

URBAN-NET

Deliverable 4.1

“Protocol and procedures for the planning and implementation of URBAN-NET common calls for research proposals”

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(Leader of work package 4)
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1. Introduction

This document summarises the iterative work carried out by WP4 with project partners to understand the various national research funding and management mechanisms to formulate common procedures and protocols for project partners to participate in a joint call. The success of this work is measured by the development of the resultant “call text” and “memorandum of understanding” that underpin the launching of a joint call in January 2008.

2. Elaboration of common Procedures Summary Overview

Two ways have been followed in URBAN-NET to elaborate the protocol and procedures for joint calls: a bottom-up way, with a questionnaire developed by Formas (WP5 leader) to the other URBAN-NET participants, and a top-down way, developed and implemented by MEDAD (leader of WP4), discussing a model of MoU, coming from best practices in other ERANETS.

A significant agreement was reached in the first project Steering Group meeting in February 2007 for a pilot call common to the whole URBAN-NET on the broad theme of urban sustainability. As a result of this, experiences were searched among other ERA-NET's who had also issued calls for research proposals covering a broad scope. An URBAN-NET Memorandum of Understanding was adapted from that of Nanosciences-ERA-NET was presented to the Management group meeting in April 2007.

The discussion through e-mails and during the Stakeholder meeting in Edinburgh in June 2007, showed that if the URBAN-NET was going to have a broad pilot call to explore its field, it would not be possible at this stage to manage the call in a centralised manner, with a common pot, as experienced in the Nanosciences-ERA-NET.

The common call will be launched by URBAN-NET partners participating in this call through their national frameworks, with the condition that researchers answering the call belong to a consortium of at least three countries applying within the same research project. Some partners asked for those three countries to be open to countries not members of URBAN-NET. Then, a scheme for exploratory research, funded by one country inside the ERANET with two other participating, was set up to welcome all combinations. With this rule URBAN-NET became open to North-South cooperation and URBAN-NET is exploring the extension of the network to new European countries.

During the following discussion, by mail, in the Stakeholder workshop in Edinburgh in June 2007 and in the Network meeting in Köln in September 2007, the rule of a common scientific evaluation of all the research projects was set up. The evaluation will give the unity of the program, while the funding of accepted applications will be done at the national level. The expert panel will be made of scientific key persons coming from all the countries funding the call, with two experts per country. The panel will perhaps be open to prominent researchers from other European countries or scientific international organisations. But this point is still under-discussion while this report is written as it had been decided to form the panel subject to the number and themes of the proposals received.

The actual funding of projects will be decided by each national funding organisation, after the scientific evaluation. The evaluation conclusions will be given as recommendations and will only be decided in October 2008 following the complete evaluation process.

The result of the development work described above is represented as the MoU and the call text, which are being used as the key documents in the pilot call and documented in D5.1. They represent a synthesis of these two ways of designing protocols and procedures. The

questionnaire that kick-started this process was circulated to all project partners to understand national parameters and rules for transnational collaboration and to determine the level of interest and possibility to participate in the first (pilot) call. The Responses to this gives interesting details on national perspectives, on resemblances and differences that provided the main input to compiling the call text and MoU. The questionnaire questions are at Annex 1. A synthesis of the answers is given in the following sections, followed by the tables of those answers, and by the list of the raised questions.

3. Summary of the questionnaire responses

A tabulated summary of the questionnaire responses is shown on the following 3 pages. More detailed descriptions and responses by the project partners are described in Section 4.

Overview of the answers to the Pilot Joint Call questionnaire	Bulgaria	Cyprus	France	Germany	Nicis	NWO	Romania	SEERAD	SenterNovem	SNIFFER	Sweden	Turkey
2. Type of call												
Open call preferred	x	x		x		x						x
Limited nr of contractors							x			x		
Both possible/ preferred			x		x			x	x		x	
3. Model for funding												
“National funding”	x			x			x					x
Common pot preferred					x				x			
Both possible/ suggested		x						x		x	x	
4. Thematic scope												
Broad thematic scope		x			x				x		x	x
Narrow, 2-3 themes			x			x	x			x		
Broad + 2-3 themes	x			x				x				
5. Prioritised themes												
Environmental s.	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x
Social s.			x	x	x		x				x	
Economic s.			x				x	x	x	x		x
Political/administrative	x						x					
6-7. Pilot Call partner												
Wants to participate if...	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Can't participate unless...				x						x		
8-9. Level of funding												
Min contribution (1000 €)	20	20	50	-	25	Yes	?	No	15	-	Yes	No
Level of national funding	?	300	100	-	200	?	130	?	?	-	300	200
10. Target groups												
Call open to all	x	x		x	x		x	x	x			x
University lead partner			x			x					x	
11. Types of research												
Basic research		x			x	x	(x)				x	x
Applied research	x	x			x	x	x	x			x	x
Experiment, development		x					x					x
Knowledge exchange	x		x					x			x	
Academic positions						x					x	
All kinds			(x)	x	(x)				x			

	Bulgaria	Cyprus	France	Germany	Nicis	NWO	Romania	SEERAD	SenterNovem	SNIFFER	Sweden	Turkey
12. Project structure												
Number of partners			2						15			
Number of countries	5	2	2			3			7			
Univ. + companies/cities				x					?		x	
Inter- or crossdisciplinary						?		?			x	
Loose coord., network		x	x			x			x			x
Multiple output									x			x
13a. Funding instr.												
Preferably R&D projects							x					x
Funding all	x	x	x			x			x		x	
To be discussed later				x	x			x		x		
13b. Funding modalities												
Similar to example		x	x	x							x	?
Prefers co-funding	x				x							
Funds research only						x						
14. Dissemination												
Similar ideas from all												
15 – 17. Application												
One point of submission	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Formas point of subm.	x	x	x	x	x	?	x	x	x		x	x
Electronic/ deadlines	x					x	x				x	
National contact points	x		x	x					x			x
18 – 19. see next page												
20. Evaluation process												
Common expert panel	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
Cannot say at this stage						x						
21. Decision procedures												
Steering group for themes			x	x		x					x	
Urban-net-m. for call dec.		x			x							x
Non-participants observe		x				x	x	x		x		x
External panel for propos.			x			x		x	x			
Two-step procedures						x		x				
Eligibility check national												
Eligibility check Formas					x							

	Bulgaria	Cyprus	France	Germany	Nicis	NWO	Romania	SEERAD	SenterNovem	SNIFFER	Sweden	Turkey
22. Other issues												
Budget issues in €			x									
Proposals etc. in English			x									
Proposals are public											?	
Duration Pilot call proj.?											?	
18. Evaluation criteria												
19. Special attention X												
<i>Relevance</i>								X			X	x
Urban sustainability goals	X			x				x		x		
Social relevance	x			x	x							
Goals of the pilot call		x	x			x	x					
Integrated approach	X											
Cross-regional dimension	x			x		x						
International dimension	x											
Inovation/originality		x		x	x		x					x
<i>Scientific quality</i>			X	X							X	x
Methodology		x	x		x	x		x				
Theoretical references			x		x	x						
Aim/research questions					x	x		x		x		
Originality			X			x						
Interdisciplinarity	X					x						
Scientific integrity										x		
Back-casting (method?)									X			
<i>Consortium</i>											X	x
Competence		x	X	x		x	x	x				
Complementarity of act.						x						
Management								x				
Infrastructure		x					x					
European dimension			x									
Early-career researchers						x						
Communication strategy			x									
Cost/quality/output			x	x		x	x	x		x		
Added value		x					x					

4. Detailed results of the questionnaire survey and supplementary responses by URBAN-NET partners

The answers from the different partners are labelled by the name of the **country**, or when there is more than one partner from the same country with the name of the **organisation**.

Bulgaria ASDE

Cyprus RPF

France MTETM

Germany TÜV and also some answers from BBR

The Netherlands Nicis, NWO, SenterNovem

Romania IPA

Scotland SEERAD, SNIFFER

Sweden Formas

Turkey TUBITAK

4.1 Objectives of the call

Formas: The general objective of joint calls is to support the development of an efficient European Research Area (ERA), giving actors access to a larger research community and support the interaction and cooperation between research groups. More specifically, URBAN-NET aims to structure and coordinate research on urban sustainability in Europe, to support the implementation of the ERA in the urban research field as well as other European legislation, policy and strategies relating to sustainable urban development. The specific objective of a Pilot Joint Calls in the URBAN-NET project is to test different forms of calls, different approaches for funding, different mechanisms etc. Furthermore, this “learning by doing” is also a way of finding out what possible obstacles to joint calls might occur. In addition to these objectives, which refer to the ERA objectives and the objectives and tasks of the URBAN-NET project, the call consortium can formulate objectives more specifically related to research policy or urban policy in the EU, at national or regional level, e.g. to stimulate researchers to cooperate more across national borders, or to redirect their focus into the field of urban sustainability, or to address a specific urban issue, etc. The game of setting objectives in the partnership will be a game of balancing between very specific objectives, which makes the call narrow and perhaps attracts a limited number of applications, and very broad and general objectives, which are easy to agree upon and may open up for many applications, but on the other hand might give a very disperse output.

Germany is interested in thematic priorities

A specific policy objective offers the opportunity to generate similar research projects at a national level. These projects will be comparable and could be connected by common activities (e. g. workshops). The current German discussion on Urban Sustainability is focussed on following subjects and topics:

Climate Change and Resources Management

This policy objective refers to renewable energies and energy efficiency as well as to adaptation to and mitigation of existing and forthcoming impacts of climate change. Currently the Federal Ministry of Urban Development is discussing the set-up of a new research focus on “Energy Efficient Cities”.

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Education and Schools

In fragmented and multi-cultural urban societies as well as in deprived neighbourhoods, districts schools receive an increasing relevance as integrating factors of urban development. A lot of ideas are being discussed from new organisational and financial structures of schools to target agreements with pupils in order to avoid drop-outs. A national competition

introducing clear and simple criteria for evaluation and research activities could be an interesting instrument for a joint call.

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Land Use and Recycling Management

One of the most accepted aims of Urban Sustainability is the reduction of new land consumption for housing and transport needs. The implementation of this objective seems to be rather difficult to implement. I.e. not only because of high costs for land recycling of brown-fields, but also because of an increasing competition between cities and suburbs.

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Multi-generation housing and special housing needs of Elderly People

Demographic change is undoubtedly a challenge for European Cities as Elderly People will become the majority of population in coming years. Changing and more differentiated lifestyles and mobility behaviours are very likely. To cope with this challenges the district- and neighbourhood level will become more important than today. The question will be how to get integrated and complementary structures within the cities to meet different needs of different generations.

The Netherlands is looking for organisational objectives

Nicis, in charge of disseminating research to cities wants the call to establish a meaningful cooperation between the research community and practitioners.

NWO, responsible of the urbanisation research programme, stresses several objectives:

- To support excellent research
- to promote and support cooperation between researchers from different countries
- to stimulate researchers early in their careers
- to support innovative, original and ground-breaking research
- to coordinate scattered capacities
- to contribute to the development of urban science globally

SenterNovem, in charge of supporting new technologies for energy efficiency and sustainable development is interested by integrative approach of sustainability and transnational cooperation

Bulgaria has planning and policy objectives

- targeting major environmental and social problems in urban regions;
- monitoring of sustainable urban development and management;
- assessment and adoption of different indicators for sustainable urban development/or good R&D practices in urban planning/, based on regional approach;
- providing base for investments from private sector in the proposed project and involving more interested parties;
- involving universities;

France looks for transnational research

- to exchange knowledge between countries
- to test methodologies from one country in another

Cyprus proposes organisational recommendations for the calls.

- 1) The first pilot call should be general and open regarding the thematic areas and procedures that will underpin it.

- 2) The joint call should give emphasis to the integration of the procedures (eg submission, evaluation, decision making etc) rather than establishing a system of "parallel" launching of National Programmes.

Conclusions for call and MoU texts:

Most participants prefer openness of thematic areas in this call; following calls may be narrower based on work of WP3, in charge of defining thematic priorities.

Integration of the procedures: submission and evaluation but decision making national.

4.2 Form/type of call

Formas: There are several types of calls which can be tested in a pilot call. Open call for proposals and Call for tenders from a limited number of possible contractors are two options. Experience from the ERABUILD project is that the latter alternative can be used when the funding partners agree on a very specific project brief, with the aim to fund one joint project.

An open call for proposals was chosen for the pilot call, because it was preferred by 5 organisations, ASDE from Bulgaria, Research Promotion Foundation from Cyprus, PT MVBW and BBR from Germany, TUBITAK from Turkey, NOW from The Netherlands. This form/type of call gives the opportunity to many applicants with ideas covering a broad spectrum of Sustainability to submit project proposals."(Cyprus) 5 organisations, MEDAD from France, SEERAD from Scotland, SenterNovem, and Nicis from The Netherlands and Formas from Sweden, do not mention any preference.

The open call is preferred when the targeted applicants are University members like for TUBITAK in Turkey or for NOW (The Netherlands) :“The call should be open to all universities to apply for research-funding. The procedure could probably best be organised by a two-step model in which first an outline proposal is presented and only a selection of the submitted outline-proposals is allowed to submit a full proposal. The outline proposal could be assessed by a review committee, while the full proposal should also be reviewed by external referees (two or three). Since cooperation between the different partner countries should be a goal, there should also be a minimum level for researchers from different countries cooperating together.”

A call for tenders from a limited number of possible contractors is preferred by two organisations, SNIFFER and Romania, so as to be able to concentrate the resources on a well-defined area of research. “Our experience from directing partnership working suggests that requiring contractors to fulfil a specific project brief will:

- Usefully requires partners to clarify priority research needs in advance;
- Be easier for contractors to respond to in a meaningful way;
- Is more likely to address identified needs and expectations of the majority of partners;
- Will be easier to project manage.”

We decided to have an open-call for the pilot call to include most partners.

The possibility was left open that in countries preferring the call for tender, or having no program open at the date of the launching of the call, researches could be negotiated with the other model, as described by Seerad (Scotland): “SEERAD operates a number of funding mechanisms for the research it commissions, depending on circumstances. These include the ‘open call’ route where calls are open to any interested party, usually advertised on our website. Specificity (or boundary setting) also varies between calls we issue: for some we set out in the call our broad area of interest and invite contractors to submit detailed proposals; for others, we explicitly state our requirements or the subject area and invite contractors to submit detailed proposals on methods they propose to use to deliver our requirements.” Pragmatism is also the case in Germany, and in the new French programs (ANR-Sustainable cities and CNRS-PIRVE)

4.3 Model for funding

Formas: Several different models for funding can be taken into consideration. Pooling of national funding into a common pot or funding from each URBAN-NET partner restricted to project partners from their own country? A combination of those? Other models?

Funding from each URBAN-NET partner restricted to project partners from their own country is preferred by Bulgaria, Germany, NWO in Netherlands, Romania and Turkey.

And the argumentation is quite strong to say that doing things another way would be impossible. Two country who are in favour of a common pot, explain that it will be rather difficult either to make decision about it (Cyprus), or to organise the reporting in relation with it (France).

Pooling of national funding into a common pot is preferred by Nicis and SenterNovem from Netherlands, but they don't give any information on how this could work. Who would make the bank for the others?

Both funding models are possible for SEERAD, SNIFFER and Sweden, but again without any information on how the common pot could work..

No definite restrictions are mentioned in the above preferences. The model of contracting for a common pot, and the organisation able to play this role will have to be studied in the following work.

The virtual common pot gathered by URBAN-NET is a "distributed" common pot. That means that all national contributions are made public and known when the call is launched. The common pot is distributed between the selected projects according to the national contributions of the countries to which belong the researchers.

The model of funding for each research (grant for a part of the cost of the research or full cost funding) will be studied on the applications received in answer to the call.

4.4 Thematic scope and strategic prioritisation

Formas: A broad thematic scope, with a high level of bottom-up approach regarding the urban issues to be addressed or the topics of research to be carried out and the fields of expertise involved, will probably stimulate many different potential partners to establish consortia and submit calls. This approach is likely to result in many proposals and a large outreach of the call. The evaluation might be complicated, e.g. it might be difficult to use the same evaluation criteria on proposals from very different fields of expertise, and there could be a risk that the URBAN-NET partners have difficulties to prioritise between proposals addressing very different urban problems. A more narrow scope, on the other hand, will limit the outreach of the call, might result in a smaller number of proposals. The evaluation procedure is likely to be easier in this case, and the ranking of proposals for funding more simple.

Bulgaria: We propose both - global and specific objectives. In any case it is preferable to have some specific thematic objectives covering urban area but also to keep interdisciplinary participation. For instance the global objective can be proposing overall criteria as the so-called "eco-foot" per citizen or household; another possibility is efficient land use/ land management; Specific objective can be accepted regionally or on national level.

Cyprus: “The Research Promotion Foundation prefers a broad thematic scope, with a bottom up approach regarding the urban issues to be addressed, as this would probably stimulate many different potential partners to establish consortia and submit proposals. As it is the first time of launching the joint call a broad thematic scope for testing the mechanism should be more appropriate. Afterwards, with a common pot and all countries participating, a narrower specified prioritisation could also be acceptable.”

Turkey: “Having a pilot call encompassing a broad range of urban sustainability issues will allow us to reach a wider audience and possibly have a positive effect on the number of proposals received. We will therefore have a better idea of the kinds of topics researchers are more interested in, and see whether or not there are differences in the kinds of topics that receive attention in partner countries. This knowledge will provide information regarding the extent to which researchers share URBAN-NET’s notion and definition of urban sustainability and may prove to be a valuable resource for creating a shared understanding of the scope of URBAN-NET. It will also act as a “market research” tool: having insight into the kinds of topics that receive the most interest and enthusiasm may prove very beneficial when crafting the “advertising” efforts that we will need to undertake as part of the efforts to make URBAN-NET widely known and recognised.”

The three partners from **The Netherlands** had intermediary position, Senter Novem being for a broad scope, but with an integrative approach; Nicis for a broad scope but with a socio-economic approach; Now for a narrow specified prioritisation, perhaps the international analysis of a theme already studied at national level. **Germany** had also an intermediary position asking for “a thematic scope as broad as possible and as narrow as necessary”.

Romania and **France** thought that a focused call should bring more, avoid the rhetoric of sustainability and rather lead to studies of the implementation of urban sustainability.

Themes were proposed at that stage, but this entered in the process of defining research areas, which is studied in deliverables from WP3. During the elaboration of the call and of the MoU, a new approach of this question of scope was adopted, following the points made by Netherlands (Senter Novem and Nicis). The themes will be open to the choices of the researchers but the integrative approach for any theme strongly recommended. The concept of “resilient city”, a city both attractive and resistant to environmental threats, was given to researchers as this recommendation to deal with any of the subjects they will decide to study.

The importance of an integrative or interdisciplinary approach was emphasised from the beginning of URBAN-NET, and resumed in the symbol of urban sustainability as a flower, with all its research fields as petals around the urban core.

4.5 Types of research

A majority of the organisations are open for, or even prefer, funding applied research, and some mention experimental and development projects.

Many organisations are positive to funding knowledge exchange through workshops and networks, but several think it is not sufficient for a research project, which must bring new insights and results. Knowledge exchange and workshops appears rather as a common activity, which should be developed at the URBAN-NET network level, in thematic areas.

All respondents think that projects must be organized in close cooperation by practitioners and researchers, as is underlined by Germany. ‘The experimental research projects are important to demonstrate innovative solutions or to evaluate the feasibility of technical ideas’

Germany would like the establishment of internet based networks . The language barrier is still a problem experienced in EUKN already.

Cooperation between activities is an objective of URBAN-NET development. The first period has been devoted to establish the will and the basis for it through the preparation of the pilot call.

4.6 Targets of the call and envisaged project structures

Formas: Should the call be open to any type of organisation to submit research applications and participate in research projects; universities, research institutes, private enterprise, local and regional authorities etc, or do we have specific target groups? Do we wish to restrict participation in projects to a certain type of research organisation? Some URBAN-NET partners may normally have restrictions as to who is eligible for funding (e.g. private enterprise can not be the lead partner), or specific target groups which are given priority in their research funding.

For Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Scotland the call should be open to any partner. Turkey, NWO and Nicis (The Netherlands) ask consortiums to be lead by University members. In France and in Germany projects are not funded at full cost when they come from private enterprises or local authorities. In France most projects come from Universities, or little research private firms.

For all participants the call has to be disseminated to all potential stakeholders.

4.7 Decision to participate in the call and timing

10 organisations from 8 countries participated in the launching of the call and signed the Memorandum of understanding. There was a difficult moment during this discussion when it appeared that 5 countries were in favour of a completely open thematic call, and 3 in favour of a more focused call on the concept of “the resilient city”. This difficulty was solved by giving the status of a recommended approach and not a compulsory theme to the “resilient city” item. There was then a general consensus to launch the call together, with 8 countries and 10 organisations.

But it was not possible to wait for new national programmes coming on. Several countries said that the decision process in their country was limited in time: the money promised for 2008 could not be distributed the year after. So the all process of launching the call, evaluating the proposals, asking for the funding from the organisations, signing the contracts had to be inscribed in one civil year. The launching of the call was prepared for 2008 January 15th, for the evaluation to take place at the beginning of September and the contracting at the beginning of October.

The funding is given by national research organisations, having national programs on urban sustainability, using the national rules of funding to fund the researchers belonging to the same country. The comparison between those national rules was not done systematically at that stage. It was preferred to learn by doing, and to discover with the research projects the problems which can raise from different rules between countries.

Some members of Urban-net could not launch the call because they had no research programme on urban sustainability open at that time. It is the case in Germany and in Scotland.

New organisations may enter the process, when launching calls in the urban sustainability field. It is the case of National agency for research in France which is launching a programme on Sustainable cities. But the programme was not ready when the URBAN-NET programme was launched. So cooperation will come for the next calls. The situation is similar in United Kingdom, in which Academy for Sustainable Communities may join, but no programme was open at the very moment of the launching of the pilot call. Research cooperation between URBAN-NET countries may come also with commissioned research projects elaborated in common by several countries; this has not appeared yet.

4.8 Project structures

Formas: What type/s of projects do we prefer to fund? The volume in terms of budget, number of partners, number of countries involved etc. Requirements on the consortia, e.g. partners from cities, or companies as well as universities included in the consortium. Level of collaboration, e.g. one, strictly coordinated project with one single output, or projects more like a research network, with multiple output (by each individual project partner or sub-project) and moderate or low level of coordination.

For **Cyprus** and **France** a consortium must include at least three countries to avoid bilateral projects. **Bulgaria** and **The Netherlands** at that stage thought in terms of open networks, multidisciplinary, with may be 15 members, covering either a geographical zone even outside the countries present in Urban-net, either a research theme. Rather loose networks for knowledge exchange appear as a first step in establishing an European research platform on urban sustainability. But such open networks are better for knowledge exchange than for new research.

4.9 Funding instruments

Formas: A variety of funding instruments can be used and the pilot call consortium needs to agree on which instruments to be used in this call, e.g. funding of common projects, academic exchange, access to research infrastructure, support to conferences, workshops etc. This matter is probably one of the latter ones to decide upon, after the more strategic matters have been decided.

SNIFFER (Scotland) “has a long track record of managing partnership funding for programmes of work and individual projects. We take the view that the different forms of funding instruments can be managed once direction has been taken on the more strategic issues such as the nature of call and the themes chosen.

More specifically, our experience in this field is founded upon the fact that SNIFFER exists to:

- Establish a knowledge base of environmental research;
- Identify research needs and priorities;
- Commission, manage and target research;
- Influence and inform the priorities of other research organisations;
- Work with stakeholders to form mutually beneficial partnerships.

We do this by:

- Developing and implementing research themes;
- Influencing UK research programmes;
- Facilitating forums and networks.”

In all URBAN-NET partners is present a common knowledge about

funding research projects, academic exchange, access to research infrastructure, support to conferences, workshops. And all those activities are thought as necessary to implement research.

4.10 Marketing/dissemination of the call

A lot of ways to reach the target groups are mentioned: Websites of the partner organisations, URBAN-NET, CORDIS, news-letter of URBAN-NET, announcements in research journals, at workshops and conferences, brochures, e-mails and phone-calls to target groups.

Cyprus: The Research Promotion Foundation disseminates information regarding the launching of the calls, the content of the calls and the application procedures through its website. Furthermore, a main launching event is held on the day of the announcement of the calls during which presentations are made to the whole community of prospective applicants. Presentations are prepared and executed from the programme managers and also information brochures or other material is circulated around. Emails and phone calls are also made, targeted to specific research groups with information on the specific research programmes that are of interest to them.

France: We make lists of research organisations concerned by such and such themes. We send call directly by e-mail and by post-mail to those organisations; we also publish the call on a specific site for calls, and on our own website on the internet. So we could do the same thing for this call. Research calls may be published also in research journals, but they have to be sent to these journals quite a long time ahead.

Turkey: The pilot call can be announced in the URBAN-NET website. In addition, partners can announce the pilot call on their own websites and provide links to the URBAN-NET website. Partners can also disseminate information regarding the joint call via mailing lists or information databases known to be accessed frequently by target audience.

4.11 Application procedure

One central submission point is preferred by most organisations with the addition that national focus points from URBAN-NET ought to be used to promote, clarify, ask questions and make recommendations. But Turkey underlines the need to check the eligibility at the national level, before evaluation. This point is mentioned in the MoU: FORMAS recognised as the central submission point will submit the proposals to national organisations for eligibility check.

Choosing FORMAS as the central submission point means that proposals will be made public, as FORMAS has a policy of full transparency. For most organisations this does not create problems. SEERAD reserves about the commercial information a proposal may contain. But it was thought as a problem for results less than for proposals.

Electronic submission is preferable and deadlines are handy.

5. Evaluation and contract procedures

5.1 Evaluation criteria

Formas: Which parameters need to be assessed? What should be the balance between scientific quality and policy/practice relevance? What may be other strategic parameters? Which criteria do you use in your national programmes?

Different aspects of scientific or scholarly quality (theoretical, methodological, originality, competence of the research team) and relevance (social relevance in general and with respect to the goals and the objectives of the call) are mentioned by all partners.

Bulgaria and Germany both stress the policy or urban sustainability relevance, whereas Nicis, NWO, Sweden and Turkey sets the scientific quality first. France, Romania points at the importance of finding an adequate balance between these two dimensions. Scotland (SEEREAD and SNIFFER) discussed criterias for evaluation only in the case of commissioned research which was not the model chosen. Policy relevance is more important then.

An integrative and interdisciplinary approach is also mentioned as a criterion that is special for evaluating research on urban development and sustainability.

Bulgaria:

- Sustainable urban principles relevance – interdisciplinary/integrated approach
- Environmental friendly Scientific and technological relevance
- European policy
- Targeting important cross-regional/national problem
- Involvement of different actors
- Social relevance
- Management – coordination and finances
- Human resources involved
- International dimension

Germany:

- innovation in comparison to the state of the art
- relevance and usefulness for practitioners
- kind and scope of cooperation of the applying consortium (focus also on trans-national aspect)
- level of excellence of the researchers
- cost and time planning
- contribution to Urban Sustainability

Nicis:

- Is the aim of the research clear?
- Clear problem statement?
- Clear research question(s)?
- No overlap between research questions?
- Originality of the research topic?
- Is there a clear scientific relevance? Does it add something to the existing theoretical body of knowledge?
- Is there a clear societal relevance? How does society profit from the (results of the) research?
- Does the research use all relevant literature in the field?
- Is this literature combined to new insights?
- Are concepts operationalised in the right way?

- Is the selected research method motivated well enough?
- In case of a survey: are there enough cases?
- In case of a survey: is the questionnaire of good quality?
- Are the statistical techniques employed in the right way?

NWO:

- Scientific quality of the proposed project
- Originality and innovativeness
- Appropriateness to the call's theme and transnational nature expected outcomes and impacts
- Participation -
- Range of expertise in the project team
- Scientific merits of the project team
- Participation of early-career researchers
- Feasibility, efficiency and economy of the research plan
- Adequacy of financial and human resources

Turkey:

The three criteria currently used for the assessment of 1001 projects are originality, scope of influence and feasibility. The originality criterion is concerned mainly with the scientific aspects of the proposal: is there a new and interesting research question? Will the proposed research methodology meet the demands of the research question?, etc... The scope of influence criterion refers to the policy relevance of potential research findings and the extent to which the proposed study will help generate future interest in the area. The feasibility criterion looks at aspects such as the competency of the research team, timetable, budget, and whether or not the suggested methods and courses of action will enable the successful completion of the project. The extent to which proposals address URBAN-NET issues may be another criteria we may like to include in the evaluation criteria . Another criterion may be the extent to which proposals offer potential for collaboration, an important element likely to contribute to the formation of research consortia.

France:

Our proposed evaluation criteria are:

- adequacy of the projects to the questions of the call
- innovative quality of the project
- scientific quality of the proposal, in its theoretical references
- scientific quality of the project, in its methodology
- quality of the dissemination plan proposed
- quality of the relation with stakeholders in dissemination project
- European dimension of the consortium
- Quality of experience of consortium members
- Adequacy of budget to methodology
- Relation cost/quality

Romania:

The most important evaluation criteria should be the usual criteria for evaluation:

- Relevance of the proposal with the main targets, goals of the joint call.
- Degree of innovation
- The quality of the consortium (human resources, infrastructure and other resources)
- The quality and credibility of the actions, milestones and deliverables
- The added value-impact

SEERAD:

Criteria SEERAD currently use in tender evaluation include:

- Appreciation of the policy area and key research issues.
- Understanding/development of the research specification.
- Addressing the objectives of the research project.
- Design and methodology proposed.
- Professional staff and technical competence (including track record).
- Project management arrangements and quality assurance.
- Value for money.

SNIFFER:

The parameters to be assessed include:

- Clear understanding of project objectives and technical requirements
- Any value added

Approach:

- Overall methodology
- Project plan
- Methodology

Communication strategy:

- With project management and steering group
- Dissemination
- Recognition of target audience
- Accessibility of output

Staffing and project management:

- Technical expertise
- Track record
- Management capability of team leader
- Suitability of project team
- Contingency arrangements
- Implementation plan
- Timescale for project delivery

Geographical coverage

Basic evaluation criteria:

- Policy relevance;
- Scientific integrity;
- Value for money;
- Attention to project specifications.

Sweden:

Question at issue

The aim, theory and hypothesis as well as novelty will be assessed.

The application's originality is assessed under scientific innovation. New ideas, bold hypotheses, and cross-disciplinary approaches will be considered advantageous. The applicant's awareness of and the application's position on existing national and international literature and knowledge within the area should be included in the assessment.

Method and performance

Scientific methodology is what is primarily assessed here, but work schedule, cost plan and plan for scientific publication and dissemination of popular science information are also assessed.

The scientific methodology is assessed in terms of the extent to which it can be considered well chosen and correctly applied considering the objective of the project.

The plan for scientific publication and dissemination of popular science information will be assessed with respect to its relevance for the project or pre-research activity.

The work schedule is assessed in terms of feasibility and coordination of the different parts of the project.

The soundness of the financial plan is also assessed. If stated costs are assessed as unreasonable, a revised financial plan will be recommended. This will be commented upon in the evaluation statement.

Consortium expertise

The applicant's documented experience and scientific excellence are assessed regarding the implementation of the project in accordance with the project description. Each individual researcher in the consortium is assessed separately as well as the group's collected ability to handle the project's undertaking. In addition, the coordinator's experience of project management and ability to implement the project according to the sketched-out plan will be assessed.

The assessments of the applicants are based on previously written work and expertise that has been demonstrated in other ways in the application. Consideration is also given to the applicant's ability to inform the community of his/her research.

Expertise assessments are based on the applicant's previous work, regardless of whether s/he has experience of the project area or if it is a new area.

5.2 Evaluation process

Formas: Will URBAN-NET call have joint evaluation or should each partner carry out their own evaluation? Evaluation by individual experts and/or expert panel? National expert assessment and joint meeting for final judgement? How should experts be recruited, jointly in a common decision by the URBAN-NET consortium, or should each country appoint experts to a joint pool of evaluators? Which procedure for evaluation? A model for evaluation in steps can be used, e.g. first step is to check eligibility of the proposal, second step is the relevance to the call and only those who pass the two first will go to evaluation of scientific quality. How to manage conflict of interest?

Evaluation by a common expert panel or committee, where each partner country contributes with an expert or two, is suggested by most organisations. Prior to this, however, an eligibility check has to be carried out, as pointed out by many. Some suggest that it should be made in each country, others think Formas should do it.

SEERAD and NWO suggests two-step proposals with a first expression of interest that is reviewed by a panel and a second invited full proposal that is peer-reviewed.

France: Each country member of the Urban-net could appoint two or more experts to a common pool of evaluators. Experts should not be members of organisations which have submitted proposals to avoid conflicts of interests. So the list of organisations submitting proposals should be communicated to partners as soon as projects have been received in the central point of submission, during the first step of evaluation: checking the eligibility. Partners then propose experts not implied in the projects.

The model of evaluation in steps is convenient for that. But scientific experts must give their advice about the adequacy to the call.

A first selection of experts can be made as soon as the exact theme of the call is known, and the final selection as soon as the submitting organisations are known.

Nicis:

Nicis recommends that all URBAN-NET partners should be represented in a review committee by appointing national experts.

NWO:

The evaluation should be according to criteria made known to the applicants beforehand. Every individual evaluation should be identical. A two-step model would be most appropriate. I would prefer a joint evaluation by a central committee. The full proposal should be reviewed by external referees. The partner countries can name researchers to act as a reviewer. So each country can appoint experts to a joint pool of evaluators. Each project should only be funded when all the countries which are part of the project are willing to fund. Researchers which have an interest in a proposal should be banned from the assessment procedures. I would prefer a two-step system in which first outline proposals are assessed by an expert panel, and then full proposals may be submitted which will be refereed.

SNIFFER:

Collective evaluation by funding partners, with the inclusion of experts where appropriate. It will be an important consideration to maintain the participation of URBAN-NET partners who have not been able to participate in the call itself (for whatever reason) to maintain their interest, inclusion and involvement in the process and the call outcomes

Turkey:

In order to minimise, if not eliminate, conflict of interest, TUBITAK adopts the policy of having experts who do not come from the same institution or university as the applicants. Applicants are also asked to include in the application forms the names of their doctorate supervisors, the names of people with whom they engage in collaborative research activities or any other individuals they feel may be positively or negatively biased in the evaluation process of their proposals. To further reduce the possibility of conflict, those invited to participate in the proposal evaluation panels are asked to inform the relevant research group if they feel that they will not be able to act impartially in the evaluation of project proposals and to withdraw from the evaluation process. The experts are also reminded of the confidentiality of research proposals and asked not to disclose information to others. To further ensure confidentiality, they are also requested not to get in contact with the applicants.

5.3 Decision-making procedures

Formas: Is it sufficient to use a written procedure or should decisions be made at a formal URBAN-NET meeting? Is there a role in the decision-making for URBAN-NET partners who do not participate actively in the joint call? Is there a need for an (external) advisory committee?

Most organisations points out that there should be a difference between countries who are funding and not funding, but also adds that it is essential that non-participants are informed and can take part in the discussions so that we don't lose them on the way.

Cyprus:

The Research Promotion Foundation would suggest the organisation of a meeting where decisions should be made in a formal URBAN-NET meeting. Occasionally, written procedures should also be appropriate.

In addition, we suggest that organisations not participating in the joint call could only participate in the decision – making meetings as observers.

France:

Decisions about the theme of the call should be taken by the Urban-net steering group to design a common field of work of the most possible number of organisations and countries. As soon as the theme, or themes, and the types of researches wanted are defined we can work by written procedures.

I think that all partners can participate in choosing experts for the evaluation and in disseminating the call in their countries, even if they cannot participate in funding at first.

Romania:

There should be a difference of decision empowering between the organizations that participate and those that do not do that for this pilot joint call.

SEERAD:

SEERAD would support decision-making being taken by a panel and ratified through a written process around URBAN-NET partners, rather than requiring a formal acceptance at an URBAN-NET meeting.

The extent of involvement / participation of external (non-URBAN-NET partners)_organisations in decision-making would probably need to reflect the extent to which they were contributing funds.

SNIFFER:

SNIFFER suggests that the funding partners collectively agree the decision making process. The requirement as to whether this is done in person or through written procedures should be deferred until partners, funding models and themes are identified. Nonetheless, SNIFFER believes it is critical that all URBAN-NET partners are closely involved in the process and informed of progress, even if not contributing funds.

Turkey:

The exchange of ideas and synergy facilitated by formal URBAN-NET meetings may allow a smoother communication flow between partners and offer better ground for negotiating the terms of the call. However, it is costly in terms of time and resources. So we might consider making the critical decisions at formal meetings and, if any details were left unsettled, we could opt for a written process.

The URBAN-NET partners who do not participate actively in the joint pilot call can have an indirect role in the decision making process (they can, for instance, provide suggestions or feedback), but it would be best for the formal decision making process to be limited to the active participants.

An external advisory committee would be welcome if it was formed such that it included members who have experience in launching and implementing joint calls.

Decisions to launch the pilot call, on which theme, with which approach, with which models were taken in Urban-net meetings: in Edinburgh June 2007, Koln September 2007, Bucharest, November 2007. The texts of the call and MoU were elaborated by a small focus group comprising the leaders of WP's 1, 2, 4 and 5. They were discussed and modified by written procedures through e-mail until the last days of December 2007.

6. Outline of a call text

It was agreed that the call text should contain the following;

- Introduction: Strategic objectives of URBAN-NET
- Invitation
- Thematic areas/topics in the call
- Formalities in the call: application procedure, budget of the call, time frames, legalities, etc
- Evaluation procedure: process, criteria
- Contract procedure
- Follow-up of project implementation
- Further information and inquiries

Partners underlined the fact that the call text should be pointed at creating a research arena for urban research in which European researchers are stimulated to cooperate, and not only research programmes should be funded but also exchanging of information, ideas and knowledge by workshops, seminars and other meetings.

The types of research expected (basic, applied, demonstration, knowledge exchange) the desired consortium (with two or more different countries working together, interdisciplinary etc) and the size and the duration of the project should be stated.

Setting the frames for the call

Objectives of the call

Comments: The general objective of joint calls is to support the development of an efficient European Research Area (ERA), giving actors access to a larger research community and support the interaction and cooperation between research groups. More specifically, URBAN-NET aims to structure and coordinate research on urban sustainability in Europe, to support the implementation of the ERA in the urban research field as well as other European legislation, policy and strategies relating to sustainable urban development. The specific objective of a Pilot Joint Calls in the URBAN-NET project is to test different forms of calls, different approaches for funding, different mechanisms etc. Furthermore, this “learning by doing” is also a way of finding out what possible obstacles to joint calls might occur. In addition to these objectives, which refer to the ERA objectives and the objectives and tasks of the URBAN-NET project, the call consortium can formulate objectives more specifically related to research policy or urban policy in the EU, at national or regional level, e.g. to stimulate researchers to cooperate more across national borders, or to redirect their focus into the field of urban sustainability, or to address a specific urban issue, etc. The game of setting objectives in the partnership will be a game of balancing between very specific objectives, which makes the call narrow and perhaps attracts a limited number of applications, and very broad and general objectives, which are easy to agree upon and may open up for many applications, but on the other hand might give a very disperse output.

→ Question 1: Do you wish to add a specific policy objective?

→ Question 2: Do you have any preferences regarding the type of call? Does your organisation have any restrictions (legal, policy-related, financial etc) in this respect, which would make it difficult, or impossible for your organisation to be part of the call consortium?

→ Question 3: Do you have any preferences regarding the model for funding? Does your organisation have any restrictions (legal, policy-related, financial etc) on how money can be used?

→ Question 4: Do you prefer a broad thematic scope, or do you prefer a narrower, specified prioritisation?

→ Question 5: Which themes are of highest interest for your organisation/country (max 3 themes)?

→ Question 6: Is your organisation interested to participate in the pilot call?

→ Question 7: Is the timing of the pilot call agreeable for your organisation/country, and is it feasible for you to make necessary (internal, national) decisions in due time?

→ Question 8: Do you recommend a minimum financial contribution per partner to participate in the pilot call? If so, which level do you suggest?

→ Question 9: What would be a desirable and possible level of funding for your organisation/country?

→ Question 10: Does your organisation have any priorities, or restrictions, in relation to the target groups for the call?

→ Question 11: Does your organisation have any preferences or restrictions regarding the types of research activities to be funded?

→ Question 12: Do you have any views on the envisaged project structures?

→ Question 13: Do you have any general experience and/or preferences regarding funding instruments?

→ Question 13 b: Does your organisation have any regular terms and/or restrictions regarding the funding modalities, which has to be implemented also in this call? If not, do you have any general experience and/or preferences regarding funding modalities?

→ Question 14: Do you have any general experiences or preferences on the marketing/dissemination of the call?

→ Question 15: Do you prefer one central submission point or national submission points?

→ Question 16: If the central submission point alternative is chosen, do you agree that Formas takes the role?¹

→ Question 17: From your national perspective, do you have any particular expectations or needs in relation to the submission point?

Evaluation and contract procedures

→ Question 18: List the most important 5-10 evaluation criteria/parameters.

→ Question 19: Is there any specific parameter/criterion, which your organisation wants to give a higher weight in the evaluation? Are there any criteria of less importance to your organisation? Do you have any other thoughts/requirements regarding this matter?

→ Question 20: Do you have any specific views or requirements from your organisation regarding the evaluation process, the recruitment of experts etc?

→ Question 21: Do you have any specific views or requirements from your organisation regarding the decision-making procedures for the call?

Legal, organisational and administrative arrangements

Comments:

→ Question 22: Does your organisation have any specific views, requirements or restrictions regarding the legal, organisational and administrative arrangements for the pilot joint call?

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