



Guide to funding for research in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)



Business Support on Your Doorstep

If you are a high-tech small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) involved in Information and Communication Technologies research, this funding could be for you.

FP7 funding for this area aims to improve the competitiveness of European industry and enable Europe to master and shape the future developments of these technologies so that the demands of its society and economy are met. The European Commission recognises that ICT is at the very core of the knowledge-based society.

Activities will strengthen Europe's scientific and technology base and ensure its global leadership in ICT, help drive and stimulate product, service and process innovation and creativity through ICT use and ensure that ICT progress is rapidly transformed into benefits for Europe's citizens, businesses, industry and governments. These activities will also help reduce the digital divide and social exclusion.

A total of €9.1bn is dedicated to this funding stream, making it the largest in the Cooperation programme. The involvement of SMEs is strongly encouraged. Projects can expect to access up to €3m from the EU, and SMEs can finance up to 75% of their R&D costs and 100% of the costs of their management.

All projects have to be transnational; you must work in partnership with other companies or research institutes based elsewhere in the EU.

The following topics related to ICT research are covered below:

- [Who is it for?](#)
- [What does it fund?](#)
- [How much funding can I access?](#)
- [What funding is available now?](#)
- [How many partners do I need?](#)
- [How do I find possible partners?](#)
- [Does the project have to have a transnational element?](#)
- [How long do projects last?](#)
- [What if my project idea does not fit entirely under the ICT theme?](#)
- [How can I protect my IPR?](#)
- [Do SMEs have to manage projects?](#)
- [How can I make sure that my application is eligible?](#)
- [How can I calculate the budget?](#)
- [Where can I access more support?](#)



For explanation of some of the European Commission terms contained in this guide, please refer to our [online glossary](#).

Who is it for?

RTD activities relevant to this theme can be carried out by any type of research body, including large companies, universities, public research labs and high-tech SMEs for example.

The involvement of SMEs is especially encouraged. According to the 2007-8 Work Programme 'the role of SMEs in innovation is indisputable. In ICT, they play a vital role in the development of new visions and in transforming them into business assets. They have a large capacity to focus their research effort and to take fast technical and business decisions.'

What does it fund?

The ICT Work Programme under FP7 is divided into seven 'Challenges' of strategic interest to European society, plus research into 'Future and emerging technologies' and support for horizontal actions, such as international cooperation:

[Challenge 1 - Pervasive and trusted network and service infrastructures](#)

RTD in this area will help to strengthen enterprises in Europe through the development of new technologies in networks, software and services and make dynamic information and media services widely and securely available.

Challenge 1 initiatives will focus on:

- New generations of pervasive network infrastructures that are ubiquitous; of extremely high capacity; fully flexible; and adaptable to many business models.
- Future Internet architecture and technologies which overcome today's usage limitations.
- New generations of software and service technologies that will allow services to be dynamically configured; composed of ad-hoc coalitions of resources; dependable and reliable; and graceful in handling underlying complexities.
- Architectures and solutions for integrated and interoperable organisations and enterprises
- Security and trust of networks and service platforms
- End-to-end, personalised media delivery and collaborative use
- Complete user control over personal data and digital identity, accompanied by strict protection of user privacy



[Challenge 2 - Cognitive systems, interaction and robotics](#)

Research should aim to provide the next generations of ICT systems and products with more intelligence which will open the door to a wide range of opportunities for ICT-based applications in a range of sectors.

Apart from advancing new engineering methods and their scientific foundations it is expected that the work in this area will have significant industrial and societal impact.

Work will extend the industrial robotics market to:

- Flexible small scale manufacturing, opening up professional and domestic services markets to robots,
- Novel functionalities for embedded systems,
- Assistive systems for interpersonal communications, such as support of dynamic translation, and effective medical diagnostics and therapeutics.

[Challenge 3 - Components, systems and engineering](#)

This research area will help Europe to stay a leader in the supply and embedding of electronic components and systems thereby ensuring that our strongholds in automotive, avionics, industrial automation, mobile communications, telecoms and medical systems are able to develop. Furthermore, we will be able to design and produce advanced photonic components in applications such as optical networks.

Key objectives include:

- The integration and miniaturisation of chips and multi-functional components that offer higher performance at lower cost;
- To get beyond 32 nm for the devices and 45 nm for the manufacturing and processes with a wafer size of 450 mm;
- To be at the forefront of nanoelectronics including systems-on-chip and systems-in-package design and manufacturing technologies;
- To lead in photonic components and subsystems for lasers, lighting and image sensors.

[Challenge 4 - Digital libraries and content](#)

Here research will focus on balancing an ever growing load of information and content with increasing demands for knowledge and skills. Europe needs to link content, knowledge and learning and make them more accessible and usable over time by both humans and machines.



Advances expected include:

- New digital library services
- Digital preservation services
- New management and production tools
- More creative approaches to content and knowledge
- Enabling the mass-individualization of learning experiences

[Challenge 5 - Sustainable and personalised healthcare](#)

The health sector is clearly an information intensive sector which increasingly depends on information and communication technologies. The objective is to better serve patients and health professionals by making the most of technology to improve the quality, availability and effectiveness of care.

Research will focus strongly on three specific aspects of e-health systems:

- Personal Health Systems for health status monitoring and point-of-care diagnosis;
- Patient safety and risk assessment;
- Virtual Physiological human, built upon research started under FP6 in biomedical information processing with a major orientation towards patient-specific modelling and simulation.

[Challenge 6 - Mobility, environmental sustainability and energy efficiency](#)

Europe needs to invest in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and shape their use to improve road safety and meet our goal of halving road fatalities by 2010. Advances in ICT can also help combat environmental degradation and ensure sustainable use of natural resources, while improving efficiency in energy production and use, and modernising energy networks.



Research should make the following contributions:

- Intelligent Vehicle Systems should offer a higher degree of accident prevention.
- New mobility services should provide enhanced options and should target safer, more secure, efficient, competitive and environmentally-friendly freight transport solutions.
- Industrial processes and infrastructures should be more energy-efficient and secure.
- Access to shared data infrastructures and data management systems to monitor and react to environmental risks should be provided.

[Challenge 7 - Independent living and inclusion](#)

Europe's population is growing older which has enormous socio-economic implications and demands a paradigm shift in social and health care while creating new requirements for social inclusion and access to public services. At the same time, the complexity and lack of accessibility and usability of many ICT-based products and services is a major barrier for many people.

ICT solutions should be made more accessible and usable for people with disabilities and functional limitations and help offset the impact of the ageing population – and other socially excluded groups - by increasing active participation in the economy and society.

Some aims of this research are as follows:

- Provide systemic ICT solutions which can increase personal independence.
- Enable a radical improvement in ease of use of future ICT products and services by people with disabilities and functional limitations.
- Apply and advance highly advanced assistive technology solutions built around non-invasive brain-computer interfaces;
- Build stronger RTD capacity for ICT facilitating social inclusion of marginalised young people through delivery of proof of concept solutions;
- Create important new market opportunities for European industry and establish global leadership in inclusive ICT.



[Future and emerging technologies \(FET\)](#)

FET is the ICT incubator and pathfinder for new ideas and themes for long-term research in the area of information and communication technologies. Its mission is to promote high risk research, offset by potential breakthrough with high technological or societal impact. It involves two approaches – ‘Open’ and ‘Proactive’ – both of which continuously promote and fund non-conventional research of long-term, cross-cutting importance to Europe.

In particular the ‘Open’ programme operates a continuous proposal submission scheme for Small and Medium-scale focussed research projects (STREP) proposals. Proposers are therefore asked to submit their short STREP proposals as soon as they are ready, and not to wait for a specific date before submitting.

How much funding can I access?

Across the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) SMEs are entitled to funding which covers a maximum of 75% of the costs of their research and development activities. Management and training activities are funded up to 100%.

The EU Member States have earmarked €9.1bn of funding for this theme over the duration of FP7.

Funding thresholds will apply to the following types of projects:

- Small collaborative projects (SCP)
- Coordination and Support Actions (CSA)

These funding thresholds will be applied as eligibility criteria. Proposals which disregard these limits will be considered ineligible, so check all relevant call information.

What funding is available now?

To find out about current funding opportunities, please click [here](#).



How many partners do I need?

The number of partners in a project consortium depends upon the 'funding scheme', which is used by project applicants to determine the form of their project. Different funding schemes are suitable for different projects and vary according to the objectives, size and scientific contents of a project.

Sometimes Calls for Proposals will specify the funding scheme which should be used to apply for funding under a particular research topic. If the funding scheme is not specified by the Call, it is up to the project consortium to decide on the best management structure to make use of.

How can I find possible partners?

Use the Idealist service partner search service www.ideal-ist.net.

Does the project have to have a transnational element?

- Yes. Partnerships must be transnational and include partners from at least three different EU Member States or Associated Countries.
- Some Calls for Proposals will encourage cooperation beyond these areas. For example, projects could include third countries, International Cooperation Partner Countries and countries with Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreements with the EU.

How long do projects last?

The duration of a project is determined by its research objectives and their implementation. Typically the duration is 2 - 3 years. Only in exceptional cases would a project last longer than 3 years.

What if my project idea does not fit entirely under the ICT theme?

Certain Calls for Proposals will encourage projects to take cross-thematic approaches to research and development, especially where research in ICT overlaps with research in another of the ten Cooperation theme areas. In 2008 a Joint call for ICT and Security is expected, for example.



How can I protect my Intellectual Property Rights?

- Some general guidelines about IPR are provided here. However, if you do decide to submit an application to FP7, we strongly recommend that you seek further advice, for example, from Own It: www.own-it.org
- Essentially, any 'foreground' developed by a partner in the consortium is the property of that partner.
- However, when new knowledge is created in cooperation with other partners, ownership is shared. In these cases, partners should work out (sub) licensing deals or should create joint-ventures within the consortium for exploitation of the results.
- Through FP7, partners should have access rights to the pre-existing knowledge ('background') of other partners, if they need it to carry out their own work on the project.
- IPR issues should be in the **Consortium Agreement**, where partners should:
 - Define the pre-existing knowledge ('background') of all partners and determine under what conditions to include this in the project
 - Define to what extent and for how long partners should grant access rights to their knowledge and /or technology to the other project partners
 - Set out how to solve any possible future IPR conflicts within the consortium
- General IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) matters are also addressed in the **Grant Agreement** which partners agree with the European Commission.

Do SMEs have to manage projects?

SMEs can manage projects but they are not required to do so.

How can I make sure that my application is eligible?

- The application process is highly competitive. It is therefore vital that applications are of the highest quality and that they are eligible from the start.
- The project proposal must be received by the Commission before the deadline given in the call text.



- The project must involve at least the minimum number of participants given in the call text. Under this theme, this is three members of different Member States or Associated Countries (or international partners, if eligible under that call).
- The application must be complete and must include both the administrative forms and the proposal description that are relevant to the funding opportunity.
- Page number restrictions must be adhered to. Text used must be no smaller than size 11 font. No annexes are allowed and will not be evaluated.
- The European funding requested must lie within the limits set by the European Commission. See above: How much funding can I access? See here for details.

How can I calculate the budget?

- SMEs can access 75% of their eligible costs for R&D activities; 50% of costs for demonstration activities; and 100% of costs for other activities, such as training and management.
- To be considered eligible, costs must be actual – i.e. actually incurred by the partner in question, not forecast to be incurred in the future. Receipts and supporting documents must be kept. Eligible costs must also be incurred during the project (except costs of final reports and audit certificates) and must be outlined in the Grant Agreement.
- The following costs are not eligible: indirect taxes including VAT; duties; interest; provisions for possible future losses or charges; exchange losses; costs relating to return on capital; and costs relating to other EU-funded projects.

Eligible costs can be both direct (i.e. directly attributable to the project – e.g. cost of personnel, travel, equipment supplies and subcontract) and indirect (i.e. not directly attributable to the project – e.g. cost of premises and IT). SMEs that are unable to identify real indirect costs can use a flat rate that is 60% of the direct costs



Where can I get more support and advice?

Enterprise Europe Network London can support you throughout the application process. We provide tailored advice to make sure this is the appropriate funding stream for your project idea (if not, we will help you in identifying the right one). This service is provided free of charge.

For further details contact us at fp7@gle.co.uk / 020 7940 1512 / www.een-london.co.uk

National Contact Point

National Contact Points (NCPs) have been established in your country to provide advice to all those wishing to become involved in FP7. Your NCP can direct you to the suitable funding activity under FP7 as well as assist you with your application.

For help within the UK, contact the FP7UK National Contact Point on 0870 6006080 or visit www.fp7uk.co.uk. A dedicated ICT Helpline is available on 0870 1910112

European support

- The FET Open scheme operates its own helpdesk: info-ictfet@ec.europa.eu
- If you have general questions about FP7, contact the [FP7 Information desk](#).
- If you have other questions about ICT, contact the ICT help desk at ict@ec.europa.eu.

Neither the European Commission nor the Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation nor any person acting on behalf of them is responsible for the use which might be made of the information contained herein. The views in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the European Commission.