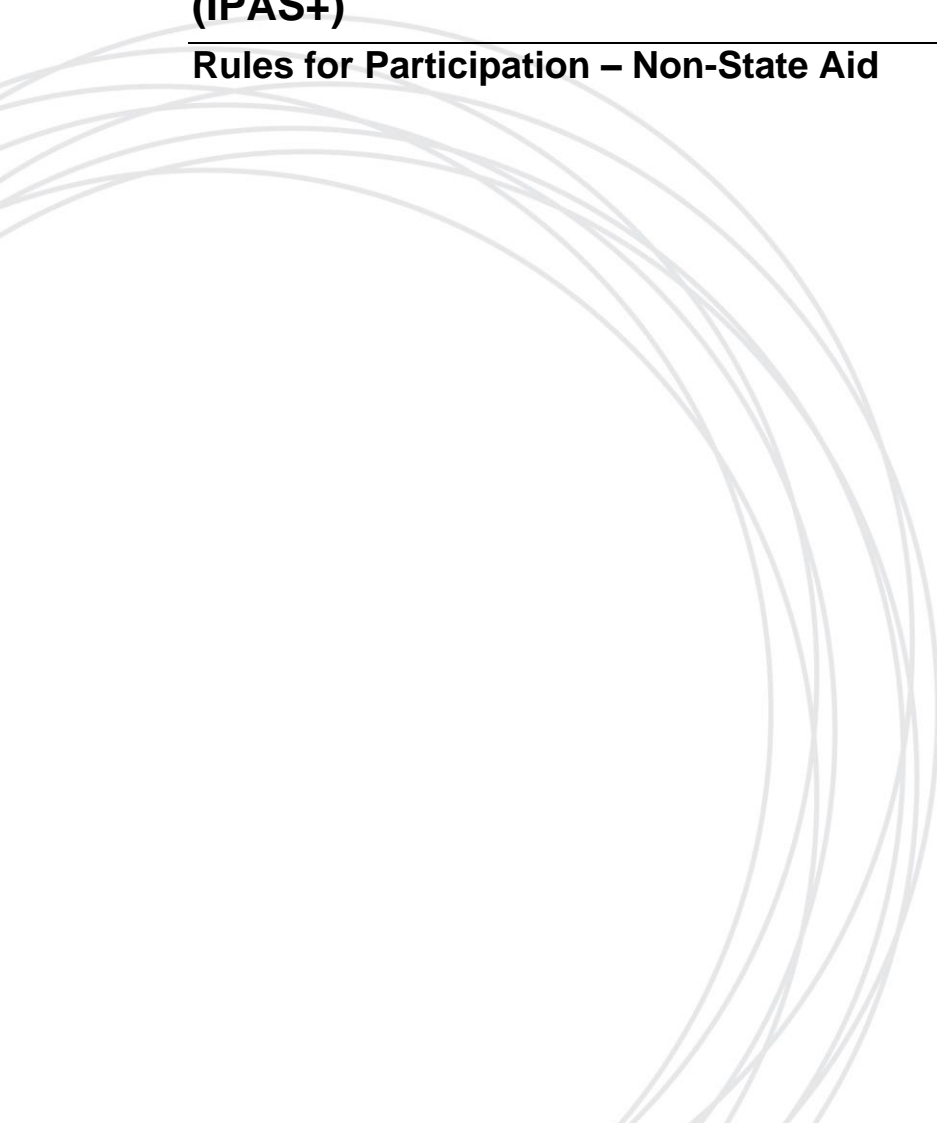




GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR YOUTH, RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION

Internationalisation Partnership Awards Scheme Plus (IPAS+)

Rules for Participation – Non-State Aid



1.0 Introduction:

The Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) is receiving proposals under the Internationalisation Partnership Awards Scheme Plus (IPAS+). The Scheme is divided into two options. Applicants are to fill in the appropriate sections of the form; they may select either Option A or Option B, or both:

- i) **Option A:** will support opportunities for collaborative initiatives between **Maltese** public entities and Public Research and Knowledge Dissemination Organisations, and at least one **foreign** research entity of proven track record of excellence. Proposals should describe the nature of the joint activities that would be funded through the Award. Applicants are to demonstrate how the proposed activities contribute towards and align with achieving the goals of the National R&I Strategy and to describe the potential of any activities to become self-sustaining or generate longer-term outcomes.

The activities that will be funded under Option A of this Award Scheme should promote internationalisation through at least one of the following:

- the development of joint teaching curricula for Masters or PhD students.
- placements for local researchers in foreign institutions for the purposes of furthering research & innovation collaboration.
- the arrangement of strategic and targeted visits by local academics/researchers and representatives of private entities to foreign entities in order to participate in research & innovation activities of an exploratory and developmental nature.
- the organisation of seminars or workshops on a particular research and innovation area **held** in Malta that would benefit from the participation of foreign experts.
- the development of transnational research & innovation proposals for submission to third party-funders, e.g. AGRIP, EASME - COSME, EPLUS, Horizon Europe, Life Programme, etc...

ii) **Option B:** will support Maltese eligible public entities and Public Research and Knowledge Dissemination Organisations intending to submit a Horizon Europe proposal, including proposal submission to Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe Partnerships in which Maltese Managing Authorities are partners (Clean Energy Transition Partnership - CETP, Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership - SBEP, Transforming Health and Care Systems Partnership - THCS, Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area - PRIMA, Water4All, European Partnership on Innovative SMEs - Eurostars), as a **Coordinator** entity to engage a service provider (local or foreign) who will be supporting the applicant entity through proposal writing and submission.

In the case of Option B, the applicant entity needs to develop and submit a proposal by engaging the services of proposal writer/s or consulting services with a proven track record in proposal writing in Horizon Europe/H2020/FP7. Unless otherwise instructed by MCST, applicants will be expected to participate in related Horizon Europe/Partnerships events and trainings organised by MCST. In addition, applicants are required to set up regular meetings/consultations with the respective Horizon Europe National Contact Point and Partnership Call Managers.

The activities for **both Options** must be implemented within **one (1) year** period from date of the grant agreement without the possibility of extension.

2.0 Definitions

- **Applicant** means any eligible entity to apply in terms of these Rules for Participation and who consequently applies for funding under this scheme.
- **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. Having family

ties or a personal relationship between the service provider and the applicant will lead to a breach of the arm's length principle.

- **Coordinator entity** is one of the beneficiaries of a project consortium that is appointed as the single point of contact between MCST and the consortium partners from proposal submission to project end. The coordinator entity will have the responsibility of ensuring that all the partners involved in the consortium are eligible and supervises the project workflow with the help of WP leaders. Additionally, the Coordinator entity will be required to submit the project application on behalf of the consortium and must also compile and submit reports / deliverables to the funding bodies, which in turn will relay these documents to the Lead Agency.
- **Council** refers to the Malta Council for Science and Technology.
- **Letter of support** is a document where the entity listed as partner in the project is showing their commitment in supporting the project including (if applicable) the confirmation of additional funding.
- **Partner** is defined as a partner in a consortium of a funded project.
- **Public Entity** is any Ministry, Department, Entity, Authority, Public Commission, Public Sector Foundation, or similar organisation that does not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU and that exercises public power, or else acts in its own capacity as public authority, where the activity in question forms part of the essential function of the State or is connected with those functions by its nature, its aim and the rules to which it is subject. However, the classification of a particular entity as an undertaking depends entirely on the nature of its activities, and the overriding criterion of consideration is whether it carries out an economic activity or not, e.g. an entity that is formally part of the public administration may nevertheless have to be regarded as an undertaking within the meaning of Article 107(1) of the Treaty. Thus, an entity that carries out both economic and non-economic activities is to be regarded as an undertaking only with regards to the former. In this case, if the economic activity can be separated from the exercise of public powers, then that entity acts as an undertaking in relation to that activity and the financing, the costs and the revenues of that economic activity shall be accounted for separately from the other non-commercial activities.

If an economic activity cannot be separated from the exercise of public power, the activities exercised by that entity as a whole, remain connected with the exercise of those public powers and therefore fall outside the notion of an undertaking.

- **Research and knowledge-dissemination organisation** means an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, in the quality of, for example, shareholders or members, may not enjoy preferential access to the results generated by it.
- **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.

3.0 Eligibility Criteria

The applicant must be an entity registered as one of the following:

- i. **Public research and knowledge-dissemination organisation whose main activities are education which is not offered for remuneration and independent research whose results are widely disseminated on a non-discriminatory basis;**
- ii. **Public entity that does not offer goods or services on a market for remuneration.**

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 declares 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 scheme 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 scheme.

Option A: Eligible applicants are to partner up with international institutions with a proven track record of excellence and experience in the research and innovation field that will form the basis for cooperation.

Option B: Eligible applicants will be supported by a proposal writer/consultant.

Applications should be endorsed by the entity's legal representative. Applicants already featuring on MCST's non-compliance list will not be eligible to apply for this Awards Scheme.

4.0 Financing

Each applicant is invited to provide a breakdown of the anticipated costs to carry out the proposed activities as part of the application form. MCST reserves the right to negotiate any amount quoted by the applicant should this be considered as being over-estimated.

The amount of the Award available to any one successful applicant is capped at €6000 per option, except for the following cases under Option B

- For the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship Call the grant is capped at €2500.
- Applicants that have already benefited from IPAS+ Part B for their ERC proposal and have successfully passed Step 1, can request a top up grant of up to €3000 to prepare for the interview stage.
- Applicants that have already benefited from IPAS+ Part B for their first stage application that is part of a two-stage call and have been selected to submit the full proposal for the

second stage, can request a top up grant of up to an additional €6000 to pay the consultant/proposal writer fees for the preparation of the full proposal.

Eligible costs:

For Option A:

- flights for travel related to the project (the total amount for each flight should be estimated as costing no more than €1000 for EU countries and €2000 for non-EU countries and should be an economy class ticket);
- travel insurance (obligatory with all flights funded with IPAS+ grant);
- subsistence allowance (inclusive of accommodation) - when subsistence costs are calculated the local entity's pre-approved subsistence allowances should be used;
- catering and up to two hosted meals per day (strictly in relation to meetings, workshops and seminars hosted by the applicant in Malta); and
- information and promotional material (essential for the effectiveness and success of the collaboration).
- publications related to the project (up to €1500)

Furthermore,

under Option A: 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 the Internationalisation Partnership Award (IPAS+). Proposals including such supplementary or match funding from partner institutions will be prioritised.

For Option B:

- Proposal writer/s or consulting services fees;
- Graphic designer fees for improving the visual appearance of the proposal (graphs, charts, images, etc) of up to €500 as part of the total requested grant.

For Option B, MCST will provide 100% reimbursement upon confirmation of proposal submission and confirmation of invoice and receipt by beneficiary (further details in Section 9). The beneficiary must follow procurement regulations and the Council can request evidence that the services were good value for money. eg. quotations, track record of selected service provider.

Applicants that have already benefited from IPAS+ Part B for their ERC proposals and have successfully passed Step 1, can request a top up grant of up to €3,000 to prepare for the interview phase.

A conflict of interest (COI) exists for Option B if the proposal writer/s or consulting service;

- is involved in the preparation of the IPAS+ application.
- Is a Beneficiary in the Horizon Europe/Partnerships proposal to be submitted to the European Commission/Call Secretariats.
- stands to benefit directly if the proposal is positively evaluated. Providing market research information to the applicant will not be considered a COI.
- has a family / personal relationship with any person representing an applicant.
- is a director / trustee / partner of the applicant or involved in the management of the applicant's entity or is an employee of the same entity.
- the costs incurred for the service provider do not meet the conditions outlined in the arm's length principle.

If emerges that the chosen proposal writer/s or consulting service has a conflict of interest as explained in the previous clause, the beneficiary cannot use their services and must choose a different consultant.

In cases of IPAS+ Option B resubmissions (whenever the applicant has already used the IPAS+ Option B in previous calls and would like to apply again in order to resubmit the same proposal to the Commission),

- a different consultant should be chosen.

- IPAS+ Part B application will be considered eligible only if the applicant has received higher score than the threshold after the Horizon Europe/Partnerships proposal was previously evaluated by the European Commission/Call Secretariats.

Consumables and equipment cannot be funded under this Scheme. Expenses related to loans, interests and recoverable value added tax are also considered as ineligible costs.

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. The Applicant should provide an estimated breakdown of the anticipated costs to carry out the project's activities in the application form.

No double funding is permitted for the **same** activities carried out in IPAS+ and in conjunction with other schemes.

To apply under these National Rules, the applicant needs to adhere to the justifications found in the application form as to why the activities to be undertaken do not meet the criteria of Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (i.e., not falling under State Aid implications).

Additional Provisions

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

- Any expenses incurred during the project must be consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- 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 2.

5.0 Submission of Application Form

Interested Applicants are to submit their application form electronically to The Council at ipas.mcst@gov.mt keeping Mr Robert Cauchi robert.cauchi@gov.mt in copy with “IPAS+ - Application 2023” as a subject heading by not later than **Friday 13th October 2023 at 11.30pm.**

The application must be dated and signed by the applicant and the legal representative. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Submissions should include the following documents:

- the ‘Internationalisation Partnership Awards Scheme Plus - 2023 Application Form’ provided by MCST that is associated with this call.
- Under option A:
 - letters of support from all partner institutions, confirming any matching or additional funding.
 - full CVs of principal investigator/s from local and partner institution/s.
 - profile of potential partners,
 - agenda of event, activities, training etc...
- Under option B:
 - proposed project idea (project’s brief) and pre-identified call topic.
 - profile of pre-identified potential consortium partners (if already available).
 - profile of at least 3 *potential* proposal writers or consulting services providers and profile of selected graphic designer company (if relevant)
 - company profile/track record of the applicant’s legal entity.

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 **15MB** will be automatically rejected by the mail system. The applicant may make use of cloud storage.

6.0 Selection Process

Applications will be assessed by a selection panel set up by MCST against the following criteria:

For Option A:

➤ **Quality of Project/Activity:**

- Proposals will be evaluated on the quality of the collaboration activities with the foreign partners. Activities must either be, or be supportive of, high quality international research & innovation with the potential to yield mutually beneficial results and demonstrate innovation and interdisciplinary in the selected field of interest. The involvement of early career researchers (i.e. at Masters or PhD level) in the implementation of the internationalisation activities will be considered an advantage.

➤ **Strength of Partnership and Leadership:**

- Projects/activities must be led by recognised experts with a demonstrated track record in research and innovation and good leadership ability. Evidence of past collaborative work between the partnering institutions, for example, joint projects or publications, and any other relevant past achievements will be considered a testament to the strength of the partnership.
- New partnerships between local and foreign entities in the interest of furthering R&I collaboration are also encouraged with the aim of fostering closer ties between local and international institutions. A convincing case should be made for the benefits of the partnership(s).

➤ **Outcomes and Sustainability:**

- Proposed activities must have significant potential outcomes, including, for example, joint publications, subsequent grant bids, development of innovative products, etc., and 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 demonstrates increased odds of success for securing third party-funding or which demonstrate a clear benefit to enhancing the international dimension of local research & innovation activity.

For Option B:

- Excellence of the proposed project idea (project's brief) and relevance to the pre-identified call topic.
- Proven track record of the proposed consultancy individuals/firms, including a list of other Horizon Europe/Horizon 2020/FP7 projects that have been supported in the past.
- Quality of the proposed consortium partners, makeup, distribution, diversity (academic, public, private), if applicable.

7.0 Award Duration

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 should the amount in the 'breakdown of costs' appears to have been overestimated.

The deadline for completion of the projects/activities funded through the award is one (1) year from the starting date on the grant agreement, although projects may be completed at any point within the one (1) year time frame. Requests for extension of the award will not be considered. Any activities/deliverables related to the award cannot start before the grant agreement is signed by MCST legal representative. Upon completion of the activities/projects, the applicant is to submit a final report within 30 days according to a standard template developed by MCST. The final report will need to be accompanied by all relevant documentation, including receipts demonstrating how the award was spent. MCST 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 request a reimbursement of the unspent funds.

Any requests for change of use of the award should be addressed in writing to the Council at ipas.mcst@gov.mt with “IPAS+ 2023 - Request for modification” as a subject heading. Such request needs to receive consent from MCST prior to being effected. 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 refunds 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. However, MCST will provide a notice indicating a rectification period of one month.

8.0 Correspondence

Successful applicants will be required to inform the Council at ipas.mcst@gov.mt at MCST regularly of any direct or indirect outputs resulting from this award during and beyond the lifetime of the award.

Reference to this award should be made on any publication, marketing or PR material that is generated in relation to the project or activity undertaken.

9.0 Final Reporting

Successful applicants are also required to submit a detailed report on the activities undertaken to the Council within thirty days from the date of completion of the activities funded by the Award. For those activities extending for the full duration of this Scheme (i.e. one year from the starting date on the grant agreement), final reports should be submitted to MCST by no later than 30 days

from that date. MCST reserves the right to take any necessary legal action should such reporting not be submitted.

Required documents as final report:

For option A:

- i) Final Technical Report
- ii) Final Financial Report
- iii) Other financial documents as flight tickets, boarding passes and other receipts.

For option B:

The reimbursement will be issued on the provision of the following:

- i) Final Report
- ii) Invoices and Receipts related to Proposal Writer and Graphical Designer Fees
- iii) Proof of successful submission of a proposal through the Horizon Europe/Partnerships online submission platform.
- iv) Proof of successful submission of a complete national application form to the Maltese Managing Authorities by the imposed deadline (if applicable, eg. not applicable for Horizon Europe Calls).

10.0 Interpretation of the Rules

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.

11.0 Confidentiality of Submissions

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

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

- i. The National Rules for Participation;
- ii. 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).
- iii. The legitimate basis to process personal data submitted by the data subject by virtue of his/her written application for assistance 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'.

12.0 Further Information

For further information on the Internationalisation Partnership Award Scheme Plus (IPAS+) kindly contact Mr. Robert Cauchi (For Option A) and Mrs Lili Kankaya (For Option B) as per details below:

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