Industrial Partnership Block Grant

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1. The FNR Background and Objectives

It is a strategic priority of the National Research Fund (FNR) to turn public research into a competitive advantage for Luxembourg. To this end, the FNR supports the advancement of Luxembourg's knowledge-based economy by supporting industry-informed research, by reinforcing co-operation between public research and innovative industries, and by facilitating the commercial exploitation of research results.

The aim of the “Industrial Partnership Block Grant” (IPBG) programme is to foster the cooperation between Luxembourg based companies active in R&D and public research institutions in Luxembourg.

The specific objectives of the programme are to:
1. Support knowledge transfer between higher education institutions and Luxembourg based companies active in R&D;
2. Prepare young scientists not only for an academic career, but also help in acquiring the necessary skills and competences for the private job market;
3. Provide PhD and Postdoc students with an excellent, stimulating research training experience within the context of mutually beneficial research collaboration, between public research institutions and Luxembourg-based industrial partner organisations.
4. Promote the development of industrial research capacity in Luxembourg through the recruitment of early stage researchers and the concomitant implementation of partnerships between companies and public research organisations.

2. General Principles

Research under IPBG should fulfil the following general principles:

1. Adequate attention needs to be paid to working conditions, transparency of recruitment, equal opportunities and career development as regards the IPBG applicants. In these matters, the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers offer a reference framework.
2. Under the IPBG scheme, employment contracts are the rule. In Luxembourg, the FNR exclusively supports researchers having an employment contract.
3. Research should respect fundamental ethical principles, including those described in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Qualifying Research Bodies are expected to have in place clear ethical guidelines and assurance procedures designed to manage research under their direction.
4. Research misconduct, e.g. provision of false information, plagiarism or falsification of data, results in a rejection of the proposal. The FNR reserves the right to pursue further steps according to the ‘Research Integrity Guidelines’ accessible on the FNR website (http://www.fnr.lu/en/Calls,-Forms-Guidelines/General-FNR-Guidelines).

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1The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their recruitment can be downloaded from http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/rights
5. Regarding **Research integrity**, the FNR endorses the following references: The «Singapore Statement on Research Integrity» adopted in 2010 following the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity², and «The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity³» published by the European Science Foundation and ALLEA (All European Academies).

6. Ideas and/or text belonging to others must be properly referenced, based on international standards. All applications will be checked for plagiarism and any misconduct may result in the immediate disqualification of the application.

7. The dissemination of research results and transfer of knowledge are key added values of a research project. The FNR expects that results are published in peer-reviewed first author publications⁴ at the latest 2 years after project end. The commercial and/or industrial exploitation of research results is an important aspect of the IPBG. In addition, the FNR fosters the dissemination of research towards the general public and the media. Measures need to be taken to increase the use and impact of results by industry, policy makers and society. Financial support from the FNR must be acknowledged in all publications and other forms of media communication, press releases and conferences.

3. **IPBG Programme Outline**

The call is organized as a new strand of FNR’s PPP call (which comprises BRIDGES and Industrial Fellowships). Submissions are to be made by eligible public research institutions collaborating with Luxembourg-based industrial partners that have established a solid track record in collaborative doctoral training.

Proposal submission deadlines: **open**

Notification of selected projects: ca. 3 months after submission

Programme Start: immediately after notification but at the latest 24 months after notification.

4. **IPBG Scheme Characteristics**

The Industrial Partnership Block Grant awards a block allocation of PhD and/or Postdoc grants (Industrial Fellowships) in which Luxembourg-based industry partner(s) take the lead in arranging a research programme with a Luxembourg-based public research institution of their choice in research relevant to FNR’s strategic priority areas. The individual grants have to be complying with the Industrial Fellowships “Terms and Conditions” (i.e. funding duration, financial contribution, etc.)

⁴ The FNR considers the following as peer-reviewed publications: a publication in a journal of the list of journals with impact factors published yearly by ISI Thompson; a publication in the journal index established by SCOPUS; a publication in peer-reviewed conference proceedings; or a monograph with a review board.
This programme enables FNR to fund collaborative training with the industry and allows businesses to better integrate studentships into their planning cycles. It will also allow research partnerships to share the risk around major challenges.

The partnership programme has a bottom-up approach; proposals in the national priority areas are eligible for funding. However, the programme targets only research teams that have already a certain track record in doctoral training together with industry partner(s) that have successfully managed at least 5 doctoral trainings each in the past.

Number of awards and funding duration

FNR will support IPBG programmes for a minimum of 48 months and maximum of 72 months period. A minimum of 5 and maximum of 15 PhD and Postdoc grants (each grant comprising the equivalent of a 4-year Industrial Fellowship PhD/2 year Industrial Fellowship Postdoc employment contract + a training & travel allowance of 6,000 EUR/PhD and 4,000 EUR/Postdoc) can be awarded.

Key-requirements

- Industry-led proposals with Luxembourg-based companies/consortia/networks in collaboration with Luxembourg-based public research institutions.
- Need for all partners to demonstrate a solid track record in collaborative doctoral training
- Studentships have a mandatory placement at the industrial research partner for a minimum of 25% and maximum of 50% of their time.
- At least 25% of the funding (cash) to be supported by the industry partner(s).
- An accountable governance structure to enable effective management and communication and a significant role for FNR in strategic engagement and post-award monitoring should be put in place.

4.1. Programme Partners and Organisation of the Consortium

A programme will be run by a consortium comprising

1. One or more Luxembourg public research organizations and
2. One or more Luxembourg-based companies,

In addition, the following entities can also participate in the consortium:

3. Luxembourg-based non-profit associations and foundations engaged in research
4. Luxembourg-based private research organisations

The institutions under 1 will designate one coordinating institution. Only institutions listed under 1 and 3 are eligible to receive direct funding by FNR.

‘Non-contracting Partners’ are organisations or individuals from the public or private sector (within Luxembourg or abroad) participating in the project without direct financial support from the FNR.
‘Subcontractors’ are not considered as partners (contracting or non-contracting) in the project.

FNR expects the partnership programme to have an accountable governance structure which enables effective engagement and communication with all levels including supervisors and students. FNR also expects to see high-level engagement from senior management to ensure the partnership links with organisational governance and advice streams, and to enable the programme to access wider resources where relevant.

- The “Programme Director” must be a qualified researcher employed by the coordinating public research institution in Luxembourg with a work contract covering the full duration of the project.
- The “Industrial Director(s)” must be employed by the national industrial partner(s) and FNR expects that the industrial director(s) will remain in place for the duration of the IPBG; if they step down, FNR will need to be consulted on their replacement.

4.2. Principles Regarding the IPR Ownership in a Collaborative Research Project under the IPBG Scheme

IPR Ownership

1. Knowledge that predates the project

The ownership of the “Background IPR” is usually retained by the Party which was the owner, or had control over the use of the particular IPR before the collaboration project started.

2. Knowledge created during the project

The preferred arrangement for the ownership of the foreground IP generated through the collaborative programme, as a starting position for negotiation, is that the “Luxembourg Public Research Organization(s)” (LPRO) will initially own all IPR arising from the research and then licence the IPR to the partner company on preferential terms. The conditions (licensing fees, duration, etc.) are negotiated according to how the partner company plans to use the IP.

A LPRO will not normally consider assigning ownership of its IPR, but it may in exceptional circumstances, once IPR have been created, agree to transfer or assign ownership of these IPR, provided that the LPRO:

- receives fair value in return,
- satisfies itself that the assignee is in a position to commercialise the IP for the benefit of the country and
- satisfies itself that there are adequate provisions in place to enable commercialisation to continue in the event that the assignee is unable to commercialise the IP

Where the LPRO licenses (or in exceptional cases transfers or assigns) the IP to a company, the LPRO shall retain the right to use that IP for its research and teaching.
**IPR Access**

Collaborative companies shall be entitled to negotiate arrangements to access IP arising from the project and owned by the LPRO, ahead of other organisations who may wish to access the IPR, within a period of six months starting on the date on which the LPRO declares the creation of the IPR. After this time, the LPRO shall be free to negotiate arrangements for other organisations to access the IP in order to maximise the benefits of commercialisation.

Access by companies to IPR owned by an LPRO will normally be by the granting of exclusive or non-exclusive licences by the LPRO. Licences shall be for defined purposes, fields and territories, and on fair commercial terms which provide opportunities for economic and societal benefits for the country.

The LPRO shall be free to publish the IP, provided it first follows a standard process to notify other collaborating parties of its intention to publish and to agree any restrictions on publication;

**4.3 Submission and Assessment Process**

**4.3.1 Submission stage**

Grants for the partnership programme will be awarded through a call for proposals. Proposals are submitted by the Programme Coordinator, who has responsibility for the proposed activities, on behalf of the public research institution. Applications can be submitted continuously from the date of publication of the call until the final deadline of the same call and will be evaluated and selected based on the two specific deadlines set out in the Programme Outline.

A completed Application (details in Annexe) will need to be submitted by the Programme Coordinator via our Electronic Grant Submission System: [https://grants.fnr.lu](https://grants.fnr.lu)

**4.3.2 Assessment Process**

In making its recommendations to the FNR, the Assessment Panel, consisting of independent experts with extensive experience in public-private collaborations, will assess the information provided by applicants as part of their IPBG proposal. The assessment of proposals will also include an interview with the coordinators and the management team of the proposed Partnerships, typically conducted at one of the partner’s premises.

The selection process is set up according to the fundamental FNR values of transparency, efficiency and integrity and aligns with the “Statement of Principles for Scientific Merit Review” of the Global Research Council.

**Assessment Criteria**

The Assessment Panel will evaluate proposals based on the evaluation criteria and generate a rank-ordered list of applications that are recommended for funding.

Proposals are ranked and selected on the basis of the following selection criteria:
1. Excellence of research and alignment with FNR’s priority research areas

2. Added-value of the public-private synergy

3. Excellence of the PhD/Postdoctoral training programme and environment across the organisations involved in the Partnership.

4. Quality of management of the collaborative training programme, supervision of the students, governance of the partnership and employability perspectives.

5. Impact and possible applications of the IPBG

4.4. Progress Reports and Project Follow-up

Annual Progress reports (APR) need to be submitted yearly by the Programme Coordinator. A final report (FR) needs to be submitted maximum one month after the project’s end.

5. Annexe

5.1. FNR Grant Management System (Online Submission)

All IPBG Calls are managed through an online submission system (FNR Grant Management System) accessible via https://grants.fnr.lu. This system provides applicants a web services interface for automated submission and further monitoring of completed grant applications and related services (acknowledgement emails, notifications and reminders). The publication ‘e-Tutorial: Online Application’ explains how to log into the system and how to create a new application. Please download it from the webpage: https://grants.fnr.lu/help/

The system will guide the applicant through the different steps of the application procedure. All forms have to be filled in online and submitted in electronic format.

For documents that need to be uploaded to the online system, please respect the font and page limitations indicated in the application forms! If page limitations are not respected, the FNR retains the right to shorten the document and only forward the correct amount of pages to the external evaluators! In order to be eligible, the valid forms of the relevant call have to be used.

5.2. IPBG Application Procedure

The IPBG proposal application consists of completing and submitting the Online Application Form and its attachments. Applicants must submit their application in electronic format to the online submission system (FNR Grant Management System) https://grants.fnr.lu no later than 14:00 (CET) on the deadline. To be eligible, applicants have to use the templates valid for the relevant call.

Incomplete applications and/or late submissions will make the application non eligible and the application will be turned down without further evaluation!
5.3. Application Elements
The applications for IPBG project consist of the following elements:

1. The ‘IPBG Online Application Form’ is to be accessed and completed online in the FNR’s online Grant Management System (https://grants.fnr.lu).
2. The IPBG Project Description Form (maximum 30 pages) contains detailed information on the proposed collaborative research programme. A Word file template is to be downloaded and completed offline, afterwards converted to PDF and then uploaded to the Online Application Form in the online system. The ‘Project Description’ cannot be submitted alone.
3. The supporting documentation (to be uploaded):
   - The Bibliography (max 4 pages). Most relevant publications by the supervisors should be highlighted.
   - The recent Curriculum Vitae for coordinators and all collaborative partners including publications and supervised students (no template provided but should not exceed 2 pages)
   - The Programme Plan (template Gantt chart) contains the graphical representation of the project plan including human resources planning;
   - The Consortium Agreement (including IPR) concluded between the collaborators
4. Commitment letters of partner institutions. A letter of commitment has to be provided by each partner institution. It has to state the role of the institution in the partnership programme and has to be signed by the organisation’s legal representative, or someone of equivalent authority.

The IPBG Programme Description Form and the Programme Plan have to be downloaded to the applicant’s own desktop and completed off-line before being converted to PDF and uploaded. They are part of a web-based online application and cannot be submitted alone.

For technical questions regarding the FNR Grant Management System, please contact us by e-mail at tech-support@fnr.lu or call our Help Desk at +352 26 19 25 45.