Guidelines for applicants

Sumforest 1st transnational Call for proposals

Sustainable forests for the society of the future

Closing date for proposals: 17th June 2016, 3PM CET

February 2016

Guidelines for applicants
1st Transnational Call for Proposals

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION

This document provides guidelines for applicants for submission of proposals of the 1st Sumforest Call. Additionally, national funding regulations and requirements must be satisfied.

2 THEMATIC RESEARCH AREAS – CALL TEXT

The title of the call is "Sustainable forests for the society of the future" which addresses the following three topics:

1. **Comparative assessment of the sustainability performance of forest-based, other renewable and non-renewable raw material-based value chains to inform policy decisions.**

2. **Risk resilient forest management - Adapting forest management regimes which incorporate risk assessment related to potential climate change impacts to inform policy decisions.**

3. **Investigation, appraisal and evaluation of trade-offs related to the provision of forest ecosystem services to inform policy decisions.**

Proposals have to address at least one of the topics described in detail in the Scope of the Call. This is available at www.sumforest.org/calls-research.

3 PARTICIPATION AND FUNDING OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

Support for transnational projects will be based on the 'virtual common pot' instrument. Research grants will be administered through the participating national funding partner. Applicants must comply with the terms and conditions of their responsible funding partner and programmes (see Annex B: National Regulations, available at the 21st March 2016).

An overview of indicative funds from participating countries per thematic research area is provided on www.sumforest.org/calls-research, available at the 21st March 2016. These amounts may be allocated to one or more projects (details see National Regulations).

Applicants from countries which are not partners in Sumforest or from member countries which do not provide funding for the call are welcome to participate. However, their costs will not be covered, and thus they will need to cover these themselves. They are not taken into account in the minimum number of eligible partners and countries in the Sumforest eligibility criteria.

It is the intention of Sumforest to fund more than one project per topic.

CALL SCHEDULE

The call involves a 1-step procedure with an optional pre-registration. The respective time schedule and activities required are listed in the table below.

1-step procedure with optional pre-registration:

Action	Scheduled/Deadlines
Launch of the Call	21st March 2016
Optional pre-registration for proposal	**20th May 2016 3PM CET**
Pre-eligibility check by Call Secretariat and national Funding Contact Points	23rd – 25th May 2016
Closing date for proposals	**17th June 2016 3PM CET**
Eligibility check by Call Secretariat and national Funding Contact Points	20th June – 01st July 2016
Scientific evaluation (online)	04th July – 09th September 2016
Scientific evaluation (meeting)	15th/16th September 2016
Funding decision (meeting)	26th/27th September 2016
Latest date the funding decision is communicated to applicants	14th October 2016
Start of national negotiation between selected project partners and funding organisations	14th October 2016
Tentative start of projects 1. Call	15th December 2016 till beginning of 2017

4   CALL SECRETARIAT

The Call Secretariat is the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE – Germany), will provide administrative support to applicants regarding the call, call documents and procedures. It is the primary point of contact between the Research Project Proposal Consortium and the Sumforest Call Steering Committee for all general matters in relation to the call.

Contact information:

Vera Steinberg (Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE); Germany)
Phone: +49 228 6845-3653
E-mail: vera.steinberg@ble.de

Concerning the Online Submission Tool:
German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt (DLR))
DLR-Projektträger
Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse 2
10178 Berlin

ptoutline@dlr.de
+49(0)30-67055-767

Funding Contact Points

The national Funding Contact Points (FCP) support the Call Secretariat and should be contacted for all matters regarding national regulations and funding. Please see Annex A for contact information of Funding Contact Points (available at the 21st March 2016).

5   SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Applications must be completed and submitted online via the website's submission portal.

The pre-registration is optional and should be submitted by 20th May 2016, 3PM CET.

The proposal must be submitted by 17th June 2016, 3PM CET.

The application form consists of three different parts:

1) Pre-registration (Part A): the registration is web-based and must be completed directly on the call submission website. The pre-registration is optional. It may be submitted up to the 20th of May 2016 and an eligibility check will be completed. The administrative requirements of the proposal will be checked and feedback on the eligibility of the partners will be given. If an applying institution is not eligible for funding, applicants have time to resolve the issue. No guarantee that the proposals will be accepted for the call is given with the pre-eligibility check.

Although the pre-registration is not mandatory, its completion is strongly recommended to ensure eligibility.

2) Proposal description (Part B): a project description form must be downloaded, completed and uploaded to the call submission website.

3) Proposal costs (Part C): planned budget details must be inserted in predefined boxes on the call submission website. Allowable character counts are provided below.

The Part B form must be submitted as an **unprotected Adobe PDF** file. Proposals must be written in English and they should be precise and concise.

The application should be submitted by the Project Coordinator (see below) on behalf of the Project Consortium.

For further information, please contact the Call Secretariat.

THE PROJECT COORDINATOR

Each Project Consortium needs to appoint a Project Coordinator, who has the following role and responsibilities:

- Be the primary point of contact between Sumforest and the Project Consortium from the submission of the (optional) pre-registration until the publication of the final report.

- Submit the application on behalf of the Project Consortium.

- Compile and submit reports and other deliverables to Sumforest on behalf of the Project Consortium.

- Ensure that all project milestones and deliverables are met and take action according to the project management plan if one or more partners fail to deliver.

- Inform the Call Secretariat of Sumforest about any event that might affect the progress of the project.

- If a Project Partner leaves the project earlier than anticipated, the Project Coordinator will need to inform in writing all Funding Partners involved in that project.

- If more than one project is to be financed on the same or a similar subject, the Project Coordinator must ensure there is communication and a minimum of coordination between these similar projects.

PROPOSAL APPLICATION

The proposal shall be submitted online via the Sumforest submission tool. All fields in the tool are mandatory. It is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator to enter the data online.

Information required about the Project Coordinator and all the partners is as follows:

- Academic Title
- Contact First Name
- Contact Last Name
- Status of Organisation
- Name of Organisation/Institution/Company
- Department
- Street + No.
- Zip/Postal Code
- Town/City
- Country
- Email Address
- Telephone Number
- Mobile Phone Number
- Fax Number
- Task(s)
- Upload CV of Project Coordinator and Work Package (WP) leaders as a PDF file

Applicants will be required to submit a proposal consisting of the following information:

1) Pre-registration (Part A, optional):

A1 Title of Project (max. 200 characters)

A2 Project Acronym (max. 20 characters)

A3 Thematic research area:

a) Comparative assessment of the sustainability performance of renewable and non-renewable raw material-based value chains to inform policy decisions.

b) Risk resilient forest management - Adapting forest management regimes which incorporate risk assessment related to potential climate change impacts to inform policy decisions.

c) Investigation, appraisal and evaluation of trade-offs related to the provision of forest ecosystem services to inform policy decisions.

Proposals can cover more than one thematic research area.

A4 Project Summary (2000 characters), suitable for web publishing

A5 Keywords (between 5 and 100 characters)

A6 Duration of the proposed project (between 18 and 36 months)

A7 Contact details for each project partner

- A short description of the partners

- Information about the Project Coordinator

A8 A preliminary financial plan with requested funding for each project partner. The financial needs principally have to be in line with national regulations of each country. These regulations can be found in Annex B available at the 21ˢᵗ March 2016.

2) Proposal description (Part B): MS word file from the call website to be submitted as a PDF document:

B1   All points of **Part A**, if no pre-registration was submitted

B2   Background and „State of the Art" (approx. 1,5 pages)

B3   References of three to five selected publications (per project partner) by the partners and relevant to the proposal, including links to the articles or abstracts

B4   Description of project partners:

a.   The role of each project partner in the project

b.   A short description of each partner

For Project Coordinators and work package leaders:

c.   A short description of on-going and planned future projects related to the present topic indicating project name, funding source and amounts, and potential overlap or link with the current proposal

d.   A brief CV of the Project Coordinator and WP leaders (max. 2500 characters)

B5 Description of the project: (max. 8 pages in total)

a) Aim, objectives and hypotheses

b) Scientific description of methods & work plan, including work packages, description of deliverables, milestones and timetable (with responsible partner/work package and deliverables, optionally in a Gantt chart)

c) Expected results and their impact/application

d) Description of novelty in methods or development opportunities

e) Dissemination plan and/or exploitation of results

f) Description and definition of potential risks to the implementation and success of the project (e.g. in research methods, case studies, stakeholders' involvement), describe how the chances for success are maximized, and include a contingency plan

B6 Statement describing how the proposal fits to the call topic/thematic research area(s) (max. 1 page) including identification of the added value/complementarity of the proposed research to previous or on-going projects

B7 Statement describing how/why the proposal has a clear added value of being carried out on a transnational basis (European/International added value, transnational impact of the proposed project, including added value for participating countries and cross border problems, description of the specific integration of participants in the transnational consortium structure) max. 0,5 page

B8 Statement describing mobility/training opportunities (description of training/exchange activities foreseen within the project, if applicable) (max. 0,5 page)

B9 Statement describing the societal and ethical aspects (aspects of the project such as environmental, human or animal welfare, intellectual or cultural development, that could cause societal or ethical concerns or contribute to progress in these areas) (max. 0,5 page)

B10 References used for the project description (please use a format containing the following information: Surname, A., Surname, B., Surname, C. (Year): Title of paper, Journal, Volume, Pages) max. 30 references

B11 <u>Declaration of parallel submissions of this proposal (whole or parts) to other funding programmes.</u> Provide details of any proposal related to this one, which you or another project partner have submitted to other funding opportunities, including title, funding source, extent of overlap and expected decision date. **Duplication of funding is not allowed for the same (whole or part) research project**

3) Proposal costs (Part C): predefined boxes on the call submission website:

C1 Details of requested resources for each partner (person months, salaries, equipment, subcontracting, travel, overhead and other additional costs to be specified), approx. 1 page

C2 A division of resources on the main activities (Work packages) within the project must be presented

The maximum text indicated in each part should be respected and the following format should be used: Arial, 10 pt., single space, 2.5 cm left/right margins, 3.5 cm top margin, 2 cm bottom margin.

Part A and C can be saved at all steps; revisions of Part B can be submitted until the deadline. The latest version will be shown at the next log-in. On **17th June 2016 at 3PM CET** the latest version is considered to be the final proposal.

Proposals which do not include all the compulsory information and adhere to all formal requirements, will not be considered for evaluation.

The proposal submission occurs online via the Sumforest Submission Tool. It is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator to enter the data online, including the contact details of the partner. It is obligatory that all the partners **accept the national regulations** (click the respective **check box**).

In completing the application form online, it is strongly recommended to regularly save any changes (button at the bottom of each page) in order to avoid any data loss. For security issues, an automatic logout is set up within this tool.

Data entered by the Project Coordinator and the project partners in the Sumforest Submission Tool will be saved in a database and will be used to generate the proposal document. The proposal document is available for information (it is not required e.g. to print it and send a hardcopy of the proposal to the Sumforest Call Secretariat) at any time for download and provides an overview of all entered data.

During the application phase it is mandatory for each applicant to consider the national regulations for their country as published on the call website. For further information please contact the Funding Contact Points (see Annex A, available at the 21st March 2016).

6   ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR FUNDING

The proposal should meet the following eligibility criteria:

ETHICS

Work involving the use of animals or humans should be carried out under the appropriate authorisation taking into account national ethical requirements. Any proposal, which seems to contravene fundamental ethical principles, shall not be selected, and may be excluded from the evaluation and selection procedure at any time by the Sumforest Call Steering Committee. The judgement of the significance of ethical issues will be made by the Call Steering Committee using the criteria published by the Commission in its guidelines for the Seventh Framework Programme (http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference_docs.html#fp7).

SUMFOREST ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Each project proposal must:

- ✓ Include at least three independent eligible legal entities from a minimum of three different countries from the list of participating countries listed in Annex A available at the 21st March 2016

- ✓ Be written in English

- ✓ Use the application forms provided via the call website: www.sumforest.org and fulfil the formal requirements for proposal submission

- ✓ Satisfy the National Regulations of each respective country listed in Annex B, available at the 21st March 2016

- ✓ Be submitted correctly and completely via the call website before the call deadline (17th June 2016, 3PM CET)

- ✓ The total requested funding for a project partner (or partners from the same country) cannot exceed the indicative amount allocated by their respective national funding partner

- ✓ A Project Consortium Agreement must be established no later than six months after project start and submitted to the Call Secretariat. If no Project Consortium Agreement is sent within the first reporting period, funding of the project will be stopped by the National Funding Partners

- ✓ The project duration must be between 18 and 36 months

Sumforest encourages a broad representation of countries to stimulate new and innovative collaborations.

NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All project partners involved in any application must ensure that the application is in line with the respective national requirements and regulations. The main national regulations are listed in Annex B available at the 21st March 2016 with additional links to the entire national regulations for participants.

It is strongly recommended that the national rules are checked with the respective Funding Contact Point (Annex A available at the 21st March 2016) before submitting a proposal.

7   SELECTION PROCEDURE

All proposal submissions will be treated as strictly confidential by Sumforest.

In the selection process the transnational research proposals will be checked according to the "Eligibility Criteria for Funding" (see section 6) by the Call Secretariat and each national Funding Contact Point. Meeting these criteria is mandatory and proposals that do not meet them will not be eligible for further consideration.

Where one Funding Partner will not support the funding of a proposal for reasons of ineligibility of applicants, the whole Project Consortium risks not being considered for funding. It is therefore strongly recommended to form consortia consisting of more than three partners and use the opportunity of the pre-registration to ensure eligibility.

Proposals found eligible will be evaluated by experts according to the following criteria:

- The proposal addresses the aim(s) of the joint transnational call as described in the topic descriptions

- Relevance of the proposal to the call text and current state of knowledge (Innovative and problem solving potential of the project and complementarity with already existing results)

- Scientific quality of the proposal including methodology

- Innovation level of the project and methods, and multi- and inter-disciplinary approach, as appropriate to the research question

- Impact (Specific barriers and development potential addressed by the project)

- Transnational and/or European/International added value

- Quality and international reputation of participants in the field(s) of the proposal (previous work in the field, expertise of the participants)

- Quality and efficiency of the project management (coordination of work packages and tasks management)

- Quality of the consortium and collaboration (well balanced partnership; integrated partnership in work packages; broadness of consortium compared with geographical relevance; previous level of collaborative interaction between the participants)

- Dissemination and communication activities and expected impact for stakeholders and the society

- Expected impacts in terms of capacity building

- Feasibility of the project – human, technical and financial resources: adequate work package structure and work plan (tasks, milestones, deliverables, matching events, calendar); adequate equipment and manpower resources

- Cost-efficiency of the project plan compared with the budget

- Probability of success of the project based on description of risks and the contingency plan

- Inclusion of relevant societal, ethical and gender aspects

It is strongly recommended applicants read the Guidelines for Evaluators available at 21st March 2016 on the Sumforest Call Website.

The international experts will be nominated by the Call Steering Committee and appointed by the Call Secretariat. The optional pre-registration of the proposals serves to assist in the identification and selection of suitable experts, in order to cover the expertise needed. Potential conflict of interests will be considered. Moreover, the experts have to sign an impartiality and confidentiality agreement before they get access to the proposals. The experts will score the proposals based on the evaluation criteria listed above, provide comments, make an overall assessment of the scientific merit and a funding recommendation.

The final funding decision will be taken by the Sumforest Call Steering Committee based on the recommendations from the expert evaluation and the available budget.

The Sumforest Call Secretariat will send notification letters to all Project Coordinators to inform them of the result of the final funding decision not later than the 14th October 2016. For the proposals not selected the letter will include an explanation why they were discarded.

After the official notification of the funding decision, the national Funding Partners will contact the respective project partners of the selected projects for contracting.

8 CONTRACT CONDITIONS

8.1.1 TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

The national funding of the Sumforest Call is offered under the coordination of the FP7 ERA-NET Sumforest. Partners in the Project Consortia are required to recognize the coordinating role of the Sumforest Call Steering Committee throughout the duration of the funded research projects until the publication of the final report. Each Project Consortium will be asked for a feedback on the processes in order to help to refine them for future use.

8.1.2 CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Sumforest is a collaboration of national funding partners with the aim of establishing transnational research collaboration. The contracts with applicants and funding procedures and regulations remain the full responsibility of the national funding partners.

Because of the fragmented nature of the funding, it is most important that the individual contracts are synchronized both in time and content, so that the Project Consortium can deliver transnational outputs as described in the project proposal. The national funding partners will ensure that common Sumforest conditions are met (e.g. common start date of a given project, reporting requirements etc.).

8.1.3 FUNDING CONTRACTS

For the entire duration of the contract it is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator to inform the Sumforest Call Steering Committee of any changes which may affect the implementation of the project (e.g. work plan, consortium modifications) and other changes such as changes in the contract details.

Any financial issue is under the responsibility of each national funding partner involved in the approved project.

If a change within the Project Consortium occurs which poses a risk to the project, the issue must be resolved by the consortium (in line with the Consortium Agreement). The Call Secretariat must be informed of any such events.

Any changes in the work plan should be only minor, but will need to be authorised by the Sumforest Call Steering Committee.

8.1.4 CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT

The consortia selected for funding must enter into a Consortium Agreement, in order to manage the project activities, finances, intellectual property rights (IPR) and to avoid disputes which might be detrimental to the completion of the project.

It will be the responsibility of the Project Coordinators to draw up a Consortium Agreement suitable to their own group. The Consortium Agreement will normally be under the law and legal system of the country of the Project Coordinator. The purpose of this document is:

- To underpin the project partners' collaboration and provide the project partners with mutual assurance on project management structures and procedures, and their rights and obligations towards one another

- To assure the funding bodies involved that the Project Consortium has a satisfactory decision making capacity and is able to work together in a synergistic and positive manner

The Consortium Agreement must be finalized and signed by all partners of the Project Consortium no later than six months after the project start date.

8.1.5   INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS, USE AND ACCESS TO RESULTS

Results and new Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) resulting from projects funded through the Sumforest Call will be owned by the Project Partners according to the conditions stated in their Consortium Agreement and shall not be in conflict with the respective national regulations.

Project partners are encouraged to actively exploit the results of the research project and make them available for use, whether for commercial gain or not, in order for public benefit to be obtained from the knowledge created.

8.1.6   START DATE OF PROJECTS

A project can start when all national contracts have been finalised. Once the national contracts come into force, eligible national costs may be claimed as per national procedures.

8.1.7   PROJECT REPORTING

Each project partner will report on the progress and outcome of the project to the corresponding national funding partner. The Project Coordinator is also responsible for reporting on the progress and outcome of the project as a whole to his/her national funding partner, which in turn will communicate with the other funding partners involved in the consortium.

8.1.8   DISSEMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Dissemination of project results is requested in the form of various communication routes such as scientific papers, posters, stakeholder involvement, course or training materials, web based tools, workshops or direct intervention towards end users.

A dissemination plan should be included in the proposal and specify the planned dissemination activities.

Further, the Project Partners have to acknowledge the transnational funding of Sumforest and the individual national funding bodies in any document that is published (in written, oral or electronic form) within the research project.

ANNEX A: SUMFOREST FUNDING CONTACT POINTS

Available at the 21st March 2016

ANNEX B: NATIONAL REGULATIONS

Available at the 21st of March 2016