



## ERA NET INCOMERA

### 2nd Transnational Call 2016

### Innovation and Commercialisation in the NMP Thematic

## Guidelines for Proposers



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## 1. Introduction

INCOMERA is an ERANET project (European Research Area Network). The objective of the ERANET programme is to foster coordination of research and innovation policies between consortium partners. This ERANET project brings together a number of 22 funding agencies from 13 countries and regions for a duration of 4 years. . Among the 22 agencies, 12 agencies will participate to the 2<sup>nd</sup> transnational call 2016 (See Call Text part 2.7 funding rules).

Its objective is to fund projects to allow validated technologies or processes to be further developed for industrialisation. Results should be commercially exploited at the end of the project INCOMERA focuses on nanotechnologies, materials and new production technologies. INCOMERA will support industrial projects for SMEs which carry out activities like performance validation (technical and cost), system prototyping and end-user qualification.

## 2. Call announcement

Referring to the scope and objectives of the INCOMERA project, it is of importance to have a clear view of the most significant concepts underpinning INCOMERA.

### 2.1 Objectives and topics

The scope concerns : **nanotechnologies, materials and production processes**. The core objective of the 'Nanosciences, Nanotechnologies, Materials and new Production Technologies (NMP)' theme is to improve the competitiveness of European industry and generate the knowledge needed to transform it from a resource-intensive, to a knowledge intensive industry.

NMP research also aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the European industry by generating 'step changes' in a wide range of sectors, and implementing decisive knowledge for new applications between different technologies and disciplines.

Funding the NMP research theme will benefit to new, high tech industries and higher-value, knowledge based traditional industries, with a special focus on the appropriate dissemination of research results to SMEs. The transformation of the European industry into a knowledge-intensive one is essential in order to produce high added value products, which in turn is crucial to create new companies. This transformation should also take into account customer requirements as well as growth, environment, health and other societal expectations.



Emphasis will be given to the following activities:

- **Nanosciences and nanotechnologies** - studying phenomena and manipulation of matter at the nanoscale; -applying it to the manufacturing of new products, the improvement of production processes and/or the creation of new services.
- **Materials** - using the knowledge of novel and smart materials for new products and processes. Materials can be polymeric (e.g. films) or metal or ceramic based, can be structured (e.g. textiles) or layered (composites) or can involve treatments of materials (e.g. coatings).
- **New production** - creating conditions for continuous innovation and for developing generic production 'assets' (technologies, organisation and production facilities as well as human resources), while meeting safety and environmental requirements. INCOMERA will fund activities to develop production processes from a laboratory environment to close to market pilot scale.
- **Integration of technologies** for industrial applications - focusing on new technologies, materials and applications in niches markets.

These technologies are often key enabling technologies (KET) for addressing many societal challenges. Relevant applications of these KETs can be found in challenges such as: Health and Well-being, Green Transport, Food Security, Secure Societies, Clean Energy and Environment.

The sector of nanotechnologies, materials and production processes is also defined as HighTech Systems and Materials. It is often one of the key sectors in regional smart specialisation strategies (S3).

Some regions have indicated specific topics that are covered or excluded for funding (see Annex F). Applicants have to consider this in designing their project and consortium.

Applicants should contact their funding agencies (See Annex A) for more details concerning the topics eligibles.

## 2.2 Activities to be funded

### 2.2.1 Expected types of projects

The proposals expected to be submitted in INCOMERA are typically:

- **Projects funded by the European Union under FP6 or FP7.** For example, a project with partners from different countries (Member States or Associated) was financed under FP6. At the end of the project, the research reached TRL 4. Some partners (out of the initial) from 2 different countries want to continue the research up to a functional demonstrator.



Those partners, out of countries/regions participating to the INCOMERA Call 2016 (see Annex D), can submit a project.

- **Projects funded at a national/regional level through national funds or regional funds.** For example, a consortium of partners had submitted a project in MANUNET. At the end, the research reached TRL 5 and the whole consortium, who belongs to countries/regions participating to the INCOMERA Call 2016 (see Annex A), want to continue the research up to TRL 6. Then they can submit in INCOMERA.

- **A project idea.** For example, a SME wants to develop a prototype but needs the competence of a large company. If both belong to countries/regions participating to the INCOMERA Call 2016 (see Annex A), then they can submit a project in INCOMERA.

### 2.2.2 Technology Readiness Levels

INCOMERA uses the methodology of Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) to assess whether proposals do indeed aim at crossing the bridge from validation of a proof of concept in a laboratory environment to a pilot-line and/or demonstrator.

The proposers are explicitly invited to use the TRL Methodology to assess:

- The status of the starting point of their project
- The objective of the project
- The activities to carry out during the project

**The application of the TRL methodology shall be evaluated by the evaluators to consider funding for proposals. Proposals not applying the TRL methodology shall fail on this criterion.**

The TRL methodology has been developed initially as a method to assess progress in technology development for NASA. The methodology is now also used by the European Commission to define funding instruments and it distinguishes between fundamental research (TRL 1-4), applied research (TRL 5-7) and pre-industrial or pre-commercial activities (TRL 8-9). We advise to consult a note of EARTO (<http://www.earto.eu/news.html>) to have a good grasp of the TRL methodology.

The TRL is often visualised as a thermometer or ladder with nine steps. This is an example of such a representation that is used as a reference for INCOMERA:

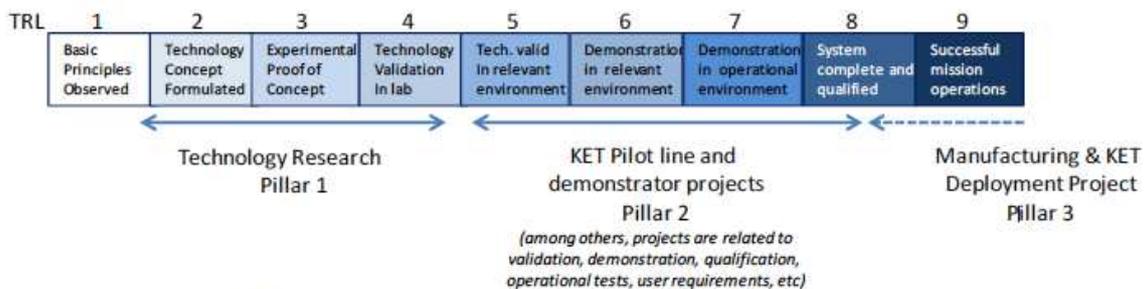


Figure 1: Technology Readiness Levels and types of activities that INCOMERA will support



In this scheme, proposals should pick up results at TRL 4 and bring them at least to TRL 6. Only some regions/countries shall fund TRL 7.

**What activities are relevant to be funded (this list is not comprehensive):**

- The development and testing of materials, processes or systems under realistic conditions;
- The modelling of material or process properties to understand parameters and their interaction for the development of a knowledge base and design rules;
- The development of models to enable customisation or adjustment to specific end-users and the validation of customisation processes;
- The development of a pilot line to test production under controlled conditions. However for investments in equipment specific funding rules apply;
- The development of demonstrators for functional tests with (stratified) samples of end-users. Also clinical tests in vivo may apply, when animals or humans are involved specific guidelines apply.

For more details about the Technology Readiness Levels, see ANNEX B.

**The proposals should explain the TRL status, objectives and activities of the different project components in a synoptic way, preferably a table.**

**Applicants should contact their funding agencies (See Annex A) for more details concerning the TRL methodology.**

### 2.2.3 Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

INCOMERA funds projects that develop clearly described exploitable results from past projects. The INCOMERA call for proposals emphasises the importance of IPR in project proposals. This focus on IPR serves several purposes. Formal IPR forms an indication of novelty of a technology and the description of for instance a patent gives a basis for the evaluators to judge the progress beyond the state of the art. IPR such as a patent represent an investment and are thus a proof of commitment of the patent holder that it represents potential economic value. IPR should demonstrate that the consortium has the right to exploit the novelty. Protection of IPR is expected as an outcome of the project as a basis for further market exploitation of the technology.

Proposals have to clearly demonstrate that:

1. The project is novel and is based on a recognised novel invention tested as a proof of concept in a laboratory. The proposal has to convincingly demonstrate novelty and excellence and show the potential to move forward beyond the state of art in a given market area. The clearest indication of this is a patent or a publication. In the case of a patent this should be underpinned by a prior art search by a patent expert. In the case of a publication, this should be underpinned by a peer reviewed process leading to a conference paper or an article in a scientific journal. If a new technology is not described by an article or in a publication, other proofs have to be



given. This can be a review by an external party, a jury report for an award. The proof of novelty should be anterior to the opening date of this call for proposals.

2. The consortium has the right to exploit the knowledge in a project. This is an important aspect since it is a prerequisite to carry out a project and to exploit the results. Those results should themselves be partially or completely patentable. The consortium shall have to demonstrate one of the following:

- (Partners in) the consortium has a right on a patent as being applicants or holders, or they should be author (as a person or organization) of a publication.
- (Partners in) the consortium has a right granted by the patent holder in the form of a license or a franchise to apply a technology in a product/process or market.
- The consortium may assert that the knowledge that is the basis of the project is already in the public domain. This can be best supported by publications that show the “freedom of use”. A proposal supported by publications of partners is of course stronger.

### 3. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

#### 3.1 Submission of Applications

The INCOMERA application process will be a one-step procedure.

The proposals must be submitted through the INCOMERA on-line submission system by the partner acting as coordinator, available at [www.INCOMERA.eu](http://www.INCOMERA.eu). In addition the corresponding regional/national funding application form may be requested by the respective funding organisations according to their respective programme rules.

**It is strongly advised to all project partners to contact their respective regional/national funding agencies** in order to discuss beforehand:

- If the project content matches with the strategic agenda of the funding agencies
- The funding conditions required;
- If such is the case, additional applicable regional/national rules and procedures.

#### 3.2 The Evaluation Process

The proposals will be evaluated following this procedure:

- The Call Secretariat (See Annex C) will check the eligibility of each proposal (See Sub-Section 3.2.1);
- The Call Secretariat will send the eligible proposals to funding agencies for a eligibility check (See sub-section 3.2.1) → The proposals not passing the eligibility check will be out of the process.



- The Call Secretariat will then manage and monitor a centralised evaluation with an independent expert panel (see sub-section 3.2.3) which will be in charge of reviewing proposals according to a pre-defined list of criteria (see Annex D).

### 3.2.1 Eligibility check and evaluation criteria

i. At INCOMERA level, consortia proposing a collaborative pre-proposal must fulfil the following eligibility criteria :

- Application form submitted in the Electronic Submission System in English before the deadline given in the call conditions ;
- **Consortia of at least 2 independent partners from 2 different countries participating to the Call**
- **It is recommended that minimum of 40% of the overall budget is allocated to SMEs<sup>1</sup>**
- Project duration: Max. 24 months ;
- Budget restriction: no more than 70% of the budget of the project is financed by one funding agency.

ii. At regional/national level, each concerned beneficiary must meet the requirements of the local funding agency he depends on:

- Eligibility of the applicants ;
- Matching of the project content with the strategic agenda ;
- Corresponding regional/national funding programmes ;
- Presence of requested documents if the case.

### 3.2.2 Result of Proposal Assessment

Only if proposals fulfil each below-mentioned criterion, they will be assigned to an independent experts panel for the scientific and economic final assessment.

### 3.2.3 External evaluation of Full Proposal

Following the assignment of experts, the evaluation proceeds as follows:

**1. Individual evaluation.** The Call Secretariat sends the full proposal to two experts, one with an academic background, the other one with business background. Both experts will have to sign a confidentiality agreement and to declare not having any conflict of interest on assigned full proposals. Each expert carries out an evaluation and prepares an evaluation summary report with comments and scores according to the evaluation criteria available in Annex A. For each criterion, scores from 1 to 5 are awarded. Half scores are possible.

**2. Common evaluation.** The individual experts then form an 'evaluation panel' to come to a common view and agree on comments and scores. Both experts have to communicate their

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<sup>1</sup> SME according to EU definition



individual assessment and confront it via the EPSS in order to reach a consensus and to fill in one ESR.

**3. Validation by the Call Secretariat.** If the Call Secretariat considers a report as unclear or comments do not fit with scores, experts could be asked to review and/or complete their assessment. If the evaluation panel cannot reach a common view, the consensus ESR will set out both the majority view and the dissenting views.

**4. In case of disagreement among experts,** a consensus panel composed of two additional experts with both academic and economic profiles will mediate with the first assigned experts to reach a consensus. If not, a new evaluation procedure will be undertaken.

**5. As a final outcome,** the Call Secretariat will compile the ranking list of all full proposals above the thresholds for submitting to funding agencies and final decision.

This ranking list consists of:

- A list of proposals proposed for funding (the final funding decision remains in the hands of the respective national and regional agencies according to their available budget.);
- A list of proposals that do not pass the thresholds or have been found to be ineligible.

**6. Funding Decision.** An evaluation meeting in presence of each funding agency's representative is scheduled, chaired by the Call Secretariat, to formally approve the ranking list and the communication to the coordinators.

**7. Final Communication.** The Call Secretariat will communicate the final results to each coordinator by sending a generic email without any comments and justification for non-retained proposals. Applicants are then invited to contact their local agency for further details.

## **4. FUNDING DECISION, CONTRACTS & MONITORING**

### **4.1 Funding decision**

During an evaluation meeting chaired by the Call Secretariat, funding agencies will formally approve the list of full proposals recommended for funding. The prevailing rule is to follow the final ranking list until the available budget will be exhausted.

Please note that the good proposal's position in the final ranking list does not necessarily imply a positive funding decision. Should a full proposal have a positive evaluation and above thresholds, budgetary limits of involved funding agencies can imply a funding rejection.



#### **4.2 Start of the project**

The indicative date for the start of the project is ideally January 2017. Beneficiaries should contact their funding agency.

The process of each individual contract will be monitored by the respective regional/national funding organisation through their specific process.

Because of different local sequences among funding agencies, it is strongly advised to ensure that each partner of the same project can start in a fixed time-window not exceeding three months.

Besides, the funding cannot start before the final signed version of the consortium agreement has been received and approved by each funding agency involved.

#### **4.3 Project review**

Project monitoring will mainly be monitored by each respective funding agency according to their local rules and requirements.

Nonetheless, the Call Secretariat will also carry out some monitoring activities through questionnaires addressed to project coordinators (success stories for INCOMERA dissemination activities, feedback form about satisfactory with evaluation procedures...). For that reason, a reference to INCOMERA is requested in publications, exhibitions, lectures and press information concerning results of the projects.



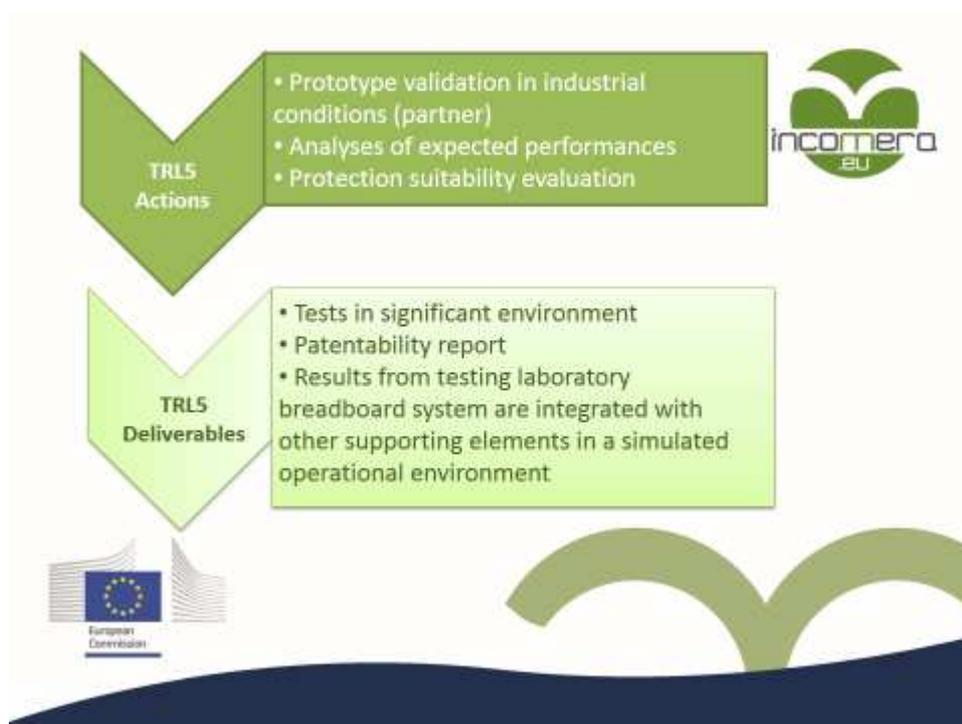
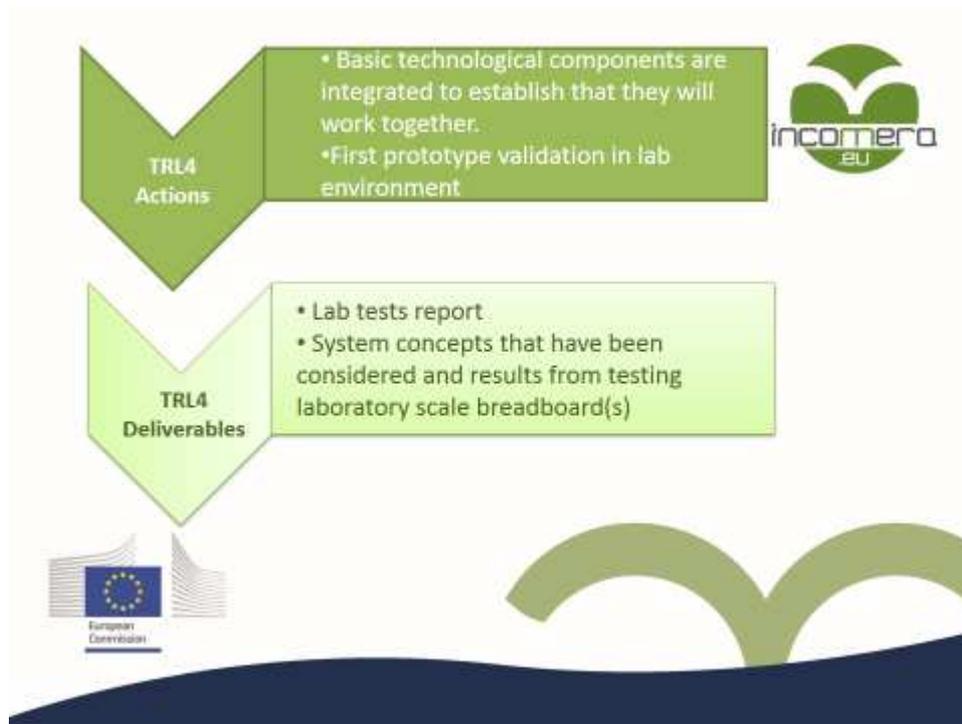
**Annex A : Funding Organisation in the Call – Local contact points**

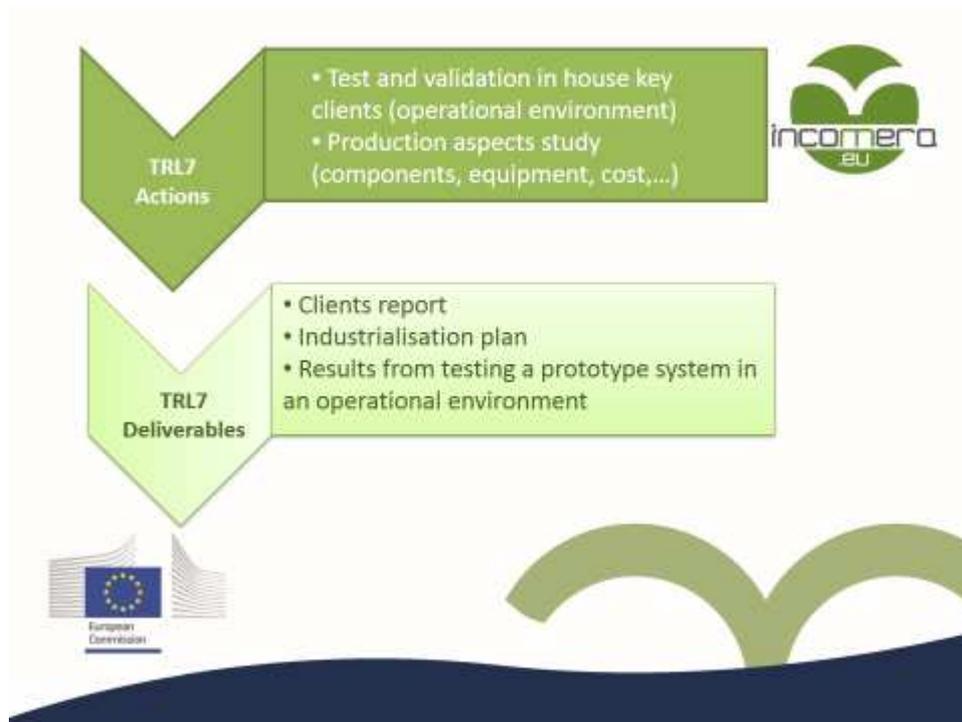
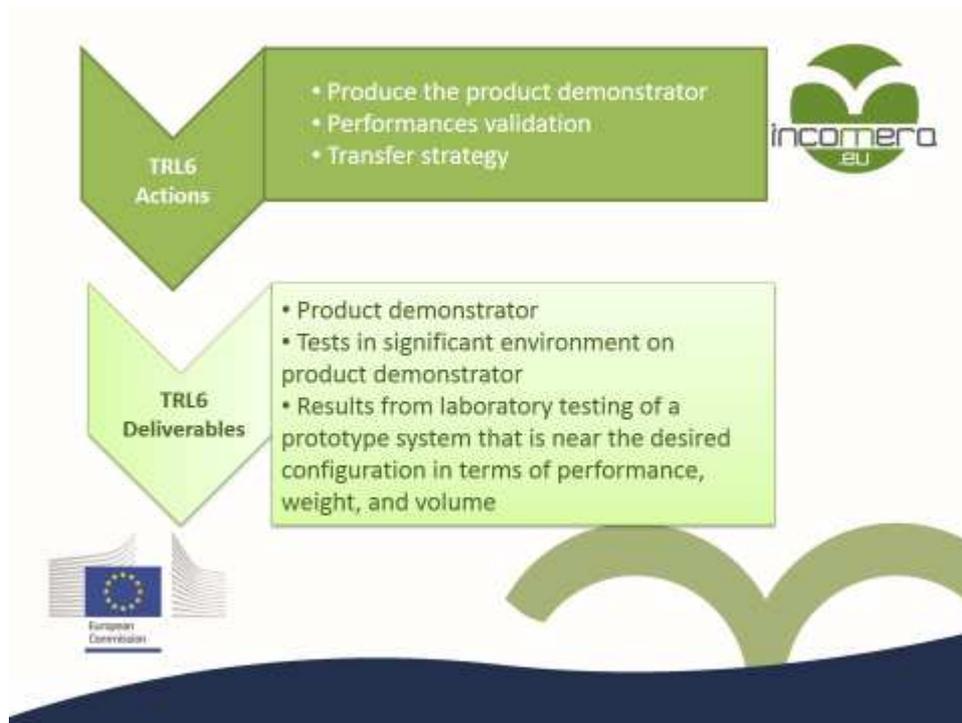
<i>Country/Region</i>	<i>INCOMERA member</i>	<i>Contact details</i>
<b>Wallonia (Belgium)</b>	SPW-DGo6	Nicolas Delsaux Place de la Wallonie, 1, bat III 5100 Jambes BELGIUM <a href="mailto:Nicolas.delsaux@spw.wallonie.be">Nicolas.delsaux@spw.wallonie.be</a> Tel : +32 81 33 45 20 Mobile : +32 473 556 174
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\* Participation to be confirmed

## Annex B - the Technology Readiness Levels







## ANNEX C - EVALUATION PROCESS

### 1. What is the Call Secretariat ?

The INCOMERA Call Secretariat (CS) will be the central basis for activities related to the implantation of the call. The CS is responsible for the proposals reception and transmission to the panel members. The confidentiality of all projects will be ensured through specific confidentiality agreements with the panel members and establishment of strict procedures for proposals reception.

#### 1.1 Composition

- Chaired by the Valencian Institute of Business Competitiveness (IVACE);
- A representative of GAIN, the Regional Council of Nord-Pas de Calais, Sviluppo Toscana S.p.A, SPW-DGO6 (Wallonia) and UEFISCDI (Romania)

#### 1.2 Tasks

- **Selection of experts.** The Secretariat will select the experts to act as evaluators for each one of the proposals invited, including the Consensus Panel. The Secretariat will contact all of them to be sure that they will participate in the process and, if yes, to collect their signed confidentiality agreement.
- **Proposals reception.** After the deadline, the Call Secretariat will verify the integrity of the process and provide the coordinators with the corresponding Acknowledge of Receipt. This must be done automatically by the platform.
- **Proposals INCOMERA eligibility check.** The Call Secretariat will check that the proposals received meet the call requirements according to the submission procedure.
- **Proposals Agencies eligibility check.** The proposals accepted are sent to the corresponding agencies. The Call Secretariat gathers the eligibility decision of each funding agency.
- **Experts evaluation.** The Call Secretariat will assign the proposals to the experts nominated as evaluators, opening their access to the corresponding proposals in the platform. If the experts are unable to agree on the evaluation summary report (ESR), the Secretariat will allocate an additional expert to evaluate the proposal and build up a consensus between the experts. The Secretariat will collect a single ESR for each proposal.



- **Evaluation Committee.** The Secretariat will prepare the initial ranking list and send it to the funding agencies jointly with the proposals' evaluation summary reports. A live meeting is scheduled, chaired by the Call Secretariat, to formally approve the ranking list and the forthcoming communication to the coordinators.
- **Communication.** The Secretariat will communicate to the proposal coordinators the final results of the evaluation and invite the partners of the whole consortium to contact their corresponding agencies for the national/regional procedures.

An INCOMERA platform will allow all above-mentioned functionalities thanks to an intuitive and interactive networking and evaluation tool.

## 2. Panel of Experts

In order to ensure that only proposals of the highest quality are selected for funding, we rely on independent experts (evaluators) for the evaluation of proposals.

### 2.1 How are the evaluators selected?

The INCOMERA Call Secretariat appoints independent evaluators for each call from the database of external and independent experts selected through a Call for Experts.

Evaluators will have a scientific/technological and/or business background linked to the innovation cycle with a high-level of expertise in the relevant fields of research and innovation and business.

### 2.2 Organisational structure

**Panel of experts (PE):** is a panel of internationally recognised scientific and business experts responsible for the evaluation of submitted full proposals. (PE) members will not submit or participate in proposals within this call, and must sign declarations of confidentiality and declare any conflict of interest.

**Evaluation panel (EP):** Each full proposal will be assessed by an evaluation panel made up of two experts who will have to reach a common consensus and fill in one ESR.

**Consensus panel (CP):** a consensus panel composed of two additional experts with both academic and economic profiles will mediate with the first assigned experts to reach a consensus.



## Annex D : Evaluation criteria, scores and thresholds

The evaluation criteria and the corresponding thresholds are the following:

	Criteria	Explanation of the criteria	Score	Explanation	Threshold
1	Link to the state of art and progress beyond it	Innovative character towards foreseen results & Technological foreseen results	1-5	1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Very good 5=Excellent	3
2	Consortium Strength	Quality and relevance of partners & transnational added value	1-5	1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Very good 5=Excellent	3
3	Activities and budget in relation to TRL	Work plan, tasks division and clear goals	1-5	1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Very good 5=Excellent	3
4	Quality and time-frame of the exploitation plan	Realism of forecasted activities to the expected market and market accessibility (IPR – dissemination)	1-5	1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Very good 5=Excellent	3

→ Each criterion scored out of 5;

→ Individual threshold of 3;

→ Overall Threshold of 12.



## Annex E : Checklist for proposers

- The proposal conforms to the guide of proposer.
- Every project partner has been in direct contact with his/her national or regional funding agency and has checked that their collaboration and their project contribution is eligible for funding.
- The consortium is aware of the necessity to have a consortium agreement, including amongst others the agreements on intellectual property rights (IPR) and publication rules for a funded project (to be signed before the first payment).
- All project partners have checked the national/regional programme procedures and regulations. All project partners are aware of documents requested by the national/regional funding organisations.



## Annex F : Funding Programs & Rules

Questionnaire to be filled in by each participating funding agency