



6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme  
Anticipating Scientific and Technological Needs

## **NEST**

New and Emerging Science and Technology

REFERENCE DOCUMENT ON

# **INSIGHT PROJECTS**

Implemented through:  
Specific Targeted Research Projects (STREPs)  
Co-ordination Actions (CAs)

This is a reference document of DG Research. Before preparing proposals for NEST, the Guide for Proposers, and all other relevant documents which constitute the Information Package for the call, should be consulted.

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Please note that there is a **National Contact Point (NCP) for NEST in your country** who can offer personalized services. The mission of NEST NCPs is to inform, advice and support potential applicants in the preparation, submission and follow-up of NEST proposals.  
 For contact details: <http://www.cordis.lu/nest/ncp.htm>

# Reference document on INSIGHT projects

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The New and Emerging Science and Technology (NEST) activity falls within the specific programme “Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area” of the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (FP6).

INSIGHT projects respond to the requirement in the specific programme that the NEST activity will conduct :

*... NEST mandate for INSIGHT projects ...*

*Research to assess rapidly new discoveries, or newly observed phenomena, which may indicate emerging risks or problems of high importance to European society, and identify appropriate responses to them.*

This reference document addresses the key elements of INSIGHT projects, indicating how they will be implemented under NEST.

## 2 OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED BENEFITS

*... anticipatory function...*

INSIGHT projects have an anticipatory function. They are scientific investigations, designed to provide early identification and clarification of discoveries and phenomena that could lead to potential problems and risks of concern to society.

*...assist to strategic decision-making...*

INSIGHT projects follow the basic principles of the NEST activity, giving researchers the freedom to develop their ideas within the broadest possible limits. But, at the same time, proposals need to demonstrate that the research proposed has a high potential impact and provides results of significant added value for strategic decision-making.

They should therefore aim to develop scientific understanding that enables actors concerned (e.g. policy makers, regulatory authorities, industry, interest groups representing civil society) to frame strategic choices about necessary future actions. They might for example aim at reducing or eliminating key uncertainties and areas of ignorance, or they may be orientated towards developing viable and robust means to limit the practical consequences of uncertainty, or both.

This could be achieved, for example, by means of:

*... possible specific objectives ...*

- Analysis of the specific features of a new discovery or newly observed phenomenon in question, through the rigorous application of existing methodologies and techniques.
- Development of new and innovative methodological approaches and tools, to enable robust decisions to be reached on the appropriate responses to such discoveries or phenomena, for example in the face of significant uncertainties or areas of ignorance.

- Development of means to pool and/or compare understanding and scientific assessments and/or reconcile different (eg national) positions and perspectives on topics of interest to different organisations and interest groups in Europe.

*... benefits to various actors in the field of public safety and risk ...*

INSIGHT projects should therefore be of benefit to various groups charged with addressing public safety and risk, including the European Commission, national government departments and agencies, and other actors, e.g., by helping them to identify “early signals” of potential risks and hazards and to make strategic judgements.

INSIGHT projects could also help to develop Europe’s institutional capacity (within the European and national bodies and amongst other relevant organisations and interest groups) to identify and manage the implications of uncertainty and ignorance, and address issues of concern, for example by identifying ways in which technological and policy-making systems could become more resilient, robust and adaptable.

### 3 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

#### 3.1 Possible Areas of Action

*... areas of INSIGHT research ...*

INSIGHT projects may in principle address topics in any field of science and technology as long as these do not fall within other areas of FP6 (in particular the Thematic Priorities<sup>1</sup>). The spectrum of possible subject matter is thus in principle rather broad.

To provide some guidance on the possible scope of project proposals, the following interpretations are given for key concepts cited in the NEST mandate for INSIGHT projects (see section 1 above).

***Risk or problems of high importance to European society:*** Bearing a high potential for causing a significant reduction in the quality of life for Europeans as a whole, or specific social groups in Europe. Quality of life would encompass circumstances and prospects for good physical and mental health, economic well being, social harmony, and environmental quality.

*... Examples ...*

***Discovery or phenomenon:*** These terms are interpreted in the context of human interaction with the natural world and with technological developments. The following potential “triggers” for INSIGHT actions could be envisaged. (Note that the examples are purely hypothetical – they do not indicate preferred areas or areas of particular concern.) :

- *Discoveries associated with a change in the state of the natural world, or our understanding of the natural world* (e.g. a new pathogen; a new environmental contaminant; a new exposure pathway for an existing contaminant for humans or animals; a novel

<sup>1</sup> FP6 Thematic Priorities: 1. Life Sciences, Genomics & Biotechnologies for Health, 2. Information Society Technologies, 3. Nanotechnologies & Nanosciences, Knowledge-based Multifunctional Materials, New Production Processes & Devices, 4. Aeronautics & Space, 5. Food Quality & Safety, 6. Sustainable Development, Global Change & Ecosystems, 7. Citizens & Governance in a Knowledge-based Society. <http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/home.cfm>

natural hazard).

- *Phenomena resulting from new scientific or technological developments and their application* (e.g. a newly-observed problem arising from a medical intervention or medical practice; a means by which communications systems or machinery could inadvertently or deliberately be caused to suffer major failures; a new method of financial market intervention with the potential to cause systemic problems; a phenomenon in human development or genetics that indicates serious potential ethical problems in the future).
- *Phenomena relating to changes in economic and/or societal conditions in the context of scientific and technological developments* (e.g. uptake of a new agricultural practice with potential for damaging consequences on international trade relations; appearance of a new type of crime that is difficult to detect or combat)

*... importance of novelty ...*

***New or newly observed:*** the anticipatory role of INSIGHT projects means they must address issues at a very early stage, on which there has been very limited prior analysis and research, and where understanding is limited. They will not address topics within the context of ongoing “risk debates” where there is perennial controversy over areas of uncertainty or the interpretation of data.

### 3.2 Possible Elements of INSIGHT Projects

*... different activities...*

Projects might in different cases, for example, involve laboratory or field experiments to clarify the scientific basis of a phenomenon, modelling of different possible mechanisms and impacts, analysis of systemic and societal vulnerabilities, and/or the development of response strategies.

*...questioning orthodoxy ...*

They may also involve questioning orthodoxy and the development of new analytical, methodological and technical approaches for assessing and responding to problems and risks, including in particular interdisciplinary and systemic issues.

*...critical examination of assumptions ...*

The projects could also be ‘reflexive’ in the sense that they might critically examine some of the assumptions underlying their own investigations and the interpretation of their findings. They might also contribute by re-framing some of the questions, or by providing answers from a novel perspective.

*... inter-disciplinary approaches ...*

In most cases, INSIGHT projects are likely to require a multi-disciplinary team and an inter-disciplinary approach, both to investigate the risk potential of new discoveries and phenomena and to understand the implications for society. Thus, social sciences might play an important role within INSIGHT projects. In some cases, however, INSIGHT projects might usefully draw predominately or even entirely from a single discipline such as, for example, analytical chemistry, epidemiology or the development of software for the analysis of geographical data information systems.

*...an opportunity for social sciences ...*

<sup>2</sup> INCO countries: 1) Russia and other New Independent State, 2) Mediterranean Countries, incl. Western Balkan, 3) Developing Countries. For details: [ftp://ftpnl.cordis.lu/pub/fp6\\_wp/sp1/en/sp1\\_annexc\\_wp\\_200203\\_en.pdf](ftp://ftpnl.cordis.lu/pub/fp6_wp/sp1/en/sp1_annexc_wp_200203_en.pdf)

### 3.3 What INSIGHT Projects are Not

The following types of research will not be funded:

- Research that legitimately falls within the scope of the *FP6 Thematic Priorities*.
- *Policy evaluation studies*, i.e. research intended to evaluate the impacts of existing policies or prospective policy options, unless it relates to a novel phenomenon that is independent of the policy itself.
- *Technology foresight studies*, i.e. research focused on exploring the future avenues of technology development and technology uptake; or *technology assessment studies*, i.e. research intended to explore a broad range of socio-economic impacts associated with the development or implementation of a technology or system.
- Research addressing phenomena that do not involve important novel aspects, such as topics in the context of ongoing “risk debates”, or which is *open-ended*, without clearly-articulated strategic benefits, or research directed towards investigation of *hypothetical phenomena* or predictions, with no plausible or convincing evidence as to their real or potential existence.

*... examples of research that will not be funded under INSIGHT projects ...*

### 3.4 Instruments

*...implementation through STREPs and CAs ...*

INSIGHT projects can be carried out through two different FP6 funding instruments depending on the nature of the funding required.

**Specific targeted research projects (STREPs):** STREPs are the main instruments for the implementation of INSIGHT. It is envisaged that INSIGHT STREPs will be relatively small in scale (compared to other actions in FP6) and orientated towards the production of robust outputs in a relatively short period of time (normally a maximum of 2 years duration with solid interim results after approx. 1 year). As such the maximum EC grant will not normally exceed EUR 800,000.

*...co-ordination of research activities carried out, e.g., with national funding ...*

**Co-ordination Actions (CAs):** CAs could be envisaged in cases where pooling or consolidation of nationally funded research activities is needed. They can provide funding for the co-ordination and management of these activities, but not for the research activities themselves. INSIGHT CAs would normally involve a maximum of two years and a maximum EC grant of up to approximately 10k€ per partner per year. It is here assumed that all partners are putting in place research activities relevant to the project, supported through their own or other means.

These instruments are mutually exclusive: an INSIGHT activity is funded either through a STREP or a CA, never through both.

*... partnership with at least three legal entities ...*

For both instruments, *FP6 Rules for Participation* specify that the number of participants in a project shall not be less than three

independent legal entities established in three different Member States or Associated States, of which at least two shall be Member States or Associated candidate countries.

*... funding of participants from third countries ...*

The participation of partners from third countries is welcome as long as the project keeps clearly a European dimension. Third-country-participants from EC target countries, so-called INCO countries<sup>2</sup>, may even receive EC funding. Participants from other third countries might receive funding if their participation to the project is essential.

## 4 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION MECHANISM

### 4.1 Submission and Evaluation Procedure

*Proposal preparation, pre-registration and submission ...*

Submission of INSIGHT proposals, in response to the relevant Call for Proposals, follows the standard procedures of FP6. All relevant details on the submission procedure are given in the *Guide for Proposers*. “Notification of intention to submit a proposal” (pre-registration) of proposals is strongly recommended, in order for the Commission to anticipate the required range of expertise for the evaluation.

The NEST evaluation procedures comply with the relevant official *Guideline for Proposal Evaluation and Selection Procedures*.

*... evaluation by a senior scientific panel ...*

NEST will use a combination of specialist experts, and a panel of senior experts. The panel may include experts with a broad range of affiliation and background, including for example representatives from government departments or regulatory agencies, policy makers, as well as “civil society” more broadly, in the sense of an “extended peer review”.

*... complemented by specialist expertise ...*

The panel bases its judgements on the individual assessments of a large number of experts who provide independent individual assessments of proposals. These experts – the referees – are specialists in the area of the proposal.

*... 2-stages for STREPs ...*

Proposals for INSIGHT STREPs follow a two-stage evaluation procedure. Proposals are submitted as OUTLINE STREP proposals, containing administrative information (Part A) plus a scientific / technical part of maximally 5 pages long (Part B). The technical part B of these OUTLINE STREP proposals is anonymous, i.e. the names of the scientists and their institutions should not be revealed. The OUTLINE STREP proposals are assessed against three evaluation criteria, given in Annex 1.

*... anonymity in part B ...*

*... first outline, then full proposal submission ...*

Successful OUTLINE STREP proposers will be invited to submit a FULL STREP proposal, which will be assessed against six evaluation criteria, again given in Annex 1. The technical part of FULL STREP proposals is not anonymous.

*... 1-stage for CAs*

Proposals for INSIGHT CAs follow a one-stage evaluation procedure. Proposals for CAs are submitted as full CA proposals, consisting of

**Reference document on INSIGHT projects**

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*not anonymous ...* administrative information (Part A) plus a scientific / technical part of maximally 20 pages long (Part B). The technical part of proposals is not anonymous. CA proposals are assessed against six evaluation criteria, given in Annex 1.

*...comprehensive feedback to proposers ...* All proposers are informed of the results of the evaluation by means of the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR). The NEST ESR faithfully reflects the views of the experts involved. It communicates the comments of the individual referees, the comment from the panel and a final set of marks.

**4.2 Evaluation Criteria**

*... individual criteria are specific to NEST ...* The precise criteria for evaluation applicable to INSIGHT STREPs and INSIGHT CAs are reproduced in Annex 1. They derive from the standard blocks of evaluation criteria adopted by the Commission for FP6; and are largely self-explanatory.

Specifically, in the stage 1 evaluation of INSIGHT STREPs the proposals will be assessed against three criteria: “Relevance”, “Excellence”; and “Impact”, while in stage 2 the proposals will be assessed against the complete set of criteria.

**5 MANAGEMENT OF INSIGHT PROJECTS AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS**

*... external communication and information ...* Related to the socio-political dimension of such projects, where sensitive questions of public concern might be addressed and/or arise, a well thought external communication with and to decision-makers and other people concerned is required. Thus, proposals will need to present convincing strategies for communication and dissemination of project results to the stakeholders concerned, which might require their involvement at relevant stages during the course of the research itself.

**6 CALLS FOR PROPOSALS AND CONTACTS**

NEST Calls for Proposals can be consulted on the Cordis information website [www.cordis.lu](http://www.cordis.lu).

**Contact information:**

*...contact points...* NEST web-site: <http://www.cordis.lu/nest>  
6<sup>th</sup> framework programme: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6>  
Contact point for further information: [rtd-nest@cec.eu.int](mailto:rtd-nest@cec.eu.int)

## Annex 1

### Evaluation Criteria: INSIGHT STREPs

#### 1. Relevance to the objectives of the programme

##### Outline/Full proposals:

Is the proposed project **within the scope of INSIGHT projects**?

- Does it address a **new discovery or newly-observed phenomenon**, which has a **high potential for serious problems or risks** to European society?
- Are there **significant scientific uncertainties** that need to be clarified or resolved? Does the project fill a **need for better scientific understanding** at European level?
- Does it **cut across** or **lie outside** the thematic priorities?

#### 2. Scientific and technological excellence

##### Outline/Full proposals:

- Does the project have clearly **defined and well-focused objectives**?
- Do they represent **clear progress beyond the scientific state-of-the-art** (and where relevant overcome its existing **limitations**)?
- Where the project addresses **complex or inter-disciplinary questions**, and/or **challenges orthodoxy** or involves radical and unconventional approaches, is the **methodology convincing**?

##### Outline proposals:

- Is the proposed scientific **approach plausible**?
- The evaluators will comment on, but not assess, whether the **resources requested** (e.g. personnel, equipment, financial) seem **in line with the scientific approach** and **reasonable for achieving the project objectives**.

##### Full proposals:

- Is the scientific approach **well thought out**, and **likely to enable the project to achieve its objectives**?

#### 3. Potential impact

##### Outline/Full proposals:

- If successful, will the project provide results of **significant value to strategic decision making**?
- Does the project address uncertainties and/or areas of ignorance in a manner that will enable **robust strategies** to be developed?
- Can the impact of the proposed work best be achieved if carried out at **European level**?

##### Full proposals:

- Are exploitation and/or dissemination plans adequate to ensure **optimal use of the project results**?

#### 4. Quality of the consortium

##### Full proposals only:

- Do the participants collectively constitute a **consortium of high quality**?
- Are the participants **well-suited and committed to the tasks** assigned to them?
- Is there **good complementarity** between participants?

#### 5. Quality of management

##### Full proposals only:

- Is the **project management** of demonstrably **high quality**?
- Is it appropriate/sufficient to provide **necessary guidance** to decision-makers and/or other actors involved?
- Is the **dissemination plan appropriate, well-balanced and effective**?

#### 6. Mobilisation of resources

##### Full proposals:

- Are the foreseen **resources** (e.g. personnel, equipment, financial) **necessary and sufficient** for success?
- Are these **resources convincingly integrated** to form a coherent project?
- Is the **overall financial plan** for the project adequate?

#### Thresholds/Maximum Marks<sup>3</sup>

Criterion	Outline proposals	Full proposals
1 - Relevance	4 / 5	4 / 5
2 - Excellence	4 / 5	4 / 5
3 - Impact	3 / 5	3 / 5
4 - Consortium	Not applicable	3 / 5
5 - Management	Not applicable	3 / 5
6 - Resources	Not applicable	3 / 5
Total Score	11 / 15	21 / 30

## Annex 1

### Evaluation Criteria: INSIGHT CAs

#### 1. Relevance

- The extent to which the proposed project **addresses the objectives** of the work programme.

#### 2. Quality of the Coordination

The extent to which:

- The research actions/programmes to be coordinated are of **demonstrably high quality**.
- The **coordination mechanisms** proposed are sufficiently **robust** for ensuring the goals of the action.

#### 3. Potential Impact

The extent to which:

- The proposal demonstrates a clear **added value** in carrying out the work at European level and takes account research activities at national level and under European initiatives (e.g. Eureka).
- The Community support would have a real impact on the action and its scale, ambition and outcome.
- the project mobilises a critical mass of resources in Europe
- Exploitation and/or dissemination plans are adequate to ensure **optimal use of the project results**, where possible beyond the participants in the project.

#### 4. Quality of the Consortium

The extent to which:

- The participants collectively constitute a **consortium of high quality**.
- The participants are **well-suited to the tasks** assigned to them.
- The project combines the **complementary expertise** of the participants to generate added value with respect to the individual participants' programmes.

#### 5. Quality of the Management

The extent to which:

- **The project management** is demonstrably of high quality.
- There is a satisfactory plan for the **management of knowledge**, of intellectual property and of other innovation-related activities.

#### 6. Mobilisation of Resources

The extent to which:

- The project provides for the **resources** (personnel, equipment, financial...) necessary for success.
- The **resources** are **convincingly integrated** to form a coherent project.
- The overall **financial plan** for the project **is adequate**.

#### Thresholds / Max. Marks<sup>3</sup>

Criterion	Full Proposals
1 - Relevance	3 / 5
2 - Coordination	4 / 5
3 - Impact	3 / 5
4 - Consortium	3 / 5
5 - Management	3 / 5
6 - Resources	3 / 5
Total Score	21 / 30

<sup>3</sup> Six-point scale from 0 to 5 for each evaluation criterion: 0 – the proposal fails to address the issue under examination or can not be judged against the criterion due to missing or incomplete information; 1 – poor; 2 – fair; 3 – good; 4 – very good; 5- excellent.