

The logo for Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB), consisting of the letters 'RUB' in a white, bold, sans-serif font on a dark blue rectangular background.

RUB

A photograph of a vibrant flower bed in the foreground, featuring a mix of purple, yellow, and white pansies. In the background, a modern university building with a glass facade and a person walking are visible under a clear sky.

RUHR-UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM

Cooperation Projects

How to initiate a project and how to write a competitive proposal

The logo for the Professional School of Education, featuring a stylized grid of squares in shades of green and blue.

Professional
School of Education

Agenda

- Introduction
- Initiating a project
 - Finding calls
 - Reading calls
- Finding partners
- Writing the proposal
 - Award criteria
 - Further suggestions for writing the proposal
- Helpful resources and tools

Introduction

- Professional School of Education at Ruhr University Bochum → initial teacher education (Master of Education)
- Developments in teaching and learning, research communication and transfer, Graduate School of Educational Studies, Center of Educational Studies



Initiating a project

- Finding calls
 - [Programme guides](#)
 - Funding and tenders portal (FTOP) → [Search Funding and Tenders](#)
 - Erasmus+ funding [opportunities for organisations](#)
 - Newsletters of [national contact points](#), research agencies and exchange services (like [DAAD](#) with [country specific funding opportunities](#))

Initiating a project

- Reading calls:
 - Is the need of the funder connected to your proposal idea?
 - What message do you want to convey to the funder to show, that your goals are aligned with the funders goals (e.g. [EU policy priorities](#))?
 - What do you know about the funders usual funding practice?
 - Check past and ongoing projects, e.g. [CORDIS Website](#) for Horizon Europe and ERASMUS+ [Project Results Platform](#)
 - Foundational research vs. application-oriented research vs. Cooperation Support Actions
 - Scope of funding
 - Common deliverables and methodologies
 - Common terms used and definitions → BUT ALSO: Do not “copy” call in your proposal but instead translate it.

Finding partners

Think – Pair – Share (5 Min):

- How do you usually find partners? What campus and EU resources do you use?
- How do you approach partners?

Writing the proposal

- Check resources first → programme guide and other funding resources (depending on your call)
- Follow technical and funding guidelines from the beginning
- Check resources on campus:
 - Are there templates, e. g. concerning ethics, security or gender equality plans?
 - What institutions provide interesting synergies, e. g. concerning structured programmes for early career researchers, dissemination, university strategies...

IMPORTANT NOTICE

What is the Application Form?

The Application Form is the template for EU grants applications; it must be submitted via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal before the call deadline.

The Form consists of 2 parts:

- Part A contains structured administrative information
- Part B is a narrative technical description of the project.

Part A is generated by the IT system. It is based on the information which you enter into the Portal Submission System screens.

Part B needs to be uploaded as PDF (+ annexes) in the Submission System. The templates to use are available there.

How to prepare and submit it?

The Application Form must be prepared by the consortium and submitted by a representative. Once submitted, you will receive a confirmation.

Character and page limits:

- page limit normally 40 pages for calls for low value grants (60 000 or below); 120 pages for all other calls (unless otherwise provided for in the Call document/Programme Guide)
- supporting documents can be provided as an annex and do not count towards the page limit
- minimum font size — Arial 9 points
- page size: A4
- margins (top, bottom, left and right): at least 15 mm (not including headers & footers).

Please abide by the formatting rules. They are NOT a target! Keep your text as concise as possible. Do not use hyperlinks to show information that is an essential part of your application.

⚠️ If you attempt to upload an application that exceeds the specified limit, you will receive an automatic warning asking you to shorten and re-upload your application. For applications that are not shortened, the excess pages will be made invisible and thus disregarded by the evaluators.

⚠️ Please do NOT delete any instructions in the document. The overall page limit has been raised to ensure equal treatment of all applicants.

Award criteria

- Relevance of the project
- Quality of the project design and implementation
- Quality of partnership and cooperation arrangements
- Sustainability, impact and dissemination of results

- To be considered, a project must reach a threshold of points + score at least 50 - 60% of maximum points in each of the categories of award criteria
→ check guidelines for your specific call for details!

Award criteria – Relevance

- Link to EU policy
- Purpose
- Objectives
- EU added value
- Horizontal priorities
 - Digital skills
 - Green skills
 - Inclusion and diversity
 - Gender sensitivity

Award criteria - Relevance

Challenge	Suggestion
<p>Objectives – Why is it necessary to fund my project? Why is it realistic that I can implement my project successfully?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Literature review (also from EU or OECD) → needs analysis▪ Define core aims as precisely as possible from the beginning → they should run through the proposal → SMART-goals
<p>Purpose and Innovation – How do I convince reviewers of the innovative potential of my project? Deliverables/Outputs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Make sure, your approach fits the objective of the funders (e.g. EU priorities) → Why is your approach suited best? Why is it an adequate response to regional needs?▪ Link your innovation to actual measurable outcomes → what target groups do these outcomes benefit and how?▪ Does not only include the core aims of your project, but also methodology or creative forms of cooperation▪ Even if the project is not a RIA, include research or evaluations

Award criteria - Relevance

Challenge	Suggestion
<p>European added value and link to policy – What value does my project add? How does European cooperation support this?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strength of the network → new cooperations, how does this support European policy? Creation of EEA and attractive EHEA▪ Use existing tools, i. e. ERASMUS tools like eTwinning or School Education Gateway → forge synergies or show complementary usage
<p>Horizontal priorities (digital skills, green skills, social dimension, gender sensitivity) – How do I meet all of the priorities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Thematic priorities of proposal vs. “methodological” priorities: If you focus on one of the horizontal priorities thematically, make sure to include the others in your implementation, e.g. through inclusive and sustainable mobility.

Award criteria – Quality of project design & implementation

- Coherence
- Methodology (and risk management)
- Work plan
 - Timelines and Structure
 - (Management)
- Budget
- Quality control (measuring tools)
- Environmental sustainability

Award criteria – Project design and implementation

Challenge

Suggestion

Coherence – Project goals, activities and budget has to be coherent

- Get to the point quickly → and stick to it over the course of your proposal
 - Connect your goals directly to work packages and outputs, i. e. in a table
 - Define wording from the beginning → use the same wording through your proposal (also in visualisations and timelines)
 - Use SMART-goals to make sure that you not only have qualitative but also quantifiable goals (see also relevance)
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- Carefully read funding guidelines → what is the scope for funding?
 - The budget must be comprehensible for partners' personnel deployment
 - Use university resources and guidelines, especially concerning personnel
 - Involve financial departments from all beneficiaries from beginning!
 - The budget has to be coherent over multiple documents and support the overall narrative of the proposal → do not under-fund the project!

Calculating a realistic **budget**

Award criteria – Project design and implementation

Challenge	Suggestion
Methodology - Structuring the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Make sure, you have included a reasonable risk management▪ Management and governance structure → visualize communication structure▪ Use graphics to show how activities relate to each other▪ Spend time on the executive summary! It decides whether the proposal will be read to the end.▪ Read the Model Grant Agreement → Comply with legal regulations
Defining work packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Make sure to consider dependencies between work packages▪ Develop a reasonable timeline showing dependencies and milestones▪ Task responsibilities have to be clearly defined▪ Clearly defined deliverables and milestones for each work package

Award criteria – Quality of partnerships & the cooperation arrangements

- Configuration - Composition
 - Upward convergence
 - Geographical dimension
 - Intersectoral partnerships
- Commitment
- Tasks
- Collaboration

Award criteria – Partnership

Challenge	Suggestion
Finding the right balance between new and old partners + geographical dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Using existing networks is seen positively, but double financing of networks has to be avoided, ALSO: added value of project?▪ A good distribution of partners is important → don't have to be in the same role → associated partners▪ Expertise of partners should be clearly stated in the proposal▪ Upwards convergence?
Intersectoral cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Plan enough time to contact partners outside of universities → critical friends, different stakeholders▪ Consultation and tech support concerning FTOP

Award criteria – Partnership

Challenge	Suggestion
Active role of all partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Make sure to show, why all partners are needed in the project → What unique expertise do they bring to the table?▪ Distribute work packages evenly between partners, according to expertise▪ Ownership of tasks▪ Send application text to all partners (one person writes and then QA and feedback)
Communication and trust between partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Set up a system for sharing documents at an early stage▪ Document meetings thoroughly and highlight tasks separately▪ Conflict management → external board?▪ A well-planned meeting is just as important as a good atmosphere

Award criteria – Impact

- Exploitation
- Dissemination
- Impact on participants and outside the organisation
- Sustainability and continuation

Award criteria – Impact

Challenge	Suggestion
How can I monitor the short- and long-term impact of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Quantifiable goals as indicators▪ Are there stakeholders outside the direct partners who need to be involved in order to achieve policy goals? → Long-term impact▪ Clearly identify risks (Likelihood and impact?)
Exploitation and sustainability: What happens after the project's runtime?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Give clear indications of how the results will be further used, e.g. by also referring to other partnerships in which results can be used▪ OER and Open Access Publications → also open data policy of EU▪ Create results in such a way that they can subsequently be used at low cost (e.g. teaching modules that can be integrated into general teaching with recorded expert interviews, etc.)

Award criteria – Impact

Challenge	Suggestion
Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Consider different publication channels and clearly identify target groups (including classic channels such as newsletters and websites, but also social media)<li>▪ Include links between the various channels of the individual universities<li>▪ Consider multipliers → Upward convergence but also cost efficiency

Further suggestions

- Questions must be answered in a comprehensible way → have the application read by novices in the field, have English version proofread by native speakers
- Answer questions as concretely as possible, answer complex questions in a structured way and use visualisations
- Establish a common thread in the project!
- Design the proposal together with the partners
- Take holiday periods into account.
- FTOP: Watch out for different PICs
- What platforms and projects already exist in the EU → Establish connections
- Don't leave submissions to the last minute!

Helpful resources and tools

- Funding and Tenders Portal → Support, Guidance and Manuals:
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/manuals>
 - also look at: [Annotated Grant Agreements](#) and templates of application forms, e. g. for [ERASMUS+](#)
- National Contact Points:
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/ncp>
- For Newcomers:
Becker, M.; Schütt, B.; Amini, S. (2016). [Proposal Writing for International Research Projects](#). Published by the DAAD.