



Interuniversity attraction poles (IAP) Phase V

Call for proposals

2002-2006

Presentation document

PREAMBLE

- This document provides the information needed by teams wishing to participate in the call for proposals under phase five of the “Interuniversity Attraction Poles” Programme (IAP).
- The participants are obliged to uphold the rules set out in this document. If they fail to do so, the Federal Office of Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs (OSTC) will be unable to take their proposal into consideration.
- This call for proposals is aimed at Belgian universities, federal scientific institutes and the Royal Military Academy.

Proposals must reach OSTC at the latest by Friday 8 June at 17.00 hrs

Additional information regarding this call for proposals may be obtained directly from the:

Federal Office of Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs (OSTC)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Objectives

The “Interuniversity Attraction Poles” (IAP) Programme aims to provide support for teams of excellence in basic research that belong to Belgium’s various (linguistic) Communities and work as part of a network in order to increase their joint contribution to general scientific advances and, where applicable, to international scientific networks.

The programme’s objectives are to:

- award teams already recognised in the international scientific community additional human and material resources in order to put together a sufficient critical mass;
- encourage interactions between Belgium’s Communities and consolidate ties between universities belonging to these Communities in order to form lasting networks;
- develop or create collaborations between teams from different institutions and promote complementarity and interdisciplinarity between these teams;
- enable young teams to benefit from the environment of excellence constituted by a network and its international influence in order to ensure continuity in the excellence of basic research in Belgium.

1.2. Background

The IAP programme was launched for the first time in 1987 by the Belgian Government, on the initiative of its then Minister for Scientific Policy.

This action has been developed in four phases, each lasting for five years:

- Phase one (IAP-I) covered the years 1987 to 1991, had an annual budget of 325 MBEF and comprised 14 networks.
- In the light 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 400 MBEF.
- 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 400 MBEF.
- Phase two was extended by 13 months (IAP-IIb; 1995-1996) in order to bring all IAPs from phases II and III into alignment and allow the launch of a new, single IAP phase.
- Through its decision of 01.03.1996, the Council of Ministers approved the implementation of IAP phase four (IAP-IV) covering the period 1997-2001, which has an annual budget of 800 MBEF spread among 35 networks.

1.3. Towards phase V

Today, IAPs are one of the most significant factors in encouraging basic research in Belgium. This they are doing through their major financial commitment and by placing the emphasis on interuniversity collaboration. Moreover, they are one of the last structural possibilities for contacts between French-speaking and Dutch-speaking teams in Belgium, allowing scientists from Belgium's different Communities to work together.

Furthermore, the Council of the European Union's recent decisions, which are based on the memorandum, "Towards a European Research Area", from Commissioner Busquin, make the stimulation of networking and consolidation of European potential (through enhanced collaboration within the research programmes of the various Member States) priority objectives of the Union. Scientific co-operation on a Belgian scale, like that procured by IAPs, provides Belgian researchers with favourable conditions under which they can play an important role in scientific research networking that is increasing at the European level.

With the launch of Phase V of the IAP Programme in prospect, OSTC has carried out a global evaluation of the programme.

This evaluation was conducted by a panel of three independent foreign experts specialising in the evaluation of R&D public policies. To complete its task successfully, the expert panel used as its basis the results from a survey of the IAP programme conducted by 2 consultants specialising in survey methodology and scientific programme evaluations.

The evaluation itself shows that the IAP formula has broadly lived up to expectations in respect of the set objectives and that its continuation is warranted (Interuniversity Attraction Poles – expert panel report, October 2000).

After almost 15 years of operation, it is noticeable that the IAP mechanism is quite exceptional in Europe and fully complies with what the expert panel sees as the very essence of a good scientific policy.

The evaluation report by the experts provides a set of recommendations that has inspired the implementation of phase V.

On the basis of these recommendations and the policy paper on federal scientific research approved by the Council of Ministers on 20/07/2000, the time appears right to incorporate, within the new IAP phase, the possibility for promoters to associate themselves with teams from other European countries.

1.4. Implementation

At its meeting on 22/12/2000, the Council of Ministers marked its agreement on the continuation of a fifth phase of the IAP programme. This phase, lasting five years, will begin on 1 January 2002 and end on 31 December 2006.

The IAP-V Programme will be monitored by an "steering committee", the composition of which has been determined by the Council of Ministers and which is the subject of an agreement between the Federal Government and the Communities.

A minimum total budget of 107,920.446 EUR is being assigned to the IAP-V programme. This amount is likely to be increased when the State budget for the 2002 financial year is drawn up. It will be broken down as follows:

- 5% of the total budget will be used for the following:
 - 2.5% maximum will be reserved for the participation of a federal scientific institute or the Royal Military Academy as an associate partner in an IAP network.
 - 2.5% maximum will also be reserved for teams from a non-Belgian university or public research institution within the European Union. This participation, which will take the form of 50% co-funding, is fixed at a maximum 125,000 EUR per network over the five 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.
- With regard to the budget awarded to the university institutions (minimum 95% of the total budget), its distribution between institutions will be conveyed to the rectors of those institutions on the basis of the decisions by the governments concerned.

2. PROFILE OF THE PROPOSALS

The network proposals are presented by the universities, for an amount at least 30% greater than the budget assigned to each of them.

2.1. Eligibility conditions

An IAP is an interuniversity network of scientific teams conducting basic research. Any scientific sphere may be the subject of an IAP.

- The basic constituents of the networks (the “partners”) are specific research units; under no circumstances are they institutions or services containing several research units.
- Each network comprises at least three partners belonging to three different institutions:
 - The various partners belong to a Belgian university, to the Royal Military Academy or to a federal scientific institute.
 - Each network includes 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 team may only belong to a single IAP.
 - Nevertheless, a network may include several partners belonging to the same university.
- The networks are made up of one or more principal partners, with or without associate partner(s).
- The promoter of a university’s principal or associate team acts as co-ordinator for the network as a whole and ensures its co-ordination in terms of both its organisation as well as its scientific and administrative management.
- A minimum funding threshold for each network as a whole is set at 2.5 million EUR for the 5-year period (including the budget reserved for foreign collaborations). Nevertheless, proposals for human science networks will be accepted from networks requesting slightly lower funding (minimum 2 million EUR).
- The minimum funding threshold over the five years is set at 750,000 EUR in the case of principal partners and at 375,000 EUR in the case of associate partners.
- Each network will propose a “follow-up committee” whose members (minimum 3) – belonging to the scientific community (Belgian or non-Belgian), but from outside the network – will monitor the project’s scientific aspects from the submission stage.

- Each network will establish a research project using the proposal submission form produced by OSTC:
 - Networks that have already taken part in one or more IAP phases will justify the appropriateness of continuing their research in the actualised state of the art.
 - Networks that have already taken part in phase IV will take account of the comments in the *ex-post* evaluation. They will clarify the re-organisation of the network and the reorientation of its research direction.

2.2. Recommendations

- The networks will see to it that their proposal includes young emerging teams.
- The networks have the possibility of developing partnerships with non-Belgian universities or public research institutions in the European Union.
- The networks are invited to implement a “graduate training school”.

2.3. Budget distribution

2.3.1 Personnel

- 60% of the total budget for each partner will be set aside for the recruitment of personnel. It will be possible to accept grant-holders exempt from tax and benefiting from social security, in accordance with the Royal Decree of 05/07/1996 on the social security of workers and the directives to be conveyed subsequently by OSTC.
- The personnel recruited will include at least one full-time scientist or the equivalent on a part-time basis.
- The principal partners will see to it that at least one post-doctoral researcher is included.
- Contracts of employment will be for a minimum length of one year.

2.3.2. Operating costs

- The partners will be authorised to pay foreign researchers, other than those targeted by the “personnel” and “co-operation with a non-Belgian institution” headings, in accordance with the directives to be conveyed subsequently by OSTC.

2.3.3. Equipment

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

2.3.4. Overheads

- Overheads account for maximum 5% of total personnel and operating costs.

2.4. Co-operation with a non-Belgian institution

- Partnerships with non-Belgian universities or public research institutions in the European Union must produce added value for the network as a whole.
- The IAP-V programme will only fund the foreign partner to the tune of 50%, with the other 50% remaining the responsibility of the foreign partner.
- The partnership will have to be made official through a written agreement binding upon the institutions to which the foreign partners belong.
- Foreign partners must be chosen in consultation with the network's partners as a whole.
- The number of foreign partners must be compatible with the maximum amount of 125,000 EUR per network over five years (i.e. 250,000 EUR including the 50% from the foreign partnership).
- Co-operation funding will chiefly serve exchanges of researchers and the costs pertaining to the research.

3. SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

3.1. General directives

- University rectors are requested to send in, before 08/06/2001 at 17.00 hrs, network proposals, for which a research unit from their institution will act as co-ordinator, to the following address:

IAP-V Programme
OSTC
rue de la Science 8 Wetenschapstraat
1000 Brussels

- For information, university rectors and the directors of federal scientific institutes will send in a list of all research units in their institution that are being proposed as principal or associate partner for an IAP network.
- The institutions of foreign partners will see to it that they send an official letter to OSTC in order to show their agreement with regard to the 50% co-funding for participation in an IAP network (see form R).
- Proposals will be submitted in English (5 copies) as well as in the language of the network's co-ordinator (2 copies). In the latter case, all partners are left free to complete their section of the form in the language of the institution to which they belong.
- Proposal forms will be remitted in printed form and also, in order to facilitate document processing, in electronic form (e-mail address: IAP-PAI@belspo.be)
- Once the closing date and time have past (08.06.2001 at 17.00 hrs), OSTC will no longer be able to consider proposals.

3.2. Evaluation and selection

Proposals remitted by institutions that are compliant with the eligibility conditions will be subjected to an *ex-ante* evaluation, which will be conducted on the basis of a "peer review". This evaluation, the criteria for which are determined below, will chiefly concern the scientific quality of the projects, cohesion within the networks and the value added by networking.

The evaluation will highlight the consistency and quality of the project as a whole as well as the contribution made to the project by each of the partners.

Priority consideration will be given to:

- The research project's scientific quality and the realism of its objectives:
 - originality of the research topic;
 - possible major contributions to knowledge in the area being studied;
 - knowledge of the state of the art;
 - methodological approach;
 - work plan.
- The quality of the proposed partnership and the value added provided by co-operation within a network:
 - complementarity of the partners and interdisciplinarity of their collective expertise;
 - task distribution;
 - collective and bilateral relations;
 - collaboration methods (joint working, exchanges of researchers...).
- The potentiality of the network and of the partners in terms of:
 - training pre/post-doctorate researchers;
 - the emergence of young researchers and/or teams.
- The network's organisation and management and the management capacity of the co-ordinator.
- The potential role of the network and the various partners at the European and international levels.

Moreover, the selection of proposals emanating from networks that participated in phase IV of the IAP Programme will take account of the results of the *ex-post* evaluation (rendered anonymous), which will be transmitted to the evaluators.

The selection of proposals introduced, conducted on the basis of the scientific evaluations, university priorities and recommendations from the IAP programme "steering committee", will be submitted to the Minister for Scientific Research.

The projects selected will be the subject of a contract effective from 01/01/2002.

4. LIST OF ANNEXED SUBMISSION FORMS

Please note: it is necessary to refer to the “general instructions” document in order to complete the submission forms.

Section I : Forms to be completed by the network co-ordinator

Form A	:	Network composition
Form B	:	Co-ordinator contact details
Form C	:	Proposal summary
Forms D1 et D2	:	Objectives, motivation and state of the art
Form E	:	Detailed description of the proposal
Form F	:	Synoptic list of work packages
Form G	:	Main skills of the partners
Form H	:	Network organisation and management
Form I	:	Budget (global distribution per partner)
Form Z	:	Names of experts

Section II : Forms to be completed by each network partner

Form J	:	Partner contact details
Form K	:	Personnel working on the project
Form L	:	Publications
Form M	:	International contacts in the proposal’s research sphere
Form N	:	Contracts underway in the proposal’s research sphere
Form O	:	Work packages in which the partner will be participating
Form P	:	Budget (distribution per year)
Form Q	:	Declaration of intent by the member of the follow-up committee
Form R	:	Declaration of intent of the European partner and its institution