

FAQ – Thematic Networks CIP-ICT-PSP Third call

v1

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1. THEMATIC NETWORK CHARACTERISTICS

1.1. How many Thematic Networks will be selected for funding?

It is intended to support one Thematic Network in each of the objectives 1.2 Innovative eHealth tools and services in real life-learning together, 1.4 eAccessibility, 3.4 User-centricity for eGovernance, 5.2 Multilingual web content management standards and best practices and 6.1 Legal aspects of public sector information.

1.2. What is the duration of a Thematic Network?

A Thematic Network is expected to last from 18 up to 36 months.



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2. CONSORTIUM COMPOSITION

2.1. Can public administrations be beneficiaries of a grant agreement?

In accordance with the Financial Regulation and its Implementing Rules, grants can be awarded to existing legal entities (that is, entities with legal personality). Entities which do not have legal personality under the applicable national law are eligible provided their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf and assume financial liability.

Governments and public administrations have participated and are participating in programmes such as eTEN, FP6 and FP7 etc. There are several examples of ministries having signed grant agreements with the EC. Generally, if the national government or administration wishing to participate in a project does not as such have legal personality, the grant agreement would be concluded with the legal person the government or administration belongs to (this could be, for example, the respective Member State in case of a participating ministry).

2.2. Can a consortium of a Thematic Network be changed - in particular be extended to include new partners during the course of the project?

At any time during the running of a project it will be possible, in agreement with the Commission, to change the consortium either by adding beneficiaries or because it is decided that beneficiaries leave the consortium.

The addition of new beneficiaries is done through the completion of the so-called Form B of the grant agreement – accession request of new legal entities to the agreement. The procedure for the accession of a new beneficiary will be described in the grant agreement. Essentially the co-ordinator must request the accession of the new beneficiary in writing on behalf of the consortium, and the Commission has to explicitly accept the request.

The conditions and consequences of termination of the participation of a beneficiary will be described in the grant agreement. Either the Commission may terminate the participation of a beneficiary or a beneficiary may request to withdraw from the project. The Commission will not object to the withdrawal of a beneficiary unless this would substantially impair the implementation of the project.

Normally any change of the consortium requires an update of the Description of Work (Annex I to the grant agreement), in order to clearly identify who is doing what.

In general the conditions that need to be fulfilled when implementing changes to the consortium are:

The maximum Community contribution cannot be increased.

Collective technical responsibility remains applicable which implies that normally the Description of Work agreed in the negotiation process will have to be implemented.

The changes in the consortium do not fundamentally change the scope and the innovation / exploitation potential of the project and would not put in doubt the initial selection of the project.

2.3. Thematic Networks must be open to the participation of other partners. What does this mean?

Consortia are encouraged to enlarge the participation of the networks provided that this adds value to the work of the network and that the original objectives defined remain unchanged. Consortia are also encouraged to disseminate as widely as possible outside the network the results and outcomes amongst relevant stakeholders.

The EC contribution cannot be increased under any circumstance as a result of the extension of the network with new beneficiaries after the signature of the grant agreement.

The extent to which potential interested organisations will either become new beneficiaries of the Network or will participate as observers needs to be decided by the consortium. The addition of a beneficiary to the grant agreement will have to be agreed by the European Commission.

The openness of the Thematic Networks also implies that the results and outcomes of the network must be publicly available and accessible to any interested party.

2.4. Can SMEs participate and/or benefit from Thematic Networks in ICT PSP?

SMEs can participate in and hence directly benefit from Thematic Networks (in particular – but not limited - in those addressing SMEs directly).

The overall ICT PSP offers both direct and indirect benefits for innovative SMEs in the ICT sector and for SMEs that can make good use of ICT to improve their products, services and business processes.

2.5. Can entities established in countries outside the European Union participate in ICT PSP? Under what conditions?

Legal entities established in countries which have associated themselves with the programme (and have therefore made a financial contribution to the ICT PSP) may participate on the same basis as organisations in Member states.

Up to date information on which countries are associated to the programme is provided to applicants on the ICT PSP website

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/ict_psp/about/third_country/index_en.htm as soon as it is available.

The Community may also allow participation of entities from other countries which are not associated with the Programme in individual actions on a case-by-case basis. Such entities will not receive

Community funding, and do not count towards the minimum number of partners required in the consortium (see below).

2.6. How many partners must participate in the consortium of a Thematic Network?

The consortium must include at least seven mutually-independent independent legal entities from seven different Member States or ICT PSP Associated countries to be eligible for a Thematic Network.

Attention has to be paid to specific consortium requirements indicated in the objectives description of the Work Programme.

2.7. Who should coordinate the consortium of a Thematic Network?

Any willing and competent legal entity can coordinate the project. The organisation proposed to manage the project must be in the position to coordinate a large international cooperation project and should be able to demonstrate prior competence and experience in managing multi-partner international cooperation projects.

2.8. Can government agencies, industry, user associations and stakeholders other than national authorities be involved in the Thematic Networks? If so, how can they be involved? Can they submit a proposal?

Government agencies, industry, user associations and any other stakeholders can submit a proposal and coordinate a consortium. The minimum legal requirement of seven independent legal entities from seven different EU or ICT PSP Associated countries must be in any case respected. It is strongly recommended that any legal entities having a key role in the network (e.g. industrial players including SMEs or other stakeholders) should be participants of the consortium. Attention has to be paid to specific consortium requirements indicated in the objectives description of the Work Programme.

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3. FUNDING

3.1. What is the maximum Community contribution that can be obtained for a Thematic Network with the flat rate / lump sum scheme?

The maximum Community contribution depends on two variables: the **duration** of the network and the **number of participants** involved. The funding is calculated according to the following scheme:

	<i>Flat rate (based on scale-of-unit-cost) for 'Coordination costs'</i>	<i>Lump sum for 'Implementation costs'</i>	<i>Lump sum for 'attendance of meetings costs'</i>
<i>Coordinator</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3.000€ per year and per beneficiary for the first 10 beneficiaries (incl. the coordinator); - 2.000€ per year and per beneficiary from the 11th beneficiary on. - No additional funding from the 21st beneficiary on. 		Costs for attendance of networks meetings and network related events are financed by a lump sum of 5.000€ per year per beneficiary.
<i>Other Beneficiaries</i>		3.000€ per year per beneficiary	

In practice as an example, consider a proposal for a Thematic Network with 15 participants (including the coordinator) operating during 2 years. The total funding is calculated as follows:

	Coordination costs per year (flat rate based on scale-of-unit costs)	Implementation costs per year (lump sum)	Attendance to meetings costs per year (lump sum)	Total costs per year (flat rate and/or lump sum)	Duration in years	Total per partner for whole duration (flat rate and/or lump sum)
Coordinator (Participant 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.000 € x 10 first beneficiaries= 30.000 € • 2.000 € x 5 remaining beneficiaries = 10.000 € 		5.000 €	45.000 €	2	90.000 €
Participant 2		3.000 €	5.000 €	8.000 €	2	16.000 €
Participant 3		3.000 €	5.000 €	8.000 €	2	16.000 €
...	
...	
Participant 14		3.000 €	5.000 €	8.000 €	2	16.000 €

Participant 15		3.000 €	5.000 €	8.000 €	2	16.000 €
			TOTAL FUNDING	157.000 €	2	314.000 €

If in the above example for a 2 years Thematic Network the duration would be 2½ years the multiplication factor would be 2.5 resulting in an overall funding of 392.500€.

Taking as another example a 1½ years Thematic Network with 25 participants (including the coordinator) the total funding (of 370.500 €) is calculated as follows:

Flat rate for the coordinator for coordination: $(10 * 3000€ + 10 * 2000€ + 5 * 0€) * 1.5$ years

Lump sum for the other beneficiaries: $(24 * 3000€) * 1.5$ years

Lump sum for all beneficiaries for travel: $(25 * 5000€) * 1.5$ years

3.2. How do participants in a Thematic Network report their costs?

Whereas in Pilots Type A, Pilots Type B and Best Practice Networks beneficiaries must report actual costs incurred, this is in principle not the case for Thematic Networks.

The application of the flat rate / lump sums scheme described above implies that the reporting is activity-based rather than cost-based. There is no obligation on any of the participants to report costs – nor will there be an obligation for certification of costs by an independent auditor. Essentially the payment of funding is based on the approval of the periodic reports (including the final reports) and deliverables as foreseen in Annex I 'Description of Work' of the project.

3.3. Can public administrations participate without asking for funding?

The grant agreement may provide that a beneficiary which so wishes can participate without funding.

3.4. How can indirect costs be charged to a project?

As the network is flat rate / lump sum financed, no indirect costs can be charged.

3.5. Which activities within a Thematic Network will be funded?

The Community contribution represents a grant to the network and does not aim at covering the costs implied by the work plan of the network; it covers in particular the additional costs for coordinating and implementing the network.

Typical activities of a Thematic Network include:

The organisation of and attendance to meetings, conferences, seminars, symposiums and workshops

The production of reports, action plans, methodologies, guidelines, policy papers

Dissemination activities

Any other activity directly linked to the implementation of the network.

All costs for coordination of the network, including the operational and financial management, the organisation and provision of logistics of network meetings, and the organisation of the project communication with the network partners and the public at large are also covered.

Please review in the ICT PSP Workprogramme the section "Conditions and characteristics" for the objective which your proposal is addressing.

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4. OTHER TOPICS

4.1. What is the difference between Call for Tender and Call for Proposal?

The procedures are different and there are differences relating to the amount and nature of the financial contribution. Whereas public procurement (which requires a call for tender or other appropriate public procurement procedure) consists of the payment of a market price for goods provided or services rendered, grants (selected after a call for proposals) are limited to a contribution to certain costs (or in special cases a flat rate financing) incurred by the beneficiary. Therefore, public procurement permits a profit whereas grants forbid any profit and normally cover only a part of the total costs.

The results of a call for tender will be owned by the Community, while following a call for proposals the consortium has the ownership of the results, such as IPR (notwithstanding any specific requirements set out in the grant agreement as to the use and accessibility of the results).

4.2. Who will carry out the evaluation of the proposals submitted?

All eligible proposals will be evaluated by the Commission with the assistance of independent experts. The experts will be identified on the basis of a call for independent experts.