



Participating in EU research programmes: not an easy task for SMEs

Dominique Delouis, Museum Images

The purpose of this article is to show how challenging it is for picture libraries to participate in EU Research projects. Picture libraries are usually small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and some advice will be given for them to participate to calls for proposals.

The European Union Research Framework in few words

The European Research Programmes started with the ESPRIT programme in 1983, followed by the so-called First Framework Programme in 1984 that ended in 1987.

Currently, the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) has one year with 2 closed calls for proposals and 2 open calls for proposals [see http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html] and it will last 7 years (2007-2013). The budget has increased significantly with €68.3 billion for the 7 year FP7 (4 year FP1: 3.27; 4 year FP6: 17.5).

Knowledge lies at the heart of the European Union's Lisbon Strategy to become the "most dynamic competitive knowledge-based economy in the world". The 'knowledge triangle' - research, education and innovation - is a core factor in European efforts to meet the ambitious Lisbon goals. FP7 bundles all research-related EU initiatives together under a common roof and is playing a crucial role in reaching the goals of growth, competitiveness and employment; along with a new Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), Education and Training programmes, and Structural and Cohesion Funds for regional convergence and competitiveness. It is also

a key pillar for the European Research Area (ERA).

The broad objectives of FP7 have been grouped into four categories: Cooperation (€39.134bn), Ideas (€10.447bn), People (€6.279bn) and Capacities (€6.594bn).

For each type of objective, there is a specific programme corresponding to the main areas of EU research policy. All specific programmes work together to promote and encourage the creation of European poles of (scientific) excellence.

15% of the FP7 budget should be dedicated to SMEs and SMEs can be funded 75% of their eligible expenses in a project.

Picture libraries might address the €9.1bn Information & Communication Technologies ICT theme in Cooperation [see the 2007-2008 work programme at <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict>].

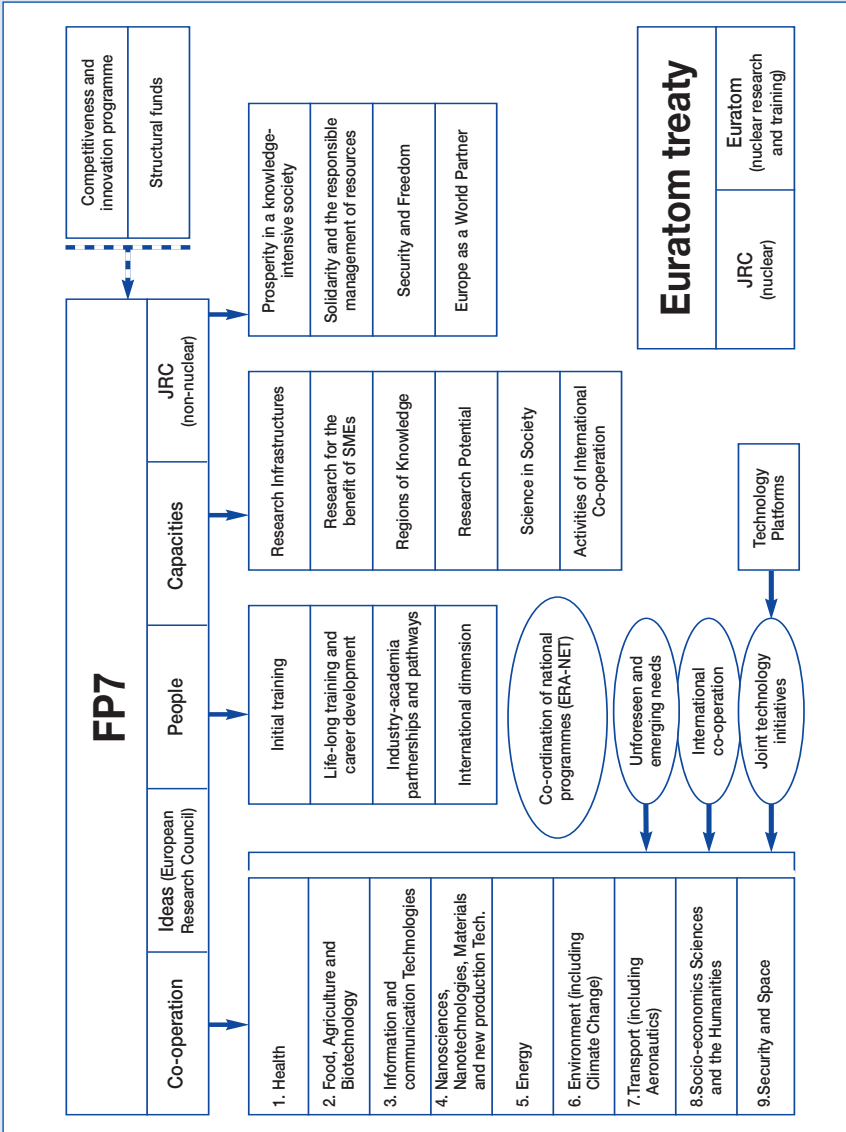
Potential participants and interested parties

FP7 supports a wide range of participants:

- Private companies such as SMEs, private research institutes or other industrial participants.
- Public organisations; for example, public universities, regional authorities, public research organisations.
- Individual researchers from both the public and private sectors.
- Researchers and organisations outside the European Union – whether from Candidate Countries, Associated States, developing countries, emerging economies or industrial nations.

It is not easy for an SME to participate in an EU research project for various reasons:

Overall 7th Framework Programme





Participating in EU research programmes: not an easy task for SMEs – *continued*

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- The rules are difficult to understand; in addition, throughout the evolution of the Framework Programmes, the rules have changed dramatically.
- Finding the right combination of partners is not straightforward; it requires having clear objectives and time to achieve the right mix.
- Preparing a project is time and resource consuming; an SME needs to have good relationships with partners that are accustomed to preparing such projects.
- Participating to the various calls for proposals is extremely competitive with a chance of 1:5 to 1:10 depending on the “Challenge”.

How to invest in successful proposals

- Have a clear idea of research and/or innovation to implement e.g. querying multiple image databases in various languages across Europe.
- Get support from your National Contact Point to secure your approach [see http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html].
- Find the right mix of partners in at least 3 EU countries, aim to include other international partners, to achieve your research/innovative idea: consulting firms, software developers, software publishers, end-users... Partners should also be useful for your business.
- Alternatively, find the right consortium of partners by using services such as www.ideal-ist.net
- Ask consultants to prepare the proposal.
- Find the right “challenge” to be addressed such as “Intelligent content and semantics” [see http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/programme/challenge4_en.html].
- Peer review your project proposal.

Have in mind that your project proposal should be perfect in all aspects to be accepted. It must meet the evaluation criteria and get the maximum scores to be in the final list of successful proposals.

ECHASE - an example of picture libraries participating in an EU research project

An example of picture libraries participating in an EU research project

ECHASE electronic Cultural Heritage made Accessible for Sustainable Exploitation www.echase.org is an eContent project. The eContent programme objective was to stimulate the creation of content for the new media.

A 24 months project (2005-2006) with €2,000,000 European funding.

Partners: Istituto Geografico De Agostini S.p.A., University of Southampton – IT Innovation Centre, Fratelli Alinari Photo Archives, Giunti Interactive Lab S.r.l., Hewlett Packard, Österreichischer Rundfunk, System Simulation Ltd, Getty Images

The aim of the project was to demonstrate:

- sustainable business models and processes that have been evaluated and proven for a range of cultural heritage content holders and content users.
- policies and processes for cultural heritage content holders to filter and make accessible their content according to the needs, prospects, rights and usage of different user-groups at a European level.

MILE – another example of picture libraries participating in a EU research project

Another example of picture libraries participating in a EU research project

MILE Metadata Image Library Exploitation
www.mileproject.eu is an eContentplus project.

A 36 months project (2006-2009) with €843,000 European funding.

Partners: AISA-BCN, Fratelli Alinari Istituto Di Edizioni Artistiche, Archetypon, The Bridgeman Art Library, BAPLA Bildombudsmannen AB, Fotofinder GmbH, The Museum Documentation Association (MDA), Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, System Simulation Ltd Trinity College Dublin and Wardynski and Partners .

International Experts from: Getty Institute, Jonathan Band pllc, The Israel Museum/Museum Computer Network, Naomi Korn Consultancy/MDA, PLUS Coalition and 5 Raymond Buildings.

The aim of the project is to make art available to everyone by improving metadata, thus improving the use, accessibility and trade of digital images throughout Europe.

The project is divided into three core areas of investigation:

- Metadata classification
- Metadata search & retrieval
- Intellectual Property Rights as metadata

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