

BEL-SME

Guidelines for Applicants

BEL-SME call 2020

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1 // Background and Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide interested parties with information about participation in the BEL-SME Call for proposals. It is targeted at interregional technological development projects between small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

The main objective of the BEL-SME programme is to strengthen the competitive capacity of SMEs by:

- increasing collaboration between SMEs from different regions,
- increasing the cooperative and competitive capability of SMEs to work in interregional R&D networks,
- helping them to develop new products, processes or technical services that exceed the existing state of the art and have good market opportunities by lowering the economic risks.

BEL-SME is an initiative of the following funding agencies:

- Wallonia (SPW recherche),
- Flanders (Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen)
- Brussels (Innoviris).

Participants from the participating regions can be funded according to the rules of the respective regional funding programme.

2 // Basic Requirements

BEL-SME is a programme which encourages Belgian SME's to collaborate through the pooling of expertise in order to develop a joint project. However, since the funding will be granted at regional level (each funding agency will fund the partners from its own region), individual application forms will have to be introduced by each partner. A very short umbrella form will have to be provided at the same time to explain the collaboration and the joint project.

As a consequence, in addition to the basic BEL-SME requirements, regional rules may apply at individual level. Please check the rules relevant for your project and get in contact with your local regional agency.

2.1 Requirements for Projects

To be selected as BEL-SME projects, projects must be innovative and must aim at developing new or to significantly improve existing products, processes or technical services that in their parameters exceed the existing state of the art. Projects must have significant technical risks. The outcome of the project must be concrete and demonstrate real market potential.

General conditions for projects are:

- at least 2 SMEs from 2 different regions
- participation of research and technology organisations (RTOs) is possible but not mandatory, they can participate as subcontractors of the participating SMEs or as an additional research partner,
- balanced participation of the partners within the project, no partner can have a budget > 70% of the total project budget,
- clear participation of all participating SMEs in the economic results of the project,
- every participant has a defined role in the project (subproject) that contains research and/or development tasks with significant technical risks and is necessary for the project success,
- part of the work may be outsourced to subcontractors, however at least 50% of the work in the complete project has to be performed by the participating companies,
- regional rules will prevail, see regional funding schemes for details,

- other partners (large companies, other SMEs, RTOs, etc.) from other countries which do not take part in this call or partners from the participating regions that cannot be funded in the respective regional programs may be part of the project consortium if their contribution is essential to reach the project goals. However, funding will not be available for them.
- The company is not in difficulty according to the EU-regulation.
- Applicants comply with the European SME-definition.

Regional rules:

Wallonia:

- Funding of the Walloon partners cannot exceed 500.000 euro / project proposal.
- For each Walloon SME, at least 50% of the budget is destined for its own services.
- The project falls under the competences of Wallonia.
- The research and/or development has not been subject to public funding.
- The subsidy percentage is 70 % for a small enterprise and 60% for a medium sized.

Flanders:

- The basis subsidy rate is 25% for development. An extra 20% will be added when the company is small and 10% in the case of a medium sized company. An extra 10% is added because of the trans regional collaboration within BEL-SME. However, the maximum subsidy rate is limited to 50%.
- Funding of the Flemish partners cannot exceed 500.000 euro / project proposal.
- Convincing extent of innovation and the related knowledge acquisition.
- Convincing quality of the proposal.
- Demonstration of valorisation potential in Flanders.

Brussels-Capital Region:

- Develop all or some of its activities within the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region.
- Show that the project is likely to have a favourable impact on the economy, employment and/or sustainable development of the Brussels-Capital Region (demonstrate the valorisation and exploitation potential in Brussels).
- Show one's ability to finance one's share in the project.
- Funding rates for Small Enterprise will be 60% for Development and 80% for Research.
- For Medium sized enterprise 50% for development and 75% for Research.

2.2 Project Duration

The duration of projects must be between 12 and 24 months.

3 // Time Schedule BEL-SME Call

December 2th 2019	Opening of the call Documents available on the websites of the participating agencies
December 16th 2019	Joint call announcement and Info session @ VLAIO
March 27th 2020	Call deadline - The joint application form must be submitted and the regional application forms must be introduced to the respective funding agencies.
July 8th 2020	Communication of funding decisions (e-mail to project coordinators).

4 // Application Procedure

4.1 Project Proposal

As mentioned here above, BEL-SME projects are joint projects performed by consortiums of SMEs. Each participant must submit to its regional funding agency the regional application and the BEL-SME Proposal Application Form must be sent to the BEL-SME coordinator (VLAIO in 2020) describing the joint objectives and outline the benefit of the collaboration.

4.1.1 Proposal Submission –Trans-regional Level

The template “BEL-SME Proposal Application Form” is available on the website of the three participating funding agencies. It includes the following sections:

- General information
- Project coordinator
- Partner(s)
- Letter of intent

It must be signed by each partner and submitted electronically by the project coordinator before the deadline of March 27th 2020 at noon to belsme@vlaio.be. The application language for this part is English. In addition the coordinator must submit a draft Consortium Agreement (not signed).

4.1.2 Proposal Submission – Regional Level

On March 27th 2020 at noon, the project must to be submitted to the regional funding agencies.

An overview of the funding schemes, contact details of funding agencies and submission procedures are available on:

- Wallonie : <http://recherche-technologie.wallonie.be/go/belsme>
- Flanders : <https://vlaio.be/nl/subsidies-financiering/ontwikkelingsproject>
- Brussels : <https://innoviris.brussels/bel-sme>

4.2 Evaluation

A proposal will be evaluated by the respective funding agencies involved following the respective regional evaluation criteria and the joint criteria indicated in the section 2.1 “Requirements of the project”. A project will be funded when all involved funding agencies achieve a positive evaluation result. The results of the evaluation will be communicated to the project coordinator.

4.3 Agreements and Contracts

4.3.1 Consortium Agreement

A Consortium Agreement between all the project partners is mandatory (only a draft at the submission stage). It will regulate, inter alia, the following:

- identity of the partners,
- IPR ownership, IPR use and exploitation of the results, subcontracting to third parties,
- contributions of each partner to the project,
- confidentiality,
- publications,
- duty for every partner to fulfil the regional reporting obligations.

The Consortium Agreement should be signed after the funding decision has been communicated. Signature of the Consortium Agreement is a prerequisite for funding.

4.3.2 Funding Procedure and Agreement

After the communication of the evaluation results, the partners of the selected projects will be invited to contact their funding agencies to launch the process that will lead to the signature of the regional funding agreement. The procedure and the modalities related to funding will be determined following the respective regional agencies rules. For more details, we strongly advise you to contact your regional agency.

5 // Project Reporting and Monitoring

Projects will be monitored according to the rules of the respective region. Hence, technical as well as financial reporting according to regional rules will be required.

6 // Contact with regional Funding Agencies

For additional information and support, it is strongly recommended to contact the respective regional agencies. Please refer to the list of contacts on the websites of the regional funding agencies:

- Wallonie : Pierre Demoitié | 081 33 45 40 | pierre.demoitie@spw.wallonie.be
- Flanders: Ria Bruynseels | 02 432 42 76 | ria.bruynseels@vlaio.be
- Brussels : Stijn Maas | 02 600 50 67 | smaas@innoviris.be

7 // Definitions

Consortium Agreement	A contract between all project partners regulating the terms of their cooperation, including the handling of IPR and the dissemination plan
Funding agencies	Agencies which manage the relevant funding program(s) in the respective region
Funding agreement	Agreement between the funding agency and the funded project partner(s) in the respective region
IPR	Intellectual property rights
Project coordinator	One of the project partners. The coordinator is the contact person and submits the proposal at BEL-SME.
Project partners	All the participants/partners involved in a project consortium
Proposal	A project description plus annexes (Letters of Intent of all project partners; draft Consortium Agreement) submitted by the project coordinator
RTO	Research and Technology Organisation. An organisation which conducts research or development as a main activity, e.g. university, higher education institute, research institute, technology centre, etc.
SME	See the definition of the European Commission dated January 1, 2005: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/index_en.htm
Transregional project	A project that includes partners from at least two regions

An overview of the definition of a SME is given in the following table:

Headcount (Full time equivalents)	Turnover (€)		Balance sheet total (€)
< 250	<= 50 million	or	<= 43 million