

Q&A “LBG Clinical Research Groups” - Zoom meeting on 03 11 2022

CRG composition and work packages

Q: Regarding the leader qualification: “Work Package/Sub-Project Leaders must have a proven track record, must fulfill the academic requirements to supervise PhD students (according to their universities’ regulations”): Can colleagues with a proven track record but not fulfilling PhD supervision criteria be WP/SP leaders? What exactly is a “proven track record” –is a PhD degree a prerequisite?

A: Special Guideline page 7 specifies that Junior Researchers are “Researchers with at least two years of national/international postdoctoral research experience **or** experience in conducting their own research project, (who) can be Sub-Project Leaders or Deputy Heads.” In case work packages/sub-projects foresee the supervision of PhD students, junior and senior colleagues can team up to form pairs of work package/sub-project Leaders to meet this requirement.

Researchers holding a medical or PhD degree, doctors in specialist training, as well as soon-to-finish PhD students can be work package/sub-project Leaders. In case of early stage career researchers, we suggest to clearly state in your proposal where the person is standing in their career development and how the CRG will help him/her to reach the next level.

Q: If two people lead a single work package/sub-project together, how does this reflect on the time commitment?

A: The combined time commitment of both work package/sub-project Leaders must amount to at least 20% FTE.

Q: As Deputy heads shall be junior clinicians/researchers, can PhD students act as deputy heads?

A: There are no defined criteria to meet. However, we suggest the lowest level of experience suitable for the role of Deputy Head to be doctor in training or scientists trained to at least PhD level. PhD students should only be considered for this role if they are to complete their PhD studies during the first year of the CRG, so that sufficient time is allowed to develop into the role of Head by the start of the second funding period.

In general, key CRG roles such as Mentor and Head (and in consequence also Deputy Head) should be assigned in a complementary fashion. At least one, Mentor or Head, being a clinical leadership position would be highly beneficial for the CRG.

In any diverging cases, please describe how positions were assigned in your CRG and underlying reasoning, as well as how you plan to ensure quality assurance of your CRG through alternative measures.

Q: Can we add “Tasks” and “Task Leaders” in addition to work package/sub-project Leaders?

A: There are no rules that say otherwise. If it serves the quality of the proposal, an additional level of tasks and task leaders can be defined.

Q: Do you expect a separate work package for Project Management?

A: No, a separate work package for Project Management is not expected. However, this does not exclude that a separate work package for project management can be created, should it serve the quality of the proposal.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of work packages and Leaders?

A: There is no limit to the number of work packages and Leaders, however, the overall proposal should represent a coherent research project that can be realised within the requested budget.

Q: I read that “Jede KFG besteht aus 5-15 geförderten Individuen”: Does it refer to full-time equivalents (FTE) and mirror the requested personnel (but does not mean the number of principal investigators)?

A: The CRG must consist of 5 to 15 directly funded individuals. This refers to FTE and the requested personnel excluding the Head, Mentor, Deputy Head(s) and work package/sub-project Leaders who must be contributed in-kind.

CRG Consortium

Q: Can a biomedical GmbH also participate as a cooperation Partner and obtain funding?

A: Yes, as long as it is a research oriented non-profit GmbH, and results can be published immediately.

Q: Do partners that are not eligible for funding have to sign the contract as well?

A: Yes, industry partners are required to sign the funding contract as well. At application stage, industry partners are asked to provide Letters of Commitments.

Q: Can an LBI act as a cooperation partner in the CRG?

A: Yes.

Ethical declaration

Q: How to upload ethical declarations, if there are multiple ethical declarations needed for the research project? What if a couple of ethical declarations are still pending?

A: Please summarise the required ethical declarations for the research project under Section 2.9 in the Short Proposal form, and specify which of those have already been obtained and which are still pending. When uploading in eCall, please combine them into one document.

Q: For studies concerning medical devices, ethical declarations will be obtained on an ongoing basis, as adaptations are made regularly. Is the ethical declaration for the whole first funding period a prerequisite?

A: An ethical declaration for the research project in the first funding period must be obtained before a funding decision can be made. Please describe the nature of the research project and how the ethical declaration will be obtained, so that the international scientific expert commission can take this into account when evaluating your proposal. If the ethical declaration does not cover the whole first funding period, then additional measures for monitoring must be made and the funding contract might need to reflect this.

Q: Is having an ethical declaration a prerequisite for a funding decision? Sometimes ethical declarations for bigger studies can only be obtained at a later stage, i.e., after conducting a short pilot study.

A: An ethical declaration for the research project in the first funding period must be obtained before a funding decision can be made. If the ethical declaration does not cover the whole first funding period, then additional measures for monitoring must be made and the funding contract might need to reflect this. If possible, plan the bigger study for the second funding period.

Rotational positions

Q: As part of the rotational position, is it allowed to go abroad for laboratory experiences?

A: Yes, if this is required and beneficial for the CRG.

Q: Can rotational positions be taken up for 1 or 2 months each year, rather than 1 continuous year?

A: Rotational positions do not appear useful for this short time frame; a part time rotational position could be considered as an alternative solution.

Q: Can rotational positions be taken as part-time?

A: Yes. Up to 2 FTE per year can be budgeted. Additional rotational positions are possible if costs are covered in-kind.

Cost and budget

Q: Is it possible that replacements for clinicians on rotational positions be brought in as in-kind by the participating universities?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there a limitation in budgeting per project partner within a consortium? E.g. only 1 FTE per project partner?

A: No – There is no budgeting limitation per project partner. Personnel costs can also be budgeted only by one partner. Note that at least 50% of the budget have to be spent at medical universities/faculties and their university clinics within the project (partner) setting.

Q: In terms of personnel, do PhD students count as a full FTE (considering that they are only hired for 75%)?

A: PhD students count as 75% FTE.

Q: What is the cost rate for the substitute for the rotational position? Can it be a postdoc cost rate according to the FWF?

A: The substitutes of the rotational positions are clinical staff. Therefore, cost rates according to the medical universities or clinics must be taken as reference.

Q: Is the maximum annual budget per year to be understood as an average over the funding period - or may it not be exceeded in the individual years?

A: The total (max) funded budget is EUR 4 Million for the period of 4 years. Therefore, (max) EUR 1 Million is an annual average and spending within the calculatory max. may vary.

Q: Is there a minimum amount of funding per year (i.e. € 0.5 million)?

A: The total funding minimum for a CRG is EUR 2,0 Million for four years, so EUR 0,5 Million on average per year.

Q: Does each consortium member have to contribute to the 10% in-kind? Are there any rules on the distribution of the 10% in-kind for the consortium members?

A: The consortium has to contribute combined 10% of the total project costs in-kind. The guidelines do not define a given distribution of in-kind contributions among consortium members. However, as salaries of Mentor, Head and Deputy Head are to be contributed in-kind by the lead institution itself, and this staff is to be employed by the Lead Institution, the Lead Institution will most likely cover a large proportion of the in-kind contribution.

General questions:

Q: Do references in the footnotes count to the character limit?

A: No.

Q: Is it a problem at the short proposal stage if the Head of one proposal is included as a work package/sub-project Leader in another proposal?

A: No, however in case both proposals are selected for funding, this person must make sure that she/he can fulfil the required time commitment for both CRGs.