



CORE

MULTI-ANNUAL THEMATIC
RESEARCH PROGRAMME

FAQs

FAQ

CORE 2014 CALL

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Please contact the FNR staff if you need additional support or if you require further explanations while preparing your application.

1. Programme Description

1.1. Does the FNR also fund applied research projects within CORE?

Yes. The CORE funding supports 'fundamental' and 'applied' research projects. However, it is not intended to support technology transfer projects or projects in the development phase of the innovation chain.

2. New Proposal

2.1. May I resubmit a proposal which has been rejected in one of the previous calls?

Yes. The FNR advises you to respect the comments of the peers in this new proposal (you will need to comment this issue anyway in the proposal form). Of course, the proposal will undergo the whole evaluation procedure again just like any other proposal. The FNR may contact the same evaluators as in the previous submission and new experts as well.

2.2. Do resubmitted proposals have better chances of getting funded?

No. Resubmitting a project is not a guarantee of getting funded. The proposals need special care in view of updating the current state of art as things change over the years. Furthermore, the FNR advises you to respect the comments of the peers in this new proposal (you will need to comment this issue anyway in the proposal form). Of course, the proposal will undergo the whole evaluation procedure again just like any other proposal.

2.3. Is it possible that my proposal is rejected without review?

Yes. Proposals which are not eligible from an administrative point of view or which are not conform/coherent with the programme theme will be rejected at this stage.

2.4. Is it better to submit a small project or a large project?

In general the FNR believes that a project should have a well-defined hypothesis and clearly defined research objectives. The FNR is looking for the scientific merit of the proposal but also the socio-economic impact which in first instance (very important) involves the training of people (i.e. PhDs) and the strengthening of the research team itself (and subsequently the institutions).

The FNR is looking for projects with clear objectives which are achievable within 2-3 years. The size of the project can vary therefore depending on the credentials of the PIs and the consortium (a young PI should aim for a small project, an experienced PI and an established consortium may well submit a more ambitious project).

Budgets for collaborative projects between 2 or more public research institutions in Luxembourg can be quite important in relation to the limited domain funding. The budget of a large proposal must be in relation to the scientific merit and the socio-economic impact (training, advancement of the institution). The FNR thus does not wish to discourage

proposers to submit collaborative projects between public research institutions in Luxembourg.

The FNR is not looking for generic projects with broadly defined objectives.

3. Project Description

3.1. What language should I draft my application in?

All applications have to be written in English.

3.2. Can the CVs be in a different language as the scientific description of the project?

No. The CVs must be in the same language as the scientific descriptions: in English. The reviewers need to understand the information. The titles of the publications may be kept in the same language than published.

4. Principle Investigator (PI)

4.1. May a Principle Investigator (PI) submit more than one proposal?

The answer is twofold depending on the nature of the CORE project:

- The answer is 'NO' for young PIs who choose to submit under CORE Junior track. They may only submit one proposal per call.
- The answer is 'YES' for principal investigators who choose to submit under the regular CORE track. Up to two proposals may be submitted per principal investigator.

As a general rule: It is possible to submit proposals every year regardless of whether a previous proposal has been accepted or not.

4.2. Can there be two PIs on a project?

No, one PI has the lead of the project and manages its implementation,

4.3. How much time does the PI need to spend on the project?

The FNR has not set a minimum requirement concerning the amount of time a PI needs to spend on the project. The PI leads the project and manages its implementation. The PI therefore plays the key role in the success of a project and the PI's suitability to run a project (experience and credentials) is an important element of the evaluation of the project proposal. Special rules apply for CORE Junior applications.

4.4. What status does the PI need to have?

The PI must hold a PhD degree at the CORE/CORE Junior submission deadline. As a general rule, a PI applying for research grants must be employed (full or part-time) at latest at project start at a FNR beneficiary organisation in Luxembourg for the full duration of the project (PIs entering retirement before the end of the project are therefore not eligible).

As an exception to the general rule, a PI seconded from a different institution (e.g. hospital, administration, institute abroad) to perform research at a beneficiary organisation is also eligible. Special conditions apply. Please refer to the Application Guidelines.

4.5. May I submit a proposal as a researcher abroad?

Yes, The FNR maintains that, at the start of the project, the PI must be under working contract with the public research institution in Luxembourg (beneficiary institution) for the full duration of the project.

A project must be conducted in a Luxembourg public research host institution permitted to conduct research and eligible for funding by the FNR (check the eligibility criteria of the FNR or check with an FNR Programme Manager). The CORE programme provides an interesting basis for scientists to come to Luxembourg and develop their careers.

5. CORE Junior

5.1. May a junior investigator/post-doc submit a project?

Yes, if the institution permits the person to submit a project.

The FNR advises that the CORE Junior PIs should structure their projects according to their track record and experience, by submitting small projects for example. In order to encourage young researchers to submit research projects, the FNR has implemented the 'CORE Junior Track'. Details about the 'CORE Junior Track' can be found in the call guidelines.

5.2. Does a junior PI have to submit under the 'CORE Junior Track'?

No. It is up to the applicant to select if the proposal should be submitted under the CORE Junior Track or under the regular CORE track. However, it is recommended for all young or unexperienced researchers for research projects to submit their project under the 'CORE Junior Track'. While submitting a CORE Junior project, the PI will become more visible.

5.3. How much time does the CORE Junior PI need to spend on the project?

The CORE Junior PI should work at least 50% on the project.

5.4. Can a CORE Junior project be of lower scientific quality compared to the regular CORE projects?

No. The CORE Junior projects should be ambitious, but not overambitious. There will be no compromises on the scientific quality. It is recommended not to have CORE Junior projects

with large consortia; the burden of managing the project should not be too high. According to the guidelines, it is possible to add one national or international collaboration (in addition to the mentor). As in any other proposal, there is a requirement to have a convincing research plan.

During the evaluation, the track record and the experience of the CORE Junior PI will be taken into account.

5.5. Can a CORE Junior PI be listed on other projects?

Yes. The CORE Junior PI can be listed on other projects, but not as PI in FNR funded projects of course.

5.6. Does it make sense to have a second CORE Junior project after a first one has been successfully completed?

Not really. The FNR expects that the PI has gain sufficient experience after having successfully completed the CORE Junior project. He/she could then apply for a regular CORE project.

5.7. Are human resources cost for the local supervisor eligible?

No, these costs are not eligible for the local supervisor. The pers*month of the supervisor don't have to be included in the 2 FTE working on the project.

5.8. Is it possible to hire a full-time person on a CORE Junior project?

Yes, according to the CORE Guidelines, the total working time to be covered by the young PI and other staff may not exceed 2 full-time-equivalents (including the PI's own contribution).

6. PhDs (CORE & AFR) on the Project

6.1. Is it still possible to submit a PhD student under the AFR scheme in a CORE project?

Yes, but it is not recommended. In order to get the funding resources for the PhD student on the CORE project budget it is required that the PhD student is involved full-time and from the beginning on the project; a 4th year prolongation request is possible within the CORE funding.

The AFR scheme, institutional or other third party funding are options but AFR undergoes a separate evaluation process and it is not guaranteed that the AFR PhD request will be selected for funding.

6.2. Is it possible to submit a CORE Junior proposal if I am currently an AFR Postdoc grantee?

The FNR advises the applicants to contact the public research institution on possible internal rules. The FNR maintains that, at the start of the project, the CORE Junior PI must be under

working contract with the public research institution in Luxembourg (beneficiary institution) for the full duration of the project. The applicant must hold a PhD degree at the CORE submission deadline.

6.3. Does the FNR have a rule of a minimum or a maximum number of PhD students and/or Postdocs on a CORE project?

No. It is not required to have PhD students and/or Postdocs on the CORE projects, it is however recommended. Regarding human resources involved in the project, the reviewers check the competence of the team. During the panel meeting, the set-up of the team is discussed and it might be that human resources will have to be reduced (on person*months level and profile) or to be increased.

7. Other Staff on the Project

7.1. Can new staff be funded in the CORE programme (i.e. research scientists, Postdoc, technicians, etc.)?

Yes, new and existing research staff can be funded through a CORE project.

As stated under 6.1, PhD students who are involved full-time and from the beginning on the project are eligible for CORE project funding (the AFR funding scheme, institutional funding etc. also remain an option).

Note also that the FNR believes that in order for a project to be feasible, a large majority of the staff should be in place at the beginning of the project. A project where a larger proportion of new staff needs to be hired may score low on the feasibility criteria. Therefore it is advised to indicate potential candidates in the proposal and/or the means employed to recruit new staff of appropriate quality and in sufficient time for the project start.

7.2. Is it possible to submit a project where at project start 50% of the required staff is not yet in place?

Yes, but it is strongly recommended to start the recruitment process a.s.a.p. The FNR might reject a project where an adequate part of the workforce is not in place and brings about a delay in the project start.

7.3. Does the FNR want to have information on the profiles of future PhD students?

Yes. Include the profile description for the PhD positions that you foresee and indicate the name of the local scientific advisor. If already available at submission deadline, please also indicate the names of the PhD candidate, the supervising professor and the university which is allocating the certificate.

7.4. When working in a team: Is it necessary to document the experience of every person involved (CVs)?

Yes, it helps you in the evaluation process. In order to have a view of the project team, the CVs or envisaged profiles of all relevant persons to the project must be available at submission time.

7.5. What is the meaning of full-time-equivalent (FTE)?

A full time equivalent (FTE) of 1 means that a person is working full-time on the project. A FTE of 0,5 shows that the person is working half-time on the project.

8. Partners on the Project

8.1. Is the mentor (under the CORE Junior Track) a ‘non-contracting partner’?

No. According to the CORE guidelines, costs associated with mentoring should be indicated in the budget heading ‘subcontracting’.

‘Non-contracting partners’ are organisations or individuals from the public or private sector (from Luxembourg or abroad) participating in the project without financial support from the FNR, e.g. foreign universities or companies.

A ‘contracting partner’ is an institution which is eligible for funding and which is seeking financial support from the FNR, e.g. the University of Luxembourg, the CRPs, the CEPS or other public-sector research organisations eligible at the FNR.

8.2. Is it required to include the non-contracting partners in the IPR/consortium agreement?

Yes, the IPR/consortium agreement must include all the partners of the project. The applicant should ask his/her administration for internal guidelines and assistance.

8.3. Signatures at submission: What has to be submitted?

The FNR does not require a partner signature form by the non-contracting partners at submission stage. However, in case the project gets funded all partners, included the non-contracting partners (see 8.2.), have to be included in the IPR/consortium agreement.

Please note that for CORE Junior projects it is required to provide a support letter by the mentor abroad (no template provided by FNR). This letter has to be uploaded at submission stage of the full-proposal.

8.4. Is it required that the third party services (subcontracting) sign the submission documents?

No.

8.5. Acknowledgements of subcontracting partners in project publications needed?

The FNR has implemented new rules for subcontracting (as of CORE 2013 call). For details see Application Guidelines.

The subcontractor (person and institution) has no IP rights and the subcontractor has no publication rights on tangible project outputs.

8.6. Is industry participation a 'must'?

No. The FNR welcomes however collaborations with the private and public sector within and outside Luxembourg.

Luxembourg companies may receive funding by the Ministry of Economy (MECE) for research and development projects (active participation in research activities are a must) through a specific programme. The FNR and Luxinnovation/MECE aim at synchronising their funding decisions. Please contact the FNR upfront to be able to assist you.

9. Budgets on the Project

9.1. Is there an upper limit to the budgets that can be requested via the CORE Programme?

The FNR has not set a maximum budget to individual projects. For each domain the FNR indicates an estimation of the number of projects it wishes to fund. The costs per project can vary largely from one institution to another depending on what costs are covered by the institution or not. Furthermore there are special rules for the overall budget submitted under CORE Junior.

9.2. How much 'overhead costs' will be funded by the FNR?

The FNR applies the Full Cost with Flat rate model (FCF), where direct costs are reimbursed on the basis of the actual incurred (real) costs and overheads are reimbursed on the basis of a flat-rate (25% of direct costs minus subcontracting). The FNR provides a standard flat rate for overhead costs of 25% of the direct cost (not including subcontracting) for all newly funded projects as of 1 January 2014. Overheads cannot be claimed by public administrations.

9.3. Is there a limit for subcontracting costs?

Yes. The FNR has implemented new rules for subcontracting costs (as of CORE 2013 call). They are limited to a maximum of 25% of the FNR requested funding (without overhead costs). For details see 6.4.5. in the Application Guidelines.

9.4. Is there a need to provide co-funding of the project?

No, a project can be funded up to 100% by the FNR provided that the costs are eligible. Concerning the funding of equipment and the development of new equipment during the

course of the project, please read the guidelines carefully. Nevertheless, the FNR may decide to limit its funding on a case by case basis.

9.5. Are travel costs for non-contracting partners eligible project costs?

Yes, but solely travel costs for attending meetings and conferences in Luxembourg within the project are covered. It is required to indicate an estimation and justification of the travel budget for the non-contracting partners. Nevertheless, the FNR might not allocate the requested budget.

9.6. Is it required to indicate the external financial contribution, even if some sources of funds are not yet attributed?

Yes. Please indicate if this is planned, and if so, if it is already approved.

9.7. Is top-up funding over the project an eligible project cost if the person receives an AFR grant?

No. Top-up funding of AFR grants will not be covered by the project.

9.8. Are 'overhead costs' on subcontracting eligible costs?

No. Lump sum calculations for overhead costs may not be applied to subcontracting costs.

9.9. Does the PI have to pay for having patented his/her findings within a project funded by FNR?

No. Neither the PI nor the public research institution will have to reimburse the FNR for patents or licenses.

9.10. Does the FNR have a limit for PhD funding when the salary is covered by the CORE project?

No, there is no such limit. The FNR pays the salaries for PhDs which will be paid by the institutions (full-cost basis).

9.11. Is it possible to combine AFR and FNR budgets to pay one PhD student?

No. The applicant/host institution must make a choice: either AFR or FNR project budget (CORE).

9.12. Can budgets for consumables be spent in partner institutions outside Luxembourg?

No.

10. Submission Process

10.1. Is it allowed to submit a proposal without using the FNR online grant submission system?

No. All CORE applications have to be submitted through the FNR Online Grant Submission System.

11. Review Process by the FNR

11.1. How does the FNR choose its reviewers?

The FNR chooses its reviewers within the international research community, from the bibliography of the proposals, from recommendations by peers and from its internal expert database. The selection is done in accordance with international standards (see also the 'Peer Review Guidelines' on our website www.fnr.lu). The names of the individual reviewers will not be communicated to the applicants.

11.2. Can the PI indicate names of reviewers which he/she does not want the FNR to be contacted?

Yes. It is however the FNR's right to select the reviewers for the evaluation. The applicant has the possibility to send an email to the FNR with a list of maximum 3 experts which should not be contacted as reviewer for this specific project. The email sent to submission@fnr.lu before the Full Proposal submission deadline has to list maximum 3 experts and their contact information and explain why these experts should not be contacted to review the proposal. It is however the FNR's right to select the reviewers for the evaluation.

12. International Co-funding through Collaborations with DFG, SNF, FWF, EMBL, NCBR

12.1. Can a CORE Junior PI apply under the international co-funding scheme?

Theoretically yes. However, the FNR strongly recommends being an experienced PI when submitting a project which is seeking for international co-funding through collaborations with DFG, SNF, FWF, EMBL ('Biomedical sciences') and NCBR ('Innovation Services' only). There is substantial effort needed to manage an international project and a CORE Junior PI, who might even be a first time project applicant, might be overstrained.

12.2. Are the funding decisions for the bilateral projects communicated at the same time?

No, the result of the FNR evaluation will be communicated to the partner funding agency for decision. This will lead to a delay of several weeks or even several months in the communication of the funding decision for bilateral projects with respect to unilateral projects. This is an agreed-upon procedure between the Lead Agency funding agencies.

12.3. How is the review process for projects submitted under the international co-funding scheme?

Projects submitted under the international co-funding scheme are evaluated within the FNR CORE review process. They are in competition with all other projects submitted in CORE. In principle, the foreign agency aligns its funding decision according to the FNR's funding decision. The evaluation is though done by one agency, in the present case, by the FNR. It happens however that, due to reasons which are out of the responsibility of the FNR, a foreign partner funding institution does not align with FNR's funding decision.

13. Difference between CORE and OPEN

13.1. What is the difference between the CORE and the OPEN programme?

CORE is the FNR's multiannual thematical research programme whereas OPEN is not linked to certain research directions. However, and this is very important, projects submitted in the OPEN call should not cover the domains which are covered in the CORE programme. In addition, a lot of emphasis is put on the track record of the PI.

The FNR will not reallocate application from one programme to another. If a project is submitted in CORE, the project will follow the CORE application and review processes.

14. Extension (up to 12 months) for PhD candidates, conferences and publications

14.1. Can the PhD candidate make a conference presentation during the extension period, if there are still travel allowances, initially foreseen for conference participation, available?

Yes, if the travel allowances are not entirely used from the initial budget.

14.2. Are personnel and overhead costs relating to the publications and to the organisation of international conferences eligible during the extension period?

Yes, all costs foreseen in the initial budget are eligible.

14.3. Personnel and overhead cost foreseen for the writing of the final report are they still eligible during the extension period which means after the end of the project?

No, the final report has to be written during the three months following the end date of the project. This date (end of project + 3 months) is indicated as closing date for the cost coverage of the project.