SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

NEF

User's Guide for Coordinators and Participants

2008-12-03 (version 2.0)

Content Table

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 the proposal's execution.

This document describes the application “NEF” (Negotiation Form Facility):

an online tool used during the negotiation process to collect legal and financial data as well as other background information on the participants related to the proposal.

The data collected includes:

- General information about the project (including reporting periods and eligible costs);
- Information on the coordinator:
  - Including Bank account;
- Information on the coordinator and all the participants:
  - Authorised representatives;
  - Contact persons;
  - Eligible costs and requested EC contribution.

NEF ’s main actors

The coordinators and the Commission Project/scientific Officers are NEF ‘s main users:

- the coordinator views and modifies his information by using the online forms;
- the E.C. Officer to verify the changes and make the necessary corrections if needed.

The Coordinator’s actions

Entering NEF, the coordinator should collect and verify the accurateness of the information, about his/her organisation and about the other concerned participants from the consortium, 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.

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 (1.x or 2.x), 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.

Where can the 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 proposal related questions (i.e. which information should be submitted?), the EC officers are the right persons to contact. Their names appear on the invitation to negotiate e-mails (*see below in this text, Figure 2*).

Alternatively, contact the person mentioned in the negotiation mandate accompanying the letter inviting you to negotiations.

When does the coordinator start using NEF?

The negotiation with NEF proceeds in a series of "negotiation sessions". Each session is opened by the responsible Commission officer (EC project officer or EC administrative officer). The opening of a session will trigger an automatic e-mail invitation including a hyperlink to NEF and a session's access key.

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.

The Coordinator can only access NEF while a negotiation session for his proposal 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 in 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 data become read only in NEF for the coordinator. The Commission will review the changes and may decide to open a new negotiation session. If the EC officer has added comments to the preceding session these comments will appear in the new *invitation to negotiate* 's e-mail that the coordinator will receive.

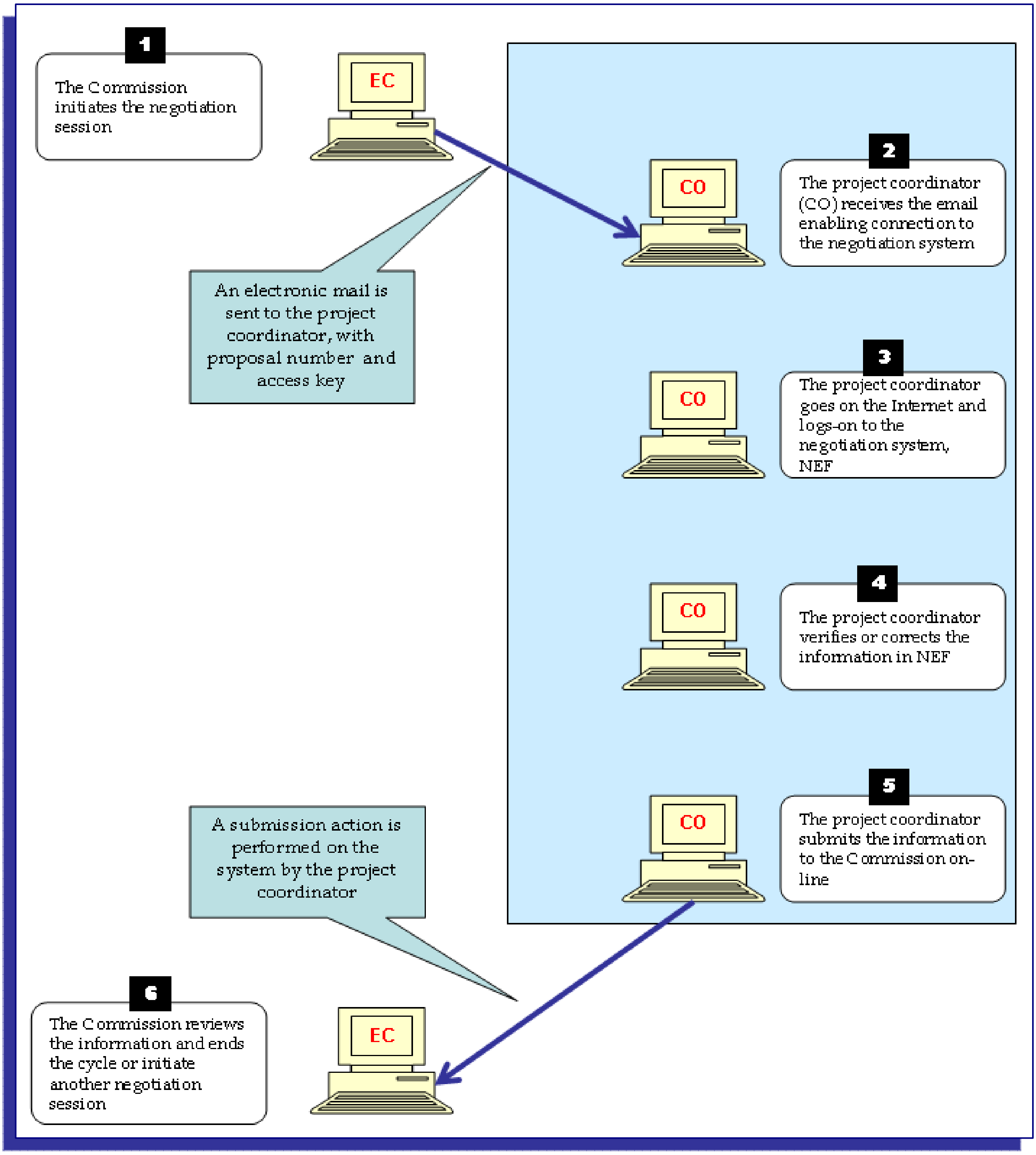
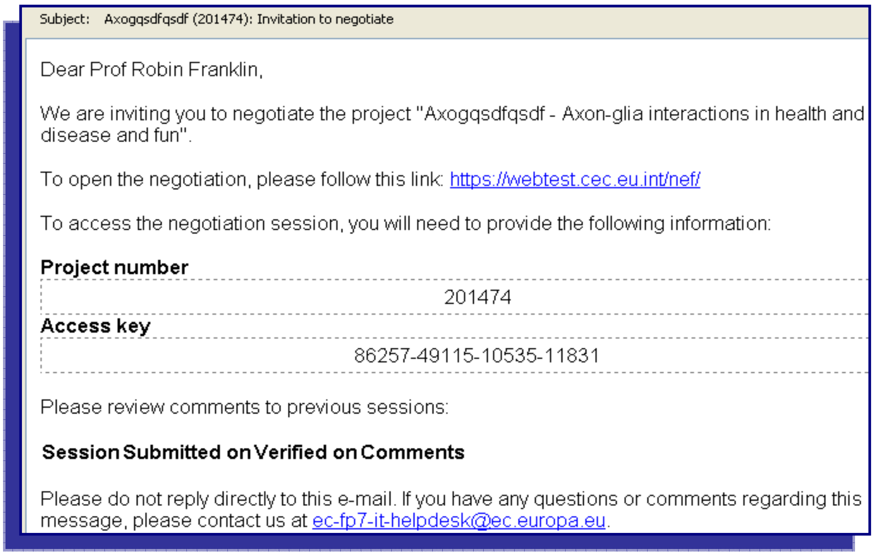

1
The Commission initiates the negotiation session
EC
An electronic mail is sent to the project coordinator, with proposal number and access key
2
CO
The project coordinator (CO) receives the email enabling connection to the negotiation system
3
CO
The project coordinator goes on the Internet and logs-on to the negotiation system, NEF
4
CO
The project coordinator verifies or corrects the information in NEF
5
CO
The project coordinator submits the information to the Commission on-line
A submission action is performed on the system by the project coordinator
6
The Commission reviews the information and ends the cycle or initiate another negotiation session
EC

Figure 1

How to use NEF?

Invitation to participate to a negotiation session

When a negotiation session is created by the EC project officer or EC administrative officer, an invitation by e-mail is dispatched 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 officer. This invitation e-mail, entitled “Invitation to negotiate” (*see Figure 2*), contains a link to NEF, the proposal's identifying number and an access key, which will be used by the coordinator to open and update the proposal:


Subject: Axogqsdfqsdf (201474): Invitation to negotiate

Dear Prof Robin Franklin,

We are inviting you to negotiate the project "Axogqsdfqsdf - Axon-glia interactions in health and disease and fun".

To open the negotiation, please follow this link: https://webtest.cec.eu.int/nef/

To access the negotiation session, you will need to provide the following information:

Project number

201474

Access key

86257-49115-10535-11831

Please review comments to previous sessions:

Session Submitted on Verified on Comments

Please do not reply directly to this e-mail. If you have any questions or comments regarding this message, please contact us at ec-fp7-it-helpdesk@ec.europa.eu.

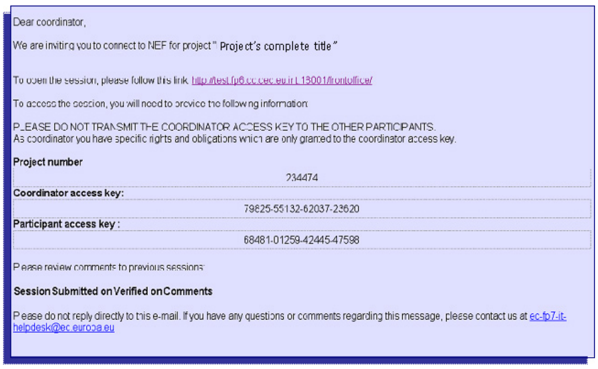
Figure 2

By Clicking on the link given in the e-mail, the “*Welcome to the negotiation*” screen will appear (*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*).

He has only to fill in the empty cells with the corresponding number of each missing position.
Each time he connects, he will get different cells to fill in with four different digits.
To avoid double usage of a same access key, for recent proposals the coordinator will receive also a Participant’s access key in the invitation email. This way the coordinator can give the participant access key to a participant who wishes it keeping his own key & making the double login possible (figure 5). **However, the participant will NOT be able to Submit any filled in & saved data to the E.C. Only the coordinator with his login can submit data to the E.C.**


Dear coordinator,

We are inviting you to connect to NEF for project " Project’s complete title "

To open the session, please follow this link: http://test.fp6.cc.cec.eu.int:13001/frontoffice/

To access the session, you will need to provide the following information:

PLEASE DO NOT TRANSMIT THE COORDINATOR ACCESS KEY TO THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS.
As coordinator you have specific rights and obligations which are only granted to the coordinator access key.

Project number

234474

Coordinator access key:

79825-55132-62037-23620

Participant access key :

68481-01259-42445-47598

Please review comments to previous sessions:

Session Submitted on Verified on Comments

Please do not reply directly to this e-mail. If you have any questions or comments regarding this message, please contact us at ec-fp7-it-helpdesk@ec.europa.eu

figure 2 bis

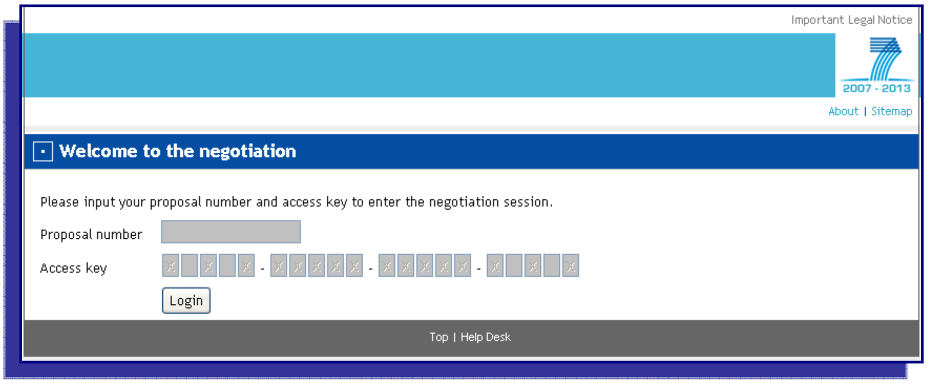


Figure 3

See the following example:

Project number 201474 and Access key 86257-49115-10535-11831

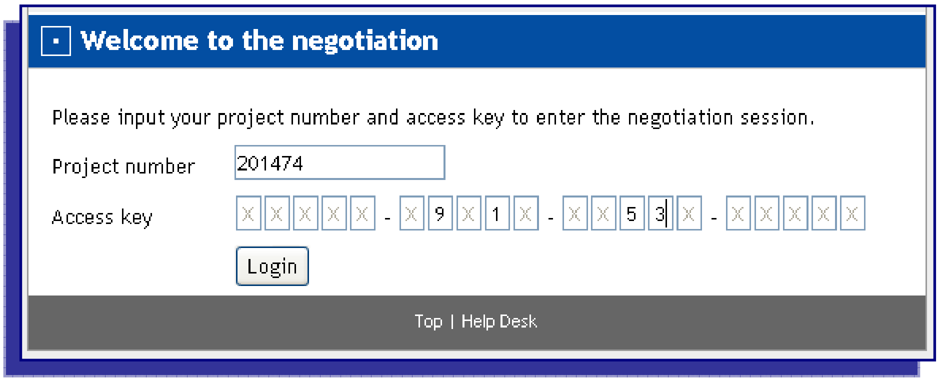


Figure 4

By pressing the “Login” button, the coordinator enters the negotiation session.
The session being opened, only the coordinator is allowed to add/verify/change the data & then close this negotiation session. When logging in, NEF opens on the main Project screen (*see Figure 5*).

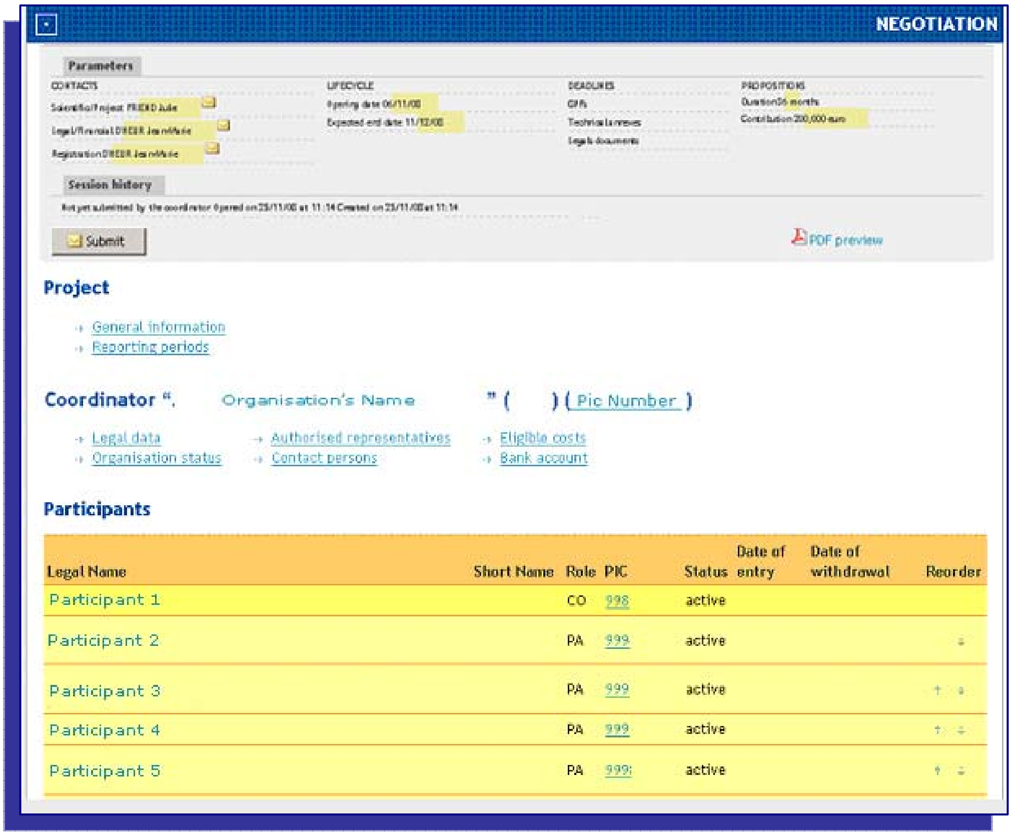


Figure 5

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.

<u>Field explanations</u>

A blue question mark at the right side of a field contains an explanation regarding this field. The explanation appears when placing the cursor on the question mark (see Figure 6):

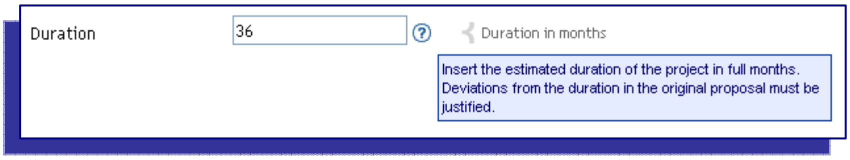


Figure 6

<u>Calendar</u>

Some dates have to be inserted in NEF.

For this purpose, a small calendar icon appears on the screen (see Figure 7):

Figure 7

Clicking on it allows selection of the appropriate date (see Figure 8):

Figure 8

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

<u>Error messages</u>

Data consistency is checked. Any incoherent data is marked with a red exclamation mark and refused at saving (*see Figure 9*):

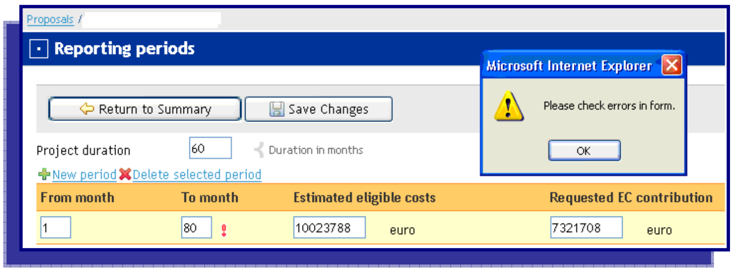


Figure 9

Mandatory fields

Mandatory fields are marked up in red or with an exclamation mark besides. (*see Figure 10*):

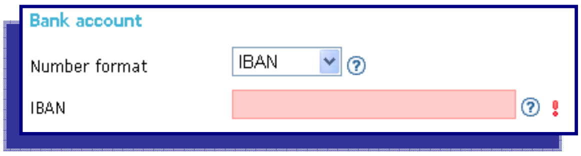


Figure 10

Saving

Changes are saved by clicking on the “Save Changes” button on the top of the screen (*see Figure 11*):

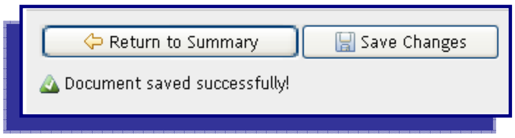


Figure 11

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 on “Save” means that the modified data hasn't been saved and will therefore 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 12) which brings him/her to the Grant Agreement Preparation Forms (GPF).

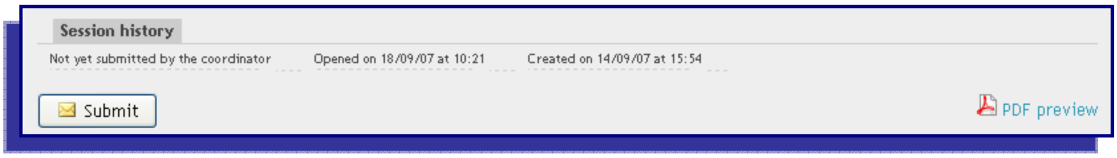


Figure 12

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 13):

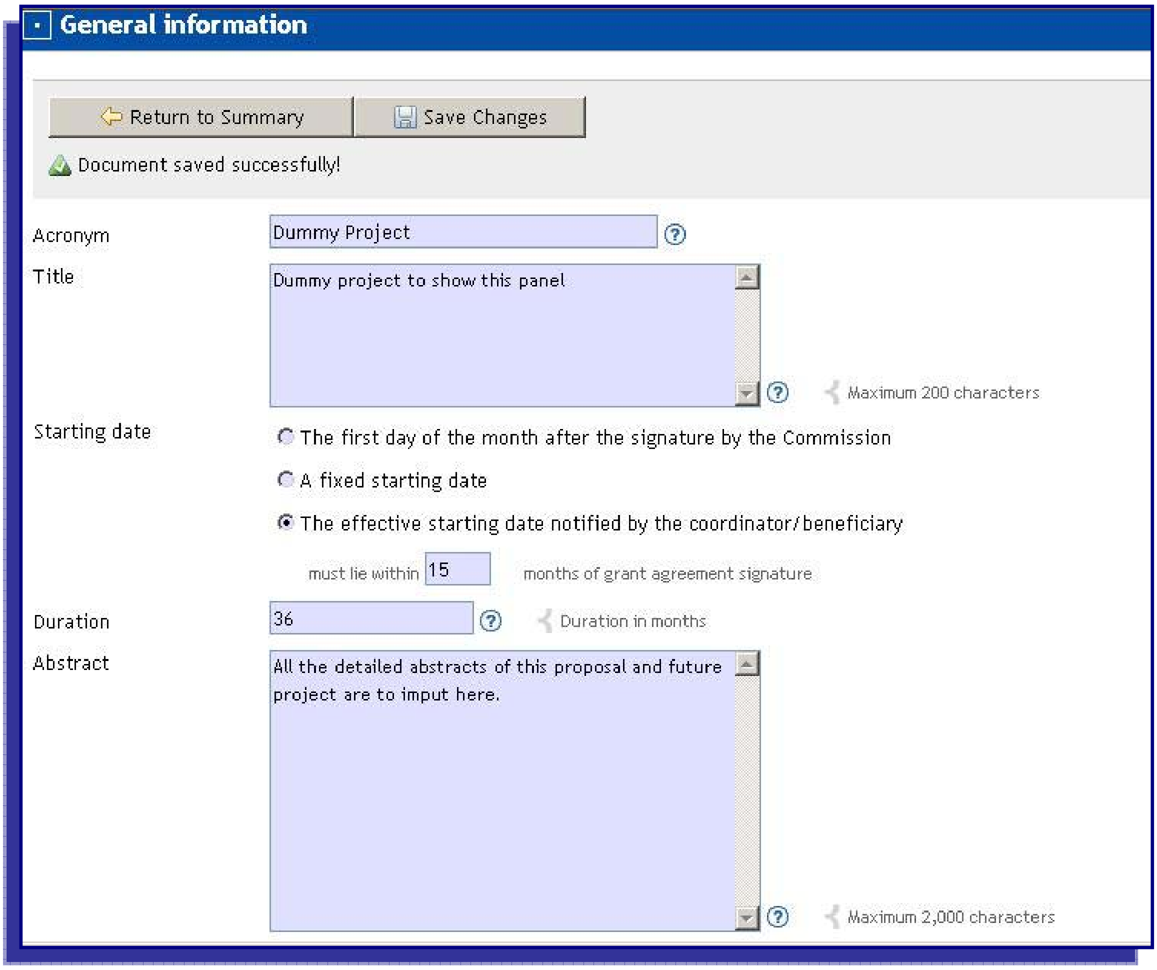


Figure 13

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 14):

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

Figure 14

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 15):

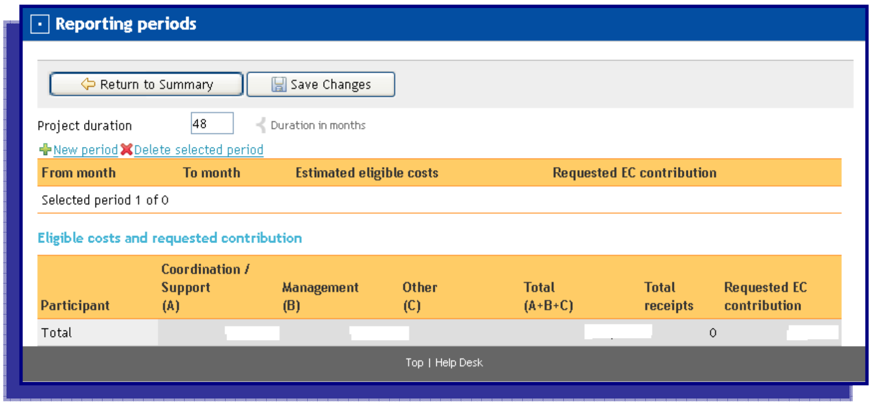


Figure 15

3. Change the project duration if necessary by filling in the appropriate field (see Figure 16):

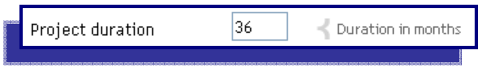


Figure 16

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 17):

Figure 17

   Please see also the Negotiation Guidance Notes:
   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 complete the coordinator's data?

1. Follow one of the links under the heading “Coordinator” on the Project screen (see Figure 18):

Figure 18

2. Each of these links leads to a further detailed information screen with information about the coordinator from the Commission participant database PDM and from the proposal stage;
3. In each of the subsidiary screens, fill in, verify or correct the field(s) when necessary. Inform your EC officer as soon as possible if there are any changes to the preset legal or organisation status information. Where there are form fields for two authorised representatives, you may, if you wish, give two names instead of one. The signature of at least one of the two persons is compulsory.
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 EC officer.

   Availability of PIC (Participant Identity Code)

   The PIC is available when the organisation has already registered for FP7 through URF. (Figure 19)

   The status of a participant is displayed in the NEF interface (*Legal Data field Status of validation*) as follow:

   - **UNKNOWN -** this is the normal status of an entity when a PIC is not present. It means either that this participant has not registered yet in the PDM-URF website (thus not having obtained a temporary PIC) or that a PIC has not been introduced in the NEF interface yet
   - **DRAFT** - The temporary PIC has been created via the registration in the PDM-URF website and it has been introduced in NEF. The validation of the participant by the CVT team (namely the check of the documents submitted) is ongoing. Obtaining a PIC when registering in the PDM-URF website does not mean that an entity is validated in fact.
   - **VALIDATED** - the Participant has been validated by the URF team. Usually the temporary PIC remains the same. If the entity was already valid before the opening of the negotiation, once the PIC is introduced the status of the entity passes straight from Unknown to Validated
   - **SUSPENDED** - NEF interface displays 'SUSPENDED' and sends the following to the Project Officer: *"Attention, this legal entity has been suspended, please contact CVT (Central validation team) for more information at RTD-URF-VALIDATION@EC.EUROPA.EU"* This option is used when an already validated entity ceases to exist, goes bankrupt or it was not legally existing after all. As the CVT team cannot delete it from the registry, it is put in a suspended status.

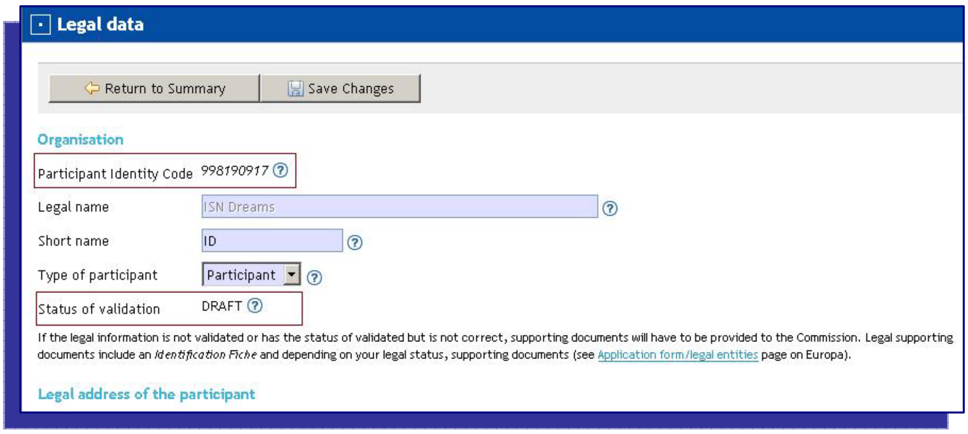


Figure 19

All organisation's data is in read-only, whether there is a PIC or not. All this information may be changed via the Unique Registration Facility (URF) only. The LEAR is the only authorized person to request changes through URF to the Central Validation Team.

If there is an obvious error in the choice of a PIC (i.e. the organisation displayed in NEF is not the actual partner), the coordinator should contact the responsible EC officer.

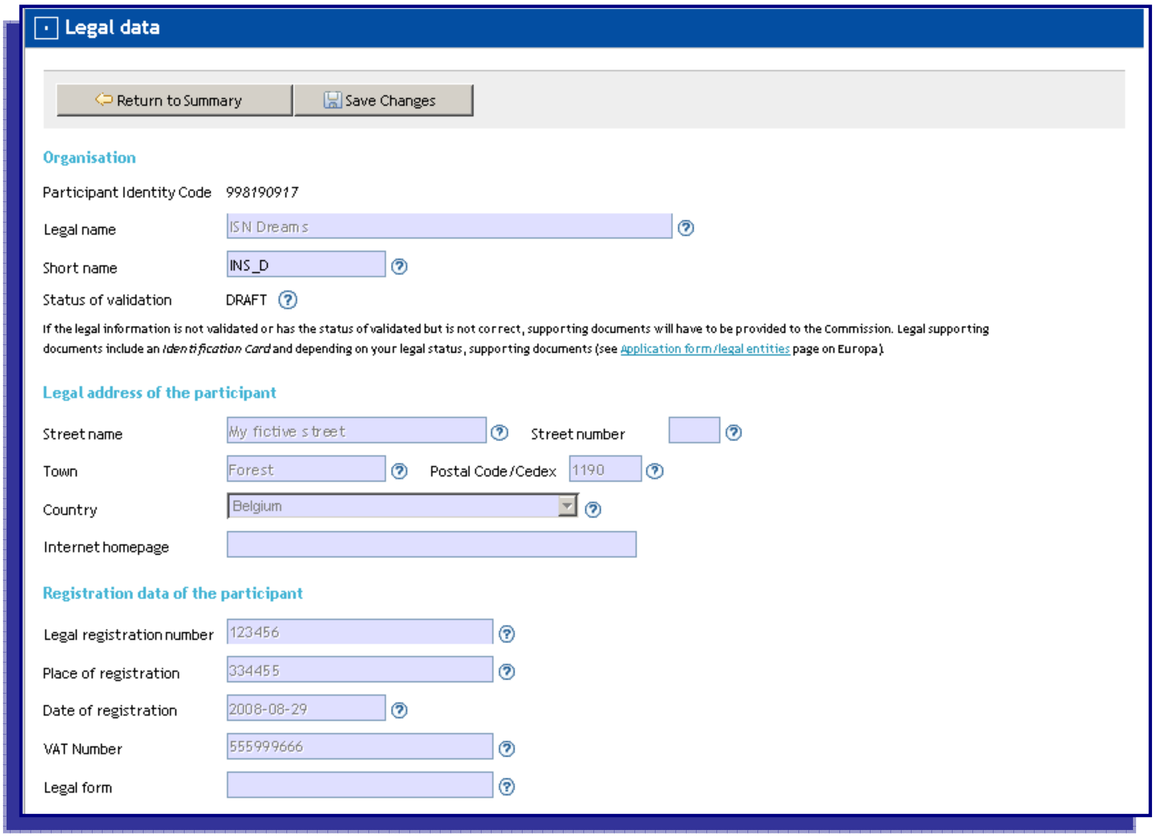


Figure 20

5. Save changes done to the organisation's acronym if there are any changes and return to the Project screen by clicking on the proposal's number on top of the page.

How to add, verify, 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 . 

Adding a new participant requires a Participant Identification Code (PIC). PICs of already registered entities can be retrieved in the URF search function: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/urf. If the new participant to be added to the Consortium does not yet have a PIC, the participant should self-register at the URF. By doing this, they will immediately receive a provisional PIC that can be used in NEF.

Not only beneficiaries themselves but also third parties covered by Special Clause 10 have to be identified in NEF with a PIC. Third parties are added as new participants and explicitly identified as third parties belonging to a certain participant by selecting the respective options on the "Add a new participant" screen (Figure 21):

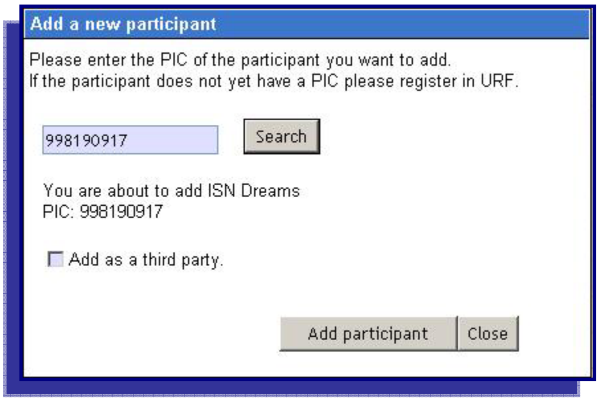


Figure 21

More details about the Participants are available by clicking on the PIC link (Figure 22):

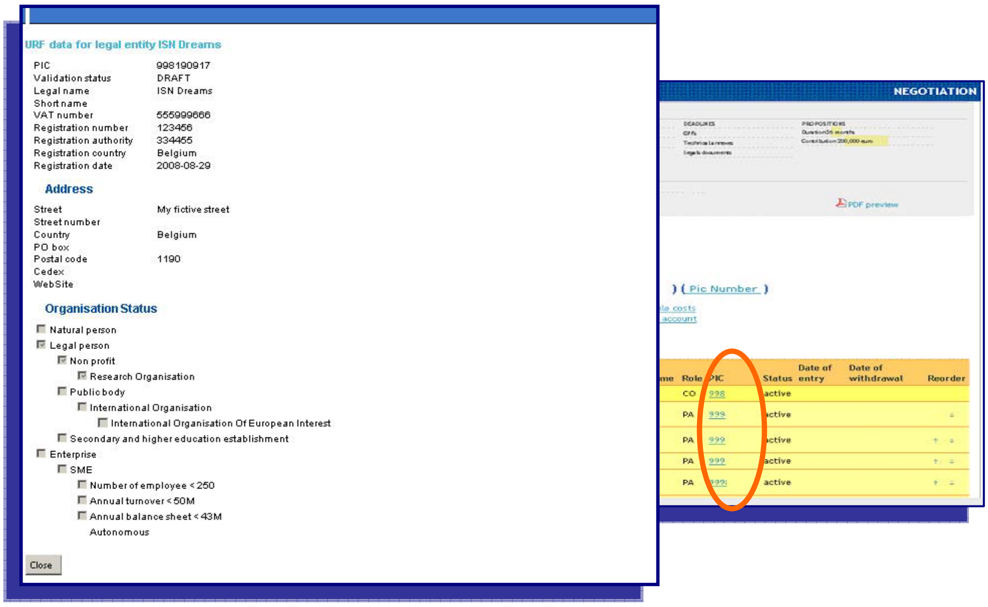
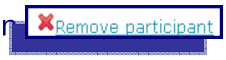


Figure 22

1. On the individual participant screen, you can either remove a participant by clicking on  or follow one of the links on the participant screen (*see Figure 23*):

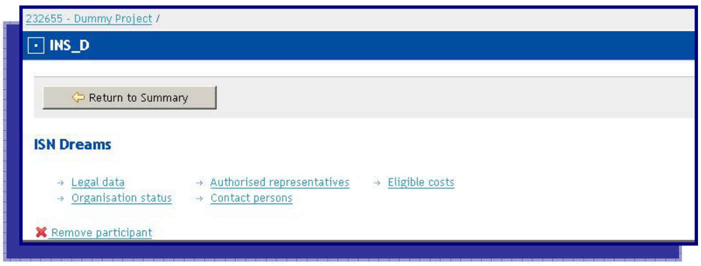


Figure 23

2. Save the changes and return to the summary.

How to end the negotiation session?

When you wish to make the data available for the Commission, close the negotiation session by clicking on “Submit” on the Project screen (see Figure 24):

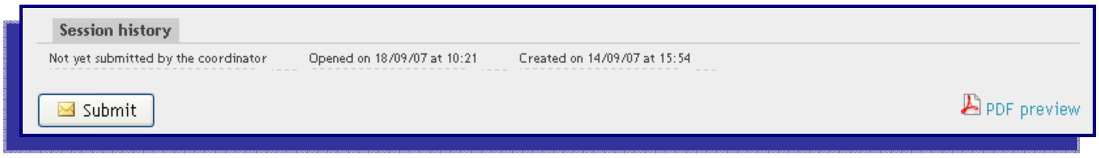


Figure 24

NEF asks you to confirm the end of the session (see Figure 25):

Figure 25

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 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 officer opens a new negotiation session, for which you receive a new invitation e-mail with a new access key. When you wish to do so, leave NEF by clicking on the "Logout" link right above on the proposal's screen (see figure 26). This action will bring you back on the "Welcome to the negotiation" screen (see figure 3).

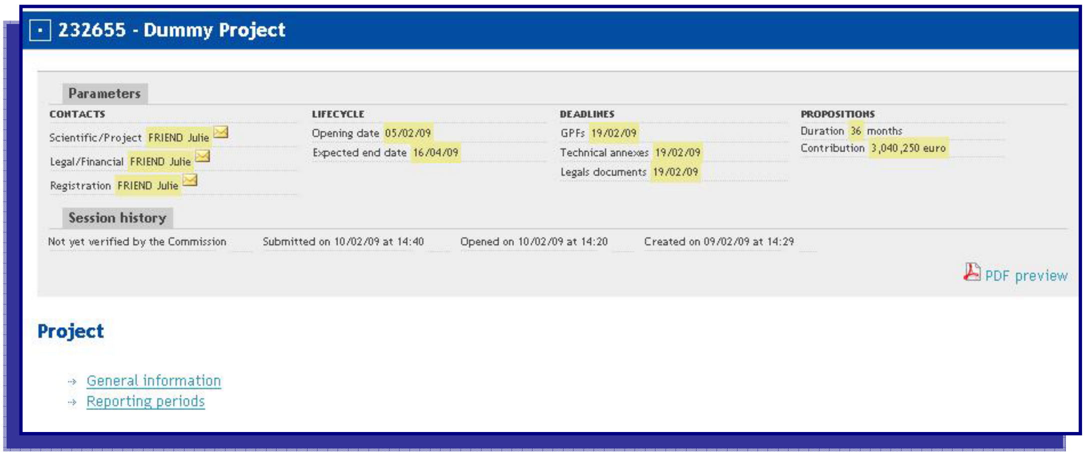


Figure 26

How to finalise the GPFs?

When the definitive version of the GPFs is agreed between the Consortium and the Commission, the EC officer closes the entire negotiation in NEF. The EC Officer will then save and send the final GPFs in a PDF file to the coordinator for printing and signature.

Which forms have to be signed manually?

Three forms out of the Grant Agreement Preparation Forms have to be signed with original signatures:

- form A2.5, “Our commitment”, has to be signed by the authorised representative(s) of the coordinator and all the participants;
- form A2.6, “Data protection & Coordination Role”, has to be signed by the coordinator’s authorised representative(s);
- form A4, “Bank account”, must be completed by the account holder (with date and signature) and, unless accompanied by a copy of a bank statement, also by the bank (with bank stamp and signature of the bank representative).

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 signed hard copies of the GPF and 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.
FP7	7^{th} Framework Programme of Research and Technological Development of the European Commission
Coordinator	The participants' coordinator in a consortium
EC Officer	European Commission's Project/Scientific Officer or Administrative Officer representing the European Commission during the negotiations.
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 proposal are agreed between the participants and the Commission
Negotiation session	A period during which the coordinators are allowed to provide changes on their proposals
PIC (Participant Identity Code)	Participant Identity Code (The unique ID of an organisation) Unique Identifier for an organisation – obtained through URF registration & used in each step of the process to indentify an organisation. The Temporary PIC received directly after URF registration and Validated PIC (CVT has validated the data & legal documents of the organisation) are the exact same number: 9 digits starting with 99…and will remain the same during the entire existence of its organisation.
URF	Unique Registration Facility
CVT	Central Validation Team – Validates the legal data of an organisation that has registered through URF and has communicated legal documents.
PDM	Participant Data Management – internal Module where all validated information of an organisation is collected. These data are synchronized each night in NEF.
LEAR	Legal Entity Appointed Representative (The representative of the legal entity in URF) – This person is chosen by the organisation itself & is Highly recommended to ease the communication with the E.C. & avoid double registrations. Only the LEAR may do a Change request (of his organisation's data) through URF and submit legal documents through URF.
Status of validation	Indication that data provided in a form have been validated by the Commission
GPF	Grant Agreement Preparation Form (Contract negotiation .pdf file)
Reporting periods	Contractual divisions of a project duration, after which a report has to be provided by the coordinator
IBAN	International Bank Account Number; used by banks in European countries for international funds transfers
ICPC	International Co-operation Partner Countries
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprise within the meaning of Recommendation 2003/361/EC