



BS-ERA.NET Pilot Joint Call

Terms of Reference

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The **BS-ERA.NET** is an ERA.NET project funded by the European Commission within the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technology Development (FP7).

The members of the consortium of the BS ERA.NET project are:

- National Centre for Programme Management (CNMP), Romania, Co-ordinator
- National Authority for Scientific Research (ANCS), Romania
- The General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT), Ministry of Education, Life Long Learning and Religious Affairs, Greece
- Italian National Agency for New Technologies Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA), Italy
- The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), Turkey
- French Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR), France
- National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), France
- Presidium of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS), Azerbaijan
- National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (NAS RA), Armenia
- International Bureau of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research at the German Aerospace Centre (DLR), Germany
- The National Information Centre for Ukraine – EU S&T Cooperation at Kyiv State Centre for Scientific, Technical and Economic Information (NCP), Ukraine
- International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), Greece
- Academy of Sciences of Moldova (ASM), Moldova
- Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), Malta
- Georgian National Science Foundation (GNSF), Georgia
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Science of Bulgaria (MEYSB), Bulgaria
- State Committee of Science of the Republic of Armenia (SCS RA), Armenia

The BS-ERA.NET consortium sets up and runs a structure to sustain and strengthen the collaboration between R&D funding programmes and agencies for transnational coordinated funding of research and development in the extended Black Sea region¹.

In this framework, a **PILOT JOINT CALL (PJC)** of interested programme owners/programme managers in the Member States of the European Union (MS), the Associated Countries to the 7th Framework Programme (AC) and the extended Black Sea region will be launched on 27th September 2010 and closed on 14th January 2011 at 18:00 Brussels time.

The objective of the Pilot Joint Call is to **promote collaborative research on Climate and Environment and Energy** taking a proactive and innovative approach to developing solutions for a sustainable development. The implementation of this Pilot Joint Call is an early step towards meeting the overall aim of the BS-ERA.NET project, namely the development of a **Black Sea Research Programme (BSRP)**.

¹ The extended Black Sea region includes the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine.

Interested programme owners/programme managers from EU-MS/AC and the extended Black Sea region, within and also beyond the BS ERA.NET project consortium, have been invited to join a “**Group of Funding Parties**” (GFP).

The following programme owners/Programme managers have signed the Implementation Agreement and confirmed their participation in the Group of Funding Parties and their readiness to pledge financial contributions:

- SCS-RA (Armenia)
- SDF(Azerbaijan)
- MEYSB (Bulgaria)
- SNRSF(Georgia)
- BMBF (Germany)
- GSRT (Greece)
- ENEA (Italy)
- ASM (Moldova)
- CNMP(Romania)
- TÜBİTAK (Turkey)
- SCSII (Ukraine)

A **Joint Call Secretariat (JCS)** has been entrusted the operational management of the Pilot Joint Call by the Group of Funding Parties. The JCS will be run jointly by CNMP and DLR.

The Pilot Joint Call will be implemented through a *coordinated funding scheme* whereby each funding party will fund its own teams within a multilateral project (“*Virtual Common Pot*”), with a view to harmonize the funding contributions in order to guarantee the funding of as many as possible of the projects selected through a peer review process.

The financial contributions of each Funding Party will be topped-up by a contribution based on a transfer of INTAS financial assets to the funding parties from the Joint Call Secretariat. Exceptions will be negotiated between the Joint Call Secretariat and the respective funding parties. The principle will be a pro-rata basis depending on the total actual contribution of each Funding Party in relation to the total financial contribution of the Group of Funding Parties.

2. JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS

□ Scope of the Pilot Joint Call

In the framework of the Pilot Joint Call, the Group of Funding Parties agreed to support **joint research projects**.

A joint research project is implemented by several institutions (“consortium”) in partnership.

The **joint research projects** will address mainly applied research. However, basic research of direct relevance for the thematic focus of the call may be addressed too. Projects may also include dedicated measures to enhance mobility, exchanges and access to medium/large scale infrastructures, with the aim to promote researchers mobility and to foster the development of long-term research collaboration.

□ **Thematic Focus**

1. **Climate and Environment**

1.1 Exploitation and transport of mineral resources: impact on environment

1.2 Water pollution prevention options for coastal zones and tourist areas

2. **Energy**

2.1 Hydrogen production from H₂S rich Black Sea Water

2.2 CO₂ capture and storage technologies for zero emission power generation in the Black Sea region.

Socio-economic aspects can be included in the research proposals where relevant.

□ **Eligible institutions and Project Consortium**

Institutions applying for funding must be eligible for funding by their respective national Funding Party. They can be higher education and research institutes, R&D companies and SMEs.

Other institutions not eligible for funding are invited to join the consortium as well on their own expenses. The **project consortium** must comprise at least 3 eligible institutions from 3 different participating countries to the BS-ERA.NET Joint Call, of which at least one from an EU country and one from a non-EU country from the extended Black Sea region². One of the institutions must be designated as Coordinating Institution.

□ **Duration**

The duration of a project must be **between 18 and 36 months**.

□ **Funding**

The **maximum funding** allocated per project is **€ 300,000**.

The funding of a **joint research project** will depend on the nature and duration of the proposed research and must be justified in terms of the resources needed to achieve the objectives of the project. The funding requested should therefore be realistically adjusted to the actual needs of the project, taking into account any other funds available.

In case an institution/partner cannot receive its funding from its national funding organisation in a selected project, this specific project will not be retained for funding.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

Project proposals must:

- Be in the scope and in the thematic focus of the call as described in Section 2
- Meet the consortium composition requirements as specified in Section 2
- Be submitted by partner institutions which are eligible to receive funding from their national members of the Group of Funding Parties
- Comply with the allowed duration as specified in Section 2

² List of non-EU BS countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine.

- Comply with the funding requirements as specified in Section 2
- Comply with the terms of the submission procedure as specified in Section 5
- Be complete according to the rules described in these Terms of Reference
- Be submitted in the English language
- Meet the submission deadline as specified in Section 1.

The Joint Call Secretariat checks that proposals meet the eligibility criteria as set out in section 3.

Only full proposals meeting all above eligibility criteria will be processed by the Joint Call Secretariat

Once a proposal meets the PJC eligibility criteria, the Joint Call Secretariat will ask the Group of Funding Parties to check and confirm the eligibility at the level of partner institutions participating in a project consortium according to their national regulations. With this respect, national regulations of the Funding Parties are available in [Annex - National Eligibility and Funding Rules](#).

Project applicants are strongly advised to contact their National Contact Point (NCP) in due time before submission, to verify their national eligibility. A list of NCPs is provided in [Annex –National Contact Points](#).

Non eligible proposals will be rejected.

4. ALLOWABLE PROJECT COSTS

Allowable project costs are grouped in two categories: **labour costs and operational costs** including travel and subsistence, consumables, equipment and other costs respecting regulations as defined by the responsible national Funding Party. All costs have to be justified by the needs of the project.

5. SUBMISSION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

Only submissions through the on-line submission system “PT-Outline” will be accepted. Proposals sent by post, e-mail, telex or facsimile will be rejected without notice.

5.1. How to use the On-line Submission System

5.1.1 Registration in the On-line Submission System

In order to submit a proposal the Project Coordinator should access the on-line submission system through the following weblink: <http://www.pt-it.de/ptoutline/application/bseranet/>.

When accessing the submission system for the first time the Project Coordinator will be asked to enter her/his e-mail address. In return s/he will receive by e-mail a **password** and a link for activating her/his account.

5.1.2 Access to the Submission System

By using the *password* all partners in the consortium are able to execute their own part of the project proposal submission and to replace the proposal partly or fully with an updated version.

!!! Avoid submission just before the deadline. High Internet traffic during the last days before the submission deadline of the Call may make the access difficult.

5.1.3 Acknowledgement of receipt and registration number

After final submission of the proposal, the Project Coordinator will automatically receive by e-mail an acknowledgement of receipt with the proposal's registration number.

5.1.4 Deadline

All proposals must be finally submitted by the Project Coordinators before the deadline as specified in Section 1.

Access to the On-line Submission System will be closed after the deadline.

5.2. *How to submit your proposal using the On-line Submission System*

SECTION A. GENERAL INFORMATION

A1. Proposal Details

- Title. Give the title of your project (less than 200 characters).
- Keywords: Identify the keywords selected from the keyword list (see Annex: List of Keywords).
- Free words: Supply additional free words to further specify your scientific subject.
- Intended starting date: not earlier than 1 June 2011.
- Duration: between 18 and 36 months.
- Total cost: estimated overall budget of the project.
- Participation of any research team in this proposal in any other project proposals in this Call.

A2. Summary (max. 3.000 characters)

Summarise the objectives, give a short description of the research activities and expected results of the project.

A3. Background and Research Objectives (max. 9.000 characters)

Give a detailed justification of the objectives of the project against the state-of-the art in the scientific area of the project:

- Describe the scientific objectives of the project. Whenever possible, quantify the objectives in terms of measurable outcomes.

- Give the scientific basis for your project and describe the present state-of-the-art concerning the specific research topics of your project. Identify important gaps to be filled in the current knowledge.
- Explain the novel character of the research proposed. Show how the objectives of the project aim at significant advances in the state-of-the-art through extending the current knowledge and/or filling the gaps identified.
- If relevant, highlight the multidisciplinary character of the project, whereby the activities in the project will tend to draw on a range of scientific disciplines and explain how this interdisciplinarity is going to be exploited.
- Explain the relevance and importance of the research project proposed, in terms of concrete applications (scientific, technological, innovative) and in terms of economic and societal impact in the Black Sea Region
- If the proposal is part of a larger national or international project, explain its precise role and how it fits into this wider context.

A4. Research Project (max. 30.000 characters)

Give an overall description of the research project and justify the methodology chosen to reach the objectives.

- Give an overall description and the general approach and methodology chosen to achieve the objectives. Highlight the particular advantages of the methodology chosen; quantify the expected project results.
- Explain where there is a potential for synergy effects between different tasks of the project and how this is going to be exploited.
- Give references of relevant scientific publications.

SECTION B. TEAM INFORMATION (max. 3.000 characters per partner)

- Identify the participating teams and the institutions to which they belong
- Identify the Project Coordinator and the team leaders.

For each team, the following information should be given:

- Team Details:
 - Give the total number of team members. The size of each team should be limited to those people actually needed for performing the tasks.
 - Describe the background and particular expertise of the team against the tasks to be performed. Describe how the teams complement each other in the performance of the project.
 - If relevant, a maximum of five references of recent scientific publications, patents which best show the capability of the research team to perform the work proposed. Indicate for each the name of the authors, the title of the article, the journal or other publication, the date and place of issue. If a publication exists on a website, give its address.
 - Describe the relevant facilities and infrastructure available in view of performing the tasks assigned to the team.

- Contact details of the Project Coordinator and each team leader.

SECTION C. PROJECT MANAGEMENT (max. 6.000 characters)

- Describe how the overall coordination, monitoring of the project will be implemented. Provide if possible a project organisation chart. Indicate the decision schemes foreseen in the project (decision boards, coordination meetings).
- If appropriate set up a detailed diagram giving the time schedule of the tasks and mark their interrelations; add milestones where important goals will be reached and/or decisions on further approach will have to be made; indicate a critical path marking those events which directly influence the overall time schedule in case of delays.
- Explain how information flow and communication will be enhanced within the project (e.g. collaboration and task meetings, exchange of scientists).
- Risk management: Indicate where there are risks of not achieving the objectives and fall-back positions, if applicable.

SECTION D. IMPACT OF PROJECT RESULTS (max. 9.000 characters)

- Give the expected results of your project, which have potential applications for further advances in technological products, systems or methods.
- Sketch out a result exploitation plan which explains:
 - i. How the deliverables of the project (ex: computer codes, technologies, prototypes or pilot plants, etc.) will be exploited;
 - ii. How the innovation potential will be further exploited through a technology implementation plan;
 - iii. How intellectual property, including patenting, copyrights, license agreements and any other arrangements will be managed.
- Describe the expected impact of the research project results in terms of economical and societal needs of the Black Sea Region.

6. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

6.1. Fundamental principles

The fundamental principles governing the evaluation of project proposals are:

- **Transparency.** The process for reaching funding decisions will be clearly described and available to any interested party.
- **Equality of treatment.** All proposals shall be treated alike, irrespective of where they originate or the identity of the proposers.
- **Ethical considerations.** Any proposal that contravenes fundamental ethical principles may be excluded from being evaluated and selected at any time.

6.2. Peer-Review Procedure

The selection of the proposals for funding is based on an *international, independent peer-review procedure*.

First, a dedicated *pool of evaluators*, consisting of external independent experts, assesses anonymously the merits of the submitted proposals.

Second, a *Scientific Council*, which will be appointed by the JCS based on the nominations of the Group of Funding Parties, consisting of high level scientific experts, consolidates the results of the evaluation and makes recommendations to the Group of Funding Parties. Each Funding Party is invited to nominate two experts, one per field. The JCS will select one expert per Funding Party ensuring the balance between the fields.

The final funding decision rests with the Group of Funding Parties.

6.2.1. Appointment of Evaluators

The evaluators from the pool of evaluators are selected on the basis of their scientific competence, irrespective of their nationality, age and affiliation.

All evaluators must have a proven experience in one or more of the following areas or activities:

- management or evaluation of projects;
- international cooperation in science and technology; development of human resources;
- use of the results of research and technological development projects;
- exploitation of research results;

Evaluators must also have proven language skills required for the proposals to be evaluated.

For each proposal, three independent evaluators at least one from a Black Sea country participating to the BS-ERA.NET Pilot Joint Call are selected by the Joint Call Secretariat from the pool of evaluators (Eval-inco), with a view to achieve maximum competence for the evaluation. National Funding Parties are encouraged to review the national experts chosen from the Eval-inco database and to invite additional evaluators to register in the database. Keywords and free words specified in the proposal help selecting the most suitable evaluators in the field of the proposal.

6.2.2. Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

The Group of Funding Parties relies on the integrity of evaluators to base their opinion with strict impartiality exclusively on the basis of the information given in the proposal and against the established evaluation criteria.

When choosing an evaluator, the **Joint Call Secretariat** takes all reasonable steps to ensure that s/he is not faced with a conflict of interest in relation to the proposals, which s/he is requested to assess. The evaluators commit themselves to inform the Joint Call Secretariat whenever a conflict of interest arises in the course of their duties. When so informed, the Joint Call Secretariat takes all necessary actions to remove the conflict of interest.

The evaluators are committed to maintain the confidentiality of the information contained within the proposals they evaluate and of the evaluation process and its outcome.

The Joint Call Secretariat is committed to maintain the anonymity of the evaluators.

6.3 Evaluation and Selection Procedure

6.3.1. Eligibility Check

The Joint Call Secretariat checks that proposals meet the eligibility criteria as set out in section 3. Non-eligible proposals will be rejected.

Once a proposal meets basic eligibility criteria, the Joint Call Secretariat will ask the Group of Funding Parties to check and confirm the eligibility at the level of partner institutions participating in a project consortium according to their national regulations. Proposals that meet all eligibility criteria undergo the evaluation and selection procedure as described below.

6.3.2. Overview of the Evaluation Procedure

The evaluation is performed on-line, using the on-line submission and evaluation system PT-Outline. Each evaluator receives access to the proposal and submits on-line the results of her/his evaluation. The access to proposals is protected by user names and passwords.

The evaluators are not informed on the other experts evaluating the same proposal. Each evaluator therefore assesses each proposal independently without exchanging views with the other evaluators.

The evaluation procedure consists of a number of steps as indicated below.

- **Step 1: Individual evaluation of proposals**

Each evaluator fills in an individual evaluation form whereby s/he gives a score and justification of the scores to each evaluation item, resulting in an overall score for the proposal. The evaluator also checks the compliance of the proposal with the thematic focus of the call.

- **Step 2: Ranking List**

From the total scores x_i given by each evaluator the **average score** $\langle x_i \rangle$ of each proposal is calculated and retained to prepare a preliminary ranking list.

- **Step 3: Scientific Council**

The preliminary ranking list prepared by the Joint Call Secretariat is reviewed by the Scientific Council.

Based on this preliminary ranking list, the Scientific Council prepares a final list of all project proposals recommended for funding together with their tentative budgets. The Scientific Council reports to the GFP, which makes the decision on the final list of projects to be funded and on a reserve list of projects eligible for funding. In preparation of the concluding meeting of the Group of Funding Parties, the preliminary ranking list will be presented to the Funding Parties, which will check the eligibility of requested funds and return an estimated national budget for each project based on their own national regulations.

The final outcome of the evaluation, including the overall score and the remarks made by the evaluators and the Scientific Council will be made available to the coordinators of the proposals after the evaluation and selection procedure has been completed.

6.4. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluators are requested to assess project proposals against a set of criteria, each of which may be awarded a maximum of **5 points/criterion** according to the following scale:

<p>5: EXCELLENT The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.</p>
<p>4: GOOD The proposal addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements are possible.</p>
<p>3: FAIR While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses that would need correcting.</p>
<p>2: POOR There are serious inherent weaknesses in relation to the criterion in question.</p>
<p>1: VERY POOR The criterion is addressed in a cursory and unsatisfactory manner.</p>
<p>0: NOT RELEVANT The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.</p>

The full set of criteria for joint research projects includes the merit of the research objectives, the merit of the research programme, the merit of the consortium, and the merit of the project management. The maximum score is 5.

(I) Scientific Merit of the project (35%)

How clearly are the scientific objectives described?

How well described is the relevance and importance of the proposed research from a scientific, economic and/or social point of view?

How novel and promising is the proposed research?

How can the research objectives be realistically achieved in the time frame proposed against the current state-of-the-art?

How clearly explained is the research programme? Is it well focussed on the research objectives?

How appropriate are the applied methodologies to reach the research objectives?

(II) Expected Impact of the Project (25%)

Do the results lead to significant advances in science?

Does the results response to the economical or societal needs of the Black Sea Region

Will the project result in applications for developing new, or improving existing technological products, systems or methods?

Does the proposal adequately plan: to use and disseminate project results by means of appropriate tools (publications, conferences, public policy proposals, etc.); to exploit the innovation potential through a technology implementation plan including demonstration, prototype or pilot plants, etc; to manage intellectual property, including patenting, copyrights, license agreements, etc?

(III) Quality of the consortium (20%)

Does the qualification of the teams meet the requirements of the tasks?

Do all the teams make a significant scientific contribution to the project?

Is the size of the teams justified by the tasks they assume?

Does the consortium provide the technical resources including research infrastructures needed for carrying out the tasks?

Do the teams involved collectively bring a significant added value for reaching the objectives of the project?

(IV) Quality of the project management (15%)

Is the Project Coordinator qualified to manage efficiently the resources and competences brought in the consortium in view of achieving the objectives of the project?

How appropriate is the requested funding and its proposed allocation to each team?

Are the divisions of tasks and resources appropriate for reaching the objectives?

How appropriate and realistic is the proposed workflow and time schedule? Does the proposal foresee adequate monitoring & control mechanisms and fall-back options?

Is the use of information and communication tools adequately foreseen (e.g. meetings, data exchange, and joint working periods, in particular for young scientists)?

(V) Quality of the presentation of the proposal (5%)

7. PROJECT CONTRACT AND PROJECT MONITORING

For each project approved for funding the Joint Call Secretariat will execute an **Umbrella Project Contract** to be signed on the one hand by the Joint Call Secretariat on behalf of the Group of Funding Parties and on the other hand by each Coordinating institution of a consortium.

The Umbrella Project Contract will set forth general terms and conditions of cooperation in the project including the signing of a Consortium Agreement and an agreement on the fair management of intellectual property rights, as well as the overall reporting duties of the Coordinating institution on behalf of the consortium as a whole. As a rule, knowledge created in a project shall be owned by the participants generating it.

The Umbrella Project Contract will include as annexes the project proposal, the Consortium Agreement and the Agreement on the IPR/Exploitation of the project results.

The Joint Call Secretariat will be responsible for the overall monitoring of the project.

Umbrella Project Contracts will be complemented by **National Project Contracts** between each participating institution in a consortium and its corresponding Funding Party in case these organisations are two separate legal entities. Those contracts will prepare the legal ground for project funding at national level according to the rules and regulations of the respective Funding Party. The management of INTAS financial assets will be handled at national level through the National Project Contracts as well.