

## **Fostering collaborative research projects between academic institution and commercial companies in Europe: Marie Curie Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP)**

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The active involvement of commercial enterprises in research activities is a key factor in Europe's development as the most competitive knowledge-driven and innovation-based society of the world, as specified in the Lisbon agenda. The European Commission (EC) is therefore keen to implement strategies to counteract the weak participation of enterprises, in particular SMEs, in Framework Programme (FP) activities.

The Marie Curie Actions (FP7 People Programme) are aimed at providing mobility opportunities via funding of human resources in all fields of research and technology. Typically this is through individual postdoc fellowships to excellent researchers or by funding institutional training networks for less experienced researchers. These actions are well known and popular with academics, but lack similar visibility within the commercial sector.

One newly created action, the **Marie Curie Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP)** aims to enhance the long-term scientific collaboration between commercial enterprises and non-commercial organisations based on a common research project. The secondment of staff between the commercial and non-commercial sectors is used to transfer knowledge and know-how in order to break down real or perceived barriers which currently limit mobility between universities and the private sector and unnecessarily narrow careers perspectives of researchers.

To be eligible for funding, an IAPP project must involve at least one partner from each sector, i.e. one commercial enterprise (including SMEs) and one non-commercial institution (typically a university or research centre), located in 2 different EU or associated countries<sup>1</sup>. Commercial partners are defined as those companies or institutes which gain a majority of their revenue from exposure to commercial markets.

Once these minimum requirements are fulfilled, any additional participant(s) from any sector and from anywhere in the world can take part in the consortium, allowing a consortium with 1 French and 2 German partners for example: opening the possibility for paid secondments within Germany, as long as it is between partners in different sectors.

There is no typical size of partnership, but in 2007 the "average" project included 3-4 participants; many projects had only 2 partners and there were a few projects with more than 10 institutions in the consortium.

The **IAPP** scheme funds the secondment of staff at any career stage from PhD candidates to senior researchers, as well as technicians or management staff directly involved in the project. There is also the possibility to recruit experienced researchers (typically postdocs) within the consortium but the recruitment may not outweigh the secondment which is the main vehicle for

collaboration in IAPP. The action recognises that it is not always possible to second staff for long periods, especially from small companies. Secondments may be for as little as 2 months up to a maximum of 2 years. Moreover the secondment periods may be split into several visits of shorter duration and spread over the lifetime of the project.

Grant Agreements are typically for 4 years duration and great efforts have been made to simplify the reporting obligations compared to FP6. In FP7 the first report is due at the end of the first 2 years of the project and coincides with a mid-term review from the EC services. The only other reporting obligation is at the end of the project.

A call for proposals will be launched in April 2009 with a deadline on the 27 July. The budget will be €65 million, representing a significant increase in funds compared to 2007 and 2008.

In summary, the IAPP scheme aims for a maximum of flexibility. Consortia vary widely in size, may involve the full spread of researcher experience, may be from any field of research, and have a lightened administrative commitment. The budgets for projects funded so far have varied from €250,000 to almost €3 million. With a likely success rate of 35% in 2009 the IAPP is an attractive funding scheme for those working at the interface of research activities with potential commercial applications.

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FP7 website: [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home_en.html)

Marie Curie Actions website: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/>

<sup>1</sup>Associated countries: Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Turkey, Israel, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia.