

ERA-Chemistry's Open Initiative

Frequently asked questions about the Open Initiative

- *Is there any other research funding scheme in Europe where two researchers from any two ERA Chemistry member states can apply together for funding in basic chemistry research?*

No. Other schemes are either thematic or they support only individual researchers or teams from a single country or they support only applied research.

- *Will this be a new form of funding from Brussels or from another supranational organisation?*

No, there is no supranational organisation involved. The process is fully in the hand of the participating national research councils. Only the web portal for submission and administration of the proposals is centralised; it is situated at the Hungarian partner OTKA.

- *Do participating organisations need to pay membership fees?*

No. The contribution of each partner council is only the amount of work in the organisation to administrate the proposals with applicants from their respective country. Furthermore, the travel costs of the board member(s) to attend the pre-proposal panel meeting need to be covered by the funding council.

- *Does the Open Initiative foresee a financial remuneration of reviewers?*

Usually not; writing reviews should be on a voluntary basis. Some smaller countries may prefer to remunerate their reviewers, as they may need international reviewers to avoid possible conflicts of interest. In such cases, remuneration is allowed.

- *Will the decisions about giving a grant be made by an international panel?*

No, the final decision about any proposal will exclusively be made by the two research councils involved in the bilateral proposal. Only a selection of pre-proposals from the top-lists of each country will be made during a joint board meeting by representatives of the involved councils.

- *Will there be a common pot or another form of funding across borders?*

No, each national funding agency will only support researchers from its own country.

- *How can a financially less powerful national funding agency provide similar funds as their "stronger" counterparts?*

This is not needed at all. Each funding agency will provide the same kind and amount of funding to its participating scientist as it is usual for that agency in its national funding scheme.

- *What happens if one research agency allows different eligible costs than the other, e.g. one funds salaries, the other not?*

This is not a problem. Scientists in each country know how to use efficiently the grants from their national agency. The Open Initiative does not require that the two collaborating scientists get the same types of costs funded.

- *If the national agencies support only their own researchers and in the same way as usual, what are the benefits of the Open Initiative?*

The benefit for the researchers is that they can choose their partner from any participant country, so they are much more likely to find the ideal partner. The benefit for the national research councils (and the countries which they represent) is that by giving more freedom to the researchers to find partners, they can expect to receive proposals of higher scientific value. This will be also ensured by the Open Initiative procedures: only those proposals will be funded which rank very high at both research funding agencies of the two applicants.

- *Are there any special benefits for smaller countries expected?*

Yes. Outstanding researchers from small or less affluent countries may collaborate as partners with equal rights with their peers in other countries even if their own funding is less than that of the partner. Without the Open Initiative these outstanding researchers are more likely to work alone or to leave their country for a long stay in the lab of the partner.

- *Are bilateral agreements not equivalent to the Open Initiative?*

No. Although in some cases bilateral agreements allow similar applications as foreseen in the Open Initiative, the bilateral agreements are always limited to two particular funding agencies. The partner agencies for such bilateral agreements are usually selected along political preferences which have nothing to do with science. No agency has bilateral agreements with all others in Europe or even within ERA Chemistry. Thus bilateral agreements are actually discriminating many scientists in Europe whose countries do not have

many bilateral agreements. The Open Initiative eliminates this kind of discrimination within Europe.

- *If a bilateral agreement already exists between two agencies, can their scientists still apply in the Open Initiative?*

Yes.

- *Do the participating research agencies need to set aside special funds for the Open Initiative?*

In principle not. Since all decisions will be in the hands of national agencies they will only support Open Initiative applications which would be supported by them anyway. The requirements of the Open Initiative towards the applicants are additional to the requirements of the national calls, thus the successful applicants should qualify anyway for the national support. All this being said it is still possible, but merely for technical reasons, that an agency need set aside some funds for the Open Initiative. This will be the case if the deadlines for decisions and the starting dates of the Open Initiative projects will be very different from the respective national dates. The design of the Open Initiative procedures will hopefully handle this difficulty in most cases.

- *Will the scientific value of the project proposals be the only criterion for decision?*

Yes and no. The scientific quality is an absolute condition. But also a high "added value" of the cooperation is a prerequisite of success in this call. If this is absent the applicants should ask for separate grants from their respective national research agencies.

Further questions and comments

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