PRIMA Initiative: Networking Assistance

National Rules for Participation

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1. Introduction

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.

By funding R&I through competitive Calls, PRIMA aims to:

"build research and innovation capacities and to develop knowledge and common innovative solutions for **agro-food systems**, to make them sustainable, and for integrated **water provision and management** in the Mediterranean area, to make those systems and that provision and management more climate-resilient, efficient, cost-effective and environmentally and socially sustainable, and to contribute to solving water scarcity, food security, nutrition, health, well-being and migration problems upstream".

More information on PRIMA can be found on the official website - http://prima-med.org/

The three Thematic Areas of PRIMA are:

- Thematic Area 1 – Water Management
- Thematic Area 2 – Farming Systems
- Thematic Area 3 – Agri-food Value Chains

For each Call, different Topics under each Thematic Area will be eligible for funding. PRIMA releases an Annual Work Plan which provides a more detailed description of the Topics.

This PRIMA networking assistance initiative is an excellent opportunity to meet and discuss with international individuals working within similar fields of expertise. It aims at forming networks that could ultimately lead to future collaborations in PRIMA project proposal submissions.

1.2 **National Contact Point**

Correspondence should be directed to:

Corinne Muscat Terribile,
The Malta Council for Science & Technology
Villa Bighi, Kalkara KKR 1320, Malta
E-mail: corinne.muscat-terribile@gov.mt

1.3 **Definitions**

Applicant means anyone eligible for participation in a Project in terms of these Rules for Participation

Council refers to the Malta Council for Science and Technology

Linked enterprises are enterprises which have any of the relationships with each other outlined in Annex I of the COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty.

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 organisation 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.

Partner is defined as a partner in a consortium of a funded transnational project

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.

Public Entity means any Maltese Public Service Department or Maltese Public Sector Entity, or any Maltese Legal Entity which has more than 50% government shareholding. Public Service refers to all Ministries and Departments; and Public Sector Entities refers to authorities, corporations, agencies and commercial public-sector entities in which the Government has a majority shareholding and that are not listed on the stock exchange. Public Entities also include foundations, local councils and public academic entities. In the case of public academic entities, this includes but is not limited to a higher education entity or a research institute, whether as a whole body or as a component unit or department within such body, provided that the entity's ongoing education and research is scientifically in line with the subject of the application being submitted during this call provided that the higher education entity must be in

possession of a license for Higher Education according to the Further and Higher Education (Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance) Regulations – Subsidiary Legislation 327.433. This does not include the license for a tuition centre.

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;

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,

2. Eligibility for Participation

2.1 **Legal Form**

The beneficiary must be an undertaking registered in one (1) of the following:

i. an undertaking established within the European Union and with an operating base in Malta. An applicant is deemed to have an operating base in Malta if:

   a. it owns, leases, or has been given the right of use by a third party an adequate premises from where to conduct an eligible economic activity in the region of Malta

   and

   b. employs at least one (1) person that is based in Malta and is liable to pay income tax in Malta.

ii. Public Entity

iii. Research and knowledge dissemination organisations (such as academia or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities),

iv. NGO

v. Non-Profit Organisation

vi. Professional Body

vii. Cooperatives

2.2 **Exclusions**

No support may be provided to undertakings engaged in activities specifically excluded under the applicable State Aid regulations (vide Section 7)

2.3 **Supported Actions**

An eligible undertaking may be awarded support to participate in a PRIMA networking event organised by the Council for the purpose of facilitating research and development collaborations.

To receive support, the applicant shall be required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that the ultimate scope of the action is to participate with the intention of developing effective cross-border collaboration, undertake research activities in the thematic areas of PRIMA, and submit a PRIMA proposal.

Through this PRIMA Initiative, the Council will fund the travel and accommodation costs of researchers that would be interested to attend.

The logistical arrangements will be administered by the Council.

2.4 **Selection Criteria**

The aid shall only be awarded if:

a. the person attending the networking event is an employee or director of the undertaking (or department in case of academia or public entity);

b. the event is a PRIMA related event, organised by the Council and not held in Malta;

and

c. the person attending is not resident in the country where the networking event is held.

Applicants must have at least an MQF Level 6 qualification.

The number of selected applicants for funding will be on a first come first served basis however a balance will be strived to be achieved between the participation of Public, Private and Academic undertakings or entities (33% Public, 33% Private, 33% Research and knowledge dissemination organisations). Only one representative from any one undertaking will be eligible to attend (in the case of Academia and Public entities, only one representative from any one Department will be eligible to attend).

In relation to targeted organised brokerage events, only applicants that will be successful in the matchmaking process will be eligible for funding.

3. Applicable Aid Intensity

The funds for the national beneficiaries participating in the PRIMA networking sessions organised by the Council will be made available in accordance with these rules and regulations.

Selected applicants will be awarded 100% of the costs incurred in travel and accommodation expenses.

The scheme operates under with 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). The total amount of *de minimis aid* granted to a single undertaking shall not exceed the amount of €200,000 (or €100,000 in the case of single undertakings performing road freight transport for hire or reward) over any period of three consecutive fiscal years.

4. Eligible costs

Eligible travel costs include the costs of airline tickets as well as the costs incurred to travel to and from the airport as well as travelling to and from the meeting venue. Only public transport costs are eligible unless transport is required outside of operating hours and the use of a taxi service is then required.

Eligible accommodation costs include the costs for accommodation including breakfast for the duration of the event.

Accommodation will not exceed 60% of the Government Class B per diem rates, as outlined within Annex II.

Both airline travel and accommodation arrangements will be organised directly by the Council. Eligible public transport costs will be reimbursed by the Council after the event, upon submission of the claim form and receipts.

5. Application, Claim, and Assignment of Aid

5.1 **Application Process**

Interested applicants are kindly requested to submit via email on prima.mcst@gov.mt the official application form which is available on the Council's website together with an updated CV and copy of qualification certificate by the date indicated within Annex I.

Only Application Forms which are complete, electronically filled in, and that include all relevant supporting documents will be considered.

Any Application Forms that are received after the submission deadline outlined within Annex I will be rejected.

5.2 **Approval**

A Letter of Approval stating the terms and conditions shall be issued in favour of eligible undertakings whose application is accepted.

5.3 **Claim Process**

Claims must be submitted on the appropriate claim form within one (1) month from the date of the networking event.

The claim form may be downloaded from the Council's website.

All late submissions and incomplete claims will be rejected.

5.4 **Assignment of Aid**

Upon submission and processing of claim, a *Grant Value Certificate* stating the amount of *de minimis* assistance shall be issued by the Council in favour of eligible undertakings whose application has been accepted.

The aid shall consist of the total amount of the flights, accommodation, and other eligible travelling costs outlined within Section 4.

6. Additional Provisions

6.1 Approval of assistance is subject to budgetary limitations.

6.2 Selected applicants that decide not to attend the event after travel arrangements have been undertaken would need to reimburse the travel costs incurred. Failure to do so would render the beneficiary automatically in default and thus may not be able to apply for other funding opportunities that are managed by the Council until reimbursement of payment takes place.

6.3 Aid approved by the Council will be revoked or suspended should the undertaking have any reimbursement pending, unlawful or/and incompatible aid subject to a recovery decision.

6.4 The Council reserves the right to request any other additional document to process the application.

6.5 The Council shall reserve the right to revoke and recover any aid granted in terms of these National Rules for Participation if:

a. During the application process, the applicant submits documentation or furnishes the Council with false information

b. The applicant breaches the rules set in these National Rules for Participation, *de minimis aid* Regulations, or any conditions set in the Letter of Approval or Grant Value Certificate issued by the Council.

c. The expenditure claimed is found not to be directly related to the trade or business activity.

d. The Council identified double funding of the same eligible costs from other measures implemented by the Corporation or any other National, European or international entity.

6.6 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.

7. Applicable State Aid Rules and Obligations

Assistance provided under these National Rules for Participation is 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).

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.

This aggregate maximum threshold applies in principle to all economic sectors with the exception of the road transport, agriculture and fisheries sectors for which different thresholds and criteria apply. The term 'undertaking' includes also all companies in a group (which fall under the direct or indirect ownership or control of the same ultimate parent company) and relevant partner and linked enterprises as defined in Annex I of Commission Regulation (EU No 651/2014). 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.

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

The de minimis declaration form must be filled in and submitted together with the application form.

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 scheme.

Funding under this joint initiative is made available on the basis that the applicant has not benefitted 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 to the funding requested under this scheme.

The rules outlined in Article 5 of the *de minimis Regulation* will be respected.

8. Confidentiality of Submissions

Unless otherwise indicated, all project application submissions except for the abstract 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 Scheme 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 (*de minimis* Regulation);

iii. Data Protection Act, Chapter 440 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'.

Further information may be found within the application form.

9. Annex I and Annex II

Annex I and Annex II may be downloaded from the Council's website and may be updated periodically.