BRAIN-be 2.0

BELGIAN RESEARCH ACTION THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY NETWORKS
PHASE 2 - 2018-2023

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PARTNER COMPOSITION – INSTITUTION/UNIVERSITY/RESEARCHER

01 Is there an obligation to include an FSI in a thematic proposal?

It depends on the pillar:
- *Pillar 1 and 3 do not require the inclusion of an FSI in the thematic proposals;*
- *For Pillar 2 the proposals must be coordinated by an FSI.*

The participation of FSI is nevertheless encouraged. At equal scientific quality between the proposals submitted, priority will be given to networks in which one or more FSIs are involved.

02 Is there a restriction to the number of project proposals a given institution/university/researcher may participate in as partner and/or coordinator?

No, there is no limitation to the number of proposals a given Institution/university/researcher may participate in as partner and/or coordinator.

03 Will the fact that a given researcher acts as coordinator of several proposals be taken into account in the evaluation?

The fact that a given researcher acts as coordinator of several proposals may be taken into account in the final strategic selection of projects to be financed - cfr institutional coverage criterion described within the Information File and Submission and Evaluation Guidelines documents.

04 Can a coordinator/promoter introduce a co-coordinator/co-promoter from the same institution and under the same budget?

No. It is not possible to have a co-coordinator or co-promoter. The only possible figure in this case is the 'Collaborator'. A given coordinator/ promoter may have ONE 'Collaborator' for a given proposal.

05 Can a member of the Advisory or the Strategic Committee introduce or be part of a project proposal?

Yes, a member of the Advisory or Strategic Committee may introduce or be part of a project proposal, provided that he/she is eligible to be a project partner or coordinator. He/she cannot however participate in any of the steps of the evaluation of said proposal.

06 Can someone who is hired as subcontractor also appear as staff?

No. Someone engaged as a subcontractor cannot appear as staff.

07   Is it necessary to identify the subcontractor in the proposal?

No. BELSPO only requires a description of the subcontracted task(s). The specification of the particular company/institute is not mandatory. It is recommended not to mention the name unless it is certain.

08   May a researcher who does not have PI status be the promoter of a proposal?

It is possible if the institution to which the researcher is affiliated allows it.

09   Is it possible to link a PhD student from a given university to the proposal?

Yes, this is possible. If the PhD student is to be financed by the university, then you must include the candidate's tasks in the Gantt chart and Work Plan (under Other sources). If the PhD student is to be financed by BELSPO via the project, then you must include the candidate within the budget as staff, and include his/her tasks in the Gantt chart and Work Plan.

10   Where can I find information regarding post-doctoral exchange researchers in BRAIN-be 2.0? The 'Information file' does not mention them.

The exchange of post-doctoral researchers is not specified in the information file as such. The BRAIN-be 2.0 Programme allows for promoters to include the exchange of post-doctoral researchers - financing of a Belgian post-doctoral researcher abroad and/or financing of a foreign post-doctoral researcher in Belgium for a period of 6 months to 1 year - in the general project implementation and project budget (under Staff and Specific Operation costs).

11   Is the way a previous BRAIN-be project was run taken into account in the evaluation of a new proposal?

No, BELSPO does not provide information on the way past projects were run to the evaluators.

ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

01   The non-for-profit institution to be included in the proposal does not appear in the list of non-for-profit research centres of the BRAIN-be 2.0 online submission platform. What can I do?

If the non-for-profit research centre does not appear in said list, you may send an Institution Request Form to BELSPO, available on the BRAIN-be 2.0 website, so BELSPO can check whether it can be included.

02   Is the Federal Planning Bureau considered an FSI for BRAIN-be 2.0?

No. The Federal Planning Bureau is a scientific institution recognised by the Federal Council of Ministers, but it is not considered an FSI (see list of FSI in Annex 1 of the Information file).

03   In which project types and pillars can the SCK-CEN participate as partner?

The SCK-CEN can participate in all Pillars and in both project types as a partner.

04 Does the CRISP (Centre de Recherche d'Information Socio-Politique) qualifies as non-for-profit partner?

Yes, the CRISP qualifies as a non-for-profit partner.

05 Is it possible to include a social partner (employer of organisation of employees) under the category of 'others'?

No, social partners cannot be included as official financed partners to the project. The only way to finance the contribution of social partners within the project is as subcontractor.

The project participation of a social partner other then as subcontractor can be confirmed via the completion of the Cash or in-kind commitment letter available on the BRAIN-be 2.0 online submission platform.

Social partners can also be included within the user's committee.

06 Can Federal Departments be partners in a project?

No, Federal Departments cannot be partners. In the case of co-funded projects they are mandatory stakeholders within the project and must make cash and possibly in-kind contributions for said project.

07 Is it possible to work with international partners (other than African partners from LDC) in a project? Can these international partners be financed by the project?

Yes, it is possible to work with all international partners, BUT they CANNOT be funded by the project unless they figure in the list of African countries from LDC.

BUDGET

01 Is it possible to hire staff with a given degree for more than the stipulated maximum (4 200€/month technician, 6 075€/month master, 7 500€/month PhD)?

Yes. It can be done, provided the person to be hired is identified by name in the proposal. Then, the platform will accept a higher salary.

02 Is it possible to hire a doctoral student or a post-doc via a grant instead of a contract?

BELSPO prefers staff to be hired under a labour contract. However tax-free doctoral or post-doctoral scholarships can be exceptionally accepted under the following restricted conditions. The total number of tax-free scholarships per project is limited to max. 50% of the number of staff financed by BRAIN-be 2.0 within said project. In any case, there shall not be more than 2 tax-free scholarships/project. Tax-free scholarships refer to a grant subject to tax exemption under the tax laws. The costs for scholarships are limited to a maximum amount of:

- *4 050 €/month FTE for a tax-free doctoral scholarship (regardless of years of experience)*
- *5 250 €/month FTE for a tax-free postdoctoral scholarship (regardless of years of experience)*

03   **Can a PhD student hired under the project be 'shared' between two institutions in terms of time and budget?**

Yes. The time and cost of a PhD student can be shared by two institutions, but it must be explained within the proposal. Should the proposal be funded, the institutions are responsible for how they apply this arrangement; including the correct inscription of the PhD student to the corresponding university.

04   **What rules apply if there are staff changes along the way during the execution of the project? Is it possible to affect part of the staff budget to other partners/budget category?**

Once the contract of the project has been signed, changes can be made via an amendment to the contract. Amendments can include shifts in budget categories and also - in case of a network project - budget shifts between partners.

05   **Within which budget category should Follow-up Committee members be included?**

Follow-up Committee members cannot be funded for their work, but their travel and accommodation expenses can be covered by the 'General Operating costs'.

06   **Can African academics from Least Developed African Countries be financed by a project partner in the category of 'Specific operating Budget' instead of including them as African Research Partner?**

Yes. It is possible to cover the African academics' expenses from Least Developed African Countries (travel costs, per-diem) using the 'specific operating budget', if it is justified in the project proposal. Note however that this cannot cover salary costs. African academics financed via the 'specific operating budget' cannot be considered 'African Research Partners'.

07   **Is it possible to include salary, operating and / or equipment costs under 'Subcontracting budget'?**

It is possible to include salary and operating costs under 'Subcontracting budget', including the budget for equipment use/hiring. The purchase of equipment is not allowed.

08   **If a Bottom-up project involves only one FSI, is it possible to allocate 25% of the project's total budget for subcontracting?**

Yes. The rule states that subcontracting may not exceed 25% of the total budget allocated to the Belgian partner concerned. If there is one single partner, then the 25% of the partner equals the 25% of the total budget of the proposal.

09   **Is it possible to fund Belgian private institutions in the project?**

Only research institutions can be funded by the project. The list of eligible partners is accessible in the BRAIN-be 2.0 online Submission Platform. If the institution you wish to work with does not appear on the list, please send an [Institution Request Form](#) to BELSPO and we will check its eligibility.

10 | Is there a restriction to the budget an institution/university/researcher may require as partner and/or coordinator?

Yes, depending on the Pillar and the type of project.

<u>*PILLAR 1:*</u> *Bottom-up proposals*

- *Coordinators must be FSIs*
- *Budget = Max 500 000 €/proposal*
- *Each FSI may submit as coordinator different bottom-up projects, for a total max amount up to: 1.5 M€*

<u>*PILLAR 2:*</u> *the introduction of proposals has been limited in terms of a 2,7M€/FSI budget envelope, including both thematic AND bottom-up proposals. This limit has been set based on the average budget demanded by each FSI in the past calls and the available budget of the call, in order to keep a success rate of approximately 30% for thematic proposals.*

- *For Thematic proposals:*
    - *Coordinators must be FSIs*

    - *FSIs must count the budget of their FSI*
    - *The budget of institutions that are not FSIs must be counted as budget of the coordinating FSI*

- *For Bottom-up proposals:*
    - *Coordinators must be FSIs*
    - *Budget = Max 500 000 €/proposal.*
    - *Each FSI may submit as coordinator different bottom-up projects, for a total max amount up to: 900 000€*
    - *Only the budget of the coordinator is counted as budget of the FSI*

<u>*PILLAR 3:*</u> *Co-Funded projects*

For each project, the maximum project budget is provided in the information document of the call. It shall not be exceeded by applicants in their proposal.
The scientific contribution to the project shall be co-funded by the concerned federal department(s) to the amount of min. 10% per participating federal department. The main and remaining funding will be provided by BELSPO (max. 90%).

ANNEXES TO THE PROPOSAL

01 | Is it possible to annex the Follow-up Committee member's CVs to the proposal?

No, annexed CVs of the Follow-up Committee members are not accepted. However, you may join a Follow-up Committee Letter of intent using the form provided within the BRAIN-be 2.0 online Submission Platform.

02   Is it possible to annex the CVs of the partners to the proposal?

No, CVs in annex are not accepted. Space is provided within the proposal for this purpose.

03   Is it possible to include annexes to the proposal description?

No, annexes are not accepted; it is not possible. However note that aside from the proposal description template, other forms are provided to annex to the proposal:

- *GANTT chart*
- *Data Management Plan Form*
- *Ethics form*
- *Cash or in-kind commitment letter*
- *Follow-up committee letter of intent*

04   Is it possible to annex the agreements for in-kind contributions of the partners to the proposal?

No, this is not accepted. However, the in kind contributions of the official project partners should be included in the proposal description.

05   Is it possible to annex support letters from administrations to the proposal?

No, letters of support from an administration are not accepted. However, should the administration wish to make an in-kind or cash contribution to the project, there is a template at your disposal: Cash or in-kind commitment letter (from institutions/ organisations which are not partners of the project).

06   Where can I find the two templates for letters (Cash or in-kind commitment letter and Follow-up Committee letter of intent)?

The templates are available on the Platform, it is compulsory to use them if you want to add information regarding cash or in-kind contributions or the intention of a given person to participate in the Follow-up Committee.

07   What is the difference between the two templates for letters (Cash or in-kind commitment letter and Follow-up Committee letter of intent)?

The Follow-up Committee letter of intent is used by future members of the Follow-up Committee of the project, to signal their engagement. Every project needs to appoint a Follow-up Committee. This letter serves to confirm the interest of future members in participating to this committee. On the other hand, the Cash or in-kind commitment letter is for non-paid partners in the project or for institutions who wish to make a cash contribution to the project.

08   Are there any guidelines regarding the number of pages or the content of the letters Cash or in-kind commitment letter and Follow-up Committee letter of intent)?

No. Both forms are self-explanatory.

09   How does the Gantt chart work?

The explanation of how the Gantt chart works is included in the Gantt chart template available in the platform.

EVALUATORS

01   Is it possible to include a member of the project's Follow-up Committee within the list of proposed experts for the evaluation of the proposal?

No. Members of a project's Follow-up Committee cannot be proposed as experts to evaluate the proposal.

02   Do proposed evaluators have to be European?

By preference evaluators are European. It facilitates the reimbursement of their services.

03   Do I need to have the agreement of the 'proposed experts' in order to include them in the Expression of Interest ?

No. You do NOT need the agreement of the researchers that you want to include in the Expression of Interest as 'proposed experts'. In fact you <u>must NOT contact</u> the foreseen experts at all:
* *You must NOT tell them that you are preparing/sending the proposal*
* *You must NOT ask them to be 'proposed experts'*

It is the task of BELSPO to contact the experts.

PLATFORM

01   Why can't the partners and/or collaborator of the proposal Log In to the platform?

Partners are given access to the platform by the coordinator of the proposal. Partners and collaborators must Log In using the same email address that the coordinator has specified in the proposal. If as partner or collaborator you are not able to access the platform, it is most probably because the email address you are using does not correspond to the one given by the coordinator in the proposal. Please check with the coordinator, and if the problem persists, please contact BELSPO.

02   Is it possible to have access to the proposal template without logging in to the platform?

No. In order to have access to the template and different documents and online fields that compose the proposal, you need to Log In to the platform. All entered data may be changed (or deleted) at any time before the proposal is submitted. You can always decide not to submit your proposal. Non submitted proposals will not be considered for evaluation.

03   I would like to create a proposal within Pillar 2 as coordinator. I have logged in on to the platform as a university, and I cannot find the template of the thematic proposal. Why?

Universities don't have the option to create a proposal within Pillar 2; this is reserved only to FSIs. The coordinator of Pillar 2 proposals must be a FSI. Should universities want to participate in a project within Pillar 2, they must associate as 'partner' to an FSI.

04   How can I delete my proposal?

In order to delete the proposal you must follow the instructions provided within the Platform Submission Guidelines document, section 5.5). Note that only Coordinators can delete proposals.

05   Is it possible to edit my proposal, once submitted?

If your proposal is submitted before the deadline, exceptionally, BELSPO will be able to un-submit your proposal, and you may continue to edit it. After the deadline, there will be no possibilities of editing submitted proposals.

DURATION OF THE PROJECT

01   Is it possible to submit a 3 year project?

Yes. Projects may have a duration of 2, 3 or 4 years.

LENGTH OF THE FULL PROPOSAL

01   Will the Full proposal be deemed ineligible for evaluation if the 'Proposal description' exceeds the established length limits?

The fact that the proposal fails to adhere to the length limits will be taken up in the evaluation.

02   Do the length limits established for the 'Full Proposal description' include also other online fields (i.e. budget table) and forms (i.e. GANTT chart, Ethics form, DMP form…)?

No. The limit is only for the 'Proposal description' template.

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL

01   Do I require the signature of my director/rector in order to submit a proposal?

No, but before submitting an EoI and pre-proposal in the introduction platform, the project coordinator must assure that his/her hierarchical authority agrees with the submission of the proposal.

Before submitting a full proposal, the coordinator must confirm to be mandated by his/her organisation as well as the partners' organisations to submit the full proposal.

RE-SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

01   May I resubmit a proposal?

Yes, it is possible to resubmit proposals which were not selected for funding in previous BRAIN-be 2.0 calls. Make sure when you do so to tick the case 'the proposal is the same...'

01   Is it possible to change the acronym when submitting a 'resubmitted' proposal?

Ideally, a resubmitted proposal must bear the same title, acronym, and content - albeit improved by taking into consideration the remarks given by the evaluators in previous calls. However, if such remarks mean that the acronym, title must change due to the re-focusing of the proposal, then, it is still possible to mark it as 'resubmitted', specifying in the summary the acronym of the previous proposal, and stating the reasons why you changed it.

CO-FUNDED PROPOSALS

01   For co-funded projects relating to burn out and reintegration (co-funded by BOSA), can interventional studies be made on a sub-sample of civil servants?

Yes, such interventional studies are possible, but the choice of the sub-sample of the federal civil servants has to enable generalisation.

02   We are considering submitting a proposal that focuses on the agri-food chain material indicators, more specifically for nitrogen, phosphorus and protein. Would that be in scope? If not, which materials and sectors do you expect to be examined?

Projects should focus on flows related to products covered by the "product norm" law of 21 December 1998. The European Circular Economy Action Plan (https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en) highlights the sectors, products and flows identified as priorities. Agri-food is an important sector, but falls outside this project.

03   Can a research team apply for a co-funded project and a thematic project whose topic is quite close?

Yes, a team can perfectly apply for both types of projects simultaneously.

04   Given the fixed budget of a co-funded project, can the team depart from the timing suggested in the description?

Yes, as long as the allocated budget is untouched.

05   Can two co-funded projects be selected and run in parallel?

No. For each co-funded priority, only one proposal will be funded. In case several proposals are in competition, the proposal scoring highest will be selected.