

Interuniversity Attraction Poles (IAP) Phase VII

2012 - 2017

Call for Proposals

Information document

August 2011

DEADLINES:

Expressions of interest: **9 September 2011**
Research proposals: **17 October 2011 by 12:00 (noon)**

PREAMBLE

This document provides the information needed by teams wishing to participate in the call for proposals under phase 7 of the “Interuniversity Attraction Poles” Programme (IAP).

The Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) handles scientific and administrative coordination for the IAP programme.

The participants must follow the rules set out in this document. If they fail to do so, BELSPO will be unable to take their proposal into consideration.

This call for proposals is aimed at Belgian universities, federal scientific institutions, the Royal Military Academy and the Institute of Tropical Medicine.

**Please read this information document carefully
before filling out the submission forms.**

**Expressions of interest must be received by BELSPO
no later than**

9 September 2011

**Research proposals must be received by BELSPO
no later than**

17 October 2011 by 12:00 (noon)

The submission of an expression of interest is an obligatory step for the submission of a research proposal.

For additional information regarding this call for proposals, please contact directly :

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Objectives

The “Interuniversity Attraction Poles” (IAP) Programme aims to provide support for outstanding basic research teams from Belgium’s various (linguistic) communities that are working in networks to increase their joint contribution to general scientific advances and, where applicable, to international scientific networks.

The programme’s aims to:

- grant teams already recognised in the international scientific community additional human and material resources to enable them to reunite the critical amount of resources;
- encourage interactions between Belgium’s (linguistic) communities and consolidate ties between universities belonging to these various communities in order to form lasting networks;
- develop or establish collaborative efforts between teams from different institutions and promote the sharing of complementary skills and fields of expertise;
- enable young teams to benefit from the outstanding environment generated within a network as well as from its international influence in order to ensure continued excellence in basic research in Belgium;
- facilitate the insertion of Belgian research teams into European and international networks.

1.2. Background

The Belgian Government first launched the IAP programme in 1987 at the initiative of its then Minister for Science Policy.

This action has been developed in 6 phases, each lasting for 5 years:

- Phase one (IAP-I) covered the years 1987 to 1991, had an annual budget of 7,780,000 Euros and included 14 networks.
- As a result of the system’s success, the Council of Ministers decided to launch a second phase (IAP-II) covering the period 1990-1995, with 23 additional networks and an annual budget of 9,484,000 Euros.
- A third phase (IAP-III) enabled phase one to be continued by expanding it to 16 networks for a further 5-year period (1992-1996) and assigning it an annual budget of 9,790,000 Euros.

- Phase two was extended by 13 months (IAP-IIb) in order to bring all IAPs from phases II and III into alignment and allow the launch of a new, single IAP phase.
- Phase four (IAP-IV) funded 35 networks between 1997 and 2001 with an annual budget of 22,062,000 Euros.
- Phase five (IAP-V) covered the period from 2002 to 2006 with an annual budget of 22,328,000 Euros spread out among 36 networks. This phase was the first to include non-Belgian research teams from the European Union in the IAP Programme.
- Phase six (IAP-VI) finances 44 networks covering the period from 2007 to 2011 with an annual budget of 28,600,000 Euros. These 44 networks include 324 research teams (250 Belgian and 74 European).

1.3. Towards Phase VII

The impact of the IAP programme in basic research is significant with some 5.000 researchers working in the framework of the programme and 550 researchers directly paid with IAP funds (over 2.000 publications are produced each year in the framework of the programme).

Unique in Europe, this programme is recognized unanimously, by the international and in particular the European scientific community, as a hallmark in terms of organization and efficiency. It constitutes an important science policy instrument which deserves to be continued and to be intensified.

This federal programme represents a structural possibility of funding in which Dutch- and French-speaking research teams can cooperate. It forms a preliminary and essential step to facilitate the insertion of researchers of a country into European and international networks, especially for a small country like Belgium.

Furthermore, the opening of the IAP programme to collaborations with foreign institutions reinforces the position of Belgian teams on the international scene.

In its conclusions of December 2008 on the definition of "Vision 2020 for a European Research Area", the Council of the European Union insists to increase the financial and human resources in favour of public research. Besides the Council also encourages the Member States to better coordinate their action in order to secure the reciprocal coherence and effectiveness of national policies. Thus, the continuation of the IAP programme contributes greatly to the realization of this aspiration.

This programme for almost 25 years enthusiastically received by the scientists was evaluated in 2010 by 20 independent international experts in the field of management and evaluation of research programmes. This new evaluation is very positive and confirms how relevant, useful and efficient this federal programme is.

1.4. Implementation

At its meeting on 22 June 2011, the Council of Ministers marked its agreement on the prolongation of the IAP programme and the start-up of a seventh phase (IAP-VII) with a total budget of 156,530,000 Euros. This phase, lasting five years, will begin on 1 March 2012 and end on 28 February 2017.

The IAP-VII Programme will be monitored by a “steering committee”, the composition of which was the subject of a cooperation agreement between the Federal Government and the Communities.

The budget allocated to the IAP-VII programme will be broken down as follows:

- a minimum of 90% will be reserved for the university institutions. The distribution between institutions of this budget will be conveyed to the rectors of those institutions based on the decisions of the governments concerned.
- a maximum of 10% will be used as follows :
 - a maximum of 7% will be reserved for the participation of a federal scientific institute, the Royal Military Academy and the Institute of Tropical Medicine.
 - a maximum of 3% will be reserved for teams from a non-Belgian university or public research institution. This participation, which will take the form of 50% co-funding, is fixed at a maximum of 160,000 Euros¹ per network over the 5 years.
 - it will be possible to assign the unused portion of either of these two budgets to the other; any outstanding balance from these two budgets together will be returned to the university budget.

¹ The allocated budget for the foreign partnership per network will depend on the number of selected networks with foreign partners (cfr. in the previous phase, the allocated budget was about 100,000 Euros per network)

2. PROFILE OF THE PROPOSALS

2.1. Eligibility Conditions

- An IAP is an interuniversity network of scientific teams conducting **basic research** and any scientific field may be the subject of an IAP.
- The partners of the networks must be research teams; under no circumstances may they be institutions, administrative structures (department, faculty, etc.) or services containing several research teams, in order to avoid the dispersal of funds.
- Each network must comprise at least 4 partners belonging to 3 different Belgian institutions :
 - The various partners shall belong to a Belgian university, a federal scientific institution, the Royal Military Academy or the Institute of Tropical Medicine.
 - Each network must include at least one partner belonging to a university from Belgium's French-speaking Community and one partner belonging to a university from the Flemish Community.
 - A network may include several partners belonging to the same university.
 - A partner may only belong to one single IAP.
- The promoter of a team shall act as co-ordinator for the network as a whole and ensure its co-ordination in terms of its scientific and administrative management.
- The minimum funding threshold over the 5 years is set at 900,000 Euros for the co-ordinators and at 500,000 Euros for the other partners. A team without IAP funding may never be considered as a network partner.
- Each network must write a research project using the proposal submission forms provided by BELSPO. Networks having taken part in phase VI must take the comments of the *ex-post* evaluation into account. They must justify the appropriateness of continuing their research in the current state of the art.

2.2. Recommendations

- The networks are invited to develop partnerships with non-Belgian universities or public research institutions.
- The networks are invited to include - if possible - young emerging teams as partners. These are recently established independent teams led by young promising researchers.
- The networks are invited to create "network-driven training activities" for PhD students and/or post-docs.

2.3. Budget distribution (per partner²)

2.3.1. Personnel

- a minimum of 60% of the total budget for each partner must be set aside for the recruitment of personnel. Doctoral and post-doctoral grant-holders exempt from tax and benefiting from social security, in accordance with the Royal Decrees of the 5th of July 1996 and the 26th of March 2003 on the social security of worker, may be accepted.
- The total compensation for doctoral and post-doctoral grants as mentioned above is limited to 60% of the total personnel budget for the 5 years.
- The personnel hired must include at least one full-time scientist or the equivalent at part-time.
- The co-ordinators must see to it that at least one post-doctoral researcher is included in their IAP team.
- Employment contracts must be for a minimum length of one year.

2.3.2. Operating Costs

In addition to general operating costs, the programme may also cover supplemental compensation for visiting researchers and professors (travel and housing costs) still on the payroll of their home institution.

2.3.3. Equipment

- Preference will be given to the acquisition of material for shared use between the partners of a network.
- The “equipment” item in the budget cannot be used beyond year four of the programme.

2.3.4. Subcontracting

- Subcontracting may not exceed 25% of the total IAP budget.

2.3.5. Overheads

- Overheads may not represent more than 5% of the total personnel and operating costs.

² (Only applicable for the Belgian partners)

2.4. Co-operation with a Non Belgian Institution

- Partnerships with non-Belgian universities or public research institutions must produce added value for the network as a whole.
- Foreign partners must be chosen in consultation with all network partners.
- A network may not include more than 4 foreign partners.
- The IAP-VII programme will only fund the foreign partner in the amount of 50%. The remaining 50% shall be the responsibility of the foreign partner.
- The maximum amount allocated by the IAP programme for the foreign partnership will be 160,000³ Euros per network over 5 years (i.e. a total of 320,000 Euros when including the 50% from the foreign partners).
- Funding of the co-operation will chiefly serve for the exchange of researchers and the costs of the research and may not, in any case, be used to fund the purchase of equipment.
- The partnership must be made official through a written agreement binding the institution to which the foreign partner belongs.

³ The allocated budget for the foreign partnership per network will depend on the number of selected networks with foreign partners (cfr. in the previous phase, the allocated budget was about 100,000 Euros per network)

3. PROCEDURES

3.1. Submission procedure

- Submission will take place in **two steps**:
 - submission of an expression of interest
 - submission of a research proposal
- The expressions of interest and research proposals must be submitted by the Rectors and Directors of the institutions for which a research unit from their institution will act as co-ordinator.

The paper versions of the dossiers must be sent in two copies
to the following address:

Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO)
IAP-VII Programme
Louizalaan 231 avenue Louise
1050 Brussels

The electronic versions in Word and pdf format must be sent to:

iap-pai@belspo.be

3.1.1. Submission of expressions of interest

- The expressions of interest may only be submitted using the two online forms that can be downloaded from the BELSPO website (<http://www.belspo.be>):
 - **Section I: Composition and description**
 - **Section II: Names of experts**
- The expressions of interest must be submitted in **English**. BELSPO will use them to select foreign experts to evaluate the research proposals.

The submission of expressions of interests takes place in two steps:

Step 1

Coordinators of research proposals are requested to submit their expressions of interests to the Rector or Director of their institution no later than

2 September 2011

Step 2

Rectors and Directors of the institutions, for which a research unit from their institution act as coordinator, are requested to submit the expressions of interest to BELSPO no later than

9 September 2011

BELSPO will not accept expressions of interest sent by the teams themselves.

3.1.2. Submission of research proposals

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

The proposals may only be submitted using the forms that can be downloaded from the BELSPO website (<http://www.belspo.be>).

The proposals must be submitted in English with a summary in French and Dutch. If deemed necessary by the applicant, a version of the proposal may also be submitted in the language of the co-ordinator.

Foreign partner institutions must show their agreement in writing for 50% co-funding of participation in an IAP network.

No annex to the dossier submitted will be considered during the evaluation and selection procedure.

The research proposals must be submitted to BELSPO by the **Rectors and Directors of the Institutions** to which a coordinator of a proposal belongs no later than

17 October 2011 by 12:00 (noon)

The Rectors and Directors of the Institutions must provide a list of all research teams from their institution proposed as partners of an IAP network.

University Rectors are requested to submit proposals for a total sum that is about 1.5 times the budget allocated to their institution in IAP phase VII.

After deadline BELSPO will no longer accept proposals.

FORMS:

The submission forms must be filled out in English so that the proposals may be evaluated by foreign experts.

Please show the acronym of the proposal on each page of the submission forms.

Each proposal must include 4 independent sections (section IV is optional and only applies in cases where an international partner is included).

Section I: Information about the network
(to be filled out by the network co-ordinator)

- A. Network composition
- B. Proposal summary
- C. Objectives, motivation and state-of-the-art
- D. Detailed description of the proposal
- E. Participation of the partners in the various work packages (WPs)
- F. Main partner skills
- G. Added value of the international partners (if applicable)
- H. Young emerging teams (if applicable)
- I. Network organisation and management
- J. Budget (global distribution per partner)
- K. To be filled out for networks having been funded in a previous IAP phase

Section II: Information about the partners
(to be filled out by each network partner, including international partners)

- L. Partner contact details
- M. Staff members of the partner team
- N. Staff members working in the framework of the project
- O. Publications
- P. International contacts in the proposal's research field
- Q. Contracts in progress
- R. Work packages
- S. Budget (distribution per year and per category)

Section III: Summary of the proposal in English, French and Dutch
(to be filled out by the network co-ordinator)

Section IV: Declaration of intent for co-funding from the international partner and its institution
(if applicable)

3.2. Evaluation and Selection

Proposals remitted by institutions that meet the eligibility conditions will be subjected to an *ex-ante* evaluation, which will be conducted on the basis of a “peer review”.

The following general evaluation criteria will be taken into account by the foreign scientific experts :

- The scientific quality of the research proposal :
 - clarity of the objectives and tasks;
 - pertinence of the methodological approach;
 - position relative to the state-of-the-art in the field in question;
 - scientific originality of the research proposed;
 - innovative nature of the expected results;
 - reinforcement of existing expertise;
 - work plan.
- The quality of the proposed partnership and the added value provided by co-operation in a network :
 - complementarity of the partners and interdisciplinarity of their collective expertise;
 - task distribution between partners;
 - collective and bilateral relations;
 - proposed collaborative methods (joint work, exchange of researchers, etc.)
- The potentiality of the network and of the partners in terms of :
 - training of pre/post-doctorate researchers;
 - the emergence of young researchers and/or teams.
- Organisation and the management skills of the coordinator of the network.

The final selection of proposals submitted will be based on the scientific evaluations (*ex ante* and *ex post* for the networks of phase VI) , priorities of the institutions and recommendations from the IAP programme steering committee.

The projects selected will be the subject of a contract effective from 01/03/2012.

3.3 Contractual Obligations

3.3.1 Contracts

For the selected projects a contract will be drawn up between BELSPO and the Institutions of the research teams.

The technical annexes to the contract will be drawn up by the partners of the network according to the guidelines of BELSPO. If the composition of the network and / or the budgets of the partners were changed in the final selection of the IAP network's, the original proposal can be adjusted in consultation with BELSPO.

3.3.2 External evaluation

All research projects are subject to one or more external evaluations. These evaluations, conducted by foreign experts, concern the quality of the scientific results and the quality of the collaboration, in the light of the initial objectives of the project.

3.3.3 Reports

The contract will define the various reports to be submitted to BELSPO.

3.3.4 Website

Each IAP network must develop and manage its own IAP website.

3.3.5 Meetings

During the first 6 months of the contract, each co-ordinator must organise a "kick-off meeting" with all partners in the network and the IAP programme administrator.

The coordinator shall also be responsible for the organisation of at least one meeting per year between the network partners and the programme administrator;

3.3.6 International symposium

Each network must organise at least one international symposium during the IAP contract period in order to increase the network's international visibility.