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1 Background and Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide interested parties with information about participation in the IraSME 21st Call for proposals. It is targeted at international research, technology, development and innovation (RTDI) projects between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and research and technology organisations (RTOs).

The main objective of the IraSME is to strengthen the competitive capacity of SMEs by:

- increasing collaboration between SMEs from different countries,
- increasing cooperation between SMEs and RTOs,
- increasing cooperative & competitive capability of SMEs to work in international R&D networks,
- helping them to develop new products, processes or technical services that exceed the existing state of the art and have good market opportunities by lowering the economical risks.

IraSME is a follow-up initiative of an ERA-NET by ministries and funding agencies. An overview of regions/countries participating in the 21st IraSME call can be found on the website of IraSME available under <http://www.ira-sme.net/calls/>.

Participants from the participating countries/regions can be funded according to the rules of the respective regional/national funding programme. Participants from other countries/regions are welcome to participate, although they will have to organise the financing for their part themselves.

2 Basic Requirements

In addition to the basic IraSME requirements national or regional rules may apply. They are described in the programme portraits on the website of IraSME available under www.ira-sme.net. Please check the programme portraits relevant for your project and get in contact with your local agency.

2.1 Requirements for Projects

Projects must be innovative and must aim to develop new or to significantly improve existing products, processes or technical services that in their parameters exceed the existing state of the art. All projects must have significant technical risks. The outcome of the project must be concrete and demonstrate real market potential. The project can not, only in a reduced form or only with significant delay be carried out without public funding.

2.1.1 General conditions for projects:

- At least a total of two SMEs from two different countries/regions (at least one SME in each country/region).
- Participation of RTOs is possible but not mandatory.
- Balanced participation of the partners in the project needs to be proven.
- Clear participation of all participating SMEs in the economic results of the project.
- Every participant has a defined role in the project (subproject) that contains research and development tasks with significant technical risks, that can be delimited from the other subprojects (no redundancy) and is necessary for the project success.
- At least 50% of the work in the complete project has to be performed by companies.
- Only use Person Month (PM) in order to specify working time on the project.
- Start date of the project should be approximately 6 month after call deadline.
- Regional / National rules will prevail; see overview of funding schemes for details.

Attention: To exemplify, some regional/national rules are listed here:

- For proposals with Austrian consortia partners: Minimum configuration is a consortium with a total of 3 companies (thereof 2 SME, according to the definition of the EC) thereof at least one from Austria.
- Project applications with Austrian partners must not exceed 10 work packages.
- In Russia only small companies with up to 100 employees (no RTOs) are eligible for funding.
- RTOs can participate if at least one SME from their country / region is part of the consortium and may be funded directly or treated as subcontractors.
- Other partners (large companies, other SMEs, RTOs, etc.) from other countries which do not take part in this call or partners from the participating countries/regions that can not be funded in the respective national/regional programs may be part of the project consortium if their contribution is essential to reach the project goals. However, funding will not normally be available for them.
- Parts of the work may be outsourced to subcontractors in German ZIM projects.
- Cooperation agreements need to have a German working translation for the ZIM applicants.

2.2 Project Duration

The duration of projects can be between 12 and 36 months according to national rules (please see the overview of funding schemes). A project start date six month after the call deadline is highly recommended in order to avoid a rescheduling during the evaluation.

3 Schedule IraSME 21st Call

- November 1st 2017: Joint call announcement – opening of the call. Proposal submission is continuously. Documents available on the IraSME website: www.ira-sme.net
- March 1st 2018: Last chance to get qualified nonbinding feedback for your project idea.
- March 28th 2018: Deadline at 12:00 noon (strict deadline, proposals will not be accepted one minute after by the automated submission system)
- April 16th 2018: Communication of the results of the eligibility check per e-mail to project coordinator only in case the eligibility check is negative. Which means the project application does not fulfil the minimum requirements and will not be evaluated.
- Mid July 2018: Communication of funding decisions (e-mail to coordinator). Signing of Consortium Agreement and funding negotiations can start (or continue), according to the respective regional/national rules.

4 Application Procedure

4.1 Project Proposal

4.1.1 Proposal Submission – Transnational Level

The project application must be signed by each partner and submitted electronically by the project coordinator before the deadline of the 21st Call on March 28, 2018 - noon. Technical details related to the submission process will be published on the website www.ira-sme.net in due time before the call deadline. The template “Application Form” available on the website must be used including the following sections:

- General information
- Project Coordinator including signature on LOI
- Partner(s) including signature(s) on LOI

The application language for this part is English, except for pure Austrian-German consortia where all documents are accepted in German. In addition to the project application the coordinator must submit a draft Consortium Agreement (not signed!) in PDF format electronically.

4.1.2 Proposal Submission – National/Regional Level

At the same time national/regional forms have to be sent to the national/regional funding agencies. An overview of the funding schemes and contact details of funding agencies is available on the website: <http://www.ira-sme.net/countries-regions/>.

4.2 Eligibility Criteria

- Proposal must be signed by all partners and submitted electronically.
- Draft Consortium Agreement (not signed).
- National/regional requirements for participation fulfilled (please see overview of funding schemes, programme portraits and please contact your local agency).
- Duration of the project between 12 and 36 months.

4.3 Evaluation

A proposal will be evaluated by the respective funding agencies involved following the respective national/regional evaluation criteria. A project will be funded when all involved funding agencies achieve a positive evaluation result. The results of the evaluation will be provided to the project coordinator.

4.4 Agreements and Contracts

4.4.1 Consortium Agreement

A Consortium Agreement between all the project partners is mandatory. It will regulate:

- identity of the partners,
- contract period
- IPR ownership, IPR use and exploitation of the results,
- subcontracting to third parties,
- contributions of each partner to the project,
- confidentiality notes and freedom of publications rights,
- duty for every partner to participate in a final report on the overall project, which will be signed by all partners in the consortium.

The Consortium Agreement should be signed after the funding decision has been communicated and before the contract is signed with the funding agencies. An example of a Consortium Agreement is no longer provided on www.ira-sme.net. It is recommended to formulate an own Consortium Agreement covering all of the above mentioned issues. Please contact your respective national/regional agency.

4.4.2 Funding Agreement

Matters related to funding will be determined following the respective national/regional agencies rules. Signature of the Consortium Agreement is a prerequisite for funding.

5 Funding Procedures

Funding will be provided to each partner by his corresponding national/regional funding agency according to the respective rules (please see programme portraits for overview).

5.1 Project Reporting and Monitoring

Projects will be monitored according to the rules of the respective country/region. Hence, technical as well as financial reporting according to national/regional rules will be required. Arrangements will be made during the funding negotiation process. The project coordinator will be required, in addition, to deliver a final report on the overall project, which will be signed by all partners in the consortium.

6 Contact with Funding Agencies

For additional information and support it is strongly recommended to contact the respective regional/national agencies. Please refer to the list of regional/national contacts on the website <http://www.ira-sme.net/countries-regions/>.

7 Definitions

- **Consortium Agreement:** A contract between all project partners regulating the terms of their cooperation, including the handling of IPR and the dissemination plan.
- **Funding agencies:** Agencies which manage the relevant funding program(s) in the respective country/region.
- **Funding agreement:** Agreement between the funding agency and the funded project partner(s) in the respective country/region.
- **IPR:** Intellectual property rights.
- **Project coordinator:** One of the project partners. The coordinator submits the proposal, leads the project and reports on progress.
- **Project partners:** All the participants/partners involved in a project consortium.
- **Proposal:** A project description plus annexes (Letters of Intent of all project partners; draft Consortium Agreement) submitted by the project coordinator.
- **RTDI:** Research, Technology, Development and Innovation.
- **RTO:** Research and Technology Organisation. An organisation which conducts research or development as a main activity. (University, higher education institute, research institute, technology centre, etc.)
- **SME:** Small and medium sized enterprises. See the definition of the European Commission and use the regulations of your regional/national funding agency.
- **Transnational project:** A project that includes partners from at least two different countries.