



Guidelines for submission of transnational proposals within the 6th ERA-IB joint call for proposals in industrial biotechnology

1. Aim

Industrial Biotechnology (IB) is essential for the construction of a Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy, using innovation from life sciences research to develop new sustainable, eco-efficient and competitive products and technologies. ERA-IB aims to bring together partners with different but complementary scientific and technological expertise to maximise resources and share risks, costs and skills. A prerequisite for transnational projects to be supported in this call is the inclusion of several different parts of the whole value chain. This will enable the newly developed products, technologies, or services to reach the market efficiently. The partnership between industrial and academic IB researchers will improve and accelerate technology transfer, and strengthen European efforts to achieve sustainable industrial development.

2. Project scope and funding

The strategic objective of ERA-IB calls is to foster the competitiveness of Europe's industrial biotechnology research by supporting academic and industrial research and their strategic partnerships. The ERA-IB focus is to support innovation and pre-competitive research by funding projects with challenging application aspects and a substantial industrial impact.

2.1. Recommendations for project budgets and project duration

Project budgets must convincingly allow the achievement of the project goals and should not exceed national or regional funding limits for each partner (for details, see annex to call text). For further information, see contact information below, *Funding options and restrictions* and *National or regional regulations, national or regional eligibility criteria* (annex to the call). The project duration may be up to 3 years (4 years for Dutch partners).

2.2. Budget & funding modalities

- Funding of project partners is provided by the national or regional funding organisations according to *national or regional regulations, and national or regional eligibility criteria* (see annex to the call text). Note that there is no common pot and that national / regional budgets differ, which limits funding possibilities for lower ranked proposals.
- A Consortium Agreement has to be in place within three months of the project start. The first instalments can be transferred only after a Consortium Agreement has been signed by all parties.

3. ERA-IB eligibility requirements

ERA-IB has developed formal criteria that are applied in the eligibility check and evaluation process to select the best projects as outlined in the mission. These criteria have been agreed on by all participating national or regional funding organisations and are described in the call text, but please note that this does not exclude more specific criteria set up in the national or regional programmes.

The eligibility criteria are stated in call text under chapter 6, “*Eligibility and evaluation procedure*” and in the *national or regional regulations, national or regional eligibility criteria* (annex to the call text).

3.1. Composition of consortia

It is the aim of the 6th ERA-IB joint call, which is supported by EuroTransBio, to facilitate broad-based funding from the member countries or regions and to allow for flexibility with regard to the composition of consortia, in particular in respect to size / number of partners (see below).

Successful consortia eligible for funding will display the following characteristics:

- The consortium consists of at least three partners (academic research groups or other public research organisations as well as small or large companies) who request funding from three different ERA-IB-2 and/or EuroTransBio member countries/regions contributing to the call. Note that a partner from a region working with a partner from another part of the same country obviously do NOT fall into the definition of transnational collaboration! Should such a case arise, these two partners would still require partners from two other countries in order to fulfil the eligibility criteria. The consortium must be balanced between countries or regions and between consortium partners. Consortia can involve a maximum of eight partners. The partners should clearly add value to the planned cooperation.
- Consortia must be coordinated by a project coordinator from an organization that successfully applies for public funding from an ERA-IB-2 or EuroTransBio member country.
- The contribution of one country or region or one company to the collaborative project must not exceed 70% of the total budget in order to ensure balanced partnerships within the project.
- Parties from countries or regions which do not take part in the ERA-IB-2 or EuroTransBio call may be part of a consortium at their own cost if their contribution is important to achieve the project goals.
- The participation of an industrial partner in the consortium is mandatory.
- Industrial partners that cannot be funded by their national/regional funding organisation may participate in a consortium at their own cost.

3.2. Responsibility of the project coordinator

- The project coordinator will lead the consortium through the application procedure and is fully responsible for the overall project coordination.

- The project coordinator has to make sure the project complies with ERA-IB-2 and/or EuroTransBio requirements as detailed above (see 3.1) and in the call text and is thus eligible for ERA-IB-2 or EuroTransBio. While all partners should resolve possible queries with their respective national or regional agencies/ministries, the project coordinator has a responsibility to co-ordinate these activities in close contact with the ERA-IB-2 Call Secretariat and the ERA-IB-2 or EuroTransBio contact persons of his/her national or regional funding organisation.
- All communication with ERA-IB-2 concerning the project will be through the project coordinator. Consequently, the project coordinator has to disseminate information provided by ERA-IB-2 to all consortium partners.
- When building the consortium, the coordinator has to confirm with the consortium partners that they are eligible for support from their respective national or regional funding organisations. In the case of contribution from non-ERA-IB-2/EuroTransBio international partners, the consortium co-ordinator should ensure that he/she is satisfied as to the availability of funds to support the contribution of those partners.

3.3. Project funding

All consortium partners must prove sufficient financial stability to conduct the project properly. National or regional funding organisations will check the financial status of partners from their own country/region.

4. Application procedure

4.1. Application scheme

The application process is divided into two steps (pre-proposals and full proposals). In the first evaluation round, the pre-proposals are checked for formal eligibility and evaluated according to the criteria laid down in the call text (chapter 6.2, Pre-proposal evaluation). Coordinators of positively evaluated pre-proposals are invited to submit a full proposal via the ERA-IB submission website (<https://www.submission-era-ib.eu/>). In the second round, full proposals are subjected to a thorough quality assessment with respect to:

1. Relevance of the proposal to the aims of the call
2. Scientific and technological quality
3. Economic and social perspective
4. Administrative and financial assessment

For details, see call text (Chapter 6.3, Full proposal evaluation).

Positively evaluated projects will be recommended for funding. The formal funding decision is taken at national / regional level, and projects will be funded through the relevant national / regional programmes. The ERA-IB Call Secretariat will inform the coordinators about the status of national / regional decisions.

4.2. Information, communication & further assistance for applicants

- Each funding organisation has nominated contact persons (see chapter 8 of the call) who will provide information about specific national or regional regulations and requirements (see *National or regional regulations, national or regional eligibility*

criteria (annex to the call). It is recommended to contact the relevant contact persons prior to the pre-proposal and full proposal submission process.

- The only official communication line for the ERA-IB call is between the ERA-IB Call Secretariat and the project coordinator. The project coordinator is the only contact person informed by ERA-IB Call Secretariat in all relevant questions during the application procedure, so he/she must provide this information to the partners (see also 3.2).
- For further assistance, please see the ERA-IB website (www.era-ib.net) and the ERA-IB submission website (<https://www.submission-era-ib.eu/>).
- For additional information and support, please refer to the nominated contact persons (see chapter 8 of the call).

4.3. Pre-proposal

Pre-proposals are checked for eligibility according to the evaluation criteria laid down in the call text. Pre-proposals must be submitted via the electronic submission system described under 5. The deadline for submission of pre-proposals is the 23rd of February 2015 (13:00 CET).

4.3.1. Completing the pre-proposal form

- Please fill in the pre-proposal form and check that all fields are completed with the required information.
- The pre-proposal executive summary should provide project goals, a scientific/technological overview, describe the economic and social impact, project management, the responsibilities of the project partners, the division of the collaborative project into subprojects, and the necessary resources. It must also include a preliminary descriptive work plan. The project should be in line with the requirements cited in the call text and in section 3.
- The space available for your information has been limited on purpose. No additional documents will be considered.

4.3.2. Eligibility check and evaluation

Eligibility will be checked by ERA-IB-2 or EuroTransBio through the participating agencies/ministries/funding organisations with regard to the following criteria: 1) **ERA-IB call requirements** that apply in all member countries, 2) **national or regional criteria** that apply exclusively to applicants from these countries (see *National or regional regulations, national or regional eligibility criteria* (annex to the call)).

The evaluation will be carried out according to the evaluation criteria listed in the call text.

The ERA-IB Call Secretariat will inform the project coordinators of the results of the first assessment step via e-mail, no later than the end of April 2015. Only eligible and positively evaluated proposals will be considered for further evaluation.

The information given in the pre-proposal is binding and changes (composition of consortia, fundamental changes in the projects) between the pre-proposal and the full proposal are subject to approval by the funding organisations involved. Such approval is collected and distributed by the ERA-IB Call Secretariat (ptj-eraibcalloffice@fz-juelich.de).

4.4 Full proposal

Coordinators of successful pre-proposals are invited to submit a full proposal by the 15th of June 2015 (13:00 CET).

4.4.1. Completing the full proposal form

- Please check the information given in your pre-proposal and make sure it is correct.
- If you feel that any changes are necessary, please indicate this clearly and contact the ERA-IB Call Secretariat for approval.
- Please follow the template and be aware that the project description should allow evaluators to assess properly all evaluation criteria as laid down in the call text.
- The space available for your information has been limited intentionally. No additional documents will be considered.

4.5. Evaluation and rebuttal

The evaluation of the proposals is conducted by an international panel of experts with relevant knowledge in the field. The expert panel will establish a ranking of the proposals. Based on the ranking and the available funding, the ERA-IB-2 and EuroTransBio Executive Board will suggest which projects to fund. The involved funding agencies/ministries will take the final funding decisions at national or regional level.

The evaluation process provides applicants with the opportunity to reply to issues raised by the expert panel. The guidelines for this process are described below. These rules and regulations are binding for all applicants.

4.5.1 General rebuttal process

- Reviews from expert panel members are obtained on each proposal. Project coordinators will get access to all reviews of the corresponding project, without revealing the identity of the evaluator.
- The project coordinator is the contact person for the ERA-IB Call Secretariat. The project coordinator may submit a response to the comments of the reviewers via the ERA-IB submission website. He/she may consult the other partners in the consortium, but only one response from the coordinator must be sent.
- Please note that this response is optional. Giving no response therefore does not exclude the proposal from the next stage of the review procedure.
- Responses by the project coordinator must comply with the rules and regulations listed below.
- Following submission of the response via the ERA-IB submission website, there will be no further discussion between the applicants and the ERA-IB Call Secretariat or expert panel members.
- The reviews and the optional responses are then the basis for the expert panel who will meet and agree on a ranking list of all proposals. Please note that (1) the decision about the ranking is the responsibility of the expert panel and (2) the final decision about the funding is the task of the funding organisations alone.

4.5.2. Rules and regulations for the rebuttal

- Please submit your response via the ERA-IB submission website (<https://www.submission-era-ib.eu/>).
- The response is strictly limited to the space available in the rebuttal form. Attachments or appendices are not permitted. All further pages will be deleted regardless of the content.
- The purpose of the response is to enable the applicants to address technical queries and points of fact, and the response must be confined to these issues. In particular, the response must not discuss the competence, expertise or suitability of the evaluator.
- The response can only provide feedback on comments specifically raised by the evaluator and should not be used to otherwise introduce entirely new information or to change the proposal e.g. by presenting new work, additional publications or new financial calculations.

5. Delivery

All proposals are submitted via the ERA-IB submission website (<https://www.submission-era-ib.eu/>).

Please submit your proposal in time. ERA-IB and EuroTransBio strongly recommends submitting pre-proposals and full proposals well before the deadlines.

6. Confidentiality

ERA-IB and EuroTransBio ensure complete confidentiality to applicants, i.e., the proposal will only be read by the national or regional funding organisations involved and by the international experts, and be handled by the ERA-IB call secretariat. All of these persons will have signed a confidentiality agreement.

7. Conflict of interest

In order to exclude individual conflicts of interest, the applicants are encouraged in this early phase to provide a number of names of companies / research groups / individual evaluators (e.g. direct competitors, names of individuals) who should be excluded from the ERA-IB expert panel, with a maximum of five. Please send your request to the ERA-IB Call Secretariat, (ptj-eraibcalloffice@fz-juelich.de) stating the reason for excluding the potential referees. Your request must reach the secretariat by the 23rd of February 2015 and will be treated confidentially.

8. Project start and follow-up of the projects

Within three months of the project start, a Consortium Agreement addressing the points listed in the **consortium agreement guidelines** should be signed by all consortium members and made available to the national or regional funding organisation on request, together with any other information required by national or regional regulations. The DESCA model, recommended by the European Commission can be used, but it is not an obligation.

The follow up of each project is conducted by each of the national or regional funding organisations involved, according to national or regional regulations and to individual contracts between applicants and agencies/ministries.

Project coordinators may be required to provide a mid-term project progress report and/or presentation, publishable project summaries and a final report via the ERA-IB submission website.

Coordinators will present the results of their projects at status seminars. There will be two seminars, at mid-term and at the end of the project. The travel and accommodation costs for attending the status seminars shall be paid from the travel budget of the project. Please note that these seminars are non-confidential – presentations will be disseminated and shared outside ERA-IB.