

D. Types of action: specific provisions and funding rates^{1,2}

ERA-NET Cofund actions

Description: ERA-NET Cofund actions under Horizon 2020 are designed to support public-public partnerships, including joint programming initiatives between Member States, in their preparation, establishment of networking structures, design, implementation and coordination of joint activities as well as EU topping-up of a trans-national call for proposals. It is based on the merger of the former ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus actions and is implemented by using ‘programme co-fund actions’. It allows for programme collaboration in any part of the entire research-innovation cycle.

ERA-NET Cofund actions aim at promoting the coordination of national programmes by pooling national resources and contributing to the alignment of national research and innovation policies.

The main and compulsory activity of ERA-NET Cofund actions under Horizon 2020 is the implementation of the co-funded joint call for proposals that leads to the funding of trans-national research and/or innovation projects. The call is normally based on a call for proposals resulting in grants to third parties. In addition to the co-funded call, the consortia are usually requested to implement other joint activities (including other joint calls without EU co-funding).

ERA-NET Cofund actions may also, depending on the research area and the underlying national programmes and their governing principles, target governmental research organisations. The co-funded call for proposals will in these cases be based on in-kind contributions from their institutional funding and the beneficiaries carry out the transnational projects resulting from their call for proposals fully or partially themselves. The in-kind contributions are the resources allocated as direct expenditure in the selected trans-national projects that are not reimbursed by the EU contribution. ERA-NET Cofund actions based on in-kind contributions do not include other joint activities.

The participation of programme managers including governmental research organisations has to be mandated by the national/regional authorities in charge (normally the responsible Ministry).

The minimum conditions for participation have to be fulfilled by the entities participating in the joint trans-national call for proposals.

¹ Eligible costs for all types of action are in accordance with the Financial Regulation No 966/2012 and the Horizon 2020 Rules for Participation Regulation No 1290/2013. In addition, as training researchers on gender issues serves the policy objectives of Horizon 2020 and is necessary for the implementation of R&I actions, applicants may include in their proposal such activity and the following corresponding estimated costs that may be eligible for EU funding:

- (a) Costs of delivering the training (personnel costs if the trainers are employees of the beneficiary or subcontracting if the training is outsourced);
- (b) Accessory direct costs such as travel and subsistence costs, if the training is delivered outside the beneficiary's premises;
- (c) Remuneration costs for the researchers attending the training, in proportion to the actual hours spent on the training (as personnel costs).

² Participants may ask for a lower rate.

Only in addition to the minimum conditions, and if justified by the nature of the action, programmes funded by other entities (international programmes, foundations or other non-public programmes) may participate.

‘Sole participants’³ may be eligible if the above-mentioned specific conditions for eligible ERA-NET Cofund partners are satisfied. A sole participant forming a sole legal entity must explicitly indicate which of its ‘members’ are either programme owners or programme managers in the proposed action, and indicate for these members the respective national/regional programmes which are at the disposal of the proposed ERA-NET Cofund action.

Funding rate: The EU contribution will be limited to a maximum of 33% of the total eligible costs of the action. The EU contribution to the costs for support to or implementation of trans-national projects is limited to one call per grant agreement.

Other information: In accordance with the H2020 Rules for Participation Regulation No 1290/2013, Article 137(1)(c) of the Financial Regulation No 966/2012 and Article 210a of the Rules of Application Regulation No 1268/2012, do not apply to financial support provided by the participants in the ERA-NET Cofund actions (since this financial support is the primary aim of the action and necessary to achieve its objectives).

The contributions of (other) national or regional programmes which are not part of the consortium to the costs of trans-national projects cannot be considered for the calculation of the EU contribution.

No costs are eligible for activities related to the preparation, implementation and follow-up of the co-funded call. The consortium may however choose to use part of the EU contribution to support their activities as long as the corresponding costs are not declared as eligible and the EU contribution does not exceed 33% of partners’ funding of trans-national projects and unit costs for additional activities. This means in practice that they have to replace any EU contribution that is used to support their activities with additional national contributions to the funding of trans-national projects.

The total EU contribution to the costs of providing support to or implementation of trans-national projects is calculated as a percentage of their total eligible cost. Therefore, if the actual eligible costs for support to trans-national projects are lower than the original amount defined in the grant agreement, the EU contribution will be reduced accordingly.

In order to mitigate the risk of underspending the EU contribution, applicants are requested to demonstrate in their proposal (for guidance see proposal template) that at least 20% of their contributions is provided separately and in addition to the amount needed to match the Union contribution to the co-funded call.

The following categories of costs are eligible direct costs (if they comply with the general conditions and the specific conditions set out in the grant agreement):

A. Costs related to trans-national projects

A.1 Direct costs of providing financial support to third parties implementing transnational projects

A.2 Costs for the implementation of trans-national projects by the beneficiaries

The consortium must provide financial support to trans-national projects or implement such projects (partially or fully) themselves in accordance with the following conditions:

³ See Article 199 of the Financial Regulation No 966/2012.

The projects must be trans-national projects involving at least two independent entities from two different EU Member States or Associated Countries.

The projects must be selected following a joint trans-national call for proposals. The consortium must publish the joint call on a dedicated webpage and promote it at national/regional level via their usual channels of communications to potential proposers. The joint call must remain open for the submission of proposals for at least 60 days. The consortium must formally notify the Commission of the call and its content at least 30 days before the expected date of publication.

The consortium must make the joint call through a two-step procedure:

- Step 1: review at national or trans-national level
- Step 2: single international peer review.

Only entities that are eligible for funding under the national programmes involved in the joint call may be invited to step 2.

In step 2, the consortium must evaluate proposals with the assistance of at least three independent experts, on the basis of the following award criteria:

- (a) excellence;
- (b) impact;
- (c) quality and efficiency of the implementation.

Proposals must be ranked according to the evaluation results. The selection must be made on the basis of this ranking. The consortium must take all lawful steps to ensure confidentiality of information and documents obtained during the evaluation and selection procedures of the joint call.

After the end of the evaluation the consortium must submit to the Commission the following:

- (a) the ranking list(s) of the projects;
- (b) the observers' report on the evaluation;
- (c) the joint selection list of the projects to be funded, and
- (d) from each consortium partner participating in the joint call, a formal and duly signed commitment on availability of funds for the selected projects.

The consortium must furthermore submit to the European Commission after the end of the evaluation information on each project selected for funding, including data on each participant and abstracts of the project proposal, in a format specified by the European Commission, for publication and evaluation purposes. This information must be updated at the end of the action (information on each funded project, including data on each participant and overview of the results).

B. Coordination costs for additional activities, as a unit cost per year

An ERA-NET Cofund consortium should also carry out other activities in addition to the call receiving top-up funding, in particular additional joint calls without cofunding from the Union. Where appropriate, additional partners might be involved which do not participate in co-funded calls under section A. The activities have to be related to the coordination of public research and innovation programmes and should focus on the preparation and implementation of joint activities including additional calls without EU top-up funding. The conditions for call implementation in section A do not apply to additional calls without EU top-up funding.

The coordination cost for the other activities takes the form of a unit cost per year and is limited to those beneficiaries that carry out activities that go beyond the co-funded call. Proposers have to demonstrate the appropriateness of the overall coordination costs for the proposed additional activities.

Beneficiaries that carry out trans-national projects partially or fully themselves cannot declare coordination costs for additional activities.

The unit costs for coordination is fixed to EURO 29000 per year per beneficiary⁴. Indirect costs for the coordination costs must be declared on the basis of the flat rate.⁵

The EU contribution to coordination costs should not exceed 20% of the total EU contribution to the action.

The total duration of the action should normally not exceed 5 years.

⁴ Commission Decision C(2013)8200.

⁵ The reimbursement rate for the action applies also to the unit costs. This would result in a maximum Union contribution per beneficiary per year of EURO 11 962,50.