Programme description & application guidelines
BRIDGES Programme 2020

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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 and to open up opportunities for researchers to sustain a high-impact research strategy while engaging with the most innovative industrial world leaders. To this end, the FNR supports the advancement of Luxembourg's knowledge-based economy by supporting applied research, by reinforcing co-operation between public research and innovative industries, and by facilitating the commercial exploitation of research results.

The objective of the BRIDGES programme is to support the public and private research community in pursuing high quality, high impact and innovative applied research in areas that demonstrably enhance and underpin enterprise competitiveness and societal development. To achieve this, this programme aims to facilitate collaborative projects between public research organisations and companies, disseminate and exploit publicly-funded research results with a view to translating them into new products, methods, algorithms and services. Collaborative projects should also aim to jointly attain applied research results that will be valuable to both parties, by enabling public research facilities to address new research issues, or to address them in a different way, and by enabling companies to access high-level public research competences in order to improve their innovation capacities.

The specific objectives of the programme are to:

- promote innovation and sustainable value creation by stimulating strong partnerships between public research institutes and companies
- facilitate access to advanced industrial technology and expertise worldwide
- utilise and strengthen national testbed facilities and living labs
- increase the attractiveness of Luxembourg as an innovation hub based on advanced technological research

2. BRIDGES Programme Outline and General Principles

The Programme is open to all domains with the following proposal submission deadlines: 17th of April and 16th of October

Notification of selected projects: max. 3 months after Proposal submission

Project Start: immediately after notification but at the latest six months after notification.

The activities under the BRIDGES programme should fulfil the following general principles:

- R&D activities should respect fundamental ethical principles, including those, which are reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. If necessary, the approval of the “Comité National d’Éthique de Recherche” (CNER) and/or the “Commission Nationale de la Protection des Données” (CNPD) need to be sought prior to the launch of the project. In case the project has ethical implications, it is mandatory to join a plan explaining how these implications will be dealt within the proposal.
- R&D misconduct e.g. provision of false information, plagiarism or falsification of data, may result in a rejection of the proposal. The FNR reserves the right to pursue further
steps according to the ‘Research Integrity Guidelines’. Applicants must comply with the ‘FNR Research Integrity Guidelines’ accessible under General Guidelines.

- 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 Integrity¹, and «The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity²» published by the European Science Foundation and ALLEA (All European Academies).

- Open Access Guidelines: costs for project related publications can be refunded through the FNR’s “Open Access Fund”, and if fulfilling the FNR requirements. This does not apply to conference proceedings, PhD theses, book chapters and scientific monographs, although the FNR recommends Open Access publishing whenever possible. Please refer to the Open Access Fund guidelines for details.

- IP Protection and Collaborative Agreements: The principal IP terms of the collaboration agreement between the RPO and the company regarding the submitted project must subject overall to the “Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01)” paragraph 2.2.2. “Collaboration with undertakings”. The applicants must indicate how their institutions have implemented the framework and submit a draft collaboration agreement including the terms and conditions that relate to intellectual property created in the course of the Project. The FNR keeps the right to audit these agreements pre and post project.

- All funded researchers must declare any private, personal or commercial interests relating to an application for funding to the FNR in an accompanying document included as an application attachment conform to the Guidelines for the declaration of potential conflict of interest.

- The dissemination of research results and transfer of knowledge are key added values of a research project. The commercial and/or industrial exploitation of research results is an important aspect of the BRIDGES. 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.

- Data protection issues: all FNR funded projects must comply with the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) concerning all data protection issues.

- The FNR has signed the “Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)” and therefore has introduced changes in how it assesses research proposals. This means that the FNR evaluates quality and impact independently of journal-based metrics and gives value to all research outputs.

¹ http://www.singaporestatement.org/
3. BRIDGES Scheme Characteristics

Proposals shall describe short- to mid-term collaborative applied research projects aimed at acquiring exploitable knowledge with the aim of allowing products, processes, services, methods or organisation models to be improved, validated or created. Through a strong collaborative approach, the project is innovative and provides tangible benefits to all partners. It should not be a pure engineering project and in any case it must not simply cover the daily operational business of the company. The applicant, the company and the public partner jointly develop the project.

3.1. Duration and Funding

FNR will support projects for a **minimum of 12 and maximum of 36 months** period. Funding will be awarded to successful applications for a **maximum amount of 400k€**.

Co-funding is required:

- To display strong commitment by the private side, co-funding by the company is required:
  - If the company is Luxembourg-based: **minimum 15% of the eligible project costs of the public institution** must be covered directly by the companies in terms of monetary contribution.
  - If the company is international-based: **minimum 30% of the eligible project costs of the public institution** must be covered directly by the companies in terms of monetary contribution.
  - Significant in kind contributions (access to company’s data, equipment and other resources) are expected as well.

- Significant contributions in kind, e.g. through acquisition of and access to infrastructure, 4th year of the PhDs, are expected from public institutions.

Costs that the FNR can cover at eligible Luxembourg public research institutions:

- Personnel – salaries
- Consumables
- Equipment essential to the project
- Subcontracting: Sub-contract services should exclude any profit element and all Foreground IP generated as part of a sub-contracting must be assigned to the institution unless agreed to the contrary.
- Travel costs (only including reasonable costs that are justified and will be incurred exclusively for the progression of the BRIDGES project, e.g. presentation of the project results at technology fairs. Details and purpose for the expenditure/name of the fair or conference, including number of staff travelling, must be given)
- Other including preparation of technical reports, market assessment, and patent filing for eventually new IP generated by the project. Licensing in new technologies only in special cases to be agreed upon by FNR.
- Overheads are reimbursed on the basis of a flat-rate (up to 25% of direct costs minus subcontracting). Overheads cannot be claimed by public administrations.
Number of applications per Principal Investigator (PI) and resubmissions of applications

A principal investigator (PI) from a RPO can submit only one proposal per call deadline. There are no limitations for the partnering companies.

A submitted project can be resubmitted only once and the applicant team has to take a written position to the received comments.

Supplementary Funding Resources

- **FNR-MECO** synchronized funding for public institutions and private entities (see Annexe 5.1).
- Funding for PhD and Postdoc positions at the national-based company or at a foreign research institution or university may be requested through a separate proposal to be submitted to the **Industrial Fellowship** (formerly AFR PPP) programme.

3.2. Eligible Host Institutions, Partners and Principal Investigator

Funds provided by the FNR in the framework of BRIDGES are aimed at the following beneficiaries:

1. Public institutions performing research in Luxembourg
2. non-profit associations and foundations engaged in research in Luxembourg and accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research

Each proposal must be accompanied by the approval of the person authorised to legally commit the institutions of the involved team members.

Project Partners

A project will be run by a consortium comprising

- One or more public institutions performing research in Luxembourg
- One or more Luxembourg-based companies,
- Companies based abroad, provided they are highly innovative and devote a substantial budget to R&D activities in their domain and are not in direct competition with any Luxembourgish company.

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

- Luxembourg-based non-profit associations and foundations engaged in research
- Luxembourg-based private research organisations
- Public research organizations (including Universities) based abroad; they will however not be eligible for FNR funding, except for PhD and Post-doctoral grants

‘Contracting Partners’ are institutions which are eligible for funding and which seek direct financial support from the FNR. Among those, the PI’s host institution is referred to as ‘Coordinating Institution’.

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3 For more information on eligibility, please consult our webpage: http://www.fnr.lu/en/about-us/beneficiaries
‘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.

**Principal Investigator**
- The PI must be employed by one of the public research institutions in Luxembourg with a work contract covering the full duration of the project.
- If an established co-ownership agreement between the public institution and the industrial partner exists, there should be a commercialization agreement put in place before the evaluation of the project.

**4. Submission and Selection Process**

Grants for BRIDGES will be awarded through a call for proposals. Proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator, who has responsibility for the proposed activities, on behalf of the host institution, i.e. 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 in two rounds per year, based on the two specific deadlines set out in the BRIDGES Programme Outline. **Applications must be submitted completely in English.** Applications with elements in other languages are not eligible.

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

**4.1. Selection Process**

The submitted applications will be evaluated by a panel consisting of independent experts with extensive experience in public-private collaborations according to the selection criteria. The selection review process guarantees an independent, state-of-the-art evaluation of the application with the objective to select the research projects and applicants that reflect scientific/technological excellence and high level of innovation in collaborative projects.

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.

The BRIDGES selection process consists of several stages:

1. Proposals undergo an **administrative eligibility check**. Applicants will receive a confirmation of the eligibility or non-eligibility of the proposal. In case of non-eligibility, the reasons are indicated and the application will not be assessed.
2. Eligible proposals are **peer-reviewed** by members of the panel team consisting of independent experts with extensive experience in public-private collaborations.
3. The **panel team** rates all proposals and recommends funding.
4. The **funding decision** is formalized by the Secretary General before being communicated to the applicants.
The **funding decision** will be communicated to the applicants within approximately 3 months following the submission deadline.

### 4.2. Selection Criteria

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

The proposal will be evaluated with respect to the following criteria:

1. **Project idea and assets innovation**
   - project idea; clarity and pertinence of the objectives
   - level of innovation (innovation potential)\(^4\) and significance for the industry

2. **R&D activities**
   - clarity and pertinence of the objectives of the proposed R&D
   - Relevance of research that gives an indication of the role of the R&D project in relation to the innovation sought
   - Soundness of the research approach and methodology

3. **Quality and efficiency of the project plan**
   - Feasibility in the industrial environment: coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources and planning of secondments; operational capacity
   - Competences, experience and complementarity of the individual participants, as well as of the consortium and collaboration as a whole
   - Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management.
   - Level of ambition in the collaboration and commitment of the participants in the proposed programme to pool national resources and coordinate their national/regional competences

4. **Impact**
   - Enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge;
   - Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results translated into assets, to communicate the project, and to manage and curate research data where relevant. Soundness of the risk mitigation plan.
   - Strengthening the competitiveness and growth of companies by developing innovations meeting the needs of Luxembourgish and European markets; and, where relevant, by delivering such innovations to the markets; there must be a high impact for Luxembourg when partnering with international partners.
   - Any other environmental and socially important impacts

Additional criteria if PhDs or Postdocs are included in the project:

- Track-record of supervisors/scientific advisors and research groups involved

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\(^4\) In this context, the term “innovation” is to be understood as renewal or new creations that generate value added. The innovation will be assessed as to whether it represents an innovation solely for the partners or applies in a national/international context as well.
• Organisation of the joint supervision and training; transfer of knowledge between the partners in the BRIDGES consortium

5. Annexes

5.1. Supplementary Funding Sources
FNR-MECO synchronized funding

FNR, the Ministry of the Economy and Luxinnovation aim at encouraging research collaboration between Luxembourg companies and research performing organizations. A joint call for collaborative projects shall facilitate access to funding for both parties in a synchronized manner.

Research performing organizations are funded by FNR through BRIDGES while companies are funded by the Ministry of the Economy through the R&D scheme as defined by the Law of 17 May 2017 relating to the promotion of Research, Development and Innovation.

Collaborative projects are evaluated by FNR according to the BRIDGES procedures in order to determine the funding for the Research Performing Organizations. Same project will also be evaluated by the Ministry of the Economy in order to determine the funding for the companies.

It shall be outlined the fact that research performing organizations can also partner up with companies abroad (according to the BRIDGES Programme Description), that cannot be funded by the Luxembourg Ministry of the Economy. Luxembourg companies can also introduce collaborative research projects with research institutes abroad. In the latter case, there is no need to submit an application to the National Research Fund.

For reasons relating to state aid regulation, the company has to submit a full application to the Ministry of the Economy before the project is submitted to FNR. In order to increase transparency, Part C - THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT of the MECO-guidelines and, if applicable, the (draft) collaboration agreement shall be appended to the BRIDGES application.

Luxinnovation provides personalized assistance to the company in the preparation of its application.

Additional information on the application procedure is available on: Innovation Portal

Guidelines for companies are available online also on the Innovation Portal

The graph below summarizes an example of the process of a Joint Application between a Luxembourg company and research performing organization:
Synopsis: FNR-MECO synchronized funding (BRIDGES and MECO funding)

5.2. FNR Grant Management System (Online Submission)
All BRIDGES 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.

5.3. BRIDGES Application Procedure
The BRIDGES 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.

The applications for a BRIDGES project consist of the following elements:

1. The ‘Online Application Form’ is to be accessed and completed online in the FNR’s online Grant Management System (https://grants.fnr.lu).
2. The **BRIDGES Project Description Form** contains detailed information on the proposed collaborative research project. 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 **recent Curriculum Vitae for principal investigator and all collaborative partners** (max. 1 page, no template provided, publication list only the last most impactful 5 publications)
   - The **Key Information of the Company (KIC)** (template provided)
   - The **Project 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 drafted in accordance with the EU regulation
   - **Letter of Acceptance** from the PhD Supervisor, if applicable
   - Declaration on **Potential Conflict of Interest (COI)**

From experience FNR suggests to consider that the preparation of IP relevant documents may take longer than planned and therefore can cause a delay of the originally intended project start. We strongly recommend the project partners to discuss all IP relevant topics as early as possible.

The Project Description Form and the Project 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.