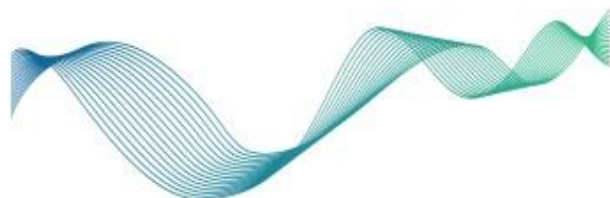


MarineBiotech



GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

ERA-Marine Biotech (ERA-MBT)

Joint transnational calls

Read also the Call Text

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1. Motivation

ERA-MarineBiotech (ERA-MBT) recognises that Europe's marine ecosystems and organisms are largely unexplored, understudied and underutilized, in spite of Europe's access to an extensive and diverse set of marine ecosystems, supporting enormous marine biodiversity. This resource, through the coordinated application of biotechnology, has the potential to provide a **major contribution** towards addressing some of the most pressing societal challenges including environmental degradation, human health and delivering sustainable supplies of food, energy and other commodities, amongst others regarded as the Grand Challenges for our future.

The main objectives of ERA-MarineBiotech are to:

- stimulate trans-European development of marine biotechnology research, innovation and enterprise activity
- build communities and capacity considering the maritime regions' different perspectives and potential
- deliver a lasting network to fund and support marine biotechnology

ERA-MarineBiotech is a four-year programme funded under the European Commission ERA-NET scheme's 7th Framework Programme (Grant Agreement Number 604814, 1 December 2013 – 30 November 2017). The partnership consists of 19 funding organisations or representatives from 14 countries. The ERA-NET intends to launch at least three calls during the programme period. The first call was launched in October 2014 under the topic "The development of biorefinery processes for marine biomaterials" and the second one was launched in December 2015 under the topic "Biodiscovery - Bioactive molecules from the marine environment". This is the third call being launched.

2. Eligibility of applications

ERA-MBT has developed formal criteria that are applied in the eligibility check and evaluation process to select the best projects as outlined in the aims of the call. These criteria have been agreed by all participating national or regional funding organisations and are described below. Additionally, more specific criteria according to specific national or regional regulations must be fulfilled.

2.1. ERA-MBT eligibility criteria

Composition of Consortia:

Only transnational projects will be funded. Each consortium should have the optimal critical mass to achieve ambitious scientific goals and should clearly show added value of working together.

Research proposals may be submitted by:

- higher education institutions
- non-university public research organizations

- commercial companies, in particular small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) (according to national regulations)

The following criteria must be taken into account:

- Each consortium submitting a proposal must involve:
 - a maximum of five partners, however, applicants are encouraged to include partners funded by the following funding organisations: UEFISCDI (Romania) and MIZS (Slovenia). If such partners are included into the consortium, the maximum number of partners can be increased up to six
 - a maximum of two partners per country
 - a minimum of three partners from three different countries participating in the call which must be eligible for the funding organizations and must request funds (see the list of funding organizations in the Call Text)
- The majority (2/3) of partners and the funding volume in a proposal must belong to funding agencies participating in the call.
- The coordinator of the proposal must be based in a country/region participating in the call and must be funded by a funding agency participating in the call.
- Partners from countries which do not take part in this call (in Europe and outside) may be partners in a project at their own cost if their contribution is relevant to achieve the project goals.
- Industrial partners are welcomed to collaborate in the consortium but their participation is not mandatory. Industrial partners that cannot be funded by their national/regional funding organisation may participate in a consortium at their own cost, if they demonstrate their added value for the project and translate this into detailed activities and budget. They should provide a letter of commitment to the JCS with details on this collaboration.
- Subcontractors may be included following national or regional financing regulations of the eligible participant.
- The duration of the project is maximum 36 months.
- The project must fit the scope of the call.

Proposals not meeting national regulations and/or ERA-MBT eligibility criteria might be rejected before the evaluation phase.

2.2. National eligibility criteria

Applicants must refer and adhere to specific regulations of the national/regional funding organisations. Each project partner is responsible for checking whether he/she meets national eligibility criteria. Therefore each project partner is strongly encouraged to contact his/her national contact (see contact persons in the Call Text - ANNEX I).

The national regulations of each partner country are described in the Call Text - ANNEX II.

**The inclusion of a non-eligible partner in a proposal might result
in the rejection of the entire proposal.**

2.3. Responsibilities 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-MBT requirements as detailed above (see section 2.1.) and should confirm that all consortium partners are eligible for support from their respective national or regional funding organisations, as detailed above (see section 2.2.).
- All communication with the ERA-MBT Call Secretariat concerning the project will be through the project coordinator (see also section 5.2.).

3. Call features

The aims and objectives of the ERA-MBT call for research proposals, together with the call schedule are described in detail in the “Call Text” document.

4. Call governance

4.1. Joint Call Secretariat - JCS

The ERA-MBT Joint Call Secretariat (JCS) is responsible for the operational management of the call and the actual implementation of the centrally organized processes, including the reception of applications, organization of the evaluation process and communication with both the reviewers and the project coordinators. When necessary, the JCS will be assisted by the scientific chair and the ERA-MBT co-chair.

4.2. Call Steering Committee – CSC

The ERA-MBT Call Steering Committee (CSC) is composed of one member from each funding organisation, and will be in charge of supervising the call and recommending the proposals to be funded to the national funding bodies. Major aspects of the call (the call topic) cannot be changed after the CSC is established by all parties signing the MoU.

4.3. Peer Review Panel members – PRP

The external Peer Review Panel (PRP) is composed of international scientific experts from both the academic and industrial sectors that will evaluate the submitted proposals as remote reviewers and, a subset of these, as panel members. The Peer Review Panel (PRP) is selected by the JCS based on the number of submitted proposals and the topics they are addressing. All ERA-MBT partners and IAG members should contribute to this task by sending names and profiles of potential reviewers to the JCS. Applicants will also be invited to suggest names for potential reviewers (see section 7.2.).

The PRP members will be selected carefully in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest¹. A conflict of interest exists when a PRP member has a real or apparent interest in the outcome of a proposal, with the member in a position to gain financially, professionally or personally from either a positive or negative evaluation of the proposal.

To ensure objectivity during the evaluation procedure, the CSC and PRP members will not submit proposals to this call.

5. Application submission procedure

5.1. Application scheme

The application process will be carried out in **one step**. The proposals will be checked for compliance with the ERA-MBT eligibility criteria described in section 2.1., and evaluated according to the criteria laid down in section 6.2.

Positively evaluated projects will be ranked and recommended for funding by the PRP members. The formal funding decision is taken at national/regional level. Projects will be funded through the national/ regional programmes.

5.2. Information, communication & further assistance for applicants

Each funding organisation has nominated a contact person/s (Call Text – ANNEX I) who will provide information about specific national or regional regulations and other requirements (Call Text – ANNEX II). **It is strongly recommended to contact the national/regional relevant contact person prior to the proposal submission process.**

The project coordinator should mediate the communication between the Call Secretariat and consortium partners regarding all relevant issues throughout the application procedure, and throughout the whole process.

5.3. Proposal submission

Proposals must be submitted using the online Electronic Submission Tool:

www.submission-marinebiotech.eu

Proposals can only be submitted during the period specified in the Call Text. Each project coordinator should register the proposal in time, as a sharp call deadline is applied. After the deadline, the submission tool will be closed.

¹ <http://www.forskingsradet.no/servlet/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobheadername1=Content-Disposition%3A&blobheadervalue1=+attachment%3B+filename%3D%2220120911Bestemmelse+om+habilitet+og+tillit+Kortversjon+EN.pdf%22&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1274506710188&ssbinary=true>

Completing the proposal form

- Fill in the requested information and check that all fields are completed.
 - Follow the template and be aware that the project description should allow evaluators to assess properly all evaluation criteria (see section 7.1.).
 - The following documents can be included:
 - Coordinator and partners CVs, which should have a maximum of two pages
 - Lists of up to five recent publications
 - Industry support letter or other recommendation letter
 - Up to two figures
- No additional documents will be considered.

The proposal must be written in English and consists of the following parts:

- Project acronym, full title, keywords, duration, publishable abstract & summary of the project;
- **Technical-scientific quality** (Introduction, objectives of the proposal, description of background and state of the art, degree of innovation and novelty; expertise and quality of the consortium);
- **Implementation and management:** work plan (description of overall strategy and synergies, project management structure, detailed description of work packages, involvement of participants in different work packages, results expected within the duration of the project, the deliverables and milestones, schedule, instruments and methodological approaches - clearly and consistently defined and described; development risk – identification of possible risks and/or bottlenecks and corresponding contingency plans); Financial plan and justification of requested budget (also specifying co-funding from other sources necessary for the project);
- **Potential impact** (Relevance of the proposal to the aims of the call, including economic/market potential; Added value of proposed transnational collaboration; Communication and Dissemination strategy; Pertinent ethical, legal, ecological and or societal aspects of the proposal).

Further instructions will be provided in the application form detailing what is expected in each field.

The deadline for proposal submission is March 7, 2017 (15:00 CET)

6. Eligibility check of proposals

Proposals received by the notified deadline will be checked for compliance with the eligibility requirements:

1. ERA-MBT general eligibility criteria (see section 2.1.) that apply to all applications will be checked by the JCS.
2. National or regional criteria that apply exclusively to applicants from each participating country will be checked by the relevant agencies/ministries/funding organisations with regard to the criteria described in section 2.2. (see ANNEX II: *National or regional regulations, national or regional eligibility criteria* in the Call Text document).

Proposals considered not eligible may not be processed further, and are returned to the coordinator of the application with a note explaining why the proposal was considered ineligible.

7. Evaluation of proposals

The PRP members and the chair/co-chair will receive specific “**Guidelines for Evaluation**” providing a detailed explanation of the evaluation procedure, the meaning of each criterion, the scoring system and other necessary information.

7.1. Individual written evaluation

Each proposal passing the eligibility phase will be allocated to **three remote reviewers** who fit the profile of the application. The reviewers are internationally recognized scientists chosen for their expertise and particular thematic orientations related to the topic addressed in the proposal.

Reviewers will be asked to evaluate the scientific relevance to the call - Scope check - which will be a “yes or no” answer. Independently of the answer the reviewer will be asked to evaluate the proposal with respect to three evaluation criteria (detailed below) using a 1-10 scale (poor to excellent). To justify the scoring, reviewers will be asked to provide comments, identifying strengths and weaknesses, in line with the scoring system (see ANNEX II: *The scoring system 1-10 scale* in this document). To finalize, an overall score and comment of the proposal will be requested.

Criterion 1: Scientific and technological excellence

- Clarity and relevance of the objectives
- Soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology
- Progress beyond the current state of the art (innovative potential, novelty, originality) with specific emphasis on the novelty of the biotech component

Criterion 2: Potential Impact

- How well does the proposal contribute to the aims of the call
- What are the economic advantages and potential for commercialization
- What is the societal impact
- Transnational benefit and added value of joint collaboration
- Output of research results: Exploitation and communication activities

Criterion 3: Implementation and Management

- Quality and relevant experience of individual participants
- Quality of the consortium as a whole (including complementarity and balance)
- Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures including risk and innovation management

7.2. Experts Panel meeting – Consensus meeting

The JCS will organize a physical meeting in which selected external Peer Review experts will meet for a common evaluation of the proposals. Taking into consideration the evaluation criteria, individual reviews and the meeting discussions, the panel experts will identify by consensus the top-quality proposals recommended for funding and establish a ranking list. Funding agencies representatives are advised to attend the meeting as observers.

Applicants are welcomed to suggest up to three experts without Conflict of Interest to review the applications, before the deadline for submission of proposals. These suggestions will help the JCS to assign good experts and establish a relevant pool to choose from.

7.3. Funding decision

Based on the ranking list established by the PRP and available funding, the CSC will agree on the projects to be funded by national/regional funding organisations. The CSC will need to follow the ranking list, but it is allowed to jump proposals in the case when some partners run out of budget and other applications recommended for funding can be realized.

Final funding decisions will be made by national/regional funding organisations according to their legal frameworks and regulations. After the CSC final decision on the list of projects to be funded, the JCS will inform the coordinators of all proposals about the evaluation outcome, by sending a reply letter and the consensus report. The scores and ranking list will not be provided to the applicants and will be kept confidential. Additionally, the PRP names for each particular proposal will not be revealed, but the PRP list will be public at the end of the process.

8. Confidentiality and conflict of Interest

ERA-MBT ensures complete confidentiality to applicants and their proposals. The ERA-MBT call secretariat handling the proposal, international experts evaluating the proposal and collaborators of national/ regional funding organisations involved in the call having access to the proposals, are ALL committed to confidentiality.

In order to exclude individual conflict of interest for industry participants, they may provide information about a maximum of five entities, i.e. companies / research groups / individual evaluators (e.g. direct competitors, name of individuals) that should be excluded from reviewing the proposal where the industry participant contributes. They should send this request to the ERA-MBT JCS (era-mbt@mineco.es), stating the reason for excluding potential referees. The request must reach the secretariat before the application deadline and will be treated confidentially.

9. Start of Projects and Consortium Agreement

Considering that the various funding agencies have different calendars to formalize contracts and funding, research consortia of funded projects need to agree on a common starting date of the transnational project, taking into consideration the recommendations of each funding organization involved.

Each consortium should prepare and agree on a Consortium Agreement (CA) for cooperation, signed by all participants, in accordance with national rules, to clarify potential IPR matters (such as licensing in, licensing out, and patent and exploitation strategy) and other management issues.

Models for CA agreements can be obtained from the IPR Helpdesk website (<http://www.iprhelphdesk.eu/services>). The CA must address (as a minimum), the following points:

- common start date and duration of the research project
- organisation and management of the project
- role and responsibilities of each partner
- confidentiality, publishing and data management
- Intellectual Property Rights
- decision making within the consortium
- handling of internal disputes
- the liabilities of the research partners towards one another (including the handling of default of contract)

Any issues regarding funding are a bilateral matter between each project partner and the relevant funding organization and should be excluded from the CA. The CA enters into force when signatures and national funding of each partner are secured. The CA is of utmost importance when there are partners in the research consortia participating with own funds. The CA, together with any other information required by national regulations, shall be available to the funding organization, upon request.

10. Monitoring

The coordinators of each funded project must submit **a mid-term** and **a final scientific project report** to the JCS, and a non-confidential summary of the outcomes of their project, according to the instructions provided by the JCS in due time. Each participant must in addition follow their national reporting requirements.

The coordinators could be required to present the results of their projects at status seminars, to be organized by the JCS. The costs for attending the status seminars should be covered by the project budgets. Any publications resulting from the funded projects must acknowledge the national funding agencies and ERA-MBT. A standard format for reference will be provided by JCS.

ANNEX I - Check list for Applicants

- Read carefully both the “Call Text” and the “Guidelines for Applicants”. These two documents contain complementary information.
- The Call Text includes the aim of the call (detailed description of expected projects: general scope, focus of the call, and exclusions), funding organizations involved, the submission timeline and the national/regional funding regulations and contacts.
- The present document, “Guidelines for Applicants”, includes the ERA-MBT eligibility requirements for the application, details on the submission and evaluation process.
- Make sure that your proposal fits to the aims of the call as detailed in the “Call Text”.
- Make sure that your proposal fulfils the national/regional eligibility criteria as detailed in ANNEX II of the “Call Text”.
- Make sure that your proposal fulfils the ERA-MBT eligibility criteria as described in the “Guidelines for Applicants”.
- If required, submit the mandatory **national submission forms or documents** to your respective funding agency by the established deadline.
- Assure that one (and only one) project coordinator is nominated among the project partners, who represents the entire consortium.
- The project coordinator should register as soon as possible in the ERA-MBT Electronic Submission System (ESS) and invite the project partners through an automatically generated e-mail. Project partners will enter their data and some specific project information.
- Transfer all required data in good time **to the Electronic Submission System**, taking into account that the ESS may be overloaded as the deadline date approaches.
- The joint proposal has to be submitted via the ESS no later than **March 7, 2017, at 15:00 CET**, by the project coordinator.
- In order to find potential partners, a search partnering tool is available at:
<https://www.submission-marinebiotech.eu/partner-search>

ANNEX II - The scoring system 1-10 scale

Score	Definition
10: Excellent	<p>Criteria: Exceptionally strong with no weaknesses</p> <p>Overall proposal: Issues under assessment are comprehensively covered. The work is of a high international standard, addresses and meets the assessment criteria to a very high level and will answer important questions in the field.</p>
8-9: Very good	<p>Criteria: Very strong with minor weaknesses</p> <p>Overall proposal: Issues under assessment are well covered, with minor suggestions being put forward to enhance the project's chances of success. The work is internationally competitive and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to a high level. Will advance the field.</p>
6-7: Good	<p>Criteria: Strong but with at least one moderate weakness</p> <p>Overall proposal: Issues under assessment are adequately covered, but the proposal shows weakness in some specific assessment criteria. Enhancing the project's chances of success may require significant additions or changes to specific parts of the proposal. The work has merit and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to an adequate level. Likely to advance the field.</p>
4-5: Fair	<p>Criteria: Some strengths but with at least one major weakness</p> <p>Overall proposal: Most of the assessment criteria are inadequately covered, and proper evidence of the project's chances of success is lacking or omitted. Greater chance of successful outcome(s) will require significant and major additions or changes. The work is potentially of some merit, and meets some of the assessment criteria to an adequate level, but is not internationally competitive. Unlikely to advance the field more than incrementally.</p>
1-3: Poor	<p>Criteria: Few strengths and more than one major weaknesses</p> <p>Overall proposal: The work is of no significant scientific merit, flawed, or duplicative of other research, or the applicants do not present evidence of a satisfactory track record, and it does not meet the assessment criteria to an adequate level. Unlikely to advance the field.</p>