NEF

User's Guide for Coordinators and Participants

2007-10-18 (DRAFT/ID/ML/CS/TB//JD/JV/FPT/FPH/tw)

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Introduction

During the negotiation process, certain details are agreed between the participants and the Commission, and further information is collected. Some of this information is needed to prepare the grant agreement, other information is needed for the Commission to manage and report on the project execution.

This document describes NEF (Negotiation Forms), which is a online tool used during the negotiation process to collect legal and financial data as well as other background information about the participants to a proposal.

The data collected includes:

- General information about the project (including reporting periods or eligible costs);
- Information on the coordinator:
  - Bank account;
- Information on the coordinator and all the participants:
  - Legal data;
  - Organisation status;
  - Authorised representatives;
  - Contact persons;
  - Eligible costs.

Who is NEF for?

The coordinators and the Commission use NEF, which allows:

- the coordinators to view and modify their information by using online forms;
- the Commission to verify the changes and make the necessary correction if needed.

Before entering NEF, the coordinator should collect and verify the accurateness of the information, about his/her organisation and about other participants in the consortium, s/he is ready to insert in NEF, which means:

- verify the legal data and status of all participants;
- define the authorised representative who will sign the documents;
- gather bank account data;
- adjust the eligible cost according to the negotiation parameters, or make correction of the costs;
- be aware of the reporting periods.

When can coordinators start to use NEF?

The negotiation with NEF proceeds in a series of “negotiation sessions”. Each session is opened by the Commission or his/her representative (EC Project Officer), and will trigger an e-mail invitation to the coordinator to provide information through the NEF system. A negotiation session is a period during which the coordinator is allowed to change the data of a proposal submitted by his/her organisation or a consortium of participants.

Figure 1 below shows the schema of the negotiation process with NEF.

Coordinators can only access NEF while a negotiation session for their project is open. If a coordinator has several proposals, the proposals will each have their own negotiation sessions and their own “Access key”. During a negotiation session, the coordinator can log into and out of the system repeatedly. When all the data for the negotiation session has been entered, the coordinator can terminate the negotiation session by submitting the changes to the Commission. When the changes are submitted, the coordinator can no longer access the information. The Commission will review the changes and may decide to open a new negotiation session.

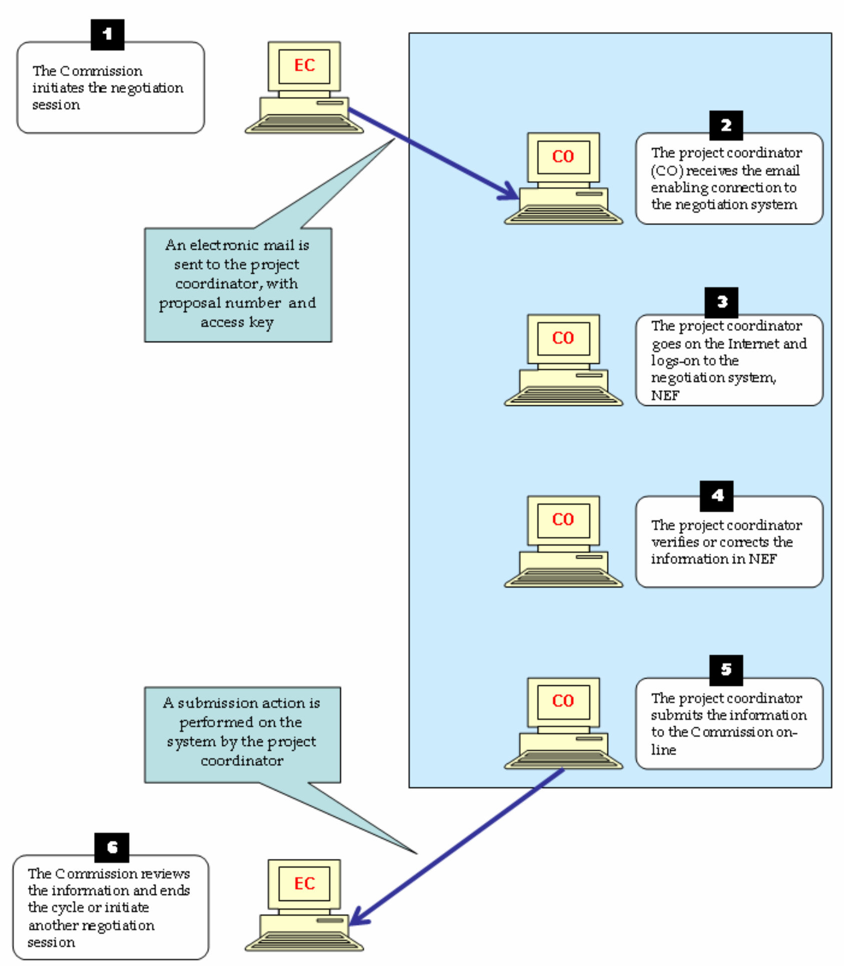

Figure 1

Systems requirements for using NEF

NEF operates on-line, without saving anything on the computer. The systems requirements are:

- a computer with a 600 MHz processor;
- an Internet connection, preferably 512 Kb/s or higher;
- a screen with a minimal resolution of 1024 x 768;
- either Internet Explorer 6.0 (or above), Firefox (2.0 or above), Opera (9.0 or above) or Safari (1.3 or above), other web browsers may work but are not tested;
- either Windows (2000, XP and Vista) or Macintosh (Mac OS X), other operating systems may work but are not tested.

How do coordinators and participants get support?

The coordinators and participants looking for technical help with NEF can ask the FP7 Help Desk by sending an e-mail to EC-FP7-IT-HELPDESK@ec.europa.eu.

For project related questions (i.e. which information should be submitted?), the EC project officer is the right person to contact. His/her name appears on the e-mail invitation to negotiate (see below in this text, Figure 2). Alternatively, contact the person mentioned in the negotiation letter.

How to use NEF?

Invitation to a negotiation session

The negotiation sessions are initiated by the EC project officer via an invitation by e-mail to the coordinator. The e-mail is sent to the person who submitted the proposal – if that is no longer the correct person, the new contact person should contact his/her EC project officer. This invitation, entitled "Invitation to negotiate" (see Figure 2), contains a link to NEF, the project identifier and the access key, which will be used by the coordinator to open and update the proposal:

Figure 2

Clicking on the link given in the e-mail, the "Welcome to the negotiation" screen appears (see Figure 3).

Logging in

On the "Welcome to the negotiation" screen, the coordinator copies the project number in the appropriate field and fills in the blank fields of the access key according to the key given in the e-mail (fields marked by a greyed cross remain unchanged).

You have only to fill the empty cells with the number corresponding to each missing position.

Each time you connect, you will get different cells to fill with different four digits.

If the coordinator forwards the email with access codes to the participants, the same access key can be shared by all participants until somebody clicks on the submit button (figure 5).

Figure 3

See the following example: Project number 217451 and Access key 21903-34174-62095-14385

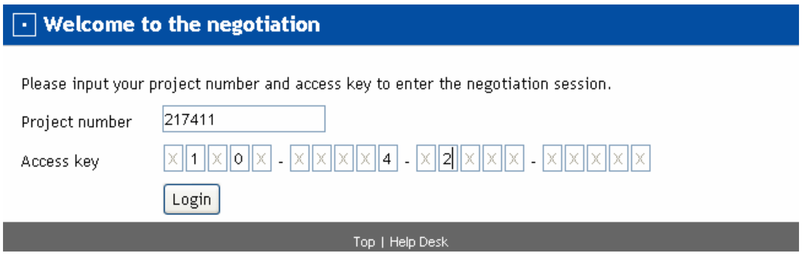

Figure 4

By pressing the “Login” button, the negotiation session is open, only the coordinator is allowed to change or close the session. The coordinator can log out of the negotiation session and then log in again as often as s/he likes. The same access key is valid, but the system will probably ask him/her for a different selection of numbers. NEF opens on the Project screen (see Figure 5):

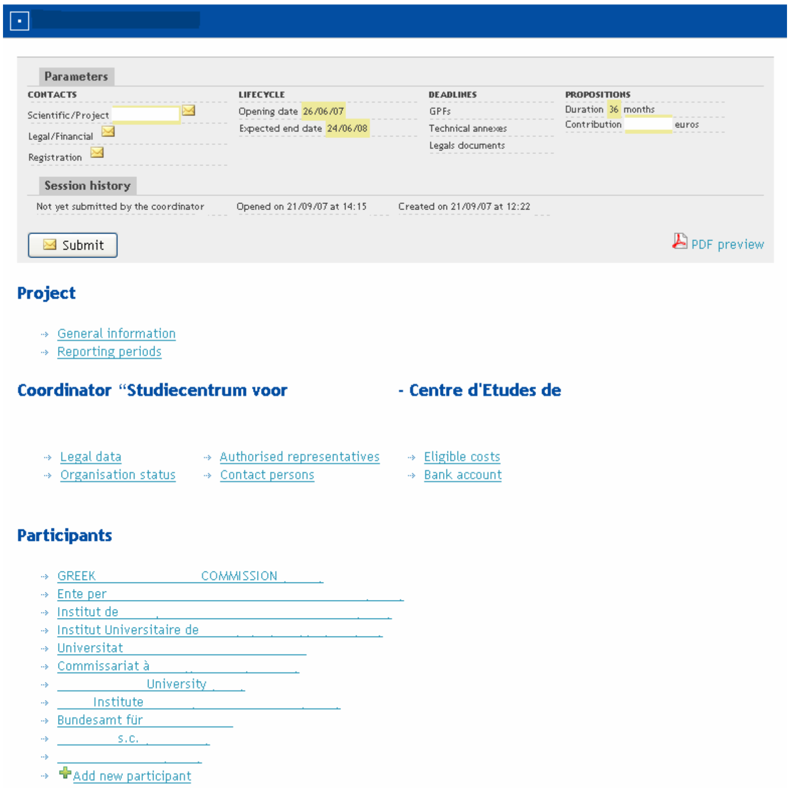

Figure 5

General use: field explanations, calendar, error messages, mandatory fields, saving, printing PDF files

Before explaining how to fill in, correct or verify the data, here is some information valid throughout the application. It concerns field explanations, calendar, error messages, and mandatory fields, saving of the data and printing of PDF files.

Field explanations

A blue question mark at the right side of a field contains an explanation regarding this field. The explanation appears when placing the mouse on the question mark (see Figure 5):

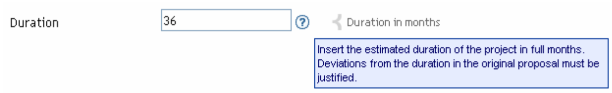

Figure 5

Calendar

Some dates have to be inserted in NEF.

For this purpose, a reduced calendar appears on the screen (see Figure 6):

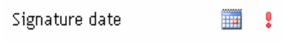

Figure 6

The coordinator has to click on it in order to select the appropriate date (see Figure 7):

Figure 7

The double quotation marks to the links  or to the right  allow the navigation to the previous or to the next years while the single quotation marks to the links  or to the right  allow the navigation to the previous or to the next months.

Error messages

Data consistency is checked. Any incoherent data is marked with a red exclamation mark and refused at saving (see Figure 8):

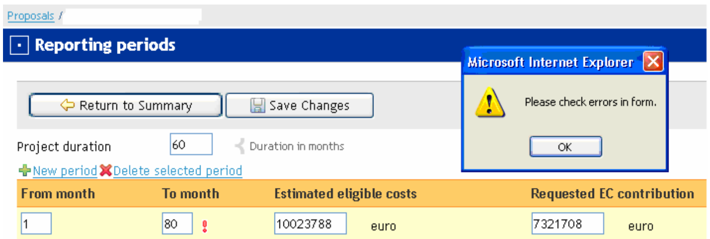

Figure 8

Mandatory fields

Mandatory fields are marked up in red (see Figure 9):

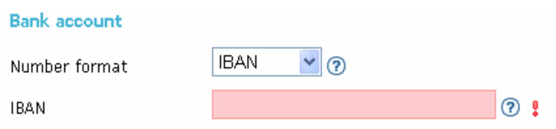

Figure 9

Saving

Changes are saved by clicking on the “Save Changes” button on the top of the screen (see Figure 10):

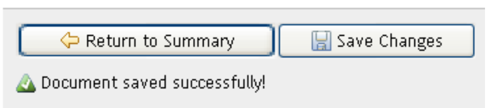

Figure 10

This action is followed by a return to the summary accessible by clicking on the “Return to Summary” button on the top of the screen. Clicking on “Return to Summary” without first clicking “Save” means that the data modified since the last “Save” will be lost.

Printing PDF files

When a negotiation session is open, the coordinator can generate a Grant Agreement Preparation Forms file in PDF format (and if required, print it) activating the link “PDF preview” on the Project screen (see Figure 11) which brings him/her to the Grant Agreement Preparation Forms (GPF).

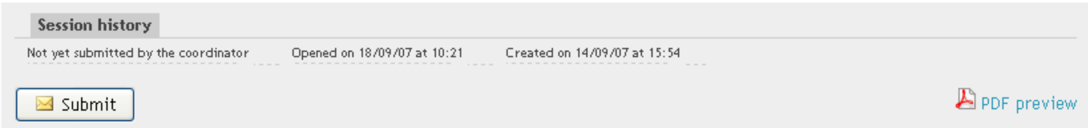

Figure 11

How to verify and correct general project data?

1. Follow the link “General information” under the heading “Project” on the Project screen;
2. The “General information” screen appears (see Figure 12):

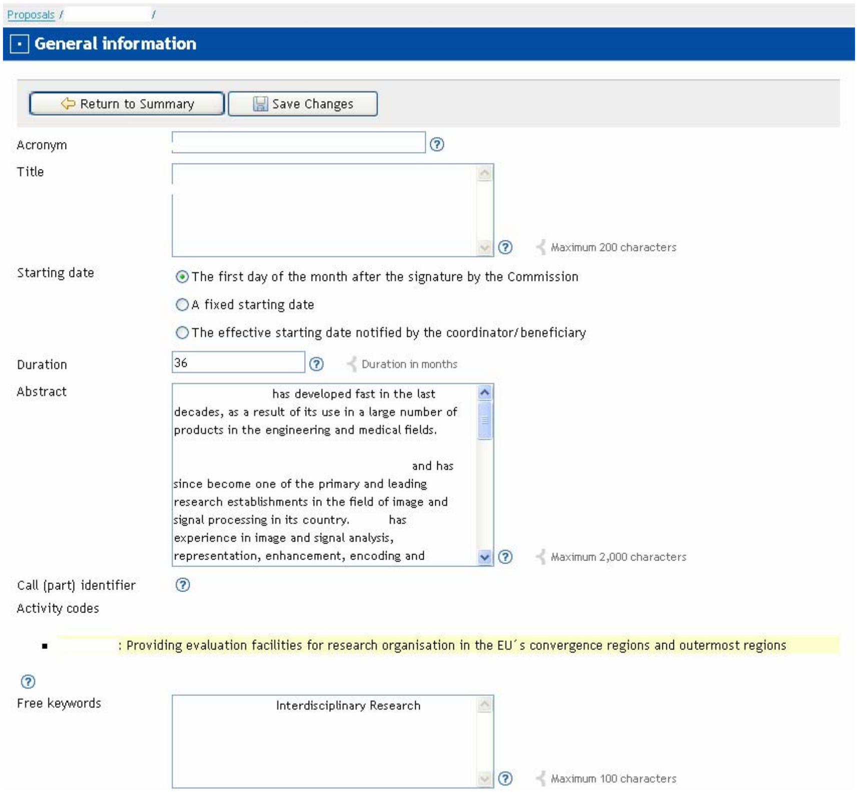

Figure 12

3. Fill in, verify or correct the project

– Acronym *;
– Title *;
– Starting date;
– Duration;
– Abstract *;
– Call (part) identifier *;
– Activity codes *;

– and Free keywords fields respecting the constraints if any (see Figure 13):

(*): These fields should only be changed in exceptional cases; check with your project officer.

Figure 13

4. Save the changes and return to the summary.

How to verify and correct the reporting periods?

1. Follow the link "Reporting periods" under the heading "Project" on the Project screen;
2. The "Reporting periods" screen appears (see Figure 14):

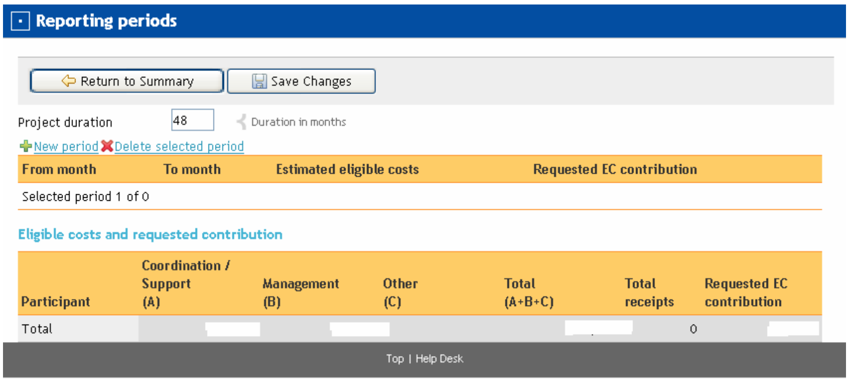

Figure 14

3. Change the project duration if necessary by filling in the appropriate field (see Figure 15):

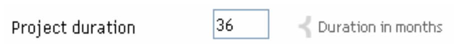

Figure 15

4. Add a new period by clicking on the "New period" button or delete a selected period by clicking on the "Delete selected period" button (see Figure 16):

Figure 16

Please see also the Negotiation Guidelines: ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/negotiation_en.pdf

5. Save the changes and return to the summary.

Note that financial information is changed as part of the coordinator or participant data.

How to verify and correct the data about the coordinator?

1. Follow one of the links under the heading "Coordinator" on the Project screen (see Figure 17):

Figure 17

2. Each of these links leads to a further detailed information screen with information about the coordinator from the Commission files and from the proposal stage;
3. In each of the subsidiary screens, fill in, verify or correct the field(s) when necessary. Inform your project officer as soon as possible if there are any changes to the preset legal or organisation status information. Note that only one person should be indicated as “authorised representative”, the person who has the authority for signing the grant agreement. The fields for the second person should be left blank;
4. If there is a “Participant Identity Code” associated to the Organisation in the “Legal data” and its status is validated, but the data is not correct, the coordinator has to contact the Commission.

   When this is “Participant Identity Code N/A”, the coordinator is able to enter his legal data.

   Remarks: Concerning part A of the GPF, the following actions are required:

   – For “Validated” participants, please verify that the information indicated in these forms is correct.

   – For “Not Validated” partners, please go to the web site mentioned on the page, fill in the relevant form and fax it to the project officer indicating the number of proposal and acronym of the project.
5. Save changes and return to the Project screenby clicking on the proposal number.

How to verify, correct, and delete participants?

On the Project screen, you can either follow the link entitled at a participant name or add a participant by clicking on the following link Add new participant ;

1. On the individual participant screen, you can either remove a participant by clicking on Remove participant or follow one of the links on the participant screen (see Figure 18):

Figure 18

2. Save the changes and return to the summary.

How to end the negotiation session?

When you wish to make the data available to the Commission, close the negotiation session by clicking on “Submit” on the Project screen (see Figure 19):

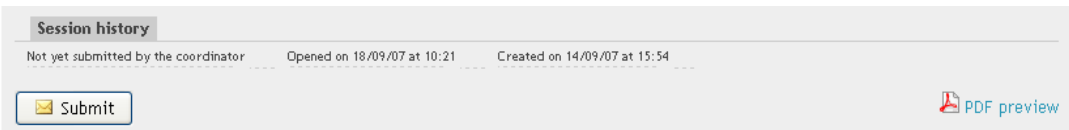

Figure 19

NEF asks you to confirm the end of the session (see Figure 20):

Figure 20

Confirm your wish to submit this version of the GPF by clicking on the button "OK" (see figure 20). At the same time, the EC Project Officer receives an e-mail declaring that you have closed the session.

You can still access NEF, but in a read only version to view the data submitted. You are not allowed to modify the proposal unless the EC project officer opens a new negotiation session by sending a new invitation.

When you wish to do so, leave NEF by clicking on the "Logout" link right above on the proposal's screen (see figure 21). This action will bring you back on the "Welcome to the negotiation" screen (see figure 3).

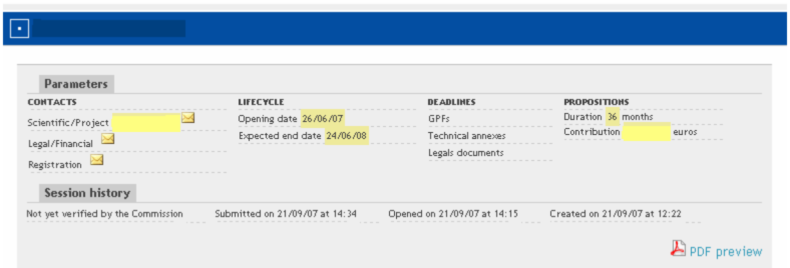

Figure 21

How to finalise the GPF?

At the end of the negotiation, the Commission will open one last negotiation session to allow the coordinators to print the final Grant Agreement Preparation Forms.

How to print the GPF?

The coordinators can preview and print the GPF by clicking on the button "PDF preview" icon on the Project screen (see Figure 19).

Which forms have to be completed manually?

Three forms out of the Grant Agreement Preparation Forms have to be completed manually:

- form A2.5, "Our commitment", has to be signed by the authorised representatives of the coordinator and all the participants;
- form A2.6, "Data protection & Coordination Role", has to be signed by the coordinator's authorised representatives;
- form A4, "Bank account", must be completed by the bank (with bank stamp and signature of the bank representative) and the account holder (with date and signature).

There may be additional information to be provided for specific project types; if the appropriate forms are not available in NEF, the Commission will advise the coordinators on how to provide this information.

The coordinators send the hard copies of the GPF or scan the GPF and send them by e-mail or by fax to the Commission.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Acronym	Short name of a project as given in the submitted proposal.
Activity code	Structured reference of an activity in FP7. This code is set out in the letter opening the negotiation; it is followed by the code(s) given in the proposal, if any.
Call (part) identifier	Reference number given in the call (or part of the call) one is addressing, as indicated in the publication of the call in the Official Journal of the European Union.
Coordinator	The participants' coordinator in a consortium
EC Project Officer	European Commission's Project Officer representing the European Commission during the negotiations.
FP7	7^{th} Framework Programme of Research and Technological Development of the European Commission
IBAN	International Bank Account Number; used by banks in European countries for international funds transfers
ICPC	International Co-operation Partner Countries
NEF	An electronic implementation of the negotiation forms. These forms are used to exchange information between the participants and the European Commission.
Negotiation	The negotiation is a process during which the details about the project are agreed between the participants and the Commission
Negotiation session	A period during which the coordinators are allowed to provide changes on their projects
Participant Identity Code	Identifier for an organisation already registered for FP7
Reporting periods	Contractual divisions of a project duration, after which a report has to be provided by the coordinator
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprise within the meaning of Recommendation 2003/361/EC
Status of validation	Indication that data provided in a form have been validated by the Commission