



# **PRIMA Training and Mobility Award**

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## **National Rules for Participation – State Aid**

**Version: 1**  
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## 1. Introduction

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Funding Party: Malta Council for Science and Technology for and on behalf of the Foundation for Science and Technology,  
Villa Bighi, Kalkara, KKR 1320  
Malta

### 1.1 Scope and Focus

The [Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area \(PRIMA\)](#) is an initiative launched by 19 Euro-Mediterranean Countries, including 11 EU States (Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain) and 8 non-EU Countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey) to participate in a EU joint research and innovation programme funding Research and Innovation (R&I) projects in the fields of Water Management, Sustainable Farming Systems, and the Agri-Food Value Chain.

The PRIMA programme is implemented through three sections. Section 1 Calls for R&I projects are funded directly by the European Commission whilst Section 2 Calls for R&I projects are funded directly by PRIMA Participating States (PS). Section 3 initiatives include activities that are organised, managed, and funded by PS, including any bilateral Calls that the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) launches with any of the PRIMA Participating countries.

Participation in PRIMA-related Calls for funding requires strong and complementary consortia. Accordingly, in 2022, **MCST** is launching the **PRIMA Training and Mobility Award** to support opportunities for **Malta-based eligible undertakings** (as defined below) to form collaborative links with **at least one foreign** counterpart from any one of the PRIMA Participating States listed above. The aim of this Award is to build local capacities and establish networks that could lead to future collaborations to submit R&I project proposals under the PRIMA programme.

To receive this support, applicants shall be required to demonstrate that the scope of the proposed action is to develop effective cross-border collaborations, undertake research activities and/or training activities in the thematic areas of PRIMA, leading to the submission of a proposal to any PRIMA-related Call. To benefit from this Award, applicants should describe the nature of the joint activities intended to support their participation in the PRIMA programme, with a clear aim and outcome(s). Hence, applicants are to demonstrate how the proposed activities (i) relate to the PRIMA thematic areas, (ii) contribute towards the goals of the PRIMA [Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda](#) (SRIA), and (iii) have the potential to become self-sustaining or generate longer-term outcomes.

The activities that will be funded should promote internationalisation through at least one of the following:

- In-person short training and/or placements for local researchers in foreign entities for the purposes of fostering human capacity building and furthering R&I collaboration.
- The arrangement of strategic and targeted visits by local applicants to foreign entities in PRIMA Participating States in order to share best practices and/or participate in R&I activities of an exploratory and developmental nature.
- The organisation of knowledge-transfer and/or dissemination seminars or workshops in Malta, on specific PRIMA R&I thematic areas that would benefit from the participation of foreign experts.

### 1.2 National Contact Point

Correspondence should be directed to:

The Malta Council for Science & Technology  
Villa Bighi, Kalkara KKR 1320, Malta  
E-mail: [prima.mcst@gov.mt](mailto:prima.mcst@gov.mt)

### 1.3 Definitions

**Applicant** means anyone eligible to apply in terms of these Rules for Participation and who consequently applies for funding under this Award. The Applicant will be required to submit the application and must also compile and submit report(s)/deliverables to the Council. Also known as the **Principal Investigator** and/or **Project Contact Point**.

**Arm's length** means that the conditions of the transaction between the contracting parties do not differ from those which would be stipulated between independent enterprises and contain no element of collusion. Any transaction that results from an open, transparent, and non-discriminatory procedure is considered as meeting the arm's length principle.

**Council** refers to the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST).

**Eligible undertakings** are defined as undertakings planning to carry out Fundamental Research, Industrial Research or Experimental Development projects that are eligible to apply for assistance under this Award. In order to be eligible, applicants must additionally satisfy the following criteria. They must be either: a) a partnership constituted under the Companies Act, being a partnership *en nom collectif*, or *en commandite*; or b) a limited liability company; or c) be duly registered as a co-operative society under the Co-Operative Societies Act, d) professional body; e) NGOs; f) Non-profit making entities (including Foundations).

'Professional Body' may be an organisation, an association, a chamber, society, institute, or a group of professional persons not being enrolled or registered in terms of The Voluntary Organisations Act (Cap. 492 of the Laws of Malta) or not being otherwise recognised in terms of Law, and which is generally recognised and acknowledged by the professional persons it seeks to represent as their representative Body. For the purposes of this Definition, a professional person is one who has undergone a period of study at a university or a recognised institution of higher learning and has obtained the formal qualification entitling the person to practise the respective profession; and who provides a specialised service to the public, based primarily on a fiduciary relationship between herself/himself and the party to whom s/he provides such service on his own personal credibility and responsibility.

'NGO' means any Voluntary or Non-Governmental Organisation set up in accordance with The Voluntary Organisations Act (Cap. 492 of the Laws of Malta).

'Non-profit making' is an entity where (a) the statute of the entity contains an express exclusion of the purpose to make profits; and (b) there is express provision in the statute defining the purposes of the entity which do not include the promotion of private interests, other than a private interest which is a social purpose; and (c) no part of the income, capital or property is available directly or indirectly to any promoter, founder, member, administrator, donor or any other private interest. Provided that if a promoter, founder, member, administrator or donor is another enrolled non-profit making organisation, the limitation in paragraph (c) shall not apply provided the availability of such income, capital or property is subject to conditions which are consistent with the general purposes of the grantor entity: Provided further that an organisation shall continue to be deemed as non-profit making notwithstanding that: (i) it obtains a pecuniary gain from its activities when such gain is not received or credited to its members but is exclusively utilised for its established purposes; (ii) it buys or sells or otherwise deals in goods or services where such activities are exclusively related to its principal purposes; (iii) it is established for the general entertainment, pastime, education or other similar benefit only of its members; or (iv) it is established for the promotion of the social role, ethics, education and values of a trade or profession provided it does not promote the private interests of its members.

**End Date** means the date when the project/activity period, having commenced on the Start Date, expires. The **Project Period** is the time required to execute the project/activity as indicated in the Grant Agreement.

**Letter of support** is a document where the entity listed as foreign partner in the project/activity is showing their commitment in supporting the project/activity including (if applicable) the confirmation of additional funding.

**Operating base in Malta** means if the legal entity:

- a. owns, leases, or has been given the right of use by a third party, an adequate premise from where to conduct an eligible economic activity in the region of Malta.
- and
- b. employs at least one person that is based in Malta and is liable to pay income tax in Malta.

**Partner** is defined as a foreign partnering entity that would have signed a letter of support to be involved in a proposed joint activity/project as part of this Award.

**Research and Development** is defined as the systematic investigation, work or research carried out in any field of science or technology through experiment, theoretical work or analysis undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge, primarily directed towards a specific practical aim or objective, and includes:

- a) **Fundamental Research** means experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any direct commercial application or use in view.
- b) **Industrial Research** means the planned research or critical investigation aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes or services or for bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services. It comprises the creation of components parts of complex systems and may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines, when necessary for the industrial research and notably for generic technology validation.
- c) **Experimental Development** means acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technological, business and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes or services. This may also include, for example, activities aiming at the conceptual definition, planning and documentation of new products, processes or services. Experimental development may comprise prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, testing and validation of new or improved products, processes or services in environments representative of real-life operating conditions where the primary objective is to make further technical improvements on products, processes or services that are not substantially set. This may include the development of a commercially usable prototype or pilot which is necessarily the final commercial product, and which is too expensive to produce for it to be used only for demonstration and validation purposes. Experimental development does not include routine or periodic changes made to existing products, production lines, manufacturing processes, services and other operations in progress, even if those changes may represent improvements.

**Retention Money** is a percentage of the total Award that the Council disburses only upon successful completion of the proposed project/activities, following any necessary verifications and audits.

**Single Undertaking** includes all enterprises having at least one of the following relationships with each other:

- i. One enterprise has a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another enterprise.
- ii. One enterprise has the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another enterprise.
- iii. One enterprise has the right to exercise a dominant influence on another enterprise pursuant to a contract entered into with that enterprise or to a provision in its memorandum or articles of association.

- iv. One enterprise, which is a shareholder in or member of another enterprise, controls alone, pursuant to an agreement with other shareholders in or members of that enterprise, a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in that enterprise.

Enterprises having any of the relationships referred to in points (i) to (iv) above through one or more other enterprises shall be considered to be a single undertaking,

**Start Date** means the date which is stated in the Grant Agreement as the official start of the project/activity.

**Undertaking** covers any entity engaged in an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU, regardless of its legal status and the way in which it is financed.

## 2. Eligibility for Participation

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### 2.1 Applicant eligibility

The applicant must be an Eligible Undertaking with an Operating base in Malta (as defined in Section 1.2) that carries out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU. Eligibility for funding is subject to the terms and conditions laid out in this document.

Eligible applicants are to partner up with foreign entities established in PRIMA Participating States, and which have a proven track-record of excellence and experience in the R&I field. The foreign partner should be eligible for funding under the respective PRIMA PS funding organization's national rules. This will form the basis for cooperation.

Applications should be endorsed by the applying entity's legal representative.

Applicants who have other funded projects with the Council and are in default, and/or have gone beyond the timelines of the project, are not eligible to participate. Any application submitted by or including the participation of any legal person or legal entity having, in totality or in majority ownership, the same shareholders, partners or persons holding and / or exercising a controlling power in any other legal entity which will have been at any time prior to such application declared as non-compliant or defaulting on any other contract or agreement entered into with the Council, shall be automatically declared as inadmissible.

Funding under this Award is made available on the basis that the applicant has not benefited and will not benefit from any other grant or financial incentive of whatever nature, applied for and/or utilised for the same scope as that subject of the funding requested under this Award.

### 2.2 Exclusions

No support may be provided to undertakings engaged in activities specifically excluded under the applicable State Aid Regulation (*vide* Section 5).

## 3. Submission of Applications

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### 3.1 Application Process

Interested applicants are to submit their Application Form electronically to [prima.mcst@gov.mt](mailto:prima.mcst@gov.mt) by the **27<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 (23:59 CEST)**. The application must be dated and signed by the applicant and the legal representative. The official Application Form is available on the Council's website. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Submissions should include the following documents:

- i. Application Form associated with this Award.
- ii. Letters of support from all partner institutions, confirming any matching or additional funding (if applicable).
- iii. Full Curriculum Vitae of Principal Investigator/s from local and partner institution/s.
- iv. Other supporting documents related to the project/activity e.g., agenda of event, proposed activities, training etc.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the timely and correct delivery of the application form to MCST. It should be noted that emails larger than 6MB will be automatically rejected by the mail system. The applicant may make use of cloud storage.

### **3.2 Budget**

The total budget allocated for this Award is €25,000. The submitted applications will be evaluated, ranked, and awarded accordingly until the budget is exhausted.

Applicants may request up to a maximum budget of €5,000.

## **4. Financing**

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Financing is based on real costs. Each applicant is invited to provide a breakdown of the anticipated costs to carry out the proposed project/activities as part of the application form. The Council reserves the right to negotiate any amount quoted by the applicant should it be considered as being overestimated.

Funding for a successful proposed submission will be based on a cash advance of 70% of the requested amount of the Award and will be regulated through a contractual agreement establishing the terms and conditions governing the financing of the project.

Funding under this Award is made available on the basis that an applicant does not benefit from any other grant or financial incentive in respect of the expenses related to the execution of the project.

The re-imbursment of the remaining 30% of the requested amount (i.e., the Retention Money) will take place upon successful completion of the proposed activities, subject to the following confirmations:

- i. Pre- / full proposal is submitted to any PRIMA-related Call for funding.
- ii. Pre- / full proposal has met the eligibility criteria of PRIMA-related Call for funding and of the National Rules associated with them.
- iii. Any verifications and/or audits are concluded.

### **4.1 Eligible Costs**

- Eligible travel costs include the most economical solutions for travel insurance, economy flights and public transport necessary for the execution of the proposed activity. The total amount for each flight should be estimated as costing no more than €1000 for EU countries and €2000 for non-EU countries. Eligible costs associated with travel are for a maximum of 2 trips, with a total duration of not more than 14 days. Eligible costs can be claimed by up to 2 people employed by or affiliated with the eligible undertaking per trip.

- Subsistence allowance (inclusive of accommodation) - when subsistence costs are calculated, the local entity's pre-approved subsistence allowances should be used.
- Organisation of meetings, workshops and seminars in Malta and hosted by local applicants (including catering or up to 2 hosted meals per day).
- Promotional material that is essential for the effectiveness and success of the activities/collaboration.
- Costs associated with organisation of visits and access to premises, facilities and/or research sites in Malta.
- Other expenses – Details of such costs shall need to be provided in the Application Form and must be approved beforehand by the Council. These should not fall under ineligible costs.

Master and PhD students, as well as any technical personnel and support staff, need to be accompanied by a Senior researcher or the Principal Investigator - PI to be eligible.

Award holders will be responsible for arranging all relevant activities including, but not limited to, travel plans, accommodation, logistics planning, insurance coverage for any participant travel, etc.

**No double funding** is permitted for the **same** activities carried out in this Award and/or in conjunction with other awards/schemes.

Furthermore, any supplementary or match-funding from the foreign partner is allowed and encouraged, as long as it does not finance the same activities that will be funded through this Award. Proposals including such supplementary or funding being matched by partner entities will be favourably viewed as this showcases a strong and balanced partnership.

### **Additional Provisions**

Eligible Costs are to conform to the following and are subject to the final audit scrutiny:

- Any expenses incurred during the course of the project must be consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Public entity partners are to follow Public Procurement Regulations in their entity.
- Commercial transactions between any applicants or consortium partners, or between any applicants or a consortium partner and a company with similar shareholding to a consortium partner, is not allowed. All transactions need to be carried out in line with the arm's length principle outlined in Section 1.3.

## **4.2 Ineligible Costs**

- i. **Consumables and Equipment cannot be funded under this Award.**
- ii. **Expenses related to loans, interests and recoverable value added tax.**
- iii. **Expenses that are not eligible under the *de minimis* Regulation.**
- iv. **Any other costs not listed as eligible costs.**

## 5. Applicable State Aid Regulation

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The PRIMA Training and Mobility Award will be implemented in line with the [Commission Regulation \(EU\) No. 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid \(the \*de minimis\* Regulation\) \(OJ L 352/1\)](#), as amended by [Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2020/972 of 2 July 2020, amending Regulation \(EU\) No 1407/2013 as regards its prolongation and amending Regulation \(EU\) No 651/2014 as regards its prolongation and relevant adjustments \(OJ L 215.3\)](#), hereinafter referred to as the *de minimis* Regulation.

**The total amount of *de minimis* aid granted to a single undertaking shall not exceed the amount of €200,000 over any period of three consecutive fiscal years. The total amount of *de minimis* aid granted to a single undertaking performing road freight transport for hire or reward shall not exceed €100,000 over any period of three fiscal years.** Applicants should ensure and declare that they are eligible for the requested grant under State Aid rules before applying. This period covers the fiscal year concerned as well as the previous two fiscal years. 'Fiscal year' means the fiscal year as used for tax purposes by the undertaking concerned.

The term 'single undertaking' shall have the meaning as established in Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1407/2013, as amended.

This maximum threshold would include all State aid granted under this aid Award and any other State aid measure granted under the *de minimis* rule including that received from any entity other than MCST. Any *de minimis* aid received in excess of the established threshold will have to be recovered, with interest, from the undertaking receiving the aid.

**Applicants will be required to submit a signed *de minimis* declaration form indicating any *de minimis* aid received during the previous two fiscal years and the current fiscal year.** This declaration form must be filled in and submitted together with the Application Form. For successful applications, an updated declaration form shall be provided at the time of the signing of the Grant Agreement, ensuring that the applicant remains eligible for funding under the State Aid regime.

Assistance approved under this aid scheme is NOT:

- i. Aid granted to undertakings active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, as covered by Council Regulation (EC) No. 104/2000.
- ii. Aid granted to undertakings active in the primary production of agricultural products.
- iii. Aid granted to undertakings active in the sector of processing and marketing of agricultural products, in the following cases:
  - a. Where the amount of the aid is fixed on the basis of the price or quantity of such products purchased from primary producers or put on the market by the undertakings concerned.
  - b. Where the aid is conditional on being partly or entirely passed on to primary producers.
- iv. Aid to export-related activities towards third countries or Member States, namely aid directly linked to the quantities exported, to the establishment and operation of a distribution network or to other current expenditure linked to the export activity.
- v. Aid contingent upon the use of domestic over imported goods.
- vi. Aid for the acquisition of road freight transport vehicles granted to undertakings performing road freight transport for hire or reward.

Where an undertaking is active in the sectors referred to in points (i), (ii) and (iii) above as well as in other sectors falling within the scope of the *de minimis* Regulation, the Council will ensure a separation of the activities or distinction of costs. Only those sectors eligible for assistance under the *de minimis* Regulation will be assisted. Activities in the sectors excluded from the scope of the *de minimis* Regulation will not benefit from assistance under this aid Award.

In terms of Article 5 of the *de minimis* Regulation, *de minimis* aid granted under this Award may be cumulated with *de minimis* aid granted in accordance with Commission Regulation (EU) No 360/2012 up to the ceiling laid down in that Regulation. It may be cumulated with *de minimis* aid granted in accordance with other *de minimis* regulations up to the relevant ceiling fixed in terms of the *de minimis* Regulation.

*De minimis* aid approved under this initiative shall not be cumulated with State aid in relation to the same eligible costs or with State aid for the same risk finance measure, if such cumulation would exceed the highest relevant aid intensity or aid amount fixed in the specific circumstances of each case by a block exemption regulation or a decision adopted by the European Commission.

*De minimis* aid, which is not granted for or attributable to specific eligible costs, may be cumulated with other State aid granted under a block exemption regulation or a decision adopted by the Commission.

## 6. Selection Process and Evaluation

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The applications received will be assessed by a selection panel set up by MCST against the following criteria:

### i. Quality of Project/Activity

- Proposals will be evaluated on the clarity and quality of the collaboration activities proposed with the foreign partner(s). Activities must either be, or be supportive of, high quality international R&I with the potential to yield mutually concrete beneficial results and demonstrate innovation and interdisciplinarity in the selected field of interest. The involvement of early career researchers (at Master or PhD level) in the implementation of the internationalisation activities will be considered an advantage, to acquaint them with such practices of capacity building, and establishing their international network.
- Proposed project/activity must be in line with the PRIMA SRIA, PRIMA Annual Work Plan and/or PRIMA-related Call Texts.

### ii. Strength of Partnership and Leadership

- Projects/activities must be led by recognised experts with a demonstrated track record in R&I and good leadership ability.
- Evidence of past collaborative work between the partnering entities (i.e., joint projects, publications, and any other relevant past achievements) would be a testament of the strength of the partnership.
- New partnerships between local and foreign entities in the interest of furthering R&I collaboration are highly encouraged with the aim of fostering closer ties between local and foreign entities established in the various PRIMA Participating States. A convincing case should be made for the benefits of the partnership(s), including the potential for long-term partnership.

### iii. Outcomes and Sustainability

- Proposed activities must have significant potential outcomes including the mandatory submission of a grant bid to Calls under the PRIMA programme. Other outcomes could also include joint publications, popular dissemination material and so on. Such outcomes will build longer term international relationships based on a genuine commitment by the partners to invest in a sustained successful partnership. Evidence of the potential to attract or generate external funding will be considered an asset.

Priority will be given to well-defined proposals, which demonstrate increased odds of success for securing funding, or which demonstrate a clear benefit to enhancing the international dimension of local research and innovation activity.

## 7. Post-selection Phase and Award Duration

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Upon successful completion of the evaluation stage, it may be necessary for MCST to negotiate the amount of the Award requested in the application form. MCST retains the right to provide Awards of a different sum if the amount in the 'breakdown of costs' should appear to have been overestimated. The Council reserves the right not to proceed with signing of the Grant Agreement if it results that doing so would be too high an exposure risk to the Council.

The deadline for completion of the activities funded through the award is **6 months from the starting date of the Grant Agreement**, although projects/activities may be completed at any point within this time frame. Any activities/deliverables related to the Award must take place between the Start and End Dates stipulated in the Grant Agreement.

Upon completion of the activities, the applicant is to submit a final report within 30 days according to a standard template provided by MCST. The final report will need to be accompanied by all relevant documentation, including receipts demonstrating how the Award was spent. The Council retains the right to audit the financial documentation and to request further proof of expenditure of the Award. Should there be a significant discrepancy between the sum of the award disbursed by MCST and the amount spent by the applicant (as substantiated through receipts or other financial documentation), MCST retains the right to retain the Retention Money and if applicable, request a reimbursement of the unspent funds. The Retention Money will only be disbursed to the successful Applicant once a final report is submitted, and all criteria for re-imburement (*vide* Section 4) have been satisfied.

Any requests for change of use of the award should be addressed in writing to [prima.mcst@gov.mt](mailto:prima.mcst@gov.mt) with the subject heading – "PRIMA Training and Mobility Award - Request for modification". Such requests need to be endorsed by MCST prior to being affected. Requests for extension of the Award need to be sent electronically by the Applicant at least 2 months before the deadline of the Award. The Council will review the request and a reply will be communicated within 2 weeks. No response should be understood as a rejection of the request. Only one request for extension is allowed for each Award, and the extension period should not exceed 3 months, unless MCST is informed of any supervening circumstances and at its own discretion give alternative directives.

Applicants are reminded of the importance of retaining all documents proving expenditure of the awarded funds for submission with the final report. If the implementation of a project becomes impossible, MCST shall be entitled to take any action it deems necessary, including, but not limited to, the withdrawal of funding for the project and the collection of money already paid out. A similar course of action may be followed if a project is in default as a result of not meeting one or more of its obligations. In such cases, MCST will provide a notice indicating a rectification period of 1 month.

## 8. Interpretation of Rules

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This document endeavours to establish comprehensive and unambiguous rules governing participation in this initiative. However, should circumstances arise where the rules are inadequate, unclear, ambiguous, or conflicting, the Council shall exercise its discretion in the interpretation of the rules through the setting up of an *ad hoc* committee.

## 9. Confidentiality of Submissions

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Unless otherwise indicated, all application submissions shall be treated in strict confidence.

The data collected by the Council via the application for the aid and its subsequent processing by the Council to evaluate data subject's request for aid under the Award is in line with:

- i. The National Rules for Participation.
- ii. COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid [OJ L 352/1, 24.12.2013] (the *de minimis* Regulation), as amended by Commission Regulation (EU) 2020/972 of 2 July 2020, amending Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 as regards its prolongation and amending Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 as regards its prolongation and relevant adjustments [OJ L 215/3, 7.7.2020].
- iii. Data Protection Act, Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).
- iv. The legitimate basis to process personal data submitted by the data subject by virtue of his/her written application for aid is Regulation 6 (1)(b) of the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR"), as 'processing is necessary in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract'.
- v. The data collected by the Council in a submitted application for aid will be retained for a period of ten (10) years from the last aid granted to the Entity represented by the data subject, in line with Article 6 of the *de minimis* Regulation.

Further information may be found within the National Application Form.