

Does my organisation qualify as an SME?

If you can answer 'Yes' to all four questions, your organisation qualifies as an SME under the EU definition.

YOUR ORGANISATION IS NOT AN SME.

YOUR ORGANISATION IS AN SME.

NO Is the organisation an enterprise, i.e. engaged in economic activity? YES!

NO Does it have fewer than 250 employees? YES!

NO Does it have an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million?*
Or
Does it have a balance sheet total* not exceeding €43 million?
To answer Yes, at least one of these conditions must be fulfilled.
*according to its most recent audited accounts YES!

NO Is it autonomous? YES!

For the definition of autonomy, and to learn how your enterprise may qualify as an SME even if it is not autonomous, see the detailed definition on the SME *TechWeb*.

RESEARCH FOR SME ASSOCIATIONS at a glance

Objectives	Improve SME competitiveness by investing in the acquisition of new knowledge from RTD providers.
Main applicants	Small and medium-sized enterprise associations/groupings (SME-AGs)
Beneficiaries	SME-AGs and their SME Members
Owners of IPR	SME-AG participants by default
Total project budget	Typically €1.5 to €4 million
EC funding	75% of research costs, 50% of demonstration costs, 100% of costs for management and other activities ² .
Project duration	2 to 3 years
Number of participants	Typically 10-15
Dissemination of results	Extensive

² The financial support of the community is in accordance with the Rules for participants and will be capped at a value not exceeding 110% of the estimated price to be invoiced by RTD providers to SME Associations.

Participating in RESEARCH FOR SME ASSOCIATIONS: Calls

The first call for projects under Research for SME Associations will close on **1 June 2007**. It is open to organisations in all research fields. For more information on how to submit a proposal and related details, please consult DG Research's SME *TechWeb* at:

ec.europa.eu/research/sme-techweb or cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc

What else do you need to know?

SME *TechWeb*

The SME *TechWeb* offers a range of information for SMEs that would like to take part in EU research. It is designed for technology oriented SMEs, especially those wishing to innovate and internationalise. Using clear, simple language, offering numerous concrete examples of projects, this website will be of particular value to those applying for research funding. Visit it now at:

ec.europa.eu/research/sme-techweb

SME National Contact Points

SME National Contact Points have shown their worth in the past as providers of information and guidance to SMEs wanting to participate in EU-funded research. This role will continue throughout FP7 (2007-2013). A complete list of NCPs for FP7 is available at:

cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html

General FP7 information

For information about related research activities, calls for proposals, work programmes and schemes in FP7, please visit the following comprehensive websites:

Europa: ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/
CORDIS: cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home.html

Contacts

Martina Daly
Martina.DALY@ec.europa.eu

Research enquiries service:

ec.europa.eu/research/enquiries

Research for SME Associations

SMEs and Research: creating knowledge for growth

The Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) provides financial support to innovative SMEs, via Associations or groups of SMEs acting on their behalf, investing in the acquisition of new knowledge from RTD providers to improve their competitiveness.

SMEs and Research

For many European small and medium-sized enterprises, continued success and robust growth is linked to competitiveness in the global economy. Fresh ideas and novel approaches to business are important for SMEs to compete in today's globalised market. Research is an integral part of that process.

In the **Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)**, the European Commission will continue to provide financial support to innovative SMEs investing in the acquisition of new knowledge from RTD providers to improve their competitiveness.

Under FP7, the funding scheme **Research for SME Associations** (formerly Collective Research) maintains its guiding principle to strengthen the innovation capacities of SMEs to develop new products and markets through the acquisition of new knowledge from those institutions best suited to carry out research.

The relationship between participating SME associations and RTD performers will be a simple customer-seller one. RTD performers agree to undertake research on behalf of an international consortium of SME associations, and will be remunerated for their services with a significant portion of the costs funded by the EU.

RTD performers conduct the research; SME associations purchase the results for or with its members. Alternatively, SME associations could also simply provide financial support in the project in order to lower the cost of purchase of the results by their SME members. In each case SME associations must ensure broad dissemination of the results to their SME members.

Principal focus of RESEARCH FOR SME ASSOCIATIONS

Research for SME Associations supports SME associations to develop technical solutions to problems common to a large number of SMEs in specific industrial sectors or segments of the value chain through research. For example, SMEs are helped to develop or conform to European norms and standards, and to meet regulatory requirements in areas such as health, safety and environmental protection. Projects must be driven by the SME associations which outsource research to RTD performers for the benefit of their members and must involve a number of individual SMEs.

As **Research for SME Associations** is a bottom-up scheme, topics will span the entire range of science and technology challenges faced by SMEs.

As the focus of this scheme is on strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs and improving industrial competitiveness across the European Union, particular emphasis will be given to the economic impact of the results for the participating SMEs. In addition, a consortium's dissemination plan for the results of their project will be important in the evaluation process.

Activities supported by RESEARCH FOR SME ASSOCIATIONS (SME-AGs)

Research for SME Associations (SME-AGs) takes a multifaceted approach to enhancing participants' competitiveness. Within the framework of each project, this scheme will support SMEs in:

- **Research and technological development activities.** Research undertaken by RTD performers will form the bulk of each funded project. SME-AGs will focus on the testing and validation of project results, and the preparatory stages for applied use. Knowledge management and Intellectual Property Rights protection will contribute to a clear economic impact of project findings.
- **Demonstration activities.** These are designed to demonstrate the viability of new technologies produced through the research that offer a potential economic advantage, but which cannot be commercialised directly (e.g. testing of product-like prototypes).
- **Training and dissemination activities.** RTD performers will train technical and managerial staff from the participating SME-AGs and their members. It will focus on best-practice utilisation of results and technologies generated by project research. Dissemination to third parties will be accomplished through conferences, publications, workshops, web-based initiatives, etc.

Projects include activities to effectively disseminate the research results to the members of the SME-AGs, and if appropriate, more widely. Furthermore, dissemination to policy makers, including standardisation bodies, is encouraged to facilitate the use of policy-relevant results by the appropriate bodies at international European, national or regional levels.

- **Management activities.** Over and above the technical management of individual work packages, these activities will provide an appropriate framework, bringing together all project components and maintaining regular communication with the Commission.

Forming a RESEARCH FOR SME ASSOCIATIONS consortium

For a project to be eligible for funding, consortium partners must meet certain requirements.

• SME Associations/Groupings (SME-AGs)

A consortium must contain at least three independent SME-AGs, or one European SME-AG established in a Member State or Associated Country according to its national law. In addition a European SME-AG must comprise a minimum of two independent legal entities, established in two different Member States or Associated Countries.

SME-AGs are legal persons, composed mostly of and representing the interests of SMEs and/or physical persons having the same kind of activities. Examples of these are sectoral industrial associations, national or regional industrial associations and chambers of industry and commerce.

• RTD performers

A consortium must contain at least two RTD performers independent from any other participant. They are legal entities able to carry out research and technological development activities for the benefit of SME-AG participants and their members. Examples are universities, research organisations and industrial companies, including research-performing SMEs.

• Other enterprises and end-users

A project consortium may additionally include any "other enterprises and end-users" that contribute to the project and helps in solving specific problems of SME-AG participants or their members, though only in a secondary role. However, a limited number of individual SMEs¹[2-5] must participate to ensure that the results of the project address SME needs and can be used by a large number of SMEs. The scope of their activity will be focused on validation, take-up, training and dissemination activities, but not on research activities.

Co-ordination of a funded project may not be subcontracted. The organisation acting as co-ordinator must have the necessary capacity and competence to effectively assume all co-ordination responsibilities. Co-ordination will normally be assigned to one of the SME-AG participants or RTD performers, however in some cases it may be entrusted to an "other enterprise and end-user" specialised in professional project management.

¹ SME Definition Commission Recommendation 2003/361/ECEC