

Co-operative and Collective Research Projects within FP6

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In addition to instruments like Integrated Projects (IP), Networks of Excellence (NoE), and Specific Targeted Research Projects (STREP), two special instruments are specifically addressed to SMEs: Co-operative Research Projects and Collective Research Projects. They are intended to support SMEs that have the potential to innovate, but insufficient research capacity to do so, and therefore require an outside RTD partner to provide research services (an “outsourcing” philosophy).

Co-operative Research Projects (CRAFT)

In CRAFT projects, the RTD performers, which are contractors under FP6, carry out (the majority of) the research activities on behalf of and for the benefit of SME contractors. The research tasks should be well defined and precisely focused, as this project involves a relatively short period of research (12-24 months). A consortium within CRAFT projects consists of a minimum of 3 independent SMEs, two RTD performers, and other enterprises and end-users if they have an interest in contributing to the action.

Collective Research Projects

In contrast to CRAFT, these projects are not addressed to single SMEs, but to Industrial Associations or Enterprise Groupings. Such a consortium consists of at least two independent national Industrial Associations/Enterprise Groupings or a European Industrial Association/Grouping, an SME core group of at least two SMEs, and a minimum of two RTD performers.

IP rules

Any IP regulations between the partners must not contradict the provisions of the EC contract. Regarding the ownership of knowledge, the partners retain ownership of pre-existing know-how. In the case of CRAFT, knowledge in the form of project results becomes the joint property of all SME contractors, whereas within collective research projects, only Enterprise Groupings gain property rights. RTD performers and SME core groups do not gain any property rights. The exercise of such joint ownership should be regulated by the consortium agreement. The owners of knowledge also have to ensure that it is adequately protected.

Some particularities of CRAFT and collective research projects can be mentioned:

- The conclusion of a consortium agreement is always mandatory. A duly signed copy has to be sent to the Commission.
- RTD performers will grant access rights to their pre-existing know-how on a royalty-free basis and will only get access to pre-existing know-how and knowledge in order to carry out their own work. It goes without saying that SMEs may agree otherwise (i.e. on further or additional rights) in the consortium agreement, for example.
- Furthermore, the use and dissemination of knowledge have to be considered in detail, as in this type of project use of the results is a key issue.
- The rule on financial collective responsibility is not applicable.
- For SMEs, the definition as described in the Commission Recommendation [2003/361/EC](#) applies.