

German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) call for German-Ukrainian Cores of Excellence (CoE)

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Object of Funding

Excellent German universities, research institutions and companies will be enabled to jointly establish with Ukrainian partners new centres for excellent research (or also to expand existing research entities) in Ukraine under the leadership of a top-class scientist. The successful Horizon 2020 instrument “Teaming for Excellence” serves as the model for this measure.

- In principle, this measure is suitable for all research disciplines covered by BMBF
- Partners in Ukraine can include: universities and research institutions which are recognized by Ukrainian legislation as research conducting institutions, or consortia of these comprising commercial companies with the potential for the development of new or existing structures and capacities for excellent research and innovation

Possible design of the funding

- The funding takes place in two phases over a project period of 1 + 4 years
- Approx. 100,000 euros are available per project for a one-year planning phase
- Two or three project plans will be selected for the implementation phase of the centres of excellence (max. 4 years) and each will receive up to 2.5 million euros of funding (625,000 euros per year)
- Participation by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is expressly desired, but not mandatory

Phase I: Possible conditions of the preparatory phase

Duration: up to 12 months

Budget: up to 100,000 euros per project

Objective: To draw up an extensive, detailed and robust concept including a business plan for the establishment/modernization of a “core of excellence”:

- a) **Recruitment of a top-class researcher** who is willing to build the centre up over the long term (or at least for the duration of phase II of the project);
- b) Recruitment plan for further early-career researchers (graduates, postdocs) from Ukraine that support the top-class researcher in his work;
- c) **Long-term vision for the new core of excellence**, which should be relevant to the host region, including a long-term science and innovation strategy based on sound analysis;
- d) **Detailed and robust business plan** for the establishment of new or upgrading existing core of excellence in line with the long-term vision (i.e. proof must be provided that the Ukrainian contribution to the infrastructure/basic equipment has been secured); formulation of a strategy for how third-party funding can be acquired

Possible contents of the CoE-concept

- Definition of an innovative and distinct research profile of the core of excellence
- Identification of an appropriate legal status of the CoE enabling autonomous, fast and effective decisions making processes.
- Provision of a detailed cooperation agreement for all partners including distinct IPR regulations.
- Realistic considerations about the long-term financing (e.g. by the hosting region, “mother institutes”, multilateral funding programmes and other credit providers) and about the legal form of the new entity or analysis of the benefits of the existing research institution,
- Design of the management structures (initially by German partner(s) in cooperation with Ukrainian partners due to funding scheme). While in the implementation phase head scientist and additional researchers are funded by BMBF, it is strongly recommended that the set-up of the new entity is such that it can pay competitive salaries (or strives to do so in the future). A culture of excellence and meritocracy has to be guaranteed.
- Development of a recruitment plan including at least one renowned top-class researcher (declaration of intent from a top-class researcher to be active in the core of excellence; duration of the contract: e.g. 4 years, 60% of his/her time), and which contains attractive conditions so that further Ukrainian early-career researchers can be hired;
- Establishment of joint research structures between the partners;
- Identification of essential infrastructure needs in selected research fields;
- Participation in international projects and networks for the purposes of positioning with regard to substantial EU funding in multilateral funding programmes, for example;
- If SMEs are involved, there must be evidence showing that they play a central role in the establishment of the cores of excellence;

Evaluation procedures

Applications for Phase I as well as submitted proposals for Phase II will be subjected to independent evaluation with the involvement of Ukrainian experts. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine undertakes nominating Ukrainian experts and approves a list of them. A list of shortlisted project proposals will be made available to the Ministry of Education and Science who has the opportunity to comment on the projects and make recommendations. A final list on the projects that will be funded is agreed upon by both ministries. (The final decision on the projects that will be funded is made by mutual agreement between BMBF and MESU). For phase 1 up to ten proposals will be selected and will be asked to develop a business plan.

For Phase II up to three project plans will be selected for the establishment of a centre of excellence and will be asked to carry out the concrete implementation of the CoE.

Phase 2: Possible conditions for the implementation phase

Duration: up to 48 months

Budget: up to 2.5 million euros (625,000 euros per year) per project

Objective: Implementation of the CoE with particular attention to establishing sustainable collaboration structures those provide the clear prospect of the medium and long-term operation of the centres of excellence.

- Above all, the staff costs of the future CoE will be covered.
- Infrastructure costs as well as administration and operating costs on the ground will be covered according to the respective business plan.

- The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine supports the projects of phase 2 in with state registration that might be necessary according to Ukrainian legislation. Therefore the projects need to determine a focal point for communication with the MESU

The BMBF will monitor the progress of the projects according to general procedures and will inform the MESU regularly and in due course of the implementation progress.

Prerequisites for funding

- German universities and non-university research institutions and SMEs headquartered in Germany submit applications in a collaboration with their Ukrainian partners (see above)

Expenditure eligible for funding

- Travel costs
- Workshops and conferences
- Staff costs (at least one internationally competitive position for a top-class researcher, at least 4 further doctoral candidate/post-doc positions, operating and administration costs in Germany)
- Equipment and consumables where they represent up to 10% of the overall amount applied for and are considered necessary for meeting the specific scale and achieving the objective of the measure