

[only for Networks of Excellence]

Before you start preparing a proposal for a **Network of Excellence (NoE)**
PLEASE READ THIS FIRST

Understand their purpose: NoEs are an instrument to overcome the fragmentation of the European research landscape with the objective to strengthen European excellence in a given area. Their purpose is to reach a durable restructuring/shaping and integration of efforts and institutions or parts of institutions (labs, departments, units, teams...) in areas where this is necessary.

The **success** of an NoE is not measured in terms of scientific results but by the extent to which the social fabric for researchers and research institutions in a given field has changed due to the project and the extent to which the existing capacities become more competitive as a result of this change.

Justify the need for integration and restructuring: NoEs are to be used in scientific areas where the research efforts in Europe are scattered and fragmented. Proposals must demonstrate that this is actually the case in the area under concern and explain how restructuring/shaping and integration will lead to higher scientific excellence and more efficient use of resources.

Scientific excellence – a necessary condition for being successful: The **scientific excellence** of the participants and their research activities is **imperative**. Proposers have to demonstrate that the participants belong to the key players in Europe in the scientific area concerned and that the science they are doing is world class. However, just bringing together excellent scientific groups around an exciting topic is not enough for an NoE. Each partner (institution) involved has to convincingly show its commitment to durable integration (beyond the period for which the Community support is requested), restructuring and organisational change.

The Joint Programme of Activities (JPA): NoEs are expected to induce and to manage processes of change: to remove mental, financial, technical and legal barriers to integration; to durably "institutionalise" the links between the institutions involved, which will imply the restructuring of the research portfolios and of the existing organisational structures. The JPA must provide the actions to implement these processes. The JPA must show the **serious commitment** of all partners to **organisational change**.

The **integrating activities** should include (non-exhaustive list; for a description of other types of activities in the JPA (research, management, spreading of excellence) see http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/instr_noe.htm):

- ?? discussing and establishing mechanisms for coordinating and finally merging the research portfolios of the different partners
- ?? staff exchange schemes or complete re-location of staff
- ?? establishment of shared and mutually accessible research equipment, managerial and research infrastructures, facilities and services
- ?? exploring the legal circumstances and possibilities for durable integration
- ?? setting up joint supervisory bodies

?? measures for joint public relations

Research as part of the JPA: Jointly executed research is an obligatory part of the JPA. These research activities must aim at achieving the purpose of durable integration, e.g. by developing common tools, or at filling gaps in the collective knowledge portfolio of the network.

Apart from this, the participants in an NoE will of course pursue their own institutional research portfolios in the area covered by the NoE. This research **cannot form** part of the JPA.

Involve the appropriate levels of decision-making: Structural and organisational changes need strategic decision making at the highest institutional level and sometimes even beyond (financing bodies, supervisory boards etc.). Proposers have to demonstrate the active involvement and commitment of the appropriate levels of decision making of each participating organisation

The size of an NoE: The objective of far-reaching and durable integration requires serious and long-lasting commitment from all participants. The depth of integration aimed at is the decisive criterion, not the size of a network. It is impossible that the necessary change processes can be managed in very big networks comprising several tens or more of participating organisations. Proposers intending to coordinate large networks in a looser way without the ambition of far-reaching organisational change and durable integration should consider applying for a Coordination Action.

Resources, budget, costs, funding: NoEs are funded by “Grants for integration”. The **allowable grant** is determined on the basis of a “**head count**” of the researchers constituting the research capacity of the participants in the topic of the NoE (plus a bonus for doctoral students), by applying a table converting numbers of researchers into an average annual grant.

However, this does not mean that NoEs are exempt from budget planning and cost reporting. Participants should indicate the necessary resources and the estimated budget for the joint programme of activities when submitting the proposal. The **payments** are made on the basis of eligible **costs actually incurred for the implementation of the JPA**; the actual grant finally paid will be smaller than the total eligible costs for the JPA.

“Litmus test” for NoEs



If the participants are going to continue to work as they have always done with no significant changes of structures, portfolios and organisations, your proposal is most probably not an NoE.



If the research area is fragmented and would gain in excellence by re-structuring; and if all the participants intend to undertake a major effort to re-structure and re-organise the way research in the area under concern is carried out in Europe and, to this end, establish durable integration of their research capacities, your proposal might be a good candidate for an NoE.