

## Innovation Coupon worth €10.000 to €30.000 – Terms of Reference

### 1. Characteristics of the innovation coupon

The project Bio Base NWE is funded under the InterregIVB NWE framework and has the objective to support the development of the bio-based economy in North West Europe ([www.biobasenwe.org](http://www.biobasenwe.org)). Within Bio Base NWE, innovation coupons are offered to SME's. These coupons provide access to the facilities and expertise of Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant ([www.bbeu.org](http://www.bbeu.org)) to assess the feasibility of taking an idea or a technology to industrial production (cost-assessment, concrete steps and possible barriers). The support can be compared to 'seed funding' as it is intended for assessing the feasibility of an innovative bio-based idea.

The main characteristics of the innovation coupon are

- The coupon is used to assess the feasibility of a bio-based idea. 'Bio-based' is defined as
  - the raw material is of biological origin or,
  - industrial biotechnology (fermentation or biocatalysis) is used in the process
- All small and medium enterprises (SME's) from North West Europe can apply
- There is no preference for certain domains or application fields, however the process should be bio-based (see definition above)
- The coupon corresponds to a technical feasibility study and can comprise a desktop study, lab work and/or pilot tests performed at Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant
- The coupon is awarded to projects with a well-defined innovation aim and a convincing business opportunity
- Applications can be submitted daily from 1/4/2013 until 31/06/2015
- Applications are evaluated on a monthly basis: They need to be submitted before the last Friday of the month to be evaluated in the next month
- Applications are evaluated by the management board of the Bio Base NWE project
- The coupon amount can vary between €10.000 and €30.000, depending on the process: A coupon of €10.000 typically is about testing the feasibility of an idea and the work associated takes about 1 to 2 days. A coupon of €30.000 would typically correspond to a pilot test, and takes about 1 week. These are averages, it depends on the type of equipment to be used and the complexity of the process.

### 2. Areas for application:

There is no preference for certain domains or application fields, as long as the process is bio-based. Bio-based is defined as (i) either the raw material is of biological origin, or (ii) industrial biotechnology (fermentation or biocatalysis) is used in the process

### 3. Procedure for call and selection

- The call is continuously open from 1/4/2013 until 31/06/2015
- The SME is strongly advised to discuss the application with their regional bio-innovation agent prior to its submission. The bio-innovation agent will assist the SME during the application process, and formally present the application to the Bio Base NWE management board for approval.
- Upon request of the assisting bio-innovation agent, the SME is invited to discuss their coupon application with Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant. This discussion will define if Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant is equipped to do the feasibility, what is the best strategy to assess the feasibility and what tests can be done for the value of a coupon. A coupon of €10.000 typically is about testing the feasibility of an idea and the work associated takes about 1 to 2 days. A coupon of €30.000 would typically correspond to a pilot test, and takes about 1 week. These are averages, it depends on the type of equipment to be used and the complexity of the process. Upon request of the SME, A Confidential Disclosure Agreement (CDA) is signed by Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant, the SME, and the bio-innovation agent (if the bio-innovation agent is present during these discussions) to protect the confidential nature of information exchange during these discussions.
- The SME drafts the coupon application, based on the discussions with Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant and the bio-innovation agent, according to the outline provided in the bio-innovation coupon guidelines, and sends it to its bio-innovation agent. The coupon application is submitted when the bio-innovation agent that assists the SME sends it to the Bio Base NWE project partners.
- Once a month, the Bio Base NWE partners meet to discuss the coupon applications. All Bio Base NWE partners are bound by confidentiality regarding data provided by companies. The assisting bio-innovation agent presents the coupon application to all partners of the Bio Base NWE project, who evaluates each coupon application based on the selection criteria mentioned below. Each partner has 1 vote. For a coupon to be granted, 5/8 partners need to be in favour. Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant has the right to refuse the project on certain grounds (e.g. due to safety concerns). The reason for refusal will be commented in the feedback towards the SME.
- After the meeting, the assisting bio-innovation agent informs the SME about the outcome. When the coupon is not granted, the SME receives feedback about why the coupon was withheld. When the coupon is granted, the SME will receive two documents:
  - an invoice for the amount of €0 from Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant that describes the work that will be done for the value of the coupon. This description fits the description of work in the coupon application form as close as possible
  - An SME declaration form to be signed by the SME to declare that the company is an SME and is compliant with the de minimis regulation
- The SME delivers the signed SME declaration to Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant and contacts Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant to schedule the work to be done for the assessment. Since all assessments need to be finalised by 31/12/2015, the SME should allow sufficient time for project delivery, agreed in advance with the Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant.
- After the tests are done, the SME receives a report with the results

#### **4. Selection criteria**

Each application is evaluated on the following criteria. All criteria have the same weight in the decision.

- the business opportunity of the idea
- the technical feasibility of the idea
- the innovativeness of the concept
- sound management of the recipient SME

Applications are judged on aforementioned criteria primarily. In case the remaining funds become limited (towards the end of the selection scheme), the representation of the different NWE countries will be used as an additional criterion to select among proposals of equal quality.

#### **5. Feedback obligations**

For the Bio Base NWE project to achieve meaningful results and collect evidence for capitalisation, feedback from each supported company will be collected. The feedback will be requested by email, upon sending the report about the feasibility test. The following feedback will be asked for.

- Did the feasibility study resolve the issue that you described in the coupon application
- Did the feasibility study enhance the innovation trajectory of your company.
  - No: Why not
  - Yes: How did it enhance the innovation trajectory
- Can you give an indication about how you are going to use these results. Please describe the following aspects:
  - A short description of your trajectory to valorising the results of the feasibility study
  - How will the feasibility study results be used in commercialisation process
  - What barriers do you still need to overcome before commercialisation of process/product
  - What time-frame do you envision for commercialisation of process/product

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