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Funding research & innovation
Promoting science

PROOF OF CONCEPT

RULES

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Preliminary note : *The use of the masculine gender in this text has been adopted in order to facilitate reading and has no discriminatory intent. The masculine is used as a neutral gender to refer to women, men and non-binary people.*

1 CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE OF THE ACTION

As part of an innovation process, a research phase generally leads to the acquisition of new knowledge, the validation or not of hypotheses and the emergence of new research avenues or innovation concepts. This phase does not always provide evidence that the acquired knowledge and the innovation concept that emanates from it can actually lead to the development of an innovation that is both technologically and economically viable. This lack of proof considerably increases the risk associated with the development process to be undertaken in order to exploit the acquired results. This risk may prevent project promoters from making practical use of their research results or lead to a premature stop in the development phase of an innovation.

The Proof of Concept action aims to mitigate this risk. It supports short-term projects aimed at proving an innovation concept emanating from a research project. The project leaders who benefit from the funding aim to consolidate their results in order to ensure a less risky transition to further development with a view to economic valorisation. It is not a question of starting or continuing a research or development process. We are dealing with a tipping point in the innovation process. In other words, the proof of concept must provide the information needed to make a decision on whether to proceed with an experimental development and commercialization project (GO/NO GO). This information is crucial both for the project leader and for the subsidizing organization and/or financial partners.

In concrete terms, the projects financed under this action are aimed at obtaining

1. *proof of concept of conclusive results from scientific research which may include the short, incomplete or small-scale implementation of the said technologies, methods, or innovative ideas, as well as the validation of tests or on-site demonstrations*
2. *proof of socio-economic interest showing the potential for the transfer of results with a view to their valorisation, in particular via spin-offs or licences.*

The projects funded must necessarily make a positive contribution to the development of the Brussels-Capital Region, in line with the strategic objectives and priority topics defined by the Government. It is expected that any project funded by Innoviris be exemplary at the social or environmental level and will not have any negative impact on these two levels (see definition of exemplarity: section 7.3).

2 BENEFICIARY

The Beneficiaries of this programme are research organisations which are conform to the definition of point 16 ff of the Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2022/C 414/01) (universities, higher education institution, De Groote centres, etc.) that have at least one operating office in the Brussels-Capital Region.

3 PROJECT SET-UP

A project funded in the frame of this action is submitted by a promotor wishing to obtain proof of a concept based on innovative technologies, methods or ideas emanating from a research project previously carried out in its laboratory with a view to valorisation in the Brussels-Capital Region.

The promotor is an experienced professor or senior researcher from the beneficiary research organisation. More specifically, if the Beneficiary is not a university, or a higher education institution, the promotor is the head of research. He or she submits the project for approval to a hierarchical superior (rector, managing director, person legally authorised to commit the research organisation) which submits it to Innoviris on behalf of his or her organisation.

The Knowledge Transfer Office/Interface (KTO/KTI) of the research organisation plays an essential role in assessing the fit of the project with the programme philosophy and in preparing the dossier with regard to the objective of economic valorisation.

The project is implemented by a researcher, who may benefit from the support of a technician and/or a business support. The promotor is responsible for the project's scientific management and the team's supervision. If applicable, it benefits from the support of the KTO/KTI for valorisation aspects.

4 PROJECT DURATION

The support which may be obtained via this action covers a period between 6 and 15 months which may not be prolonged or renewed.

5 AMOUNT OF FUNDING

The financial support covers personnel costs, costs related to obtaining proof of concept (prototyping, technical validation, preliminary clinical trials,…), and costs related to the obtaining proof of socio-economic interest (market research, technological positioning or consulting), and general expenses.

Eligible costs are as follows:

1. *Personnel costs (researcher, technician, business support)*
2. *Operating costs (consumables, small scientific and technical equipment, patients' participation costs, etc.)*
3. *Cost of the instruments and equipment used provided that and for as long as they are used for the project*
4. *Subcontracting costs (the cost of contractual research, knowledge and patents purchased or taken under licence from external sources under the condition of full competition, as well as the cost of services ad advice and equivalent services used solely for the purpose of the project)*
5. *General expenses (10% of staff costs and other operating costs).*

!!! Costs related to obtaining proof of concept should represent at least three-quarters of the project's total budget.
The grant covers 100% of the eligible expenses. Eligible expenses are explained in more detail in the accounting guidelines on our website. (https://innoviris.brussels/general-accounting-directives).

All expenditure should be the subject of supporting documents and be approved by Innoviris.

A grant decree and agreement will indicate the eligible expenditure and the payment procedure.

6 SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Applications must be drawn up using the form available on the Innoviris website (www.innoviris.brussels).

They can be submitted at any time by the Knowledge Transfer Office of the applicant research organisation after approval by the latter's authorities. They are sent to the following e-mail addresses: funding-request@innoviris.brussels and agrosfils@innoviris.brussels. The applications must include the following elements:

- *A Word version of the form*
- *A PDF version including signatures and all appendices*
- *the budget in Excel file.*

Applications submitted in any other form or by any other means will not be considered.

Please note: Please contact the *Knowledge Transfer Office* of your research organisation as soon as possible to prepare your application and plan its submission.

7 PROCESSING OF YOUR APPLICATION

7.1 Receipt

On receipt of your application, Innoviris' services will send you a confirmation of receipt within 5 days following the submission of the application.

7.2 Admissibility

Within the month, you will receive a letter informing you of the administrative admissibility of the application. The admissibility conditions are as follows:

1. *The project must target the obtaining of a proof of concept for research results already acquired with a view to valorisation in the Brussels-Capital Region*
2. *The project must not have started before the submission of the application*
3. *The project duration is between 6 and 15 months*
4. *The application must be complete*
5. *The promotor is a professor or an experienced researcher from the research organisation or is the applicant's research manager*
6. *The application is submitted to Innoviris under the authority of the Rector, Director-Chairman of the higher education institution, or the person legally authorised to commit the research organisation*
7. *The applicant must have at least one operating headquarter in the Region's territory*
8. *The applicant must have fulfilled their obligations in the context of any previous aids awarded by the Brussels-Capital Region.*

In addition, to be eligible for the Proof of Concept programme, the applicant research organisation must comply with all applicable obligations in the fields of environmental, social and labour law. The entity will ensure that it remains compliant throughout the duration of the project.

In the particular case of a reintroduced proposal (possible only once), the new version have to be thoroughly reworked to respond to the remarks made by Innoviris during the first evaluation.

7.3 Evaluation

After this step, your application, if it is admissible, will be analysed by Innoviris' scientific advisors in order to evaluate its quality and its impact on the economy, employment and environment of the Brussels-Capital Region, considering the strategic objectives and priority themes defined by the Government.

The evaluation is based on the analysis of the documents submitted by the applicant. The evaluation criteria are as follows:

- *The innovative character and scientific quality of the work concerned by the proof of concept*
- *The relevance and feasibility of the project in general (schedule, problem of intellectual property, etc.)*
- *The competence of the team in charge of the project's implementation*
- *The valorisation perspectives for the potential project's results and the impact of this valorisation for the Region with regard to the strategic objectives and priority themes defined by the Government.*

In the frame of the evaluation, Innoviris reserves the right to:

- *Request additional information necessary for the correct evaluation of the application*
- *Meet the team in charge of the project*
- *Request external expertise.*

Note that the exemplarity criterion is a necessary condition for the funding of Proof-of-Concept project. To be selected, a project must therefore at least contribute to one of the exemplary objectives listed below and not be detrimental to any of them. (cf art 4/2 de l'ordonnance du 27 juillet 2017 visant à promouvoir la recherche, le développement et l'innovation par l'octroi d'aides à finalité non économique en faveur des organisations non marchandes, des

organismes de recherche et des entreprises, telle que modifiée par l'ordonnance du 4 avril 2024 modifiant l'ordonnance du 27 juillet 2017 visant à promouvoir la recherche, le développement et l'innovation par l'octroi d'aides affectées à des finalités économiques en faveur des entreprises et des organismes de recherche assimilés à des entreprises et l'ordonnance du 27 juillet 2017 visant à promouvoir la recherche, le développement et l'innovation par l'octroi d'aides à finalité non économique en faveur des organisations non marchandes, des organismes de recherche et des entreprises).

Social exemplarity:

1. *an adequate standard of living for the most vulnerable categories of people or those with specific needs, including: a) improved access to products and services meeting basic human needs, such as water, including wastewater management, food, housing, healthcare, including care provided in the workplace, education, including vocational training; b) improved access to basic economic infrastructure, including sustainable transport, telecommunications and the Internet, electricity and financial inclusion;*
2. *the development of quality local employment;*
3. *the development of social and democratic entrepreneurship;*
4. *the creation of a more inclusive society.*

Environmental exemplarity

1. *a more rational use of resources, in particular through recycling, the practice of the circular economy or the improvement of energy performance, including carbon neutrality;*
2. *improving environmental impact, particularly with regard to pollutant emissions, mobility, biodiversity and ecosystems;*
3. *adaptation to climate change.*

Innoviris also assesses

- *Equal opportunities. Innoviris assesses whether the project has taken into account the possibility that the theme and/or activities of the project could lead to discrimination against persons directly or indirectly affected, on the basis of gender, ethnic and cultural origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or origin and social situation.*
- *Ethical implications. Innoviris assesses whether the project has taken into account ethical issues of a legal and supra-legal nature.*

In the case of a positive evaluation, Innoviris sends a comprehensive report to the Minister in charge of Scientific Research proposing the awarding of the grant.

The granting procedure takes between 4 and 6 months. However, the beneficiary may start his project at his own risk from the first day of the month following the submission of the application.

7.4 Protection of personal data

*The personal data collected by Innoviris, the data controller, by means of this form is used to process your funding application (which involves analysis and evaluation by Innoviris or even external experts). Their processing is necessary to comply with a legal obligation to which the data controller is subject (i.e. the l'ordonnance à finalité non-économique*1 *and its arrêté d'exécution*2*) and to perform a task in the public interest or in the exercise of the public authority vested in the data controller.*

No data is shared with third parties without the prior consent of the person concerned or unless a legal obligation obliges Innoviris to do so. Innoviris makes every effort to ensure the confidentiality and security of

[1] Article 30/1 de l'ordonnance du 27 juillet 2017 visant à promouvoir la recherche, le développement et l'innovation par l'octroi d'aides à finalité non économique en faveur des organisations non marchandes, des organismes de recherche et des entreprises, telle que modifiée par l'ordonnance du 4 avril 2024 modifiant l'ordonnance du 27 juillet 2017 visant à promouvoir la recherche, le développement et l'innovation par l'octroi d'aides affectées à des finalités économiques en faveur des entreprises et des organismes de recherche assimilés à des entreprises et l'ordonnance du 27 juillet 2017 visant à promouvoir la recherche, le développement et l'innovation par l'octroi d'aides à finalité non économique en faveur des organisations non marchandes, des organismes de recherche et des entreprises

[2] Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale du 21 février 2019 portant exécution de l'ordonnance du 27 juillet 2017 visant à promouvoir la recherche, le développement et l'innovation par l'octroi d'aides à finalité non-économique en faveur des organisations non-marchandes, des organismes de recherche et des entreprises, notamment son article 2 §1er.

the data processed. The retention time shall be that necessary to accomplish the purposes of the processing concerned. If you have any questions or wish to exercise your rights under Articles 15 to 22 of the GDPR, please contact dpo@innoviris.brussels or visit our "privacy" webpage.

8 MONITORING PROCEDURE

The beneficiary provides Innoviris, at time intervals defined in the agreement, the following documents:

- *Activity reports (state of progress of the implementation of the project, the results of the plan in RDI, finance, business development)*
- *Financial reports (debt obligation note, supporting documents, and payments)*
- *Report on the industrial use and promotion of the results of the subsidised project three years after its completion.*

Templates are provided by Innoviris that allow the beneficiary to draw up the reports and files requested according to the needs of the follow-up evaluation.

9 CUMULATION WITH OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING

The Proof-of-concept project cannot benefit from financial aid from other Belgian, foreign or international institutions and/or public authorities for the same eligible/admissible expenditure.

The promoter informs Innoviris immediately of any financial aid application made and any received from other institutions in the frame of the project for the Beneficiary.

Innoviris' financial intervention is not guaranteed in the case of the project obtaining partial aid from another public authority.

10 COMPATIBILITY WITH THE SPIN-OFF ACTION

***!!!** This action offers project promotors the opportunity to prove their innovation concept as well as market interest and to determine the best way for valorisation. A Proof of concept project allows to assess the relevance of starting a new business through the launching of a spin-off. It may not therefore be carried out simultaneously or following a SPIN-OFF project supported by Innoviris targeting the valorisation of the same results.*

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