is very detailed and complicated. Good proposals have always contained this degree of detail. If you find you haven't got this level of information available for your proposal, perhaps you should review your planning !

Do projects have to be proposed by a multinational consortium ?

Normally yes. We expect IST projects will be multinational in scope and ambition. If you plan research which involves only your own national goals, and includes only organisations from your own country, then it is to your own national government that you should turn for help.

What is the minimum consortium requirement in a proposal?

Your proposal must contain at least a minimum of THREE mutually independent participants:

- two participants from **different** EU states or Associated candidate countries; Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UK. (Croatia is expected also to sign an Association agreement at the beginning of 2006)
- plus one more participant from **another** EU state or candidate country listed above, or from one of the other Associated states which are not candidate countries; Liechtenstein, Iceland, Israel, Norway, Switzerland.

These conditions do not apply to Specific support action proposals. Exceptionally, proposals for Specific support actions may come from any number of participants, including just one, from any country.

Can a proposal include participants from other countries than these ?

When the minimum is achieved, you may then add participants from any other country in the world.

Do the partners which I may include from other countries get funding ?

If their country is on the list of International Co-operation (INCO) "target countries", they will get funding also, up to the limits of the available INCO resources. You can get the complete list of these countries from the INCO website <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/inco.htm>, but in general they include the remaining countries in Europe, and developing countries elsewhere in the world.

Are the participants from these other countries funded to the same level as the EU and Associated states participants in a project ?

Yes. Nationality plays no role in the amount of funding.

What about countries not on the INCO list ?

Organisations from countries which are not on the INCO list (main examples are the USA, Canada, Japan, Rep. of Korea, Taiwan, Australia, South Africa...) may also participate in a project, but their possible funding will be subject to a series of conditions listed in the Rules for participation.

How can I find possible partners in other EU countries and Associated states ?

- Get in touch with your IST National Contact Point
<http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/ncp.htm>
- Use the Ideal-IST service
<http://www.ideal-ist.net>
- Use the find-a-partner service on CORDIS
<http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/partners.cfm>
- Attend the information days and other events staged by the IST Priority
<http://www.cordis.lu/ist/events/events.htm>
- Participate in the Calls for expression of interest which we announce from time to time
http://eoi.cordis.lu/search_form.cfm
- Get in touch with the informal association of RTD contact points in Brussels
<http://www.iglortd.org/>
- Contact some of our other support services
<http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/othersupport.htm>

Do I have to notify you in advance that I am planning to submit a proposal ?

When you apply for your EPSS password you will be asked for some basic information about your planned proposal. This is of enormous assistance to us in planning for the evaluation. Please complete as much information as you can, even with only tentative data – nothing you say involves you in any commitment.

Can you give me any sort of preliminary feedback on my proposal idea, before I do all the work involved in preparing a proposal ?

You can get in touch with the Commission contact person for the objective you are interested in, and discuss your ideas with him/her, and get their informal advice. Their contact details are available from the IST call page.

Is there anything else I should do when preparing my proposal ?

Yes. Prepare and sign with your partners a Consortium agreement, dealing with the relations between the partners once the project is running, the means of settling disputes etc. We strongly recommend that you to have such an agreement before we issue a contract, so the sooner the better. We do not need to examine the agreement and we do not interfere in it, but we do need to be assured that such an agreement has been made.

Does the Commission offer a model Consortium agreement ?

No. But we do offer advice on what main points the agreement should include, in a consortium checklist at <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/consortiumchecklist/>

How does the Commission evaluate the proposals which it receives ?

The Commission evaluates the proposal with the assistance of experienced independent experts specially selected for this task.

Are all received proposals evaluated ?

All proposals are first checked for eligibility. Only eligible proposals are evaluated by the independent experts. There are five eligibility criteria in the IST Call 6:

- The proposal must have the necessary minimum number of multinational participants
- The proposal must address an objective which is open in the call

- The proposal must be complete (it should contain two parts - see the Guides for proposers)
- The proposal must have been submitted before or at the call deadline
- The proposal must be submitted electronically via the EPSS, unless a special permission for paper submission was granted

Proposals that do not meet these criteria will not proceed to evaluation by the independent experts.

How do the independent experts evaluate my proposal ?

They assess it on five or six different criteria (depending on the instrument) covering such things as relevance to the IST Priority, potential impact, quality of the consortium etc. They give each proposal a score out of 5 on each of these criteria, and an overall score is calculated by simple addition; this is therefore out of 25 (if five criteria are used for the instrument) or 30 (if six criteria).

And then how are proposals selected for funding ?

Each of the criteria has a threshold score, which a proposal must reach in order to be considered. There is also a threshold on the overall score. Proposals which fail to reach one or more of these thresholds are not considered for funding.

Where can I see these evaluation criteria and thresholds ?

They are described in the IST Workprogramme. But the complete instructions to our evaluators, including all the forms they will use, are set out in the Guidance notes for evaluators for IST call 6, which can be downloaded from our call page. When you have a first draft of your proposal, we strongly advise that you give it to trusted colleagues and ask them to evaluate it using the procedures and forms in our Guidance notes for evaluators. Then improve your proposal based on their findings and recommendations.

Are all the proposals which pass the evaluation thresholds funded ?

No. Many more proposals pass the evaluation thresholds than we have the budget to pay for. The evaluators use the scores which they have given to list the proposal in priority order, and the Commission uses this list, and other advice which the evaluators give in their written reports, to guide its selection of proposals for funding.

How will I know the results of the evaluation of my proposal ?

After the evaluation is completed, at end-June 2006, every proposal co-ordinator (the individual named as "person in charge" on the A2 form of participant no. 1) will receive an "Evaluation Summary Report" - ESR - which details the evaluators' findings about their proposal.

And how will I know if my project will be funded ?

If your proposal did not pass the thresholds (or was excluded from evaluation on eligibility reasons) you will be able to see this immediately from your ESR.

If your proposal has passed all the evaluation thresholds you will be notified a few weeks after receiving the ESR either that:

- you are now invited to contract negotiation
- your proposal has been placed on the reserve list (this is in case budget becomes available for you due to other negotiations failing, or being agreed at lower-than-expected costs)
- your proposal was ranked too low to be considered for funding.

Can I myself apply to work as an expert in an evaluation ? Even if I am not an EU citizen ?

Yes and yes. We constantly need good experts, with experience in this technological field (and a good knowledge of English - which is the working language in the evaluation). Apply at http://www.cordis.lu/experts/fp6_candidature.htm. If accepted, you will be asked to sign a conflict of interest declaration, so that of course you are never involved in the evaluation of one of your own proposals or of proposals competing with it.

Where can I get more help with my proposal ?

If you are planning a proposal, you should at once get in touch with your IST National Contact Point, whom you can identify at <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/ncp.htm>. He or she can give you an enormous amount of help. If you have specific questions about proposing, contact the IST help desk at ist@cec.eu.int. If you have technical questions about the contents of the objectives open in the current call, a list of European Commission contacts who can advise you is available from the IST call page.

A final piece of advice ?

Always after each call we are contacted by proposers who failed to submit a proposal.

- Some say they didn't think that being a few minutes late would matter. It does.
- Some made a manipulation mistake with their computer or the software under the stress of submitting at the last minute.
- Some were blocked by verification problems. The EPSS does not allow you to submit an incomplete proposal, one with missing forms or missing key data, over 10Mbytes in size or containing viruses. Check all these things, or anything else which might go wrong, by carrying out a trial submission of your proposal well before the deadline.
- Some were blocked by technical difficulties. The EPSS Helpdesk (+32 2 233 3760) can solve most technical problems in a matter of minutes, but there are many proposers who leave themselves only seconds.
- Some were still uploading when five o'clock came, and complain that the communications link was unusually slow that day, that they think their message was in a queue somewhere, that their office had a power cut that afternoon etc.All of this might be perfectly true, but it is also irrelevant. It is entirely your responsibility to arrange yourself to submit your proposal in time. No excuses or extenuating circumstances are taken into account.

Make a first submission of your proposal as good time, and then carry out re-submissions to continue to improve it up to the close of call.

If I have other questions on the rules for IST projects ?

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