THEMATIC NETWORKS 2027 CALL

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Introduction

This document collects answers to frequent questions that may arise about the IBEC Intramural Thematic Networks (TN) 2027 call. It covers the events and travel policies applicable to TN activities, as well as questions about eligible expenses for collaborative projects and general administrative questions.

All rules are aligned with the Severo Ochoa programme regulations.

If your question is not answered here or you still have doubts, please contact StrategicInitiatives@ibecbarcelona.eu.

Events Policy – Catering

Q1. Is there an event and travel policy for the Thematic Networks?

Yes. You can find the policy in the call website (https://ibecbarcelona.eu/research/ibec-intramural-thematic-networks/second-call/).

Q2. What are the catering cost limits, and where do they come from?

The limits were set by the Severo Ochoa programme following IBEC's request for guidance. They apply to all TN activities:

- Coffee break only: up to €6.00 per person (VAT included), for meetings with more than 2.5 hours of content.
- Coffee break + catering (lunch/dinner): up to €6.00 (coffee break) + €18.70 (catering) per person (VAT included), for meetings with more than 5 hours of content.

Content hours are counted excluding breaks, registration time, and similar non-content slots.

Q3. The cheapest PCB coffee break costs over €6/person. What should we do?

PCB catering services currently exceed the allowed limits. You should look for alternative options. Some caterers that have worked for the previous networks include Pa Natural, Color Café Llull, Sanaladas & Go, Ben bo i fet.

Q4. If we use the Baobab room, can we request the free coffee machine service?

Yes. If you use the Baobab room, a free coffee machine service is available regardless of contracted catering and meeting duration (including biscuits).

This service:

- Must be requested from the Communications department at least 15 days before the workshop.
- Cannot be requested for external rooms.

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- Requires the organisers of the workshop to set up and dismantle the coffee machine area themselves.
- Coffee and biscuits are limited to the coffee break time and to the number of attendees (like in IBEC seminars).

Q5. Are meals with external speakers eligible as a TN expense?

Only under specific conditions. IBEC accepts a meal for a maximum of 2 TN representatives together with the external speaker(s) (not IBEC speakers), provided:

- The meal is not covered by the catering service already contracted for the workshop.
- The meal is part of the scientific agenda of the workshop.
- The meal cost does not exceed €30 per person.

IBEC will not reimburse expenses it deems disproportionate or ineligible (e.g. alcohol).

Q6. Is a thematic network representatives meal eligible?

No. Meals among network representatives (even working meals), without an external speaker, are not an eligible expense under the TN programme.

Events Policy – Room Booking

Q7. Which rooms can TN workshops use?

Workshops can be held in the Baobab room (IBEC's internal space, available free of charge) or in external rooms (e.g. PCB facilities, with extra cost). The choice of room affects what additional services are available. Note that organizers are responsible for setting up and clearing the Baobab room and the coffee machine area.

Q8. What are the current PCB room rental prices?

The 2026 PCB room rental price list is available upon request to Strategic Initiatives.

Q9. Can we use the IBEC free coffee machine service in external rooms?

No. The free coffee machine service is only available in the Baobab room. It cannot be requested for external rooms.

Travel Policy

Q10. What class of travel is allowed?

Flights and trains: standard (economy/tourist) class at reduced fares only. Outbound and return must be on the day before and the day after the event, respectively. It is not possible to extend the stay for personal reasons.

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Q11. What type of accommodation is covered?

Category: standard or maximum 3/4-star hotel. Maximum price: €180 per night. Length of stay: from the night before to the night after the workshop or retreat.

Q12. Are taxis or private transfers from/to the airport covered?

Public transport (metro, train, bus) is the preferred and first option for journeys to/from airports, train stations, or retreat venues. IBEC recommends using public transport wherever available.

Q13. What supporting documents are required to justify travel expenses?

The Finance department will not process any reimbursement until the following are submitted:

- Final programme of the workshop or retreat.
- List of participants including name, surname, institution, and signature.

Collaborative Project expenses

Q14. Can a TN hire new personnel under its collaborative project budget?

Yes, but only through a new contract. It is not possible to amend or top-up an existing employment contract to cover TN activities, unless the person was already justified under the previous Severo Ochoa programme (December 2019 – March 2024).

Q15. What counts as "consumables" in the collaborative project budget?

Consumables are materials needed to carry out the project activities, such as chemicals, reagents, lab supplies, or any other items consumed in the execution of the work.

Q16. What counts as "scientific services"?

Scientific services refer to external analysis, use of core facilities, or specialised technical services required for the project — for example, using PCB's scientific services or outsourcing specific analyses to an external provider.

Q17. Can TN collaborative projects purchase scientific equipment?

No. The purchase of equipment is not an eligible expense under the TN programme, even if the equipment would be used exclusively for the collaborative project. Only renting of equipment is an eligible expense. This includes, for example, temporary access to automation machines or other specialised instruments needed for the project activities.

Q18. Can TN workshop activities involve the use of scientific equipment?

Yes, in terms of the activity format, networks are free to organise workshops around hands-on activities with equipment. However, the TN budget cannot be used to purchase equipment for this purpose. If access to specialised equipment is needed for a workshop, it should be arranged through the host lab or via a rental.

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Gender Balance

Q19. Does the 40% minimum representation of women apply per workshop or across the whole TN programme?

Gender balance (minimum 40% women speakers) should be achieved, where possible, at each individual workshop. However, IBEC will assess compliance at the TN level, looking at the total number of speakers across all workshops. A formal review will take place around the mid-point of the programme.

Q20. Does the 40% threshold apply to the number of speakers or the number of talks?

The target applies to the number of speakers (not talks). A speaker should only be invited once during the programme (two different networks should not invite the same speaker).

General and Administrative Questions

Q21. Is there a mandatory acknowledgement text for invoices and publicity?

Yes. It is mandatory to include the following reference in all publicity materials and invoices related to the network: "This thematic network has been financed by the project Severo Ochoa CEX2023-001282-S".

Q22. Can networks from the first TN call (2024) apply to this second call?

Yes. Networks from the first call are eligible to apply. They may present a new proposal or a continuation of the previous network. However, re-applications will not have priority over newly proposed networks.

Q23. Who can be a network representative?

Network representatives must be IBEC senior researchers or post-docs, with the approval of their PI. PIs, PhD students and visiting researchers are not eligible as representatives in this second call, although they may collaborate with the network.

Each senior researcher or post-doc can be representative in only one network. If a representative leaves IBEC while the network is active, a replacement from the same research group must be designated within one month.

Q24. What happens to unspent funds at the end of the network period?

Any funds that remain unspent at the end of the network period, or that are not required for approved activities, will be returned to the Severo Ochoa programme budget for reallocation according to institutional priorities.

Funding must be used exclusively for activities that are necessary and duly justified for the achievement of the network's objectives.

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