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Joint Call on Short Rotation Coppice Administrative process

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CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

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1. Introduction

On 2nd January 2008, the third joint call for proposals was launched in the framework of ERA-NET Bioenergy. The topic of the call was “Short Rotation Coppice (woody species)”. Organisations from four countries participated in this joint action: ADEME from France, FNR from Germany, the Swedish Energy Agency from Sweden and BBSRC from the UK. The Netherlands did not participate, but the Dutch partner SenterNovem joined as an observer. TEKES from Finland agreed to moderate the jury discussions and therefore took part in the jury meeting and its planning. The BMVIT/FFG from Austria took an active part in the planning of the call and intended to participate, but were prevented from this by national administrative difficulties.

Before launching the call, the participating countries agreed on a common call text and common procedures concerning e.g. submission of proposals, jury process and evaluation of proposals. These procedures were mostly based on the two previous ERA-NET Bioenergy calls. The following report summarises and documents the work of the agencies involved (hereafter called “SRC Team”).

As a result of the joint call, three international project consortia could start their research work in September/October 2008. The projects are due to finish in August/September 2011.

2. Common processes – “from proposal to contract”

2.1. Topic of the call

Following a workshop which included both national researchers and funding organisations (ERA-NET members), it was decided there was sufficient interest and common ground for a joint call on short rotation coppice (SRC). The call was to invite proposals on three narrowly defined sub-topics (see call text, Annex I, page 12).

2.2. Agreement on procedures

It was agreed by all participants that the experience gained from the first (call on small-scale combustion, hereafter called “SSC call”) and second call (on gas cleaning of product gas from biomass gasification, hereafter called “gasification call”) would be used in setting up the third joint call within the ERA-NET Bioenergy framework. For further information on these previous calls, see the relevant reports on www.eranetbioenergy.net.

Thus, a time schedule was worked out which was based on the one applied in the gasification call and which took into account lessons from the previous calls (Chapter 5, page 12).

The team agreed to base their call procedures on the past calls.

As one of the first steps, it was agreed that one partner should be responsible for the overall organisation of the call.

For the SRC call, the role of this “call secretariat” fell to FNR (Fachagentur Nachwachsende Rohstoffe e.V., Germany).

In order to be clear about individual responsibilities, about timeframes and processes, the secretariat composed a script based on the one used for the gasification call. The script served as a handbook for both SRC team and jury members, and included the following aspects:

- Secretariat
- Jury composition
- Submission of proposals
- Pre-check by the national agencies
- Jury pre-judgement

- Jury meeting
- Funding recommendations
- National decisions
- Summary of the schedule
- Evaluation criteria.

The script is not a public document but is accessible for ERA-NET Bioenergy members on the internal pages of www.eranetbioenergy.net.

Details were discussed by e-mail and phone before the call opened. During a telephone conference on 16th January 2008, every step of the later stages of the call process (jury pre-judgement, jury meeting, national decisions) was discussed in detail.

Moreover, an intranet folder was set up on the ERA-NET Bioenergy webpage. Access to this folder was restricted to the team members and the members of the expert jury. It was to become a platform for information exchange during the evaluation stage. As a first step, the script and additional information for the jury members were added to the folder.

The SRC team was aware of the fact that national processes were different, and that one partner (BBSRC) was not an ERA-NET Bioenergy partner and had thus partaken neither in the last calls nor in any other joint action with the other agencies.

As a result of the discussions mentioned above, the team members were aware of each others' requirements. The jury procedures were slightly adapted to accommodate BBSRC's needs and the script and time schedule for the SRC call could be finalised. The procedures will be described in the following.

2.3. Submission and pre-check of proposals

2.3.1. Submission of proposals

In the frame of the joint call on SRC, proposals could be submitted within one of three sub-calls (topics):

- 1. Genetic improvement of Salix and other woody SRC species (Germany, Sweden, UK)
- 2. Improving the value chain of SRC (France, Germany)
- 3. Environmental aspects of SRC (France, Germany, Sweden, UK)

Due to the remits of the agency in question or, in one case, due to national policies, not all four partners took part in all three sub-calls. France could not fund proposals in area 1, and Sweden and the UK could not take into account proposals in area 2. However, institutions/companies from these countries could still join consortia in the research areas mentioned, but only as additional partners and if they sourced funding elsewhere. Organisations from third countries were also allowed to join consortia, under the same two conditions.

Proposals were invited from both research institutions and companies, following national eligibility criteria. Research outputs were expected to be made publicly available. Proposals had to include partners from at least two of the countries involved in the call and the relevant sub-call.

The documentation to be submitted consisted of two parts:

- **Common proposal**
- **Standard national application form(s)**

The **common proposal** had to be in English and contain all relevant information on the project. Only the common proposal was evaluated by the international jury and thus formed the basis for the funding decision. Therefore, it was made clear there could only be one version of the common proposal, which all consortium members had to submit.

An “affirmation sheet” had to be sent with the common proposal, in which the proposer acknowledged they understood this requirement, and in which they also – to avoid past confusions on the side of the ERA-NET members – clearly named all members of their consortium and indicated who acted as coordinator.

Each project partner could obtain the **Standard national application forms** from their national funding agency. These documents included all necessary data needed by the national agencies, and they were not seen by the international jury.

Each project partner had to submit these documents to their participating national funding agency.

The Common Proposal document had to be structured as follows:

- Project Title, Duration
- Application details
- Financial summary table

- Executive summary
- Detailed description of project
- Detailed description of consortium
- Project planning and management
- Communication of project outcomes
- Background and competences of participating organisations and individuals

One day after the deadline for submission of proposals, the team members supplied the secretariat with some basic information on the proposals they had received (number, title, partners, budget). The secretariat compiled this information into table form (“sheet first details”) and sent it to the team members.

2.3.2. Pre-check of proposals

The **pre-check** was introduced in order to avoid the situation that the jury rejects a proposal because of formal reasons (“office rejection”). The pre-check guaranteed that a proposal met all formal and financial requirements, fitted into the relevant national programme and met its specific funding criteria. Furthermore, the responsible person at the funding agency could comment on the quality and the liability of the project partners involved. The scientific quality of the proposal was not evaluated.

2.3.3. First information exchange

The group agreed that a first information exchange after the pre-check would be useful in order to bring everybody to the same level of information.

All proposals which passed the pre-check were put into the intranet folder, as was a template for the evaluation form every country was to complete.

2.4. Jury process and project evaluation

During the planning stage of the call, the team had a telephone conference to discuss and decide on the more complex parts of the call procedure. It was quickly decided to adopt the Jury process of the Austrian programme “Energy Systems of Tomorrow” for the SRC call, as happened during the previous two ERA-NET Bioenergy calls. The evaluation form used for these calls had only been slightly adapted to the requirements of current call.

All eligible proposals were evaluated by an international jury. The experts that were sent to the jury panel were selected by the funding organisations involved in the call.

The international jury provided funding recommendations (ranking list). The final decisions were made nationally by the ERA-Net Bioenergy partners, but the ranking list was to give strong advice to the national decision board.

2.4.1. Jury composition

During the telephone conference, the team decided on one feature which differed from the past calls: each ERA-Net Bioenergy country participating in the SRC call was to nominate *two* representatives to the jury. One of these had to be an expert in the field of SRC, while the other had to be a senior member of the funding organisation. This meant that both jury members of a country *could* be from the funding organisation, but only if there was an expert available on the topic of SRC.

This step was taken to accommodate BBSRC's requirements for funding decisions. It was further felt that, with only four countries participating, there was no need to split into one "expert panel" and one "strategic panel" as happened during the SSC call. However, the absence of a senior member of one or more funding organisations would have meant strategic (political) issues could not have been confidently addressed. Merging the two panels would facilitate and shorten the whole evaluation process, and enable the team to draw up a confident ranking list at the end of the day.

As in the past calls, a moderator was asked to take on the responsibility of supervising the discussion and keeping it focussed. The "call secretariat" was to support the moderator, mainly by writing the minutes. The group decided that all ERA-NET Bioenergy members were welcome to join the jury meeting as observers. The jury meeting was fixed for Berlin, 29th/30th May 2008. The jury members' CVs were available in the intranet folder by April.

2.4.2. Evaluation form and criteria

The SRC team agreed on a standard evaluation form including all evaluation indicators and sub-criteria (see Annex II, page 29). The experts were asked to judge the quality of the proposals following the evaluation form.

2.4.3. Pre-judgement

The jury experts received the submitted proposals approximately three weeks before the jury meeting took place. The jury members were asked to supply their pre-judgement beforehand i.e. either e-mail the completed evaluation form to the SRC secretariat or directly put it in the intranet folder.

It must be noted here that there was one judgement per country (i.e. depending on national procedures, the expert evaluated the proposals alone or in cooperation with external referees, or with the strategic jury member).

The expert assigned preliminary scores to the proposals and indicated whether they should be “financed”, “rejected” or whether they “need more discussion”. The pre-judgements of each expert were available in the intranet folder 2 days before the jury meeting. They formed a basis for discussions during the meeting.

2.4.4. Jury meeting and funding recommendations

The jury process itself was a step-by-step discussion following the evaluation form, and lead by the moderator. During the jury meeting, the jury experts had to agree on a common score for each of the evaluation criteria, choosing from the scores available in the form.

The jury was also asked to formulate recommendations and comments on each project. This helped the SRC team, i.e. the funding organisations involved, to formulate the rejection and invitation letters. Finally, the jury had to agree on a final ranking list of the proposals. This list stated which projects *should*

- ✓ **“definitely be funded if resources are available”**
- ✓ **“not be funded even if sufficient resources were available”**

General comments concerning the jury:

- The jury decided on the projects as they were presented in the proposal, with some background information by the national experts (e.g. on previous work of the proposer).
- The jury gave recommendations/comments on the projects. In case the project was recommended for funding, these jury recommendations had to be fulfilled by the proposers in order to get the project financed. If, on the other hand, the project was rejected, the comments were used for the rejection letter.

2.5. National decision processes

The SRC team decided that the national and final decision would not be altered. Therefore, the existing national decision processes were integrated in the whole process of the call on short rotation coppice. The final funding decisions were taken nationally after the jury meeting. The results of the jury panel were recommendations for funding and brought to the national decision boards.

2.6. Clearing process (Second information exchange)

It was agreed that a second information exchange should take place in order to guarantee that all partners were informed of the outcome of the national decision processes. No binding decisions should be sent out to proposers until all national decisions had been taken by the participating countries.

2.7. Contract negotiations

Contract negotiations could start after the clearing process had ended. It was decided early on that a Consortium Agreement would have to be signed by each partner in a project before the first payment could be made.

2.8. Project monitoring, workshops and expected deliverables

In addition to the standard requirements of the individual national funding agency the SRC team required the following:

- 1) Participation in and presentation of the proposed research at a joint ERA-NET Bioenergy workshop (9th September 2008 in Potsdam, Germany)
- 2) A common Final Report (written in English) describing the activities and outcomes of the work. Detailed requirements for this report were distributed to successful applicants once the projects started.

3. Results of the jury meeting

3.1. Selected proposals

Seven (7) joint proposals were submitted within the joint call on short rotation coppice. The jury meeting took place in Berlin on 29th/30th May 2008.

As a result of the meeting, the following **3 projects** were **selected** to be funded:

- CREFF: Cost reduction and efficiency improvement of short rotation coppice on small field sizes and under unfavourable site conditions (Topic 2, France/Germany)
- BREDNet: Targeted breeding of a European SRC willow crop for diverse environments and future climates (Topic 1, UK/Sweden/Germany)
- RATING-SRC: Reducing environmental impacts of SRC through evidence-based integrated decision support tools (Topic 3, Sweden/Germany/[UK]*¹)

4 proposals were *not* recommended for funding.

3.2. Common text for letters to proposers

The following text was used in the invitation/rejection letters:

“The decision *to fund/not to fund* your proposal, submitted to [*funding agency, e.g. FNR*] for the ERA Net Bioenergy joint call on short rotation coppice (SRC) was made based on the recommendations of an international jury composed of experts from each of the countries participating in the call. The jury has supplied the following feedback summarising the reasons behind their recommendation and, where appropriate, providing additional comments and guidance.

.....*insert feedback*.....”

With regard to topic 2, the following sentence could be added to the rejection letter:

“While the jury were supportive of your proposal, the competition for funding was very strong and unfortunately your project was not ranked highly enough to receive funding.”

After the jury meeting, the final ranking list with the joint comments on each proposal was added to the intranet folder, as were the minutes of the meeting.

The jury was also asked for feedback about the evaluation process (see Chapter 5, “Lessons learnt”).

¹ * the UK partners could not be funded by BBSRC, but through alternative sources

4. Kick-off meeting

On 9th September 2008, a kick-off meeting for the SRC call took place in Potsdam, Germany. Participants came from all ERA-NET Bioenergy members (whether part of the SRC team or not) as well as all organisations involved in any of the three proposals selected for funding.

The goals of the kick-off meeting were to:

- give researchers a chance to introduce their consortium and present their proposed research
- clarify any administrative issues
- provide the ERA-NET Bioenergy partners with feedback on the call and its procedures
- provide an opportunity for networking

The project presentations were published on the ERA-NET Bioenergy website (www.eranetbioenergy.net).

The team received extensive feedback from the researchers, collected partly before the meeting and partly during and after it (see Chapter 5.2.2, page 16). This feedback will both be used for a general (external) evaluation of ERA-NET Bioenergy and for a possible next call.

5. Lessons learnt

5.1. Lessons learnt from previous calls (incorporated into SRC call)

The “lessons” are in standard print, while the measures taken are in green italics.

5.1.1. Lessons from the SSC call

1. Time between opening and closing the call must not be less than two months, preferably three. *Done: 2nd January to 1st April 2008*
2. The call text must describe clearly the topics and goals of the call. *See feedback from researchers (5.2).*
3. Guidelines for proposers are necessary, preferably including a checklist. *Done*
4. The length of proposals must be limited; if possible, even further than for the present (SSC) call. *Done.*
5. The deadline (here: 1st April) must strictly be adhered to. *Done.*
6. Proposals must not be altered after the deadline for submitting them. *Ensured for common proposals. Nationally, additional clarification may be sought acc. to respective rules.*
7. A comprehensive summary of goals and work packages should be included in the executive summary. *Required.*
8. A coordinator is necessary, especially for larger projects. The expenses required for his task must be considered in the project plan. *Coordinator is required.*
9. Having a “secretariat” collect all proposals proved difficult (in the SSC call). It is thus recommended to save proposals on an internal internet platform. This could also facilitate recommendation No. 6. *Secretariat to collect only Common Proposals. This proved manageable in the Joint Call on gasification.*
10. Evaluation should comprise cost-benefit considerations. *Where appropriate.*
11. The Austrian evaluation form used in the present call proved to be suitable. Generally, text and format can be adopted nearly one-to-one, with some modification of wording to fit the call in question. *Done at preparatory meeting.*

12. Care should be taken to include only such elements into the evaluation form as can actually be directly by the jury, i.e. become evident on the basis of the proposal alone. *See feedback from jury members, 5.2.*
13. The definitions and tasks of jury and strategic panel must be discussed before starting the call and made clear to all parties involved. *Done at preparatory meeting: As only 4 countries, jury and strategic panel merge, i.e. one panel with 2 representatives from each country.*
14. Experts for the jury should be homogeneous, i.e. from funding agencies only or researchers only etc. *This was a comment by some of the SSC jury members, but was not the case in either the SSC or the gasification call. In the SRC call, one of the 2 had to be from the funding agency and one had to be a scientific expert (meaning that there could be 2 from the agency if they could provide a scientific expert).*
15. All funded projects must be “green” (“should be funded”) projects. This must be cross-checked by all participating countries. *Done.*
16. Jury recommendations should be used as guidelines for funding decisions. Re-ranking should only happen in justified exceptional cases. *Done: No re-ranking after jury meeting.*
17. Publication of jury results/informing proposers should take place at the same time and in a uniform way within all participating countries. The relevant processes and information should be decided on beforehand. *Generally, done – as in, information about positive assessment by jury. Final national decisions did not come on same day.*
18. Researchers’ feedback should be collected and assessed, e.g. on comprehensibility of the call text, difficulties in submitting proposals, experiences with procedures. *Researchers’ feedback on the **SSC call** was considered in drawing up the SRC call:*
 - *The opening time of the call was set to 3 months.*
 - *It was tried to make clear the administrative requirements (consortium agreement, end report), as well as the relationship between national and ERA-NET Bioenergy rules, both in the call text and in during the kick-off meeting*

- *Again, as in the previous calls, some countries which may be considered “important” are missing in the call. With the researchers’ feedback in mind, it was therefore made possible for third countries to join consortia.*

Note: Feedback from researchers involved in the gasification call was not collected until well after projects funded in the SRC call started, and could therefore not be taken into account.

5.1.2. Lessons from the gasification call

1. An expert jury in which some experts come from research institutes while others are members of the national funding organisation will result in difficult discussions – different viewpoints, both of which are of course relevant and important. In the SSC call, this was solved by having a strategic panel meeting after the expert jury meeting – but still, in some cases, it was the same person involved. In the gasification call, there was no strategic panel, which created other difficulties – the funding organisations clearly need to be present. *See 5.1.1, point 14.*
2. The veto mechanism introduced for the gasification call was not received well by the jury experts. *It was therefore decided not to use it in the SRC call.*
3. Three months between opening and closing of the call worked well (*5.1.1, point 1*).
4. There was some confusion about scoring on the side of the jury members. The evaluation form was therefore changed for the SRC call: *It was only possible to give those scores indicated in the drop-down menu for each indicator.*
5. The national clearing process always takes longer than expected in one country or the other. *During the call process, it was therefore decided to make the schedule more flexible and to allow more time before the start date of the projects (1st September 2008).*
6. “Matchmaking”: During the opening time of the gasification call, there had been a few requests for matchmaking between researcher groups. However, this wish could not be fulfilled at that time. *For the SRC call, the idea was taken up although organising a brokerage event was deemed to be too great an effort for such a small call. Efforts were therefore restricted to an electronic exchange of contact details: Each SRC team member drew up a list of potential proposers, consisting of research institutions and companies who were either known to work in the relevant area or who contacted the national agency and explicitly stated they were looking for partners. The contact details included the institution’s name,*

contact person, telephone, e-mail address and, if known, the topic(s) they were interested in.

7. Evaluation: jury members felt two weeks to be too short a time to evaluate the proposals properly. *Fewer proposals were expected for the SRC call than for the gasification call (the latter encompassing 7 countries, the former only 4). Consequently, it was decided 18 days should be enough time for the jury pre-judgements.*

5.2. Lessons learnt from the SRC call

5.2.1. Feedback from jury members

- Number of criteria too high – would be better to merge some of them
- Definitions of indicators were not always clear
- It needs to be explicitly indicated that the middle score (“0”) is neutral, not negative

5.2.2. Feedback from researchers (kick-off meeting)

- Researchers were unhappy about the fact that some countries did not have a fixed budget for the call. It was felt that a number would have made it easier to build a consortium and to scale a project
- Clearing: takes too long. Maybe a two-step process would actually speed things up instead of slowing them down?
- Information about the kick-off meeting was too close to the date of the event in some countries – although, in the end, all partner organisations involved in the projects were able to participate. The delay was due to difficulties in the national clearing processes. The lesson here would be to plan kick-off meetings at least a month after the envisaged start date of the projects to allow for such uncertainties
- The procedure of the “Affirmation Sheet” needs to be simplified
- Timing: While there was enough time for the proposal, the timeframe for clearing/negotiations was tough (over summer). Moreover, it would have been better to start the projects 3 or 4 months later (winter), and thus gain one growing season
- Having different administrative rules in each country complicates matters

- Not all topics offered clear possibilities for industry participation, although this was desired in the call. It should be stated more clearly what kind of industry partners are meant.

It must be noted here that there was also a lot of positive feedback, e.g. the jury members especially felt the weighting of scores to be a good idea, while researchers acknowledged that information on the call and its requirements was clear and accessible and the contact persons helpful. The use of known national routines was also mentioned as an advantage. However, the most important positive point from researcher side seemed to be the fact that such (small) ERA-NET Bioenergy calls complement larger calls such as those within the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme.

6. Annexes

6.1. Annex I: Call text



Invitation to a Joint Call on Short Rotation Coppice

2nd January 2008

Aim of the call

The purpose of this call is to generate joint European industrially relevant research and development activities within ERA-NET BIOENERGY. This call builds on the experience that was gained in the previous two Joint Calls (on small-scale combustion and on cleaning of product gas from biomass gasifiers respectively).

This call provides new opportunities for industries and researchers to take part in multilateral cooperation in the field of Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) and to enhance the quality of the conducted research. Projects are expected to provide knowledge through research in order to develop solutions which are economically competitive, reliable and environmentally friendly.

Given the limited budget and also the content of the existing FP7 call from the European Commission, the topic open for research proposals focuses on three areas: genetic improvement of cultivars/species for SRC, improving the value chain of SRC and environmental aspects of SRC. The joint call will open on 2nd January 2008 and will close on 1st April 2008.

This call will be published on the ERA-NET BIOENERGY web page and on the web pages of the national programmes. See: www.eranetbioenergy.net

Research on Short Rotation Coppice

Background

This is a joint call by some of the ERA-NET BIOENERGY partners. ERA-NET-BIOENERGY is a network of national R&D programmes focusing on bioenergy.

The network includes funding organisations from Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The ERA-NET BIOENERGY project has a duration of 4 years and ends December 2008. The funding agencies organising this call are aiming to investigate best practises for arrangement of joint calls and subsequent evaluation of the resulting projects. We are also aiming to provide a platform for information exchange related to short rotation coppice in different countries through workshops and other dissemination activities.

The European Commission actively supports the use of biomass for energy as part of the EU aim to increase the use of renewable energy and to avoid an increase of CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere. The European Union and its Member States recently decided to set a target of 20% CO₂-reduction and the implementation of 20% Renewable Energy by the year 2020. Wood has traditionally played a major role in supplying biomass for energy, and demand for this raw material is expected to rise with new policies promoting renewables while prices for fossil fuels are increasing.

By-products from conventional forestry have been the traditional bioenergy feedstock. However, the increasing demand raises concern about future energy feedstock availability and its effects of on conventional forest industry. SRC (defined as short rotation coppice of woody species such as willow or poplar) is regarded as a promising option to mitigate these future problems. Although the species used for SRC may have a long commercial and scientific history their application in the SRC concept is relatively new and requires further development.

Joint call topic

Due to budgetary restrictions and participating countries' different priorities, the content of this joint call is restricted to three focus areas. Note that not all countries participate in all parts of the call, i.e. organisations can only apply for projects in a specific topic if there is a financing national body.

1.) Genetic improvement of Salix and other woody SRC species

The genetic properties of commercial plant material are one of the most important factors influencing the economic as well as environmental performance of SRC. Traits like growth pattern, resistance to and tolerance of diseases and frost, water and nutrient efficiency, etc are all key parameters for the competitiveness of the production system. Compared to e.g. agricultural crops and conventional poplar plantations, coppice systems of e.g. willow and poplar are relatively new and have a short history of genetic improvement. At this early phase of commercialisation, the global R&D effort in genetics

and breeding is limited and involves few actors. Enhancing cooperation and coordination between national programmes is thus of vital importance.

The objective of this call is to support breeding technologies and programmes by collaboration between leading stakeholders involved in breeding of e.g. willow and in related disciplines. Collaboration should make use of advanced breeding technologies aiming at substantially improving the time and cost efficiency in commercial breeding of e.g. willow or poplar. Projects should focus on traits regarded as commercially critical on future main SRC markets. New technologies and tools should be validated and tested in breeding programmes. Projects should also have a strong link to national programmes and contain a component of systematic information exchange.

Countries participating in this sub-call are Germany, Sweden and the UK. (Partners from other countries may be involved, please see “General instructions for proposers” on p. 4 for details.)

2.) Improving the value chain of SRC

A cost efficient production of woody biomass for energy purposes requires both efficient technical solutions, e.g. harvesters, biomass storage and transport systems, as well as efficient business models. The harvested volume of SRC for energy is still very limited and further R&D is expected to result in major cost reductions on the supply side.

This sub-call covers R&D in all parts of the value chain, technical as well as non-technical. Examples are:

Harvesting technologies:

Harvesting represents a major cost factor in the production of SRC biomass. Furthermore, local conditions differ considerably between countries and there is limited large-scale experience of the different harvesting technologies.

Further improvement of harvest technologies is expected to decrease costs and increase productivity.

Transport and logistics:

Transport and logistics are critical parameters for most bioenergy systems. Infrastructure and logistic systems will depend on local conditions but are expected to have a considerable potential for improvement through development and comparison of different options.

Storage and drying technologies:

Storage of raw wood from SRC is made difficult by the seasonally high demands for storage space. Innovative solutions would have to look at this problem as well as consider volume losses over time and moulding.

Drying: existing technologies (e.g. for wood chips) are not suitable for round wood. New technologies would have to consider the economy of such operations, aim to minimise losses of heating value and fit into an overall Value Chain Concept (i.e. taking into account further processing/transport).

New business concepts:

Business concepts differ considerably in profitability, and significant increases in efficiency are expected to result from the development and implementation of new, innovative business models. Examples of such concepts might involve a feedstock buyer (e.g. a utility) acquiring land to become a feedstock producer as well, or an SRC concept integrated in multifunctional production systems to improve the profitability of the whole chain.

Projects may address one or several of the above topics. The sub-call may fund partners from Germany and France. (Partners from other countries may be involved, please see “General instructions for proposers” on p. 4 for details.) All systems, technologies, etc., covered by the projects should be of such scale that a successful project is likely to have an impact on commercial conditions.

3.) Environmental aspects of SRC

The objective of this sub-call is to develop new information to facilitate political decision-making on SRC and environmental areas. Projects may deal with the role of SRC in landscaping, the impact of SRC on biodiversity – with regard to flora as well as fauna –, on soil productivity, water resources or soil contamination of heavy metals. The call is open for projects developing ways of mitigating known negative environmental impacts as well as for those examining aspects which have not been studied so far but represent potential hindrances for the wider adoption of SRC. Since closed life cycles must be a core aim for any raw material if it is to be considered a sustainable solution, the question of how to dispose of product wastes (such as ashes from combustion) must also be taken into consideration. Life cycle analyses of SRC, on the other hand, are NOT a content of this call, as past studies do already exist.

Project partners from France, Germany, Sweden and the UK may be funded within this sub-call. (Partners from other countries may be involved, please see “General instructions for proposers” below for details.)

General instructions for proposers

Consortium

Proposals are invited from companies and/or research organisations depending on national funding conditions. *Be aware that national criteria apply!* Proposals must include partners from at least two of the countries involved in the call. Project outputs are expected to provide benefits to all partner countries.

Partners from countries which are not members of ERA-Net Bioenergy are also encouraged to join a consortium (as additional members, the minimum number of partners from ERA-Net Bioenergy countries stays the same).

These so-called “associate partners” must seek funding for their activities individually, as the ERA-Net Bioenergy members will **not** provide for it.

The project partners are required to sign a consortium agreement in order to agree on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and other relevant issues dealing with responsibilities within the project and exploitation of results. The consortium agreement must be signed before the first payment can be made.

Table: Overview of countries and possible applicants. At least one industry should participate in the consortium

Country	Who can apply
UK/ BBSRC	Research Institutions (standard BBSRC eligibility rules apply)
All others	Industries as well as Research Institutes

Funding arrangements

Research will be funded from national sources and will be subject to their national funding rules. Each participating funding agency has made separate arrangements for funding the national participants. The amount of public funding available for individual projects depends on the relevant national rules. Additional co-financing from stakeholders is expected following national and European rules for R&D funding. The total funding budget is limited. For details please contact your national agency.

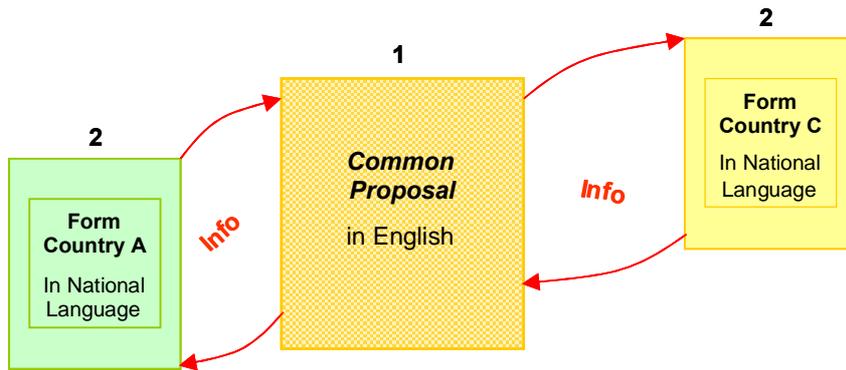
Project duration

Projects are expected to start between July 2008 and September 2008 and must be completed by 31st August 2011.

Deadline for Submission

Proposals must be *received* (i.e. the relevant date is that of the agency’s receipt stamp, not the post mark) by your participating national funding agency by **1st April 2008** at the latest. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure their documents are submitted on time.

Structure of Submission

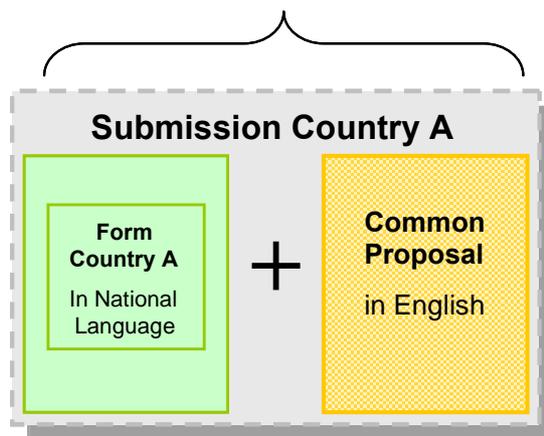


The documentation you have to submit consists of two parts.

1. A common proposal written in English which contains all relevant information about the joint project. This will be evaluated as one entity by an international jury and will form the basis for the funding decision.

2. A national proposal, i.e. a proposal in the national language which is based on the common proposal, but may include further information/application forms according to the requirements of the national funding organisation. The national proposal will not be seen by the international jury.

e.g. Funding Agency A



These documents should be submitted by each project partner to their participating national funding agency (see list of national contacts below).

Structure of Common Proposal²

The Common Proposal document should be structured as follows:

1. Project Title (max. 150 characters).
2. Duration in months (Considering that project work must be completed by 31st August 2011).
3. Name of coordinator of the project.
4. Applicant details (institution, name of contact person, contact information).
5. Financial summary table – totals only, (in €) for overall costs, costs per partner, required national funding per partner.
6. Executive summary (300 words).
7. Detailed description of consortium (role of each partner organisation and stakeholders involved).
8. Detailed project description (objectives, materials and methods, state of the art and innovative contribution of the project, project management incl. work packages and milestones, together with details of assigned resources/man-hours and associated budgets (max. 15 pages).
9. Project outcomes (implementation and exploitation plan, implementation should involve all participating countries) (max. 3 pages).
10. Background and competences of participating organisations and individuals (max. 1 page per partner organisation plus ½ page per key person involved).
11. “Affirmation sheet”, filled in and signed. The form can be downloaded on the ERA-Net Bioenergy website and the national agency’s sites.

The proposal should be written using the Times New Roman font with a minimum acceptable font size of 10.

Proposal evaluation

The proposals will be evaluated by an international evaluation jury, selected by the funding organisations involved in the call. The international evaluation jury will provide recommendations for funding. The final decisions will be made by the ERA-NET BIOENERGY partners.

The evaluation of proposals will take place during May 2008 and the funding decisions will be communicated by the end of June 2008.

² The common proposal must be equal for every applicant within any one consortium. The final version of the common proposal must be approved by the coordinator of the project before submission.

The evaluation criteria are:

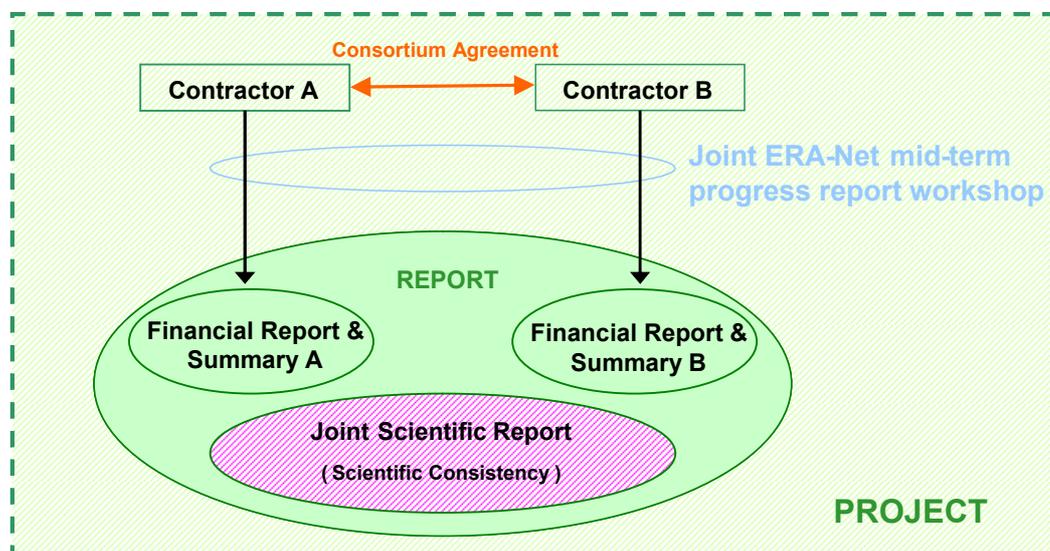
- Fit to call
- Technological and scientific quality of R&D (including why specifically the international cooperation improves the quality of the results)
- Implementation and exploitation of results (an appropriate implementation will be crucial for evaluation, e.g. describing industry involvement if type/topic of project calls for it)
- Resources available for the project, including quality of project management and coordination
- Promoting cooperation within the ERA-Net Bioenergy framework.

Beyond the above instructions, your participating national funding agency's guidelines should be followed. If you intend to participate in this call, please contact your national funding organisation.

Project Monitoring and Expected Deliverables

In addition to the standard requirements of your funding agency, ERA-Net Bioenergy requires the following:

1. Participation in and presentation at a joint ERA-NET workshop.
2. A common publishable Final Report (written in English), describing the activities and outcomes of the work including an exploitation plan stating how the results of the project will be implemented. The report should consist of a public summary and the rest will be treated as confidential. National guidelines have to be followed as well. Detailed requirements for this report will be distributed to successful applicants once the projects have started.



Participating countries / National contact points

France

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6.3. Annex II: Evaluation criteria

Indicator 1	Contribution to the Current Call	k.o.	--	-	+	++
1	Contribution to the goals of the call How well does the proposal align with the call topic?	0	6	12	20	25
Max I1						25

Indicator 2	Technical and scientific quality	k.o.	--	-	+	++
1	Novelty Does the proposed project produce a new step forward in knowledge and technology?	0	4	7	12	15
2	Quality of the proposed R&D Are the issues to be addressed significant and relevant within this field of research? Will the proposal as written be able to address these issues? Are worthwhile challenges identified in the proposal?	0	6	12	20	25
3	Quality of the approach - Methodology Clarity, adequacy and consistency of the approach: Is there enough technical detail in the methodology? Is the approach clear, adequate to the problem and consistent?	0	5	9	17	20
Max I2						60

Indicator 3	Qualification of Consortium	k.o.	--	-	+	++
1	Competence concerning the topics addressed Does the consortium have the necessary competence and experience for achieving the results proposed?	0	4	7	12	15
2	Co-operation and complementarity of partners Are the partners clearly complementary in their roles and do they fit together? Is the balance between the partners appropriate? Is there added value in the co-operation including why specifically the international co-operation improves the quality of the results? Is it likely that the project will be a true co-operation of all partners? Will external stakeholders be engaged?	0	4	7	12	15
3	Availability of technical and human resources Are appropriate technical and human resources available within the consortium or if not, have they been requested within the proposal?	0	2	4	8	10
Max I3						40

Indicator 4	Project Management	k.o.	--	-	+	++
1	Quality of project management arrangements Are suitable plans and structures in place to make sure that the project will operate effectively over its lifetime? Is there sufficient detail in the project plan (milestones, workpackages,...)? Are arrangements in place to ensure effective communication between the partners?	0	5	9	17	20
Max 14						20

Indicator 5	Outputs and exploitation	k.o.	-	-	+	+
1	Potential outputs and expected results Are any cost reductions and efficiency improvements likely to result from the proposed work?	0	8	1 4	2 4	3 0
2	Plans for implementation and exploitation Are realistic and appropriate plans in place for effective implementation and subsequent exploitation of the outputs?	0	6	1 2	2 0	2 5
Max 15						5
						5