



**DECISION OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES BOARD OF THE ECSEL  
JOINT UNDERTAKING**

**On the evaluation and selection procedures related to Calls for Proposals**

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES BOARD OF THE ECSEL JU,

Having regard to the Statutes annexed to Regulation (EU) No 561/2014 of 6 May 2014 establishing the 'ECSEL Joint Undertaking', and in particular Article 12 of the Annex thereof,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

*Article 1*

The evaluation and selection procedures related to Calls for Proposals as set out in the Annex to this Decision are hereby approved.

*Article 2*

This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels, on 3 July 2014,

For the Public Authorities Board

*(signed)*  
Ben Ruck  
Chairperson of the Public Authorities Board

## ANNEX

### **ECSEL Joint Undertaking Evaluation and selection procedures related to Calls for proposals**

This document describes the steps that shall be followed by the ECSEL JU related to the Calls for proposals, the procedures for evaluation and selection of Proposals, the allocation of public funding following such Calls, and the subsequent establishment of grant agreements for Projects<sup>1</sup>.

#### **I Preliminary Steps**

1. The Private Members Board shall submit to the Executive Director the draft research and innovation activities plan (RIAP) within the deadlines set by the Governing Board.
2. The public authorities (ECSEL Participating States and the European Commission) shall communicate the following information to the Executive Director in due time to be included in the draft work plan and taking into account the RIAP:
  - a. The estimates of expenditure for the next year(s) covered by the work plan;
  - b. The reimbursement rate of the eligible costs to be used to determine the financial contribution of the public authority (if relevant, by category of participant and/or by type of action);

Only for ECSEL Participating States:

- c. When they differ from the conditions laid down in the Rules for Participation in Horizon 2020 (Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013), the specific criteria regarding the eligibility of individual applicants to receive funding from the ECSEL Participating State – such criteria should lend themselves to verification;
    - d. When the ECSEL Participating State does not entrust the ECSEL JU with the implementation of its contribution to its participants, any specific rules regarding the eligibility of costs.
3. The Executive Director shall prepare and submit for adoption to the Governing Board by the end of the year prior to its implementation the draft work plan including the scope of the calls for proposals needed to implement the research and innovation activities plan as proposed by the Private Members Board and the corresponding expenditure estimates as proposed by the public authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> "Project" is a research and/or innovation action or coordination and support actions selected by the ECSEL JU following competitive calls for proposals

4. The work plan shall also determine the number of calls for proposals to be launched by the ECSEL JU in the referenced year(s).

## **II Launching the Calls for Proposals**

1. The Public Authorities Board (PAB) shall approve the launch of calls for proposals, in accordance with the work plan.
2. Before publishing the calls for proposals, the Executive Director shall receive from each public authority the confirmation or an update of the estimated expenditure for the calls.
3. The PAB shall instruct the Executive Director to publish the call(s). Each call shall specify the following:
  - Scope and objective(s) as per the work plan;
  - Rules for participation, including any specific national criteria and/or rules as per the work plan;
  - Estimated expenditures from each public authority;
  - The reimbursement rates as per work plan;
  - The evaluation criteria, the score ranges, the corresponding thresholds and weights (only the criterion on Impact may have a higher weight than the other criteria), and any overall threshold that a proposal should reach in order to be retained;
  - The planned date by which all applicants shall be informed of the outcome of the evaluation of their application and the indicative date for the signature of grant agreements;
  - Any other conditions for the establishment of the grant agreements.
4. The calls for proposals shall be published on the website of the ECSEL JU as well as on the EU Participant Portal for Horizon 2020.
5. The ECSEL JU shall make use of the toolset made available by the European Commission to handle the submission, evaluation and grant management fully electronically with the participants.

## **III Evaluation and Selection process and allocation of public funding**

### **III.1 General rules**

1. The Governing Board may appoint independent experts (observers) to monitor the process of evaluation of proposals with full access to documents and evaluation experts. These observers shall report to the ECSEL JU Governing Board on any aspect of the evaluation as required, in particular on the respect of the evaluation rules and procedures.
2. The evaluation process carried out with the assistance of independent experts shall respect the principles of excellence, transparency, fairness & impartiality, efficiency & speed, ethics & security and confidentiality.

3. The work plan may provide that prior to submitting a Full Project Proposal (FPP), applicants shall submit a Project Outline (PO) to the ECSEL JU. The Call for proposals shall state the deadlines for the submission of POs and FPPs and provide templates for the PO and FPP. When a PO phase is foreseen, it shall be eliminatory, i.e. only applicants of successfully evaluated POs shall be invited to submit a FPP.
4. For each Call and before the deadline of submission of PO (if applicable) or FPP, the ECSEL JU shall establish a pool of experts who may participate in the evaluation of proposals. These experts must be registered in the lists of experts at the disposal of the ECSEL JU.
5. The ECSEL JU may call upon the advice of the Private Members Board and the PAB for the identification of independent experts.
6. All experts involved in the evaluation of POs or FPPs shall sign a declaration of confidentiality and absence of conflict of interest as defined by the ECSEL JU.
7. The evaluation of POs and FPPs shall require individual expert evaluation, consolidation of individual evaluator views, and a panel review. Any of these tasks can be done remotely. The following shall apply for the assignment of experts to a proposal at any stage:
  - Rules for conflict of interest (see Appendix),
  - A balance of profiles (private/public), expertise, gender and nationalities at proposal and panel level,
  - A regular renewal of experts,
  - The possibility for applicants to send with the FPP a list of companies or experts that should not be assigned to the evaluation of the proposal.
8. The ECSEL JU Executive Director shall implement the above rules as well as any other rule indicated in this document for the assignment of experts without however compromising on the quality of the evaluation. The Executive Director shall justify any exceptions to these rules to the Governing Board.
9. Public funding to participants shall comply with the applicable state aid rules.

### **III.2 Project Outline (PO) evaluation**

1. The ECSEL JU office shall receive the POs within a fixed deadline established in the Call text.
2. The Executive Director shall check the POs against the admissibility and eligibility criteria and decide on the exclusion of non-compliant POs. The Executive Director shall inform the applicants accordingly as part of step III.2.6 below.
3. Eligible POs shall be made available to the experts, to appointed observers, and to the public authorities potentially involved in the funding of the proposal.
4. The Executive Director shall organise the evaluation of the POs on the basis of criteria defined in the Call for proposals.

5. The Executive Director shall present to the PAB the results of the evaluation of the POs. The ECSEL Participating States may provide comments on the potential eligibility of their applicants against any predetermined national criteria as published with the call.
6. The Executive Director shall consolidate the feedback for each PO and communicate it to the applicants at the latest 6 weeks before the closure of the call for FPPs. The PO feedback shall not commit either the ECSEL JU or any of ECSEL Participating States towards the applicants.

### **III.3 Full Project Proposal (FPP) evaluation**

1. The ECSEL JU office shall receive the FPPs within a fixed deadline established in the Call text. In case of a preceding PO phase, only FPPs of successfully evaluated POs shall be admissible.
2. The Executive Director shall check the FPPs against the admissibility and eligibility criteria and decide on the exclusion of non-compliant FPPs. The Executive Director shall inform the applicants accordingly as part of step III.4.6 below.
3. Eligible FPPs shall be made available to the experts, to appointed observers, and to the public authorities potentially involved in the funding of the proposal. Public authorities shall also receive a summary of those FPPs with which they are not financially concerned.
4. FPPs shall be evaluated and scored on the 0-5 scale according to the following Horizon 2020 criteria: (1) Excellence, (2) Impact, (3) Quality and efficiency of the implementation.
5. The Executive Director shall assign at least 4 experts to each FPP.
6. The JU Office shall organise the evaluation in 3 steps:
  - a) individual evaluations,
  - b) consensus discussion, and
  - c) panel review.
  - a) Individual evaluations - The FPPs shall be made available to the experts in electronic form for remote evaluation. Each expert shall give scores and accompanying comments to the three evaluation criteria. Their individual evaluation reports shall be communicated to the ECSEL JU office within the defined timeframe.
  - b) Consensus discussion - The consensus discussions shall be moderated by the programme officers. In these discussions, the results of the PO evaluation shall be made available to the experts. The latter shall synthesise and consolidate the individual scores, remarks and recommendations for each proposal. These recommendations shall address, if appropriate, minor adjustments to the total costs and the technical content of the proposal, and assess the operational capacity of the key partners

necessary for the success of the project if executed. If major concerns are expressed by the experts which would require substantial changes to the proposal, the proposal should be scored low in the relevant criterion/a on the value of the information provided in the proposal.

c) Panel review - The panel review shall be chaired by the Executive Director or by his/her appointed ECSEL JU staff member. In this session, the consensus reports shall be examined and compared, the consistency of the comments and the scores shall be checked and any cases where there are dissenting views shall be resolved and recorded in the consensus report. The panel session shall resolve eventual score ties according to predefined criteria. Where necessary, the panel shall propose a new set of scores or a revision of the comments.

7. The panel session shall result in two lists of proposals: "above threshold" and "below threshold". Proposals with a score below threshold in any criterion or in the total score shall be included in the "below threshold" list. The "above threshold" list is ordered according to the total score of the proposals.
8. The Executive Director shall submit to the PAB the "above threshold" list of proposals with the evaluation results.
9. The ECSEL Participating States shall verify the eligibility of their listed applicants against any predetermined national criteria for funding as published with the call. The Executive Director shall verify the eligibility of all the listed applicants for funding from the Union according to the ECSEL JU Financial Rules and the criteria published with the call. The results of those verifications by the national authorities and the Executive Director shall be available at least 20 days before the PAB meets to discuss the selection of proposals and the allocation of public funding. Applicants shall be informed on the results of those verifications as part of step III.4.6 below.
10. The public authorities shall be given the opportunity to express a score for each proposal above threshold with which they are financially concerned, to reflect the level of synergy of the proposed work with EU and national R&D&I policies. They may also abstain from scoring or declare themselves neutral. A neutral score supports the order of the "above threshold" list produced by the experts.  
The Executive Director shall consolidate the individual public authorities' scores per proposal based on a mechanism previously approved by the PAB and published with the call. The consolidation of the scores shall be based on the following principles, listed in order of importance:
  - a) The weight of the score of a public authority shall be determined in proportion to the estimated expenditure of that public authority for the call.
  - b) The score of an ECSEL Participating State shall impact more the projects demanding higher national contributions from that State.
  - c) The consolidated score of the public authorities may eventually move a proposal at most half way of the ranking established by the experts.
11. Based on the evaluation results and the scoring by the public authorities, the Executive Director shall elaborate a draft final ranking list and a draft allocation of public

funding as well as any other observations and suggestions before the PAB proceeds with the selection decision.

### **III.4 Selection decision and allocation of public funding**

1. On the basis of the draft final ranking list and the draft allocation of funding, the PAB shall decide on the final ranking of proposals.
2. Following this decision, the PAB shall decide on the selection of proposals to be retained for public funding, taking into account the budgets available and the verifications of the eligibility for funding of individual applicants made earlier. The PAB shall also decide which proposals are not viable in the light of the available public funding. The national expenditure estimated by an ECSEL Participating State for Calls shall normally be dedicated to cover a percentage of the eligible costs of the participants in Projects established in its territory. Nevertheless, an ECSEL Participating State may decide to fund organisations established in other EU Member States or Associated States of the Framework Programme. In this case, the "host" ECSEL Participating State shall bear the same rights, responsibilities and obligations with respect to this "foreign" participant as if such participant was based in the host ECSEL Participating State (as specified in the administrative arrangements concluded between the ECSEL JU and the host ECSEL Participating State e.g. in terms of grant agreements, audits and cost claims). ECSEL Participating States may also allocate national funding beyond their estimated expenditure for the Call.
3. In case that the total funding allocated by an ECSEL Participating State is less than the expenditure estimated for the Call, that State may allocate the difference to applicants in proposals that would not be viable without further funding. Alternatively, the non-allocated amounts may remain unused by the ECSEL Participating State in the specific call.
4. In case the total EU funding allocated is less than the expenditure foreseen for the Call, the non-allocated amount may be de-committed and reused in up to the next 3 years.
5. The PAB may decide to create a reserve list of proposals in case funding would become available (e.g. following failure to conclude a grant agreement in a reasonable time after the PAB decision). Such a list shall be made of the proposals that are not viable for reasons of budget availability following the decisions above. It shall be ordered according to the final ranking as decided under step III.4.1 above).
6. The Executive Director shall communicate the results of the evaluation and selection to the applicants (scores, comments and, for selected proposals, minor recommendations for changes during grant preparation) within a maximum period of 5 months from the final date for submission of FPPs.
7. For each proposal retained for funding, the PAB shall give the Executive Director a mandate to prepare the JU grant agreement. To that end, the ECSEL JU office shall prepare, under the responsibility of the Executive Director, the "Technical Annex"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The 'Technical Annex' is a technical document which presents, in as clear and concise a manner as possible, all activities, actions and tasks which the Project participants are committed to undertake in

within the limits of the PAB mandate<sup>3</sup> and taking into account any minor recommendations for changes resulting from the evaluation of the proposals.

- a) In case that the grant preparation has been successfully completed within the mandate, the Executive Director shall transmit the results to the PAB and the corresponding national funding authorities of the participants in the projects together with all relevant documentation in order to proceed, where relevant, with the establishment of the national grant agreements.
- b) In cases of substantial changes not foreseen by the PAB mandate (such as the unexpected withdrawal of a partner), the Executive Director shall transmit a Project change request to the PAB for approval. If the change request is approved, the decision of the PAB shall be transmitted by the Executive Director to the corresponding national funding authorities of the participants in the project together with all relevant documentation in order to proceed with the establishment of the national grant agreements, where appropriate.
- c) In case of failure of the grant preparation, or in case of change requests refused by the PAB, the consortium shall be considered as unsuccessful. The ECSEL JU shall inform the unsuccessful consortia and the corresponding national funding authorities.

## IV Grant agreements

1. After a successful preparation, the ECSEL JU shall transmit to the coordinators of the selected consortia the Joint Undertaking's grant agreement and the accession forms for electronic signature, in the terms and conditions specified by this grant agreement. The grant agreements shall be signed within a maximum period of 3 months from the date of informing applicants they have been successful (step III.4.6 above).
2. The decision of the PAB on the allocation of public funding to Projects shall be binding for the ECSEL Participating States without any further local evaluation or selection processes. In particular:
  - The ECSEL JU shall conclude grant agreements with consortia of selected projects for the contribution of the EU and of the ECSEL Participating States having decided to entrust the ECSEL JU with the implementation of their contribution.
  - Where applicable, the funding bodies responsible for fulfilling the obligations of ECSEL Participating States shall establish grant agreements with partners in selected projects, according to the local financial and legal requirements.

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order to fulfil the scientific and research objectives stipulated in the grant agreements. It is based upon the description of scientific/technological objectives and work plan outlined in the Project proposal and possibly modified according to specific recommendations made by the experts during evaluation and as further discussed during grant preparation. In addition to its legal significance, the 'technical annex' is meant to serve as benchmark for the grant beneficiaries, the Joint Undertaking, the national funding authorities and possibly experts to effectively monitor and check the progress during the Project's lifetime.

<sup>3</sup> The mandate shall include if appropriate the results of verifications carried out by the public authorities (early warning, outstanding legal and/or financial obligations, etc.).



- The approved “technical annex” for each project as established by the ECSEL JU shall be used without change<sup>4</sup> for the JU Grant Agreement and, where applicable, for the grant agreements in ECSEL Participating States.
  - The administrative and financial conditions of the JU grant agreements shall be governed by the Rules for Participation in Horizon 2020, the ECSEL JU Financial Rules and the administrative arrangements between the ECSEL JU and the ECSEL Participating States, if appropriate.
3. Where relevant, the ECSEL Participating States shall make best efforts to synchronize and accelerate their procedures for concluding their own grant agreements.

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<sup>4</sup> Except for translations if necessary

## Appendix

### Rules for conflict of interest

Definition of the conflict of interest: For a given proposal, a conflict of interest exists if an expert:

- (a) was involved in the preparation of the proposal,
- (b) stands to benefit directly or indirectly if the proposal is accepted,
- (c) has a close family or personal relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity,
- (d) is a director, trustee or partner or is in any way involved in the management of an applicant legal entity,
- (e) is employed or contracted by one of the applicant legal entities or any named subcontractors,
- (f) is a member of an Advisory Group set up by the Commission to advise on the preparation of EU or Euratom Horizon 2020 work programmes, or work programmes in an area related to the call for proposals in question,
- (g) is a National Contact Point, or is directly working for the Enterprise Europe Network,
- (h) is a member of a Programme Committee.