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“Technological and Institutional Innovations
for Sustainable Rural Development”

European Commission Funding for Co-ordination of Research Activities in the 6th Framework Programme

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Abstract

In the past, collaborative actions have been initiated at European and Community level. It is time to bring these endeavours together and to build a research and innovation equivalent of the “common market” for goods and services. That structure is called the European Research Area and is regrouping all Community supports for the better co-ordination of research activities and the convergence of research and innovation policies, at national and EU levels.

The 6th Research Framework Programme is the most important element of this new strategy. Following the principle of subsidiarity, projects have to be transnational: consortia of partners from different member states and accession countries, including optional partners from associated countries or INCO target countries can apply. For mobility and training actions the fellows have to go to a country different from their country of origin or residence. Activities that can better be carried out at national or regional level, i.e. without co-operation across borders will in general not be eligible under the Framework Programme.

A set of new instruments has been introduced:

Support for the **networking of centres of excellence** in different countries — and situated equally in universities, research centres and organisations and in business enterprises. These networks will have clearly defined thematic objectives and will be directed towards advancing scientific and technological knowledge, within medium- to long-term time-frames; support for **integrated projects**, involving a critical mass of scientific and industrial partners, and directed toward significant products, processes or service applications;

Focus and concentration is another feature of FP 6

FP6 does not cover all areas of science and technology (with the exception of some special actions, like the ERA-net scheme — see below). A limited number of thematic priorities have been identified. Detailed descriptions of these areas and specific topics will be given in the calls for proposals. Potential participants have to check carefully if their ideas for projects fit within the scope of these priorities and topics.

For agricultural research for development

- The INCO programme is the prime activity to check (<http://www.cordis.lu.fp6/inco.htm>). The first call closed on 11 September 2003, further calls are planned to be published in March 2004 and 2005 with closure dates in September.
- Thematic priority 5: Food quality and safety (<http://www.cordis.lu.fp6/food.htm>). Further indicative deadlines: Feb. 2004, Sept. 2004, January 2005, Dec. 2005 and

- Thematic priority 6: Sustainable Development (<http://www.cordis.lu.fp6/sustdev.htm>): Currently a call is open, with various deadlines depending on the instrument and area
- Marie Curie actions — Human resources and mobility (<http://www.cordis.lu.fp6/mobility.htm>)

A specific new feature in FP 6 is the ERA net scheme:

The objective of the ERA-NET scheme is to step up the co-operation and co-ordination of research activities carried out at national or regional level in the Member States and Associated States through: the networking of research activities conducted at national or regional level, and the mutual opening of national and regional research programmes.

The scheme will contribute to making a reality of the European Research Area by improving the coherence and co-ordination across Europe of such research programmes. The scheme will also enable national systems to take on tasks collectively that they would not have been able to tackle independently.

Both networking and mutual opening require a progressive approach. The ERA-NET scheme therefore has a long-term perspective that must also allow for the different way that research is organised in different Member States and Associated States.

More information is available at: <http://www.cordis.lu/coordination/era-net.htm>

A call was published on 17 December 2002, with cut-off dates on: 03 June 2003, 02 March 2004, 05 October 2004, 02 March 2005 and 04 October 2005.

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