

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**Version: 16 June 2014**

Questions are being added consecutively.  
In this version the questions 29-31 have been added.



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## **1. What is Infravation?**

Infravation is a challenge-driven ERA-NET Plus (EN Plus) programme initiated as a pooled research fund to enable transport infrastructure innovations which are relevant to addressing the challenge identified in the White Paper on Transport: Smart, Green and Integrated transport. Its objective is to enable a high-quality infrastructure offering high service levels to the user/economy/society through solutions for both new and existing infrastructure.

On 3 March 2014 the EN Plus Infravation launched the Infravation 2014 Call, which is aimed at advanced systems, materials and techniques in road infrastructure construction and maintenance, including repair, retrofitting and revamping.

The solutions called for include materials technology, methods and processes, and supporting systems, such as for monitoring, communication and energy. Detailed information about the Call content, including its seven challenges, can be found in the 'Infravation scope' document as well as the Guide for Applicants on the Infravation website [www.infravation.net](http://www.infravation.net).

## **2. How is Infravation funded?**

11 Countries are pooling 9 million EURO, including a one-third top-up from the European Commission (EC). For the first time, the USA (Federal Highway Administration) will contribute funding to an EN Plus Call. All funding providers contribute to a single real common pot. On behalf of the funding providers, Rijkswaterstaat will act as the central body for funding, negotiation, contracting and monitoring of the research projects.

## **3. When will the Infravation Call be launched? What will the deadlines be?**

The Infravation 2014 Call was launched on 3rd March 2014. This Call follows a two-step submission and evaluation procedure. The Call closure for 'light' proposals in the 1st step submission phase is Monday 30th June 2014, 17h00 CET. The deadline for submission of full proposals (on invitation only) will be the end of November 2014.

## **4. How will Infravation liaise with Horizon 2020 (H2020)?**

The content of the Infravation 2014 Call is complementary and specific to the 2013 EC Call on Infrastructure (deadline mid March 2014). There is a cohesive communication flow between the EC services and the Infravation consortium to ensure an effective coordination between the two initiatives. In addition, the provision to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of efforts between the Infravation 2014 Call and H2020 Call topic MG-8.1a-2014 (Smarter design, construction and maintenance) has been included in both Call texts. Moreover, MG.8 is by definition multimodal, including infrastructure for all transport modes, whereas Infravation only covers road issues. The Infravation Consortium and EC will tune proposal lists to avoid any double funding of (equivalent or overlapping) projects.



## 5. Who can apply for funding from Infravation?

Individual researchers, research organisations, universities, companies or other organisations from:

- The Infravation funding countries i.e. the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Spain, France, Italy, Israel and USA.
- The remaining EU28 countries (with certain restrictions, see next paragraph)
- Countries associated to FP7 i.e. Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Republic of Moldova (with certain restrictions, see next paragraph)

## 6. Are there any restrictions that apply to applicants from non-funding countries?

Yes, the following restrictions apply to applicants from non-funding countries:

- Their funding is limited to maximum one-third of the requested funding of the respective project proposal.
- They cannot be coordinator of a project proposal. The coordinator of a project proposal should come from a funding country.

## 7. How can consortia apply for funding? How long does it take? How much funding can they get?

Proposals must be prepared and submitted electronically using the Call Management Tool (CMT), which will be available from the Infravation website [www.infravation.net](http://www.infravation.net) some weeks after the Call launch. Only those proposals that have been formally submitted in the CMT system before the strict Call deadline will be considered for evaluation. This applies to both the light proposals in the 1st step and the full proposals in the 2nd step. Only consortia of favourably evaluated light proposals in the 1st step will be invited to submit full proposals for the 2nd step.

Time to grant (administrative period between submission of light proposals and signature of the grant agreement) is around 12 months. The grant will be concluded between the central funding body Rijkswaterstaat, on behalf of the Infravation funding partners, and the project coordinator, on behalf of the project consortium.

Funding modalities are similar to FP7 and H2020. Detailed information about the funding rates and direct and indirect costs are available in the Guide for Applicants, which was published at the Infravation 2014 Call launch on 3rd March 2014.

## 8. How many partners can be in a consortium?

There is a minimum of two independent legal entities established in two of the eligible countries. There is no limit to the maximum number of partners.



## **9. Where can I get more information about the Call requirements?**

A Guide for Applicants was published at the Infravation 2014 Call launch on 3rd March 2014. This document stipulates in detail the requirements for participation in the Infravation 2014 Call. It is available from the Infravation website [www.infravation.net](http://www.infravation.net).

As part of the Infravation 2014 Call, a main information and brokerage event was held on 20th March 2014 in Brussels at the Diamant Conference Center.

To support potential applicants, there is also a Call Secretariat that you can contact at [miriam.stephan@de.tuv.com](mailto:miriam.stephan@de.tuv.com) or [david.doerr@de.tuv.com](mailto:david.doerr@de.tuv.com).

## **10. What is the difference in the kind/type of, and the amount of requested information in step 1 of the light proposal as compared to step 2 of the full proposals?**

Part B of step 2 will be extended with more details of what was submitted in step 1. For instance, the light proposal part B does not ask for a detailed table of Person Months per consortium partner and work packages. In the light proposal stage more general information needs to be provided about the overall work plan and how work will be roughly distributed within the consortium, to enable proper evaluation of the light proposals.

Thus, the full proposal will ask for a more detailed description of the work packages, the specific role and effort of consortium members, as well as due dates of deliverables.

## **11. Expectations regarding cost-benefit analysis: How detailed should it be in the light proposal? Does this need to be extended in second step?**

It is possible to carry out a cost benefit analysis on different levels of detail. In the 1st step of the application procedure (light proposal), the analysis can be more general, yet comprehensive enough that it indicates where you are going.

## **12. What makes a good proposal stand out?**

The Infravation consortium is looking for proposals which:

- Clearly address and display a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and objectives of the Infravation call (scientific),
- Involve a consortium with a combination of partners capable of delivering the work proposed (implementation) and in which
- Ultimately the work being done within the project will make a significant contribution towards achievement of the objectives of Infravation (impact).

All requirements for a proposal are set out in the Guide for Applicants. Good proposals will be characterised by a high degree of clarity regarding the objectives of the proposed project, relevance to the call, the work plan and expected impact. The high quality of a good proposal should immediately show from its summary.



**13. Is there a specific minimum or maximum budget allocated for each individual challenge?**

There is no specific funding budget allocation to challenges or to individual research questions of a challenge. Thus, depending on the proposals submitted by the research community and the result of independent evaluation, it may be the case that not all challenges will be covered in the end. Moreover, because proposals may address several challenges, a specific allocation would not be useful.

**14. What is the status of Switzerland?**

The European Commission has confirmed that Swiss applicants **can** be funded by Infravation, which is receiving funding from the EC under the FP7 ERA-NET Plus scheme. The recent ruling of excluding Swiss applicants from EC funding only applies to Horizon 2020 and not retrospectively to FP7.

**15. Is it possible to include Third Parties in the sense of FP7 special clause 10 (different from subcontracting)?**

No. In the Infravation 2014 call it is not possible to include Third Parties that are linked to a partner in the consortium in the sense of FP7 special clause 10.

**16. What about the balance of a consortium. Is it OK e.g. to have a consortium composed of five partners from one country and a single partner from another country?**

In principle yes, as two countries are involved. However, all other formal requirements outlined in the GfA have to be considered, too (e.g. applicants from one country may in sum not claim more than 70% of the requested total funding of the project).

**17. How transparent will the evaluation and their outcomes be?**

The evaluation process of the Infravation call is regulated according to the strict rules for EN Plus initiatives. This means that it will follow a 2-step evaluation procedure and be monitored by an independent observer and the European.

Regarding the outcome of the evaluation, unsuccessful consortia will be informed of the reasons why their proposals were rejected.

**18. Can one proposal focus on several challenges?**

Yes, it can.



**19. Does the selection process make a distinction between large or small projects?**

There is no preference for either larger or smaller projects. The focus is on the quality of the proposals and the expected impact of the projects. There is no absolute limit to the number of partners in a proposal. However, it is important to build a consortium that is – in terms of size and selection of partners – both appropriate and necessary for achieving the objectives of the project proposed.

**20. What is the viewpoint on entities from the USA being the coordinator of projects?**

The USA is a funding provider, which means that applicants from the USA can act as a project coordinator.

**21. Can one organisation be involved in several proposals?**

Yes.

**22. What about the funding rate for public bodies?**

The funding rates for direct costs depend on the type of organisation. The rules of participation distinguish between

- non-profit legal entities, which may comprise public bodies, research organisations, higher, secondary education establishments, who will receive maximum of 100% funding of direct costs and
- for-profit legal entities, like enterprises (whether small, medium or large-sized), who will receive a maximum of 70% funding of direct costs.

The funding rate for indirect costs is 25% of direct costs excluding subcontracts. There is no further distinction made between different types of organisations.

**23. Can the composition of the consortium be changed in the full proposal as compared to the light proposal? What about the funding?**

The requested funding shall not exceed the amount given in the light proposal financial breakdown unless the changes are based on requirements from the light proposal evaluation outcome.

The same applies to the composition of the consortium. The consortium set-up shall not be changed, except when a change has been stipulated as a requirement for the submission of a full proposal.





**24. Can operational tests also be conducted in non-funding countries, possibly without funding?**

According to the GfA, page 22: “Operational tests can take place on the infrastructure network of funding provider countries only.”

Proposals shall therefore not include operational tests on any infrastructure networks outside the funding countries.

**25. Funding to non-funding provider country costs will be only 30%, correct? So if a partner from a non-funding provider country does the work, they will get only 1/3 of direct costs (70 % for non-profit organisations), which is roughly 23%?**

No.

The funding rate for for-profit organisations is 70% for the direct costs plus a flat rate for the indirect costs (25% of direct costs excluding subcontracts). The rate applies to all applicants, whether from a funding provider country or not.

The sum of the requested funding for applicants from non-funding provider countries in a consortium may not exceed 1/3 of the total requested funding of the consortium.

**26. Under section 4.4 of the Call guide it indicates that audit certificates are required where costs are in excess of €375,000. This was the threshold under FP7, however, under H2020 it is now €325,000. Please confirm if the €375,000 figure is correct**

Audit certificates are mandatory per every 375.000 € received funding for one partner as outlined in GfA page 24.

Infravation is a stand-alone funding initiative with a specific funding instrument independent from FP7 or H2020. However, the provisions are similar to FP7 (and in a few cases also to H2020) in order to provide a familiar framework for applicants.

**27. How does one know which subjects are most important and should be therefore addressed?**

There is no particular order in the challenges addressed by the Infravation call. All are equally important. The GfA describes guiding objectives for each challenge/priority as well as research questions (see GfA Chapter 3).

**28. Where could applicants find information on the “2010 best practices and cost baselines” as referred to in the Guiding Objectives for Challenge B, third paragraph (“This specific challenge is aimed at enabling an extension of the useful life-time of existing infrastructure with up to 100% as compared to 2010 best practices and cost baselines”)?**

The business case should be plausible and consistently motivated. A general but verifiable reference to common construction and maintenance practices in one or more of the countries involved should suffice. There is no requirement for exact percentages as it is a guiding objective rather than a hard target.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> step evaluation stage the national evaluators will assess the plausibility of the claim.



**29. Could you please provide us a template for the letter of intent? / Can you please give feedback on the format of the Letter of Intent of our consortium?**

As part of light proposal preparation, the coordinator is asked to provide from each of the consortium partner a Letter of Intent (LoI) regarding their participation in the project proposal submitted to the Infravation 2014 call.

Infravation does not provide a standard template for such LoI nor does the Call Secretariat comment or approve draft LoI of individual proposals.

**30. Can I add a list of reference at the end of Part B or a Gantt chart as extra page or it will be reason for exclusion? What about footnotes?**

For the preparation of the proposal part B certain mandatory page limits apply, which are outlined in the template of light proposal part B. We advise you to comply to the stated page limits and the given structure of the light proposal part B.

Please also keep in mind that Infravation call applies a 2-step submission and evaluation procedure. At the 2nd step - i.e. when being invited for preparation of a full proposal – you will be asked for a more detailed description of work (see also question No 10 of this FAQ document).

A Gantt chart, for instance, is not required at the light proposal stage and should not be included in the light proposal on an extra/excess page.

As citations are part of the text of a proposal, the space that they take up counts to the page limits set – regardless of whether they take the form of footnotes or endnotes.

**31. Our consortium wants to ensure access to infrastructure for demonstration and testing purposes. In order to do so, can national road administrations be partner in an Infravation proposal? Or should we rather provide a letter of intent/support along with the light proposal?**

The GfA states that *“Operational tests can take place on the infrastructure network of funding provider countries only. All applicants will have the same rights and access to demonstration sites, but feasibility and employability will only be judged from the submitted proposals.”* This means that road directorates providing funding to the Infravation Call offer a level playing field for all applicants regarding the access to their infrastructure for demonstration and testing purposes.

Road administrations can be partner in an Infravation proposal, unless they are Infravation funding providers. In that case they cannot be a partner in a consortium as they cannot fund themselves. Please consult the list of funding providers in the Guide for Applicants, page 23.

Should you for the activities in your proposal for demonstration and testing purposes need access to infrastructure from a road administration, you may contact them for its availability. Be aware that for the light proposal (first step) no Letter of Intent (LoI) from a road administration is requested. Provision of a LoI will only be required when submitting a full proposal in the next phase (second step) of the Infravation call.

