



# Research Fund for Coal and Steel

## RFCS Information Package

2020

Proposal preparation and submission

Version 1.0

12 June 2020

HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	History of Changes	Page
1.0	12.06.2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Initial version</li></ul>	1

# Table of contents

PUBLICATION DATE .....	2
HISTORY OF CHANGES .....	2
<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE RFCS .....	7
2.2 PRIORITIES FOR 2020.....	7
2.3 ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES .....	10
2.3.1 Research Projects .....	10
2.3.2 Pilot and Demonstration Projects .....	11
2.3.3 Accompanying Measures .....	11
2.4 WHO CAN PARTICIPATE .....	12
2.5 PROJECT DURATION .....	13
2.6 PROJECT BUDGET .....	14
<b>3 ELIGIBLE COSTS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES .....	15
3.2 COSTS CATEGORIES .....	16
3.2.1 Direct personnel costs (Staff Costs) .....	17
3.2.2 Other direct costs .....	21
3.2.3 Indirect Costs .....	22
3.3 THIRD PARTIES.....	23
3.3.1 Linked third parties .....	23
3.3.2 Subcontracting .....	25
<b>4 PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION .....</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1 STEP 1 – LOGIN TO THE FUNDING & TENDERS PORTAL .....	28
4.2 STEP 2 – FUNDING SCHEME.....	29
4.3 STEP 3 – CREATE DRAFT .....	29
4.4 STEP 4 – PARTIES .....	30
4.5 STEP 5 – EDIT PROPOSAL.....	32
4.6 STEP 6 – SUBMIT.....	40
<b>5 EVALUATION .....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1 CONDITIONS FOR ADMISSIBILITY AND ELIGIBILITY .....	41
5.2 EVALUATION CRITERIA .....	43
5.2.1 Scoring .....	43
5.2.2 Thresholds .....	44
5.3 AFTER THE EVALUATION .....	44
5.3.1 Ranking lists .....	44
5.3.2 Evaluation Summary Report .....	45
5.3.3 Selection of proposals to be funded .....	45
5.3.4 Signature of the Grant Agreement .....	46
5.4 COMPLAINTS .....	46
5.4.1 Submission failed .....	46
5.4.2 Rejection further to the eligibility and admissibility check .....	47
5.4.3 Rejection further to the evaluation by independent experts .....	47
5.5 PROPOSAL FOLLOW UP.....	49
5.5.1 Time line following the submission stage.....	49

5.5.2 Validation of the legal entities and assessment of financial capacity. 49

**6 INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE .....51**

6.1 HELPDESKS .....51

6.2 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS .....51

6.3 CONFIDENTIALITY AND PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION .....52

**ANNEXES .....53**

ANNEX I: COUNCIL DECISION 2008/376/EC .....53

ANNEX II: SCOPE OF THE TECHNICAL GROUPS.....64

ANNEX III: EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS .....68

ANNEX IV: EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR PILOT AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS .....69

ANNEX V: EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ACCOMPANYING MEASURES .....71

ANNEX VI: TECHNOLOGY READINESS LEVELS .....72

ANNEX VII: UNIT COST FOR SME OWNERS OR NATURAL PERSONS NOT RECEIVING A SALARY .....73

ANNEX VIII: ARTICLE 50 TEU – IMPACT ON MANAGEMENT OF EU PROCUREMENT, GRANTS, PRIZES  
AWARD PROCEDURES AND INDIRECT MANAGEMENT.....75

ANNEX IX: MANUAL OF EVALUATION PROCEDURES. ....76

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS) is a funding programme of the European Union intended to support research and innovation in the sectors related to the coal and steel industry.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2019, a new European Commission entered into service for the present quinquennium 2019-2024. The new College of Commissioners, under the presidency of Ms Ursula von der Leyen, reset the Commission's commitment to "tackling climate and environmental-related challenges that is this generation's defining task".

The [European Green Deal Communication](#), presented by the Commission in December 2019, is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.

The texts of the European Green Deal Communication and its Roadmap can be found at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1588580774040&uri=CELEX:52019DC0640>

Within the most pertinent lines for the RFCS research programme arising from the European Green Deal Communication, applicants to RFCS-2020 call should consider the following elements when preparing their proposals:

- Energy-intensive industries, such as steel [...] are indispensable to Europe's economy, as they supply several key value chains. The **decarbonisation and modernisation of this sector is essential**.
- The Commission will support clean steel breakthrough technologies leading to a zero-carbon steel making process by 2030.
- A power sector must be developed that is based largely on renewable sources, complemented by the **rapid phasing out of coal**
- The EU should also reinforce current initiatives [...] on cross-cutting climate and environment issues. This may include ending global fossil fuel subsidies in line with G20 commitments, [...] phasing out all new coal plant construction, and action to reduce methane emissions
- Focus on the regions and sectors that are most affected by the transition because they depend on fossil fuels or carbon-intensive processes
- Protect the citizens and workers most vulnerable to the transition, providing access to re-skilling programmes, jobs in new economic sectors

Further relevant communications on future directions given by the European Commission, such as a New Industrial Strategy for Europe, Just Transition Mechanism and the Sustainable European Investment Plan, can be found at:

**The Sustainable Europe Investment Plan**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1588582651667&uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0021>

**A New Industrial Strategy for Europe**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy\\_en#documents](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en#documents)

**Just Transition Mechanism - proposal for Regulation COM/2020/22**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=157909955315&uri=COM:2020:22:FIN>

The State of Art in the sectors related to EU coal and steel industries in 2018 and 2019, major issues and challenges are encompassed in the publications:

**European steel – The Wind of Change**

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fb63033e-2671-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF>

**Steel and coal – A New Perspective. Research and Innovation in Action**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/steel-and-coal-new-perspective\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/steel-and-coal-new-perspective_en)

The report on the seven-year (2011-2017) Monitoring and Assessment of the RFCS Research Programme was published in 2020:

**RFCS Monitoring and Assessment Report (2011-2017)**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/research-fund-coal-and-steel-monitoring-and-assessment-report\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/research-fund-coal-and-steel-monitoring-and-assessment-report_en)

The Programme is complementary to other European financial instruments for research and innovation, such as Horizon 2020, but it remains outside those programmes. The European Commission encourages however, complementarity and synergies between the different research programmes and supports the exchange of information between projects financed under different instruments.

According to Art. 25 of the [Decision 2008/376/EC](#)<sup>1</sup>, the detailed rules for participation in the RFCS programme are laid out in this Information Package, which is written in accordance to the Financial Regulation<sup>2</sup> applicable to the general budget of the European Union, (hereinafter referred to as the *Financial Regulation*) and the Decision 2008/376/EC.

---

<sup>1</sup> Council Decision 2008/376/EC of 29 April 2008 on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel and on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme (OJ L 130, 20.5.2008, p. 7).

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) N° 966/2012 OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1

## 2 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### 2.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE RFCS

The definitions of "coal" and "steel" given under Article 3 of the [Decision 2008/376/EC](#) apply.

Proposals submitted to the RFCS programme on coal and steel research topics must address at least one of the respective RFCS Research Objectives of the [Decision 2008/376/EC](#)<sup>3</sup> and should relate to the European Green Deal Communication's elements listed in the Introduction chapter of this document.

When filling in the proposal, applicants are asked to indicate which research objectives are addressed and which of the European Green Deal Communication's elements the proposal relates to.

Each proposal shall include an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits, as stated in the Article 26 of the Decision 2008/376/EC "Content of proposals".

Within the RFCS objectives and the European Green Deal Communication's elements, the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel provides for a bottom-up approach, thus leaving applicants free to submit a project in any relevant area, on the condition that it follows the terms set down in this Information Package.

### 2.2 PRIORITIES FOR 2020

Clearly indicate in your proposal whether your proposal addresses the following annual priorities<sup>4</sup>. Be aware that:

- Special attention should be paid to the logical expressions involving the operators AND and OR. These are used in the priorities with the following meaning:

x AND y both elements x and y must be addressed in the proposal for the logical expression to be true

x OR y at least one element x or y must be addressed in the proposal for the logical expression to be true

---

<sup>3</sup> See Articles 4 to 10 of the [Decision 2008/376/EC](#)

<sup>4</sup> It is not mandatory for a proposal to address one of the annual priorities. However 0.5 additional bonus point will be granted to proposals if they address the annual priorities in the relevant topic.

## Coal Annual Priority 2020

**Priority: Proposals addressing emerging and innovative technologies supporting coal regions in transition, contributing to the objectives of the European Green Deal.**

Projects should contribute to objectives of the European Green Deal by addressing one or more of the areas below:

- Projects should directly relate to the re-purposing of closed or end-of-life coal-related assets, such as coal mines, coal power plants or other (e.g. coal transport infrastructure, coal preparation plants or heat plants that supply hot water or steam to industrial or residential consumers).
- Projects' activities should be directed at exploring or demonstrating new or improved technologies and business models that rely on renewable energy or scale energy storage, or contribute to the circular economy.
- Sustainable solutions for the re-orienting of existing assets might include CO<sub>2</sub> utilisation and storage, GHG-removal technologies, renewable energy production from low-enthalpy geothermal sources, or thermal, chemical potential energy storage.
- Projects should seek the use of synergies through sector coupling (e.g. the management, recycling or upcycling of power plant residues, household or industrial wastes, or geomaterials from past mining operations, including the production or enhancement of soil for land/water remediation/restoration).

Projects should include an economic assessment (including CAPEX, OPEX, cash flows and expected financial outcomes) to determine their likely commercial viability and added value. In addition, proposed solutions should be permissible by planning authorities, if applicable.

In addition, projects are encouraged to address socio-economic research that relates to the just transition, e.g. by addressing the training and re-skilling of workers of the coal sector, as well as other forms of support to the economic, social and environmental transition of coal regions in transition.

Projects are also encouraged to address research that stimulates new economic activities and employment opportunities in the coal regions in transition identified by the European Commission under its Coal Regions in Transition initiative.



## Steel Annual Priority 2020

**Priority: Pilot/demonstration projects of emerging and innovative technologies leading to emission reductions and industrial efficiency improvements. This will include the concept of zero-carbon steel making process in line with the spirit of the European Green Deal Communication.**

The objective of the 'emerging and innovative' technologies is to support either significant additions to or changes of the current steel production processes, or to develop breakthrough and game-changing technologies with the aims of sensible industrial efficiency improvements regarding energy efficiency, product quality, production yield, emission/carbon footprint reduction or all kinds of environmental issues.

Projects should address one or more of the areas below which could meet the criteria of 'emerging and innovative technologies':

- Breakthrough steel production that allow a significant or complete switch from fossil carbon to alternative reducing agents such as clean hydrogen or electricity.
- Alternative steel production processes that make use of fossil fuel in a way that facilitates integrated CO<sub>2</sub> capture.
- CO<sub>2</sub>-Usage and Valorisation: utilising either the CO<sub>2</sub> captured in steel plants or directly the CO/CO<sub>2</sub> content of the steel plant gases as raw material for production of valuable products.
- Process additions or modifications that are designed to be integrated in conventional steel plants with the objective to significantly reduce CO<sub>2</sub> production or to capture CO<sub>2</sub> in line with the production processes, at low energetic cost for e.g. switch to leaner carbon/energy sources in existing processes: replacing fossil coals by leaner carbon/energy sources such as natural gas, biomass or C-lean electricity.
- Significant improvements of energy efficiency of the complete steel production route by using waste heat (from gas, gas flares, fumes, water, solids; at low or high temperature), better use of steel plant gases or any other way to reduce energy consumption, e.g. smart integration of renewable energies in steel plants (e.g. solar, wind, geothermal, clean hydrogen), depending on the local potential, to cover some of its electricity and/or heat demand.
- Sustainable, efficient valorisation of residues and end-of-life materials for a conversion into valuable secondary raw materials for an enhanced material cycle closure and a higher level of circular economy in the steel industry.
- Reduction of emissions or any other ways of pollution incl. the avoidance of use of hazardous materials in production plants.
- Process and technology modifications to speed-up adaptability of conventional production in order to move towards quickly adapt to the needs of low carbon steel making without losing the necessary steel product performance qualities e.g. solutions for efficiency upgrades and utilisation of scrap in steelmaking.
- Solutions to decrease the energy consumption, greenhouse gas emission and raw material consumption by increasing the production yield or moving toward a zero defect strategy along the complete steel making and processing chain.

## 2.3 ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Applications can be submitted for the following Activities (as described under Articles 14 to 18 and Article 30 of the [Decision 2008/376/EC](#)): Research Projects, Pilot and Demonstration Projects, Accompanying Measures. These types of Activities are explained in the following sections.

Type of Activity	Description	RFCS co-funding	Duration	Budget	Consortium
<b>Research projects</b>	Investigative or experimental work	≤60%	No specific requirement (indicative duration is 36 or 42 months)	No specific requirement (recommended total budget is between 1.5 and 2.5 M€)	Minimum three independent legal entities established in at least two different EU Member States
<b>Pilot &amp; Demonstration projects</b>	Construction and/or operation of an installation at pilot or demonstration scale	≤50%	No specific requirement (indicative duration is 36 or 42 months)	No specific requirement (recommended total budget is between 3 and 4 M€)	Minimum two independent legal entities established in at least two different EU Member States
<b>Accompanying measures</b>	Dissemination or promotion of knowledge gained	≤ 100 %	No specific requirement (indicative duration is 18 months)	No specific requirement (recommended total budget is between 0.2 and 0.6 M€)	Minimum two independent legal entities established in at least two different EU Member States

### **2.3.1 RESEARCH PROJECTS**

Research projects are intended to cover investigative or experimental work with the aim of acquiring further knowledge to facilitate the attainment of specific practical objectives such as the creation or development of new products, production processes or services.

The proposals should demonstrate the ability to solve specific scientific or technical problems, as well as demonstrate the economic and/or scientific technological impact of the results.

The preliminary investigation on the state-of-the-art and literature review should not be part of the project, but should be completed prior to submission and described in the proposal.

The maximum total financial contribution of the European Union for Research projects is up to 60 % of the eligible costs.

### **2.3.2 PILOT AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS**

Pilot projects aim at the construction, operation and development of an installation or a significant part of an installation on an appropriate scale and using suitably large components with a view to examining the potential for putting theoretical or laboratory results into practice and/or increasing the reliability of the technical and economic data needed to progress to demonstration stage, and in certain cases to industrial and/or commercial stage.

Demonstration projects aim at the construction and/or operation of an industrial-scale installation or a significant part of an industrial-scale installation with the aim of bringing together all the technical and economic data in order to proceed with the industrial and/or commercial exploitation of the technology at minimum risk.

Pilot and Demonstration projects are aiming to bridge the gap between Research and Innovation.

*Innovation can be considered as the technological implementation of new products or processes within the relevant industrial sector, or of significant improvements to products or processes, based on previous research results. The innovation is technologically implemented if it is introduced on the market (product innovation) or used within a production process (process innovation).*

Where reference is given to "Innovation" in the Evaluation Form for Pilot and Demonstration projects (see [Annex IV](#)), the definition above applies.

No significant research efforts should be included in Pilot and Demonstration projects, as they should focus on the construction and validation of a ready-designed unit. The preliminary investigation on the state-of-the-art and literature review should not be part of the project, but should be completed prior to submission and described in the proposal.

Pilot and Demonstration projects will be also evaluated for their potential to provide a step forward in the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of the proposed application. To this purpose, the definitions of TRL in [Annex VI](#) apply.

The maximum total financial contribution of the European Union for Pilot and Demonstration projects is up to 50 % of the eligible costs.

### **2.3.3 ACCOMPANYING MEASURES**

Accompanying measures shall relate to the promotion of the use of knowledge gained or to the organisation of dedicated workshops or conferences in connection with projects or priorities of the Research Programme.

This activity may include dissemination<sup>5</sup>, standardisation, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning exercises and studies. It also includes the valorisation of research results having a direct impact in one of the following areas and excluding any kind of research activity:

---

<sup>5</sup> In line with Article 29 of the multi-beneficiary model grant agreement for the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel - C(2015) 5757 final

- contribution to the assessment or enhancement of European or international technical regulations and standards<sup>6</sup>;
- valorisation of results that have a direct and immediate potential application at industrial level. The improvement of environmental, product quality and safety standards in and around the workplace are of particular importance;
- exploitation of new or alternative market possibilities of products and processes related to the coal or steel sector.

The maximum total financial contribution of the European Union for Accompanying Measures is up to 100 % of the eligible costs.

## 2.4 WHO CAN PARTICIPATE <sup>7</sup>

Any undertaking, public body, research organisation or higher and secondary education establishment, or other legal entity, including natural persons, established within the territory of an EU member state may participate in the Research Programme and apply for financial assistance, provided that they intend to carry out an RTD activity or can substantially contribute to such an activity.

Any undertaking, public body, research organisation or higher and secondary education establishment, or other legal entity, including natural persons, in *candidate countries* are entitled to participate *without receiving any financial contribution* under the Research Programme, unless otherwise provided under the relevant European Agreements and their additional Protocols, and in the decisions of the various Association Councils.

Any undertaking, public body, research organisation or higher and secondary education establishment, or other legal entity, including natural persons, from *third countries* are entitled to participate without receiving any financial contribution under the Research Programme, provided that such participation is in the interest of the European Union.

Specific information concerning British applicants is available in [Annex VIII](#) of this RFCS Information Package.

---

<sup>6</sup> To know more about European Standardisation and the standards making process please visit the website of the CEN (European Committee for Standardisation) and CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation) bodies at <http://www.cencenelec.eu/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> See Art. 11 to 13 of the [Decision 2008/376/EC](#).

## 2.5 PROJECT DURATION

Although the [Decision 2008/376/EC](#) does not impose any specific project duration, most research, pilot and demonstration projects run for 36 or 42 months, while most Accompanying Measures have 18 or 24 months duration. When deciding about the project duration, applicants should consider the following:

- The proposed scheduling must be credible and should be in line with the work to be carried out; unrealistic project duration is considered as a weakness during the evaluation of the proposal.
- Possible delays occurring during the execution of the work should be taken into account; a too tight project scheduling may compromise the ability of the consortium to effectively recover from difficult situations.

Applicants must be aware already at this stage that, once the Grant Agreement is signed, project extensions will be granted only in very exceptional circumstances. However, if duly justified the consortium can still apply for a temporary suspension of the project, until the negative events affecting the execution of the project have been fully overcome. Applicants are recommended to make themselves familiar already at this stage with the rules concerning extension and suspension of projects (refer to the General Provisions to the RFCS Model Grant Agreement and the Annotated Model Grant Agreement Horizon 2020 applicable by analogy where provisions are the same), these documents can be accessed from the Funding & Tenders Portal via the following links:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/Portal/screen/how-to-participate/reference-documents>

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/amga/h2020-amga\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf)

Recommended start dates of the projects are:

- the 1<sup>st</sup> of July of the calendar year following the year of the submission of the proposal of a duration of 18, 30, 42 months,
- optionally the 1<sup>st</sup> of September of the calendar year following the year of the submission of the proposal of a duration of 24, 36, 48 months,

as this allows a best match between the reporting periods given in the Grant Agreement and the RFCS project monitoring scheme.

A different start date can be proposed and discussed with the Commission on a case-by-case basis; however, in principle projects should not have a starting date preceding the date of signature of the Grant Agreement.

It is recommended to commit sufficient time for the preparation of the final report at the end of the project.

## 2.6 PROJECT BUDGET

The Commission considers that proposals of total budget of between 1.5 to 2.5 M€ would allow to fulfil the requirements for research projects. Nonetheless, this does not exclude submission and selection of proposals foreseeing different amounts.

The Commission considers that proposals of total budget between 3 and 4 M€ would allow to fulfil the requirements for pilot and demonstration projects. Nonetheless, this does not exclude submission and selection of proposals foreseeing different amounts.

The Commission considers that proposals of total budget between 0.2 and 0.6 M€ would allow to fulfil the requirements of accompanying measures. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals foreseeing different amounts.

## 3 ELIGIBLE COSTS

This section contains guidelines on how to calculate eligible costs for carrying out an action funded by the RFCS programme (total estimated eligible costs for the action).

Important: the description of the eligible costs given in this chapter is written in accordance with a RFCS Model Grant Agreement (MGA), adopted on 26/08/2015<sup>8</sup> (MGA). A copy of this MGA is available on the Funding & Tenders Portal, in the section dedicated to the general RFCS documentation:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference\\_docs.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference_docs.html)

Any reference made in this Information Package to the RFCS MGA has to be intended as reference to the Model Grant Agreement as described above.

Applicants are strongly advised to become familiar with the rules for eligible costs presented in this Information Package, which is written in compliance with the provisions of the RFCS MGA, and to prepare the budget for their proposals accordingly. Be aware that, for proposals recommended for funding, costs not complying with the definition of eligible costs given in this section will be rejected during the preparation of the Grant Agreement and the EU contribution will be reduced accordingly.

In the text under Chapter 3 of the MGA:

- any reference to the "description of the action" has to be intended as a reference to the Technical Annex of the proposal (or Form B2, see Section 4.5 for more details) which will become Annex 1 to the Grant Agreement, and
- any reference to the "estimated budget for the action" has to be intended as a reference to the two tables with the proposal's budget (Form A3 and Forms B3, see Section 4.5 for more details). Form A3 will become part of Annex 2 to the Grant Agreement.

### 3.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

'**Eligible costs**' are costs that meet the following criteria:<sup>9</sup>

(a) for **actual costs**:

- (i) they must be actually incurred by the beneficiary;
- (ii) they must be incurred within the duration of the project with the exception of costs relating to the submission of the periodic report for the last reporting period and the final report;
- (iii) they must be indicated in the estimated budget for the action;

---

<sup>8</sup> Commission Decision on the multi-beneficiary model grant agreement for the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel - C(2015) 5757 final

<sup>9</sup> See Art 6 of the RFCS MGA

- (iv) they must be incurred in connection with the action according to the description of the action and must be necessary for its implementation;
  - (v) they must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular recorded in the beneficiary's accounts in accordance with the accounting standards applicable in the country where the beneficiary is established and with the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices;
  - (vi) they must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security, and
  - (vii) they must be reasonable, justified and must comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency;
- (b) for **unit costs** (direct personnel costs of owners of small and medium sized enterprises who are working on the action and who do not receive a salary and for beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary)
- (i) they must be calculated as mentioned in annex VII:
  - (ii) the number of actual units must comply with the following conditions:
    - the units must be actually used or produced within the project duration;
    - the units must be necessary for implementing the action or produced by it, and
    - the number of units must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular supported by records and documentation;
- (c) for **flat-rate costs**:
- (i) they must be calculated by applying the flat-rate set out in the estimated budget for the action, and
  - (ii) the costs (actual costs or unit costs) to which the flat-rate is applied must comply with the conditions for eligibility set out there.

### 3.2 COSTS CATEGORIES

Eligible costs shall be broken down into the following four categories:<sup>10</sup>

- direct personnel costs (staff costs);
- direct costs of subcontracting;
- other direct costs;
- indirect costs.

'Direct costs' are costs that are directly linked to the action implementation and can therefore be attributed to it directly. They must not include any indirect costs.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Art 5 of the RFCS MGA



'Indirect costs' are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

### **3.2.1 DIRECT PERSONNEL COSTS (STAFF COSTS)**<sup>11</sup>

#### Types of direct personnel costs

**A.1** Personnel costs are eligible, if they are related to personnel working for the beneficiary under an employment contract (or equivalent appointing act) and assigned to the action ('**costs for employees (or equivalent)**'). They must be limited to salaries (including during parental leave), social security contributions, taxes and other costs included in the **remuneration**, if they arise from national law or the employment contract (or equivalent appointing act).

They may also include additional remuneration for personnel assigned to the action (including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of their nature), if:

- (a) it is part of the beneficiary's usual remuneration practices and is paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required;
- (b) the criteria used to calculate the supplementary payments are objective and generally applied by the beneficiary, regardless of the source of funding used.

**A.2** The **costs for natural persons working under a direct contract** with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or seconded by a third party against payment are eligible personnel costs, if:

- (a) the person works under the beneficiary's instructions and, unless otherwise agreed with the beneficiary, on the beneficiary's premises;
- (b) the result of the work carried out belongs to the beneficiary, and
- (c) the costs are not significantly different from those for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

**A.3** (*Case not applicable to the RFCS programme*)

**A.4 Costs of owners** of beneficiaries that are small and medium-sized enterprises ('**SME owners**'), who are working on the action and who do not receive a salary are eligible personnel costs, if they correspond to the amount per unit set out in the estimated budget for the action multiplied by the number of actual hours worked on the action.

**A.5 Costs of 'beneficiaries that are natural persons'** not receiving a salary are eligible personnel costs, if they correspond to the amount per unit set out in the estimated budget for the action multiplied by the number of actual hours worked on the action.

---

<sup>11</sup> See Art 6(2) of the RFCS MGA

## Calculation

**Personnel costs** must be calculated by the beneficiaries as follows:

([hourly rate] *multiplied by* [number of actual hours worked on the action])

The number of actual hours declared for a person must be identifiable and verifiable.

The total number of hours declared in EU grants, for a person for a year, cannot be higher than the annual productive hours used for the calculations of the hourly rate. Therefore, the maximum number of hours that can be declared for the grant are:

[number of annual productive hours for the year (see below)]

*minus*

[total number of hours declared by the beneficiary, for that person for that year, for other EU or Euratom grants].

The '**hourly rate**' is one of the following:

(a) for personnel costs declared as **actual costs**: the hourly rate is the amount calculated as follows:

[actual annual personnel costs for the person]

*divided by*

[number of annual productive hours]

The beneficiaries must use the annual personnel costs and the number of annual productive hours for each financial year covered by the reporting period concerned. If a financial year is not closed at the end of the reporting period, the beneficiaries must use the hourly rate of the last closed financial year available.

For the 'number of annual productive hours', the beneficiaries may choose one of the following:

- (i) 'fixed number of hours': 1720 hours for persons working full time (or corresponding pro-rata for persons not working full time);
- (ii) 'individual annual productive hours': the total number of hours worked by the person in the year for the beneficiary, calculated as follows:

[annual workable hours of the person (according to the employment contract, applicable collective labour agreement or national law)]

*plus*

[overtime worked]

*minus*

[absences (such as sick leave and special leave)]

'Annual workable hours' means the period during which the personnel must be working, at the employer's disposal and carrying out his/her activity or duties under the employment contract, applicable collective labour agreement or national working time legislation.

If the contract (or applicable collective labour agreement or national working time legislation) does not allow to determine the annual workable hours, this option cannot be used;

- (iii) 'standard annual productive hours': the standard number of annual hours generally applied by the beneficiary for its personnel in accordance with its usual cost accounting practices. This number must be at least 90% of the 'standard annual workable hours'.

If there is no applicable reference for the standard annual workable hours, this option cannot be used.

For all options, the actual time spent on **parental leave** by a person assigned to the action may be deducted from the number of annual productive hours;

As an alternative, beneficiaries may calculate the hourly rate per month, as follows:

[actual monthly personnel costs for the person]

*divided by*

[number of annual productive hours / 12]

using the personnel costs for each month and (one twelfth of) the annual productive hours calculated according to either option (i) or (iii) above, i.e.:

- fixed number of hours or
- standard annual productive hours.

Time spent on parental leave may not be deducted when calculating the hourly rate per month. However, beneficiaries may declare personnel costs incurred in periods of parental leave in proportion to the time the person worked on the action in that financial year.

If parts of a basic remuneration are generated over a period longer than a month, the beneficiaries may include only the share which is generated in the month (irrespective of the amount actually paid for that month).

Each beneficiary must use only one option (per full financial year or per month) for each full financial year;

- (b) for personnel costs of SME owners or beneficiaries that are natural persons declared on the basis of **unit costs**, the hourly rate is the hourly rate set out in the estimated budget for the action (see Points A.4 and A.5 above).

#### Records for personnel costs — Hours worked for the action

The beneficiaries must show the actual hours worked, with reliable time records (i.e. time-sheets) either on paper or in a computer-based time recording system.

Time records must be dated and signed at least monthly by the person working for the action and his/her supervisor.

If the time-recording system is computer-based, the signatures may be electronic (i.e. linking the electronic identity data (e.g. a password and user name) to the electronic validation data, with a documented and secure process for managing user rights and an auditable log of all electronic transactions).

Time records should include:

- the title and number of the action, as specified in the GA;
- the beneficiary's full name, as specified in the GA;
- the full name, date and signature of the person working for the action;
- the number of hours worked for the action in the period covered by the time record; for reasons of assurance and legal certainty it is highly recommended that the number of hours is detailed per day (hours worked for the action in each day);
- the supervisor's full name and signature;
- a reference to the action tasks or work package described in Annex 1, to easily verify that the work carried out matches the work assigned and the person-months reported to the action;
- a brief description of the activities carried out, to understand and show what work was carried out.

Information included in timesheets must match records of annual and sick leave taken, and work-related travel.

As an exception, for persons working exclusively on the action, there is no need to keep time records, if the beneficiary signs a declaration confirming that the persons concerned have worked exclusively on the action.

A template for time-sheets is available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other\\_eu\\_prog/common/tpl/report/eu-grants-time-sheet\\_en.docx](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/other_eu_prog/common/tpl/report/eu-grants-time-sheet_en.docx)

(This template is not mandatory; beneficiaries may use their own model, provided that it fulfils the minimum conditions and it contains at least the information detailed above.)

### **3.2.2 OTHER DIRECT COSTS**

#### Equipment<sup>12</sup>

The depreciation costs of equipment (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounts are eligible, if they are

- purchased specifically for the action or before the action starts but not fully depreciated, and
- purchased under a procedure ensuring the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price and avoiding any conflict of interests, and
- written off in accordance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices.

The costs of renting or leasing equipment (including related duties, taxes and charges such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT) paid by the beneficiary) are also eligible, if they do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment and do not include any financing fees.

The only portion of the costs for equipment that will be taken into account is that which corresponds to the duration of the action and rate of actual use for the purposes of the action.

Consequently, eligible costs for equipment shall be calculated according to the following formula:

$$A/B \times C \times D$$

where:

- A the period (in months) during which the equipment will be used for the project;
- B depreciation time according to the national legislation and the standard practice of the beneficiary;
- C purchase or hiring cost of the equipment;
- D fraction of use of the equipment in the project ( $0 < D \leq 1$ ,  $D=1$  if the equipment is used 100% for the project).

#### Operating costs<sup>13</sup>

Operating costs, including related duties, taxes and charges such as non-deductible value added tax (VAT)<sup>14</sup> paid by the beneficiary, are eligible, if they are purchased specifically for the action. The beneficiaries must make such purchases ensuring the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price. In doing so, they must avoid any conflict of interests.

---

<sup>12</sup> See Art 6(2) D2 of the RFCS MGA

<sup>13</sup> See Art. 34 of [Decision 2008/376/EC](#) and Art 6(2) D3 of the RFCS MGA

<sup>14</sup> Value added tax (VAT) is eligible as direct cost only if it is non recoverable according to Art 126(3) (c) of the Financial Regulation

Operating costs directly related to the implementation of the project shall be limited to the cost of:

raw materials; consumables; energy; transportation of raw materials, consumables, equipment, products, feedstock or fuel; the maintenance, repair, alteration and transformation of existing equipment; IT and other specific services; the rental of equipment; analysis and tests; dedicated workshop organisation; certificate on financial statements and bank guarantee; open access publications; protection of knowledge and assistance from third parties.

### **3.2.3 INDIRECT COSTS**<sup>15</sup>

Indirect costs are eligible if they are declared on the basis of the flat-rate of 35% of the eligible direct personnel costs.

---

<sup>15</sup> See Art. 35 of [Decision 2008/376/EC](#) and Art 6(2) E of the RFCS MGA

### 3.3 THIRD PARTIES<sup>16</sup>

A third party is any legal entity that will not sign the grant agreement. The RFCS MGA foresees the possibility to involve in the project two types of third parties: linked third parties and subcontractors.

**Important. In order to be eligible, the part of the action delivered by third parties must be always set out in the description of the action (Form B2) and their costs must be included in the estimated budget for the action (Form A3 and Forms B3).**

#### **3.3.1 LINKED THIRD PARTIES<sup>17</sup>**

Only 'affiliated entities' or 'entities with a legal link (see below) to a beneficiary' can be linked third parties.

Entities performing a substantial part of the work (i.e. action tasks) should in principle be beneficiaries, NOT linked third parties. Linked third parties should only exceptionally perform a major part of the research work.

Characteristics of implementation by linked third parties:

- Linked third party does not charge a price, but declares its own costs for implementing the action tasks;
- Linked third party itself performs certain action tasks directly and is responsible for them towards the beneficiary. Linked third parties do NOT sign the GA (and are therefore not beneficiaries);
- The beneficiary remains responsible towards the Commission for the work carried out by the linked third party. Moreover, the beneficiaries are financially responsible for any undue amount paid by the Commission as reimbursement of costs of their linked third parties — unless the GA foresees joint and several liability;
- Work is attributed to the linked third party in the description of the action and is usually carried out on its premises;
- Work is under the full and direct control, instructions and management of the linked third party, who carries out this part of the action (with its employees).

#### **Entities with a legal link to a beneficiary**

'Entities with a legal link' refers to an established relationship (between the third party and the beneficiary), which is:

- broad and not specifically created for the work in the GA (its duration must go beyond the action duration and it usually pre-dates and outlasts the action). 'Ad hoc' collaboration agreements or contracts to carry out work in the action are NOT covered (in this latter case, both legal entities should be beneficiaries.)

AND

---

<sup>16</sup> This section is written in accordance with Art 6(3) of the RFCS MGA

<sup>17</sup> See Art 14 of RFCS MGA

- a legal relationship. This may be either a legal structure (e.g. the relationship between an association and its members) or through an agreement or contract (not limited to the action). If the only relation between two entities is a capital link (i.e. ownership of part of the issued share capital), the entity may only participate as a linked third party if it is an 'affiliated entity' (see below).

Examples:

*Joint Research Units (JRU) (i.e. research laboratories/infrastructures created and owned by two or more different legal entities in order to carry out research). They do not have a separate legal personality, but form a single research unit where staff and resources from the different members are put together to the benefit of all. Though lacking legal personality, they exist physically, with premises, equipment, and resources individual to them and distinct from 'owner' entities. A member of the JRU is the beneficiary and any other member of the JRU contributing to the action and who is not a beneficiary has to be identified as a linked third party. The JRU has to meet all the following conditions:*

- scientific and economic unity,
- last a certain length of time,
- recognised by a public authority.

*It is necessary that the JRU itself is recognised by a public authority, i.e. an entity identified as such under the applicable national law. The beneficiary must provide to the Commission a copy of the resolution, law, decree, decision, attesting the relationship between the beneficiary and the linked third party(ies), or a copy of the document establishing the 'joint research unit', or any other document that proves that research facilities are put in a common structure and correspond to the concept of scientific and economic unit.*

*Associations, foundations or other legal entities composed of members (where the association/foundation etc. is the beneficiary and the members are the linked third parties).*

## **Affiliated entities**

'Affiliated entity' means:

- under the direct or indirect control of the beneficiary or
- under the same direct or indirect control as the beneficiary or
- directly or indirectly controlling the beneficiary.

'Control' may take any of the following forms:

- (a) the direct or indirect holding of more than 50% of the nominal value of the issued share capital in the legal entity concerned, or of a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or associates of that entity;
- (b) the direct or indirect holding, in fact or in law, of decision-making powers in the legal entity concerned.

However, the following relationships between legal entities shall not in themselves constitute controlling relationships:

- (a) the same public investment corporation, institutional investor or venture-capital company has a direct or indirect holding of more than 50% of the nominal value of the issued share capital or a majority of voting rights of the shareholders or associates;



- (b) the legal entities concerned are owned or supervised by the same public body.

Affiliated entities cover not only the case of parent companies or holdings and their daughter companies or subsidiaries and vice-versa, but also the case of affiliates between themselves (*e.g. entities controlled by the same entity*).

Examples

- *Company A established in France holding 20% of the shares in Company B established in Italy. However, that 20% of shares has 60% of the voting rights in company B. Therefore company A controls company B and both companies may be linked third parties in a RFCS grant agreement.*
- *Company X and company Y do not control each other, but they are both owned by company Z. They are both considered affiliated entities.*

**3.3.2 SUBCONTRACTING<sup>18</sup>**

Subcontracting may cover only a limited part of the action. The beneficiaries must award the subcontracts ensuring the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price. In doing so, they must avoid any conflict of interests.

Characteristics of subcontracting:

- Based on 'business conditions'; this means that the subcontractor charges a price, which usually includes a profit (this distinguishes it from 'linked third parties').
- Subcontractor works without the direct supervision of the beneficiary and is not hierarchically subordinate to the beneficiary (this distinguishes it from action tasks implemented by in-house consultants)
- Subcontractor's motivation is pecuniary, not the research work itself. The subcontractor is paid by the beneficiary in exchange for its work
- Responsibility towards the EU/Euratom for the subcontracted work lies fully with the beneficiary.

The beneficiary remains responsible for all its rights and obligations under the GA, including the tasks carried out by a subcontractor.

Subcontracts should in particular foresee that intellectual property generated by a subcontractor reverts to the beneficiary (so that it can meet its obligations towards the other beneficiaries in the GA and respect the other obligations of the GA).

- Subcontractor has no rights or obligations towards the Commission/Agency or the other beneficiaries (it has no contractual relation with them).

The beneficiaries must ensure that the subcontractors comply with certain obligations:

- avoiding conflicts of interest,
- maintaining confidentiality,
- promoting the action and give visibility to the EU funding,
- liability for damages.

---

<sup>18</sup> See Art 13 of the RFCS MGA

In order to be able to fulfil these obligations, best practice is that the beneficiaries impose contractual arrangements on the third parties.

Another obligation is the compliance with national procurement rules when choosing the subcontractor. Beneficiaries that are 'contracting authorities' or 'contracting entities' (within the meaning of the EU public procurement Directives 2014/23/EC, 2014/24/EC and 2014/25/EC) must moreover comply with the applicable national law on public procurement. These rules normally provide for a special procurement procedure for the types of contracts they cover.

Other provisions:

- Subcontracting between beneficiaries is NOT allowed in the same grant agreement. All beneficiaries contribute to and are interested in the action; if one beneficiary needs the services of another in order to perform its part of the work it is the second beneficiary who should declare the costs for that work;
- Subcontracting to affiliates is NOT allowed, unless they have a framework contract or the affiliate is their usual provider, and the subcontract is priced at market conditions. Otherwise, these affiliates may work in the action, but they must be identified as linked third parties and declare their own costs;
- Coordination tasks of the coordinator cannot be subcontracted (e.g. monitor of the implementation of the action, intermediary for communication, review of reports, submission of deliverables, distribution of funds);
- for existing framework contracts or subcontracts the name of the subcontractor should be indicated (because it is known). Moreover, these (sub) contracts must have complied with best value-for-money and absence of conflict of interests at the time of their award.

## 4 PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/sep\\_usermanual.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/sep_usermanual.pdf)

The submission of project proposals to the RFCS Programme is made in the frame of an open call with annual cut-off date in September, which is the same for all types of activities (research projects, pilot and demonstration projects, accompanying measures).

The cut-off date of the RFCS call for 2020 is:

**Tuesday, September 15, 2020  
at 17:00:00 (Brussels local time)**

For practical reasons, submission of proposals is only possible during a limited time which goes from the opening of the call on the Funding & Tenders Portal until the above-mentioned cut-off date. Proposals submitted after the cut-off date will not be retained by the electronic submission system and applicants will need to re-submit the proposal in 2021, if they so wish, according to the modalities that will be set out in the 2021 edition of this Information Package.

The submission process consists of the following 6 steps.

		Description	Responsible
<b>Step 1</b>	LOGIN	Access to the Funding & Tenders Portal	Project Coordinator
<b>Step 2</b>	FUNDING SCHEME	Selection of Funding Programme, Topic, Type of Activity and Technical group	Project Coordinator
<b>Step 3</b>	CREATE DRAFT	Creation of a new draft proposal	Project Coordinator
<b>Step 4</b>	PARTIES	Selection of partners	Project Coordinator
<b>Step 5</b>	EDIT PROPOSAL	Preparation of the technical content, of the administrative information and of the budgetary aspects of the proposal.	All partners
<b>Step 6</b>	SUBMIT	Final submission of the proposal	Project Coordinator

Before starting the submission, applicants are strongly recommended to become familiar with all documents, guidelines and forms made available on the page of the Funding & Tenders Portal dedicated to the RFCS call.

In addition, general user manuals on the submission of proposals are also available at the following links:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/sep\\_usermanual.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/sep_usermanual.pdf)

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/submit-proposals\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/submit-proposals_en.htm)

Although the last document above is mainly intended for submission of proposals under the Horizon2020 programme, these documents provide an exhaustive overview and a step-by-step guide of the submission process, which applies for the most part also to the submission of proposals to the RFCS programme.

## 4.1 STEP 1 – LOGIN TO THE FUNDING & TENDERS PORTAL

The project proposals for the RFCS programme have to be prepared and submitted electronically on the Funding & Tenders Portal, which is the common platform centralising the funding opportunities offered by the European Commission and other EU bodies:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

No paper submissions will be accepted, nor proposals submitted by e-mail or in any other form.

The Funding & Tenders Portal offers to applicants the possibility to create and edit a proposal for any open call, to monitor the status of their submitted proposals and to enrol as an expert for the evaluation of proposals.

On the Funding & Tenders Portal, each person intending to create, edit and submit a proposal has to log in by using his/her EU Login. The EU account is intended to allow users to access a wide range of Commission information systems, using a single username and password. To register for the first time on EU account, please follow the link:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/cas/eim/external/register.cgi>

Note that the EU login is unique per person (per e-mail address). An error message will be displayed in case you are trying to register with an e-mail address already registered in the system.

You may already have an EU login if you have used in the past electronic services of the European Commission. If this is the case, please avoid a new registration and use your existing EU login to log in.

The EU login is different from the PIC (Participant Identification Code, which relates to an organisation, see Section 4.3). Typically, the PIC code is unique for the whole organisation, while the EU login is personal.

Every time you log in with your EU login, please also make sure to select the correct domain (it should be **External** for people not working in any European institution).

Once the user is logged in, the following options exist:

- If the user intends to create a new proposal to be submitted to the RFCS programme, he can do so by following the indications given in detail in Steps 2 to 6;
- If the user has already created a proposal and now wants to edit or submit it, or he/she has been invited to participate in an existing proposal, he/she can view the proposal concerned in the My Proposal(s) page and edit only specific parts.

## 4.2 STEP 2 – FUNDING SCHEME

The Steps 2 and 3 are only relevant for a user who wants to create a draft proposal for the first time.

The dedicated page of the call for the RFCS programme can be accessed from the panel of the "Funding Opportunities" on the Funding & Tenders Portal, where a link to the page with calls for proposals of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel is available. The active call of the RFCS for 2020 can be found under the name "RFCS-2020".

When accessing the page of the RFCS-2020 call, the relevant Topic (Coal or Steel) has to be selected:

- RFCS-01-2020 Coal
- RFCS-02-2020 Steel

This gives access to the page of the Topic, where the following panels are available:

- Topic description (objectives, scope, expected impact)
- Topic conditions and documents (Information Package, templates, etc.)
- Submission service

On the Submission Service panel, and upon selection of the **Type of Activity** (Research projects, Pilot & Demonstration projects or Accompanying Measure), the user will have direct access to the **Funding & Tenders Portal Submission Service** (referred to in this information Package as Funding & Tenders Portal and available under the tab *Submission Service* at the opening of the call), which is the electronic environment that allows editing and submitting the proposals.

## 4.3 STEP 3 – CREATE DRAFT

On the "Create Draft" panel of the Funding & Tenders Portal system, the user creating the proposal for the first time will be asked to:

- 1) **Identify his/her organisation**, which will be referred to in the following as the Coordinating Organisation. This is done through the Participant Identification Code (PIC) of the organisation.

The PIC is a code for identifying the participants at any stage of the different processes of the programmes managed by the DG Research and Innovation. Therefore, every organisation that intends to become participant in a RFCS proposal must request the PIC code, temporary or validated.

An organisation that has recently submitted a proposal to the RFCS or Horizon 2020 programme should already have a PIC. To check whether an organisation is already registered, the following search facility can be used (a search box is also available at this step):

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/organisations/register.html>

If the organisation does not have a PIC, then the "Register Organisation" link on the same page will direct the user to the registration process.

If you encounter problems during the registration, please contact the IT Help Desk through the dedicated link on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

- 2) **Identify his/her role** in the proposal.

If the person creating the proposal identifies himself/herself as the 'Main Contact' for the coordinating organisation, then he/she becomes the primary contact person for the Commission services and will be referred to in this Information Package as the Project Coordinator of the entire proposal.

If the person creating the proposal identifies himself/herself as "Contact Person", he/she will be asked to identify a different Main Contact at Step 4, who becomes the Project Coordinator. This information is mandatory for the successful submission of the proposal.

- 3) **Identify the proposal**. Information that needs to be entered at this stage is the proposal acronym (max 20 characters) and a short summary (max 2000 characters).

By clicking on "*Next*", a disclaimer appears which requires the user to accept the terms and conditions of usage of the submission system, followed by the confirmation that the proposal has been successfully created. An automatic email is sent by the system to the person creating the proposal, giving a direct link to the "My Proposals" page on the EC Participants Portal. This link should be used for any future access to the draft proposal.

## 4.4 STEP 4 – PARTIES

The list of organisations (having a PIC), contact persons and access right can be managed at Step 4.

Access can be given to as many contact persons of the selected organisations as wished. The identification is based upon the e-mail address of the person; if a

given email address is already linked to another contact person, a warning will be displayed and the operation fails. For every organisation, the presence of a main contact person is mandatory.

When selecting the access rights for contact persons, the following has to be considered:

- The main contact person and other contact persons of the coordinating organisation with full access rights can manage the list of participants and contacts, edit any part of the administrative forms of the proposal, upload any attachments (e.g. technical annex), and submit the proposal.
- The main contact person and other contact persons of other participants with full access rights can view/download the information but can only edit the part of the administrative forms which concern their organisation.
- Contact persons with read-only rights can only view/download the information.

To add a new participant organisation, click on the "Add Partner" button and use the Search function to obtain the PIC of the new organisation (the system allows to retrieve the PIC of any registered organisation using its full or partial name or VAT number).

*Important. Every time modifications are made at Step 4, these need to be saved by:*

- *clicking on the "Save changes" button at the bottom of the page,*
- *opening and saving the Administrative Forms (Part A of the proposal, accessible by clicking on "edit forms" at Step 5, see Section 4.5).*

Once the modifications are saved, an automatic e-mail is sent to the new individuals added to the proposal, inviting them to access and to contribute to the draft proposal via the Funding & Tenders Portal. Here, all proposals in which the person is involved will be listed under the My Proposal(s) link.

The invited parties need to have an EU login to view and modify the proposal online (Forms A2 and A3 for the relevant organisation). If not already registered in EU, they can do so at the time of first access to the system by clicking on the "Not registered yet" link.

If an invited person does not receive the invitation email, he/she can be re-invited by the main contact person by clicking on the envelope icon.

## 4.5 STEP 5 – EDIT PROPOSAL

The table below gives a summary of all RFCS submission forms required at Step 5, followed by an explanation of the individual forms.

	Forms		Sub-forms	Applies to	Format	Responsible
Part A (Administrative Forms)	A1	General information		all proposals	Single on-line form	Project Coordinator
	A2	Administrative data of participating organisations	One set of administrative data per participant			Each participant for his/her own organisation or the Project Coordinator on behalf of participants
	A3	Budget for the proposal				
Part B and Annexes	B1	Proposal Description		all proposals	To be uploaded as single pdf file (max 18 pages, max 10 MB)  Template available in Funding & Tenders Portal (Step 5)	Project Coordinator
	B2	Technical Annex	B2-1 Project objectives		To be uploaded as single pdf file including B2-1, B2-2 and B2-3 (recommended less than 40 pages, max 20 MB)  Template available in Funding & Tenders Portal (Step 5)	
			B2-2 Work packages description			
			B2-3 Bar chart			
	B3	Budget Breakdown	One Form B3 for each participant in the proposal (and its linked third parties)	To be uploaded as single pdf file including all B3 forms for the proposal (no page limit, max 10 MB)  Template available in Funding & Tenders Portal (Step 5)		
B4	Resubmission details		only re-submitted proposals	To be uploaded as single pdf file (max 2 pages, max 10 MB)  Template available on Funding & Tenders Portal (Step 5)		
ESR	Copy of the Previous ESR			Upload as single pdf file (max 10 MB)		

### **Part A (Administrative Forms)**

The Administrative Forms (referred to in the following as Part A) appear as a single online pdf file with editable fields automatically created by the submission system. These forms can be accessed by clicking on the “*edit forms*” button and are composed of three different sections:



**Form A1.** The first section of Part A (*General Information*) provides an overview of the proposal and is initially partly filled by the system with the information given by the Project Coordinator at Steps 3 and 4. The Project Coordinator must enter at this stage the full title of the proposal, its duration (in months), starting date, abstract, research objective (refer to point 2.1 in this Information Package for explanation of codes used in the dropdown list), technical group (refer to Annex II to this Information Package for details on the scopes of the different technical groups of the RFCS programme) and identification of resubmitted proposals. This part is complemented by specific declarations to be made by the Project Coordinator.

**Forms A2.** The second section of Part A (*Administrative data of participating organisations*) has to be filled in with additional information and contact details of each participant, including information on dependencies with other participants (to this goal, please refer to the definition of "independent legal entities" given in the footnote).<sup>19</sup> This part can be filled in either by each participant for his/her own organisation or by the Project Coordinator on behalf of the participants.

**Form A3.** The third section of Part A (*Budget for the proposal*) has to be filled in by the Project Coordinator and should give an overview of the costs foreseen by each participant (and its linked third parties, if any) per cost category. Such costs should correspond exactly to the amounts reported in Forms B3 by each participant under the different cost categories. Figures inserted manually by the consortium must be rounded to the nearest integer (see explanation given for Form B3), while values calculated automatically by the system will be displayed with two decimal places.

The following commands appear at the top of each page of Part A.

**Table of contents.** This link brings back to the Table of Contents on the first page of the proposal; additionally a 'Go To' drop down menu is available to quickly jump to any section of the Part A form.

**Validate Form.** At any stage of the proposal preparation process, the "Validate form" feature checks if mandatory information is still missing. The check will be carried out on all forms in Part A regardless of the page from which the validation has been launched, and will redirect the user to a page with a list of warnings (validation results). The presence of some of the warnings will not block the submission of the proposal, but may affect the eligibility of the proposal and/or the outcome of the evaluation due to missing information.

---

<sup>19</sup> Two legal entities shall be regarded as independent of each other where neither is under the direct or indirect control of the other or under the same direct or indirect control as the other. For this purpose, control may, in particular, take either of the following forms:

- (a) the direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the nominal value of the issued share capital in the legal entity concerned, or of a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or associates of that entity;
- (b) the direct or indirect holding, in fact or in law, of decision- making powers in the legal entity concerned.

The following relationships between legal entities shall not in themselves be deemed to constitute controlling relationships:

- (a) the same public investment corporation, institutional investor or venture-capital company has a direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the nominal value of the issued share capital or a majority of voting rights of the shareholders or associates;
- (b) the legal entities concerned are owned or supervised by the same public body.

**Save and Close:** every time the forms in Part A are modified, the modifications must be saved by clicking on “*Save and close*” otherwise they will be lost. This will also close the editable pdf interface. The action saves the entire Part A regardless of the page from which the “Save and close” has been launched.

## **Part B**

Part B is the core part of the proposal as it includes the description of the state-of-the-art, the work plan, the operational capacity of the consortium, the budgetary aspects, and any other element that the applicants may consider useful in view of the evaluation of their proposal.

Applicants are recommended to give the highest consideration to this part. In case the proposal is successful at the evaluation and the consortium will be invited to enter in the Grant Agreement preparation phase in view to sign a Grant Agreement with the Commission, most of the information provided in Part B will become contractual obligations. No possibility will be given during the preparation of the Grant Agreement to modify substantial elements of the proposal, such as the planned work, the deliverables, the composition of the consortium<sup>20</sup>, the nature and extent of the claimed costs etc., except for obvious clerical errors.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore the proposal will be evaluated as submitted and, if important information is missing or not convincing, or shortcomings are found, this will result in a low scoring of the proposal. Applicants are advised to become familiar already at this stage with the RFCS evaluation criteria given for each activity type in Annexes III, IV and V to this Information Package and the evaluation process explained in Chapter 5.

Part B consists of a set of pdf files (the so-called Forms B) that have to be uploaded by the Project Coordinator and should follow the given format. Templates of these forms are available for download from the Funding & Tenders Portal submission platform (under “*download templates*”).

These templates are MS Word and Excel documents and must be converted to pdf before uploading (the Funding & Tenders Portal will not accept files with extension different from *pdf*).

The forms in Part B should be filled in preferably in English as this will be the working language during the evaluation. If these forms are written in a language other than English, please include an English version of the proposal's abstract in the Technical Annex (Form B2). Note that, in any case, the online submission forms for Part A and the templates for Part B are only available in English.

---

<sup>20</sup> A change in the consortium may be exceptionally accepted in duly justified cases, provided the content and the quality of the proposal does not change, or in case of a partner failing in regard to legal and financial viability. In this case the consortium has to propose a solution, either to attribute the tasks to other members of the consortium or to replace the participant with a new organisation, after approval by the Commission on a case by case analysis.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. omission to submit evidence or information on a non-substantial element of the proposal, see Art 151 of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) N° 66/2012.

Required forms:

- For every proposal, a minimum of 3 pdf files must be uploaded: Forms B1, B2 and B3. When submitting the proposal, an error message is displayed if any of these files is missing and the submission will not be allowed.
- If the proposal is re-submitted this year after it has not been retained for funding by the RFCS in a previous evaluation, two additional pdf files must be uploaded: Forms B4 and the most recent ESR.

Also note that there are page limitations for Form B1 (max. 18 pages) and B4 (max 2 pages). When validating the proposal, the submission system will generate an automatic warning when the page count exceeds the maximum, but this will not prevent the submission. In order for the proposal to be admissible, it is therefore the responsibility of the applicants to ensure that the said limits are respected.

**Form B1**

Form B1 (Proposal Description) should contain:

- A proposal summary (maximum 100 words)
- A list of ongoing and closed projects (RFCS, ECSC, FP, etc.), international literature, patents etc. of major relevance to the objectives of the proposal, and a clear indication of the proposal's added value to what has been already achieved to date at both European and worldwide level. Any mention of information that is not yet part of the public domain (i.e. reference to projects whose final report is not yet public) should allow the reader to reach an exhaustive understanding of the relevant findings.
- A description of the project, with indication of its main aspects, the global approach of the research and a brief overview of the work plan, as well as any other element that the applicants consider useful for a proper evaluation of the proposal. The description should be concise and structured in order to facilitate an easy understanding of all the main aspects and issues at stake.
- A description of the individual partners of the consortium, highlighting their operational capacity (in terms of e.g., experience, skills, facilities, staff, resources) to carry out the proposed action. Subcontractors and linked third parties should also be described.

Required format for Form B1:

- the given template should be used  
(file B1\_Proposal\_Description.docx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "*download templates*", STEP 5);
- it has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as single pdf file, max file size is 10 MB;

- the document must not exceed **18 pages** in total; the minimum font size allowed is 11 points.

**In order for the proposal to be admissible, it is the responsibility of the applicants to ensure that the said page limit is respected.**

## Form B2

Form B2 (Technical Annex) describes the work plan for the execution of the proposed action. If the proposal is retained for funding, it will become an Annex to the Grant Agreement and will define the contractual technical obligations of the participants. It includes the following sub-forms:

- Form B2-1 should explain the objectives of the whole project, in max 1 page;
- Form B2-2: for each work package, it should explain the objectives, the activities to be carried out in order to achieve these objectives, as well as the responsibilities and overall commitment (in terms of Person-Months) of the participants. The responsibility for each deliverable should be also clearly identified, as well as the interdependencies of tasks and work packages. Contributions from subcontractors and linked third parties should be described.
- The following reports, which are mandatory and have to be submitted via the Funding & Tenders Portal (reporting module), should not be classified as deliverables, as they constitute contractual obligations:
  - Periodic Reports (one per Reporting Period);
  - Publishable summary.

**These reports are related to payments and should *not* be classified as deliverables. Please do not classify any of the contractual reports (i.e. Periodic reports or publishable summary) as deliverables in the Technical Annex.**

Annual Reports are *not* requested anymore (*reports corresponding to the calendar years in which the Periodic reports are not due, contrary to the past practice*).

**The comprehensive overview of the project (State of the Art, problem, proposed approach and outcome) should constitute a separate deliverable with an indicative delivery date not later than Month 6 from the project starting date.**

The comprehensive overview will form the reference basis for the project monitoring in the first months from its start.

Form B2-3 (bar chart): should indicate the scheduling for each task in each work package and the commitment (in terms of Person-Months) of each participant, subcontractor and linked third party.

Required format for B2:

- the given template should be used (file B2\_Technical\_Annex.docx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "*download templates*", STEP 5. The information provided should strictly follow the format given, without attaching any additional documents in whatever form (e.g. additional annexes, appendices, supporting letters etc.).
- Forms B2-1, B2-2 and B2-3 should be bundled consecutively into one single pdf file to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as Form B2; max file size is 20 MB.
- Form B2, while there is no formal page limit, is recommended of a length of 30 and at most 40 pages; the minimum font size allowed is 11 points.

### **Forms B3**

Budget breakdown for each direct participant in the proposal. The form allows participants to claim costs classified in the categories explained in Section 3.2. Footnotes are given in the form to guide applicants.

Costs incurred by linked third parties have to be claimed by indicating the name of the linked third party in the last column on the right (while, for costs incurred directly by the participant, the cells in this column should be left empty).

Direct costs for subcontracting can be claimed by the participants or by its linked third parties, as relevant.

The template provided on the Funding & Tenders Portal is a MS Excel file with an empty sample of the form. Applicants will need to generate additional copies of this form in order to cover all participants in the proposal.

In order to allow for a full compatibility with the central IT systems, the following settings are used in the Excel template for rounding numbers with decimal places: the totals A (personnel costs), B (direct costs of subcontracting), C1 (equipment) and C2 (operating costs) are calculated by automatically rounding up or down to the nearest integer; the totals D (indirect costs), E (total estimated eligible costs) and the total revenue are calculated with a precision of 2 decimal places.

When converting the Excel file in pdf format, make sure that this operation is extended to all Forms B3 that you have created (i.e., to all participants) and check that the resulting pdf file is readable

and clearly conveys the intended information. In particular check that the text inserted in the cells is always well visible; hidden text will be lost in the conversion to pdf and will not be taken into account for the evaluation. For an optimal conversion into pdf, do not modify the width and the number of the columns in Form B3 (whereas it is always possible to add new rows, if more space is needed, and extend the length of each Form B3 even beyond the 2 pages of the template).

Required format for Forms B3:

- the given template should be used (file B3\_Budget\_Breakdown.xlsx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "*download templates*", STEP 5).
- One form B3 is requested for each direct participant in the proposal.
- It has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as a single pdf file which includes all forms B3 for the proposal. The same order of participants should be used as they appear in Part A.
- maximum file size is 10 MB.
- there is no page limit for this form.

#### **Form B4**

Resubmission details (applies only to resubmitted proposals).

If it is declared in Form A1 that the proposal has been already submitted to the RFCS programme for evaluation in previous years, the proposal will be classified as "resubmitted" and the following two additional documents are requested: Forms B4 and the most recent ESR.

Form B4 should explicitly summarise any changes made against the previous submission.

Required format for B4:

- the given template should be used (file B4\_Resubmission\_Details.docx available in Funding & Tenders Portal under "*download templates*", STEP 5).
- it has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as a single pdf file; max file size is 10 MB.
- it must not exceed **2 pages**; the minimum font size allowed is 11 points. **In order for the proposal to be admissible, it is the responsibility of the applicants to ensure that the said page limit is respected.**

Note that a resubmitted proposal is subject to a new independent evaluation exercise that does not necessarily imply that it will receive equal or higher score than the previous submission.

**Previous ESR** Previous Evaluation Summary Report (applies only to resubmitted proposals).

This corresponds to the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) that the applicants have received from the European Commission following the most recent evaluation of the proposal submitted to the RFCS programme. The Project Coordinator is requested to upload exactly the same pdf file received from the European Commission.

There is no page limit for this form.

It has to be uploaded to Funding & Tenders Portal as a single pdf file; max file size is 10 MB.

If a proposal is declared as a resubmission but the applicants fail to provide the most recent ESR, this document will be provided to the evaluators by the Commission's services.

## 4.6 STEP 6 – SUBMIT

The Project Coordinator (or other contact persons of the coordinating organisation with full access rights to the proposal) is responsible for the submission of the proposal.

Prior to the submission, the Project Coordinator is recommended to perform a Validation of the proposal (by clicking on “*Validate*” on the Edit Proposal’s Forms screen) in order to know if any important information is missing in Part A and if at least the mandatory forms B1, B2 and B3 have been uploaded.

The Funding & Tenders Portal system is not programmed to check whether the Forms B1 and B4 do not exceed the maximum number of pages or re-submitted proposals actually include the required B4 and the most recent ESR. It is therefore always the responsibility of the Project Coordinator to make sure that the necessary forms are uploaded according to the instructions given in Section 4.5 (“Step 5 – Edit Proposal”), including all necessary sub-forms and respecting the page limits.

Once the “Validation” check does not reveal any residual problems, the proposal can be submitted by clicking on “*Submit*” appearing on the lower right corner of the Edit Proposal’s Forms screen. Note that this action will directly submit the proposal to the RFCS programme.

The proposal can be submitted at any time prior to the cut-off date of the RFCS call for 2020, Tuesday, September 15 at 17:00:00 (Brussels local time). By accessing the “My Proposals” page on the Funding & Tenders Portal, a submitted proposal can be withdrawn by the Project Coordinator, or it can be re-opened, modified and re-submitted as long as this is done before the given cut-off date.

Note that any subsequent submission will overwrite the preceding one and that the Commission will only see and evaluate the last **submitted** (i.e., not last saved) version of the proposal available on the system at the expiration of the deadline (cut-off date for 2020). Participants are advised to submit an early version of the proposal and subsequently update it so that there is always a submitted version on Funding & Tenders Portal.

After the deadline, proposals will remain accessible in read-only mode and for download only until the end of 2020. It is therefore recommended to save and/or print a version of the electronic proposal to keep a permanent record of what has been submitted.

Note that the proposals may be evaluated on paper after being printed in black and white. Applicants are recommended to ensure that black and white printouts of the proposal still convey the intended information.



## 5 EVALUATION

Submitted proposals are evaluated by the Commission services with the assistance of:

- independent external experts acting as evaluators
- independent external experts acting as observers

Proposals are evaluated as submitted. Changes in the proposal are no longer possible after the cut-off date and any additional documentation provided by the applicants after this date will be disregarded, unless the Commission expressly asks the applicants to provide this information, e.g. to clarify any obvious clerical errors on their part. The authorising officer responsible may correct obvious clerical errors in application documents after confirmation of the intended correction by the participant. Where a participant fails to submit evidence or to make statements, the evaluation committee or, where appropriate, the authorising officer responsible shall, except in duly justified cases, ask the participant to provide the missing information or to clarify supporting documents. Such information, clarification or confirmation shall not substantially change application documents.<sup>22</sup>.

In addition, the Commission may re-allocate a proposal to a different topic, Technical Group or type of action, if the choice made by the applicants does not appear in accordance with the definitions of the topic, Technical Group or type of action. In this case, the applicant will be informed and asked to expressly agree with the proposed re-allocation.

If the coordinator wants to withdraw a proposal after the closure of the call, s/he should inform the Commission through the RFCS functional mailbox indicated in Section 6.1. If an applicant has submitted the same proposal more than once, the Commission may ask him/her to withdraw the duplicates.

### 5.1 CONDITIONS FOR ADMISSIBILITY AND ELIGIBILITY

Proposals are only evaluated if they are considered admissible and eligible.

A proposal will only be considered **admissible** if it complies with all the following conditions:

- 1.1 It has been submitted before the deadline through the Funding & Tenders Portal Submission System (Funding & Tenders Portal); proposals submitted via any other means (e-mail, ordinary mail, hand-delivery, etc.) will not be evaluated.

---

<sup>22</sup> Article 151 “Clarification and correction of application documents” of the Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046

- 1.2 It is readable, accessible and not protected for printing.
- 1.3 It includes the following forms (intended as a complete set of the relevant sub-forms as explained in Section 4.5):

Form *B1* – Description of the proposal  
Form *B2* – Technical Annex  
Form *B3* – Budget breakdown

If any of the required forms and sub-forms is missing, the proposal will be declared inadmissible.

- 1.4 If it is a resubmitted proposal, the following additional form should be provided:

*Form B4 – Information on the resubmitted proposal*

- 1.5 The following forms must not exceed the maximum allowable number of pages:

Form *B1* maximum 18 pages  
Form *B4* maximum 2 pages (only relevant for resubmitted proposals)

A proposal will only be considered **eligible** if:

- 2.1 at least three legal entities in case of Research Projects, at least two legal entities in case of Pilot and Demonstration projects or Accompanying Measures, independent<sup>23</sup> from each other and established in at least two different EU Member States, participate in the project as direct beneficiaries.<sup>24</sup>

A check on the admissibility and eligibility of the proposals is carried out by the Commission before the evaluation. Applicants of inadmissible and/or ineligible proposals will be informed in due time about the decision of the Commission not to proceed with the evaluation of such proposals. They will not be given the possibility to improve the proposals in order to make it admissible and eligible for the current call, but can consider resubmitting it in one of the future RFCS calls, if they wish.

A proposal may be declared ineligible also at a later stage of the evaluation process, should evidence arise of non-compliance with the admissibility and eligibility criteria given above.

---

<sup>23</sup> Two legal entities shall be regarded as independent of each other where neither is under the direct or indirect control of the other or under the same direct or indirect control as the other. For this purpose, control may, in particular, take either of the following forms:

- (a) the direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the nominal value of the issued share capital in the legal entity concerned, or of a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or associates of that entity;  
(b) the direct or indirect holding, in fact or in law, of decision- making powers in the legal entity concerned.

The following relationships between legal entities shall not in themselves be deemed to constitute controlling relationships:

- (a) the same public investment corporation, institutional investor or venture-capital company has a direct or indirect holding of more than 50 % of the nominal value of the issued share capital or a majority of voting rights of the shareholders or associates;  
(b) the legal entities concerned are owned or supervised by the same public body.

<sup>24</sup> Subcontractors and linked third parties are not considered direct beneficiaries in the project.

## 5.2 EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each proposal is evaluated by a panel composed of a minimum of three experts under the supervision of Commission's staff. The detailed evaluation criteria are defined separately for Research projects, for Pilot and Demonstration projects and for Accompanying Measures.

The evaluation criteria are:

1. Excellence
2. Impact
3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation

The complete evaluation forms with indication of all criteria, sub-questions, thresholds and the order of the criteria are given in Annexes III, IV, V to this Information Package. These correspond to the forms that the evaluators will be asked to fill in the electronic evaluation system.

The cascade mechanism in evaluation criteria is explained in Section 5.3.1.

### **5.2.1 SCORING**

The panel of experts will evaluate the proposal by granting, for each single criterion, a score comprised between 0 and 5 points. Fractional scores, e.g. 3.5, are allowed. To this purpose, the experts will refer to the following definitions of the scores:

- 0 The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information (unless the result of an 'obvious clerical error')
- 1 **Poor.** The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses
- 2 **Fair.** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion but there are significant weaknesses
- 3 **Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well but with a number of shortcomings
- 4 **Very Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well but with a small number of shortcomings.
- 5 **Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion; any shortcomings are minor.

Half (0.5) additional bonus point will be granted to proposals if they address the annual priority in the relevant topic (see point 2.2 in this Information Package).

Important: the proposals will be evaluated as submitted and, if substantial information is missing or not supported, or shortcomings are found, this will result in a low scoring of the proposal and possibly in its rejection; instructions will be given to the evaluators to do so rather than giving recommendations on how to improve the proposal during the preparation of the Grant Agreement.

### **5.2.2 THRESHOLDS**

For every evaluation criteria, and regardless of the type of activity, there is a threshold of minimum 3,00 points. Consequently, a proposal obtaining less than 3,00 points in any evaluation criterion will not pass the evaluation and will not be recommended for funding.

For the overall score and regardless of the type of activity, there is a threshold of minimum 10,00 points.

## **5.3 AFTER THE EVALUATION**

### **5.3.1 RANKING LISTS**

After the evaluation, all proposals for Research, Pilot and Demonstration projects and for Accompanying Measures submitted under the same topic (Coal/Steel) will be ranked together in one list. The lists will be prepared as follows:

- proposals above all evaluation thresholds will always precede proposals failing on one or more thresholds, regardless of the total score obtained;
- within each group, proposals will be ranked according to the total score given by the evaluators (this includes the additional priority bonus point, if granted);
- in case of proposals with equal total score, these will be ranked according to the following predefined cascade order of the evaluation criteria:

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Name of the criterion for the different types of activity</i>		
		<i>Research projects</i>	<i>Pilot and Demonstration projects</i>	<i>Accompanying Measures</i>
<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Criterion 1</b>	Excellence	Excellence	Excellence
<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Criterion 2</b>	Impact	Impact	Impact
<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>Criterion 3</b>	Quality and efficiency of the implementation	Quality and efficiency of the implementation	Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Therefore for two proposals with same total score, and regardless of the type of activity, the proposal with higher score under criterion 1 will be ranked first. If these two proposals have same score under criterion 1, the proposal with higher score under criterion 2 will be ranked first; and so on.

- In case the cascade mechanism explained above is not able to define the exact ranking for two or more proposals with equal total score (i.e. if they have exactly the same scores under each criterion), the proposal with the highest percentage of participants of private for profit organisations will be ranked first.
- In case of the cascade mechanism explained above is not able to define the exact ranking for two or more proposals with equal total score (i.e. if they have exactly the same scores under each criterion and same number of private for profit participants), the proposal with the highest percentage of budget assigned in the proposal to private for profit organisations will be ranked first.

### **5.3.2 EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT**

At the end of the evaluation process, an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) is produced by the Commission, with indication and justification of scores for each criterion. The ESR will be sent to applicants in due time and in any case before 15 February 2021.

### **5.3.3 SELECTION OF PROPOSALS TO BE FUNDED**

Starting from the top of the two ranking lists (coal and steel), funding will be allocated to proposals that have passed all evaluation thresholds according to the requested EU contribution, until the available budget for the current call and for corresponding sector is assigned in such a way that the next eligible proposal in the ranking list cannot be funded.

For each sector (Coal and Steel), the complete ranked list will therefore consist of the following different sections:

- the main list of proposals that have passed all thresholds and for which there is sufficient RFCS funding;
- the reserve list of proposals that have passed all thresholds and can be funded only in case proposals in the main list are withdrawn, excluded or if extra RFCS funding becomes available;
- the list of proposals that didn't pass all evaluation thresholds;
- the list of inadmissible proposals;
- the list of ineligible proposals.

Applicants of proposals which do not receive funding under this call will have the possibility to resubmit the proposal for evaluation in a future RFCS call, if they wish to do so. The applicants should ensure the proposal is up-to-date with the scientific and technological state-of-art in the year of the resubmission.

If a proposal is in the main list of proposals to be funded, the consortium will be invited to enter in the Grant Agreement preparation phase in view to sign a Grant Agreement with the Commission. In this case, most of the information provided in Part B of the proposal originally submitted becomes contractual obligations. No possibility will be given during the preparation of the Grant Agreement to modify elements of the proposal, such as the planned work, the deliverables, the composition of the consortium, the nature and extent of the claimed costs etc., except for obvious clerical errors.<sup>25</sup> A change in the consortium may be exceptionally accepted in duly justified cases, provided the content and the quality of the proposal does not change, or in case of a partner failing in regard to legal and financial viability. In this case the consortium has to propose a solution, either to attribute the tasks to other members of the consortium or to replace the participant with a new organisation, after approval by the Commission on a case by case analysis. Even if a coordinator of a ranked proposal in the main list has received an information letter to start the grant preparation phase, this should not be considered as a commitment that the

---

<sup>25</sup> Omission to submit evidence or information on a non-substantial element of the proposal, see Art 151 of the Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.

Commission will fund the project, until the formal Award Decision on the proposals which can receive funding is adopted, and the Commission signs the Grant Agreement.

#### **5.3.4 SIGNATURE OF THE GRANT AGREEMENT**

Once the Award Decision is adopted on which proposals can receive financial contribution, a Grant Agreement can be signed by the parties (the European Commission on one side and the legal representative of the coordinating organisation on the other side).

Once the project has started, the following payments will be made to the coordinator which will transfer the relevant budget quotas to the individual beneficiaries without any unjustified delay:

- one pre-financing payment,
- one or more interim payments,
- one payment of the balance.

The total amount of pre-financing and interim payments will not exceed 80% of the maximum grant amount.

## 5.4 COMPLAINTS

### **5.4.1 SUBMISSION FAILED**

If the coordinator thinks that the submission of his/her proposal has failed due to a fault in the Electronic Submission System, s/he may file a complaint through the IT Helpdesk on the Funding & Tenders Portal,<sup>26</sup> explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal with the time stamp prior to the call deadline and, if available, evidence of the failure/problem.

For the complaint to be admissible it must be filed within **four days after** the call closure. You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt.

In order that a complaint would be upheld, the IT audit trail (application SEP Submission log files and access log files of the EC IT-systems involved) must show that there was indeed a technical problem at the EC side which prevented the coordinator from submitting (or resubmitting) the proposal.

The complainant will be notified about the outcome of the treatment of his/her complaint as soon as possible and at latest within 30 days following the reception of his/her complaint. In exceptionally justified cases, if a decision cannot be reached in this term, s/he will receive a holding reply.

If the complaint is upheld, the proposal will be considered as correctly submitted and evaluation, by independent experts, must be launched. The proposal will then be evaluated on the basis of the pdf files provided by the complainant (in the last version before the call deadline) OR if the complainant cannot provide

---

<sup>26</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/api/contact/index.html>

this, the last version in the IT system. The version must be determined via the 'pdf files attributes' showing the date and time of creation and last modification. Please do not delay submission until the final deadline to reduce the risks leaving insufficient time to solve a potential IT incompatibility issue.

You can submit the proposal as many times as you wish up to the deadline. Every submitted version will replace the previously submitted one.

#### **5.4.2 REJECTION FURTHER TO THE ELIGIBILITY AND ADMISSIBILITY CHECK**

If a proposal has been declared **inadmissible** or **ineligible** and is therefore not retained for evaluation, the Commission will inform the coordinator of the proposal in due time, explaining the reasons for rejection.

If the coordinator considers that his/her proposal complies with the rules on admissibility and eligibility, s/he may file a complaint to challenge the rejection decision.

The complaint must be filed within 30 days after receiving the rejection letter by the Commission via the following website:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/redress-frontoffice/work.iface>.

You will automatically receive an acknowledgement of receipt.

If the Commission considers that the complaint is founded, following the recommendations of the admissibility and eligibility review committee if needed, the Commission must accept the proposal, send it for evaluation and notify the complainant.

#### **5.4.3 REJECTION FURTHER TO THE EVALUATION BY INDEPENDENT EXPERTS**

At the end of the evaluation, every coordinator will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation for his/her proposal. He receives a copy of the Evaluation Summary Report with views and scores of the independent experts.

If the coordinator considers that the evaluation of his/her proposal was not carried out in accordance with the Financial Regulation or the RFCS Information Package 2020, s/he may file a complaint to request an evaluation review. The scope of the evaluation review will cover only the procedural aspects of the evaluation. Its role is not to call into question the judgment of appropriately qualified experts, and therefore it does not cover the assessments by these experts of the quality of the proposal.

In order for a complaint to be eligible, it must be filed by the coordinator within 30 days from the date on which the Commission informed the complainant of the evaluation results. The complaint has to be filed via the following website:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/redress-frontoffice/work.iface>

In addition, the complaint must raise shortcomings in the evaluation procedure, be related to the evaluation of a specific proposal and the complainants must base their complaint on the information contained in the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR), possibly with reference, as the case may be, to the conditions of the call for proposals, the evaluation rules etc. concerned.

A complaint is founded if, as a result of the evaluation review and following recommendation of the evaluation review committee, the Commission decides that there is sufficient evidence to support the complaint. In this case, the proposal will be sent to full or partial re-evaluation. Re-evaluations will be based on the proposal as it was originally submitted in accordance with the conditions and requirements of the call to which it was submitted (no additional information is admissible). The score of the re-evaluation will be the final score for the proposal (It can also be lower than the one awarded originally).

The complainant cannot request a second evaluation review procedure.

The evaluation review procedure will normally have no impact on the proposals originally selected, nor on the time-to-grant of those proposals.



## 5.5 PROPOSAL FOLLOW UP

### **5.5.1 TIME LINE FOLLOWING THE SUBMISSION STAGE.**

The following table gives an overview of the time line for the different stages following the submission of the proposals.

Important notice for successful proposals: a Grant Agreement with the consortium can only be signed by the Commission services once the final ranking list is discussed by the relevant Advisory Group, endorsed by the Coal and Steel Committee (COSCO) of member states representatives and once the relevant award decision is adopted.

<b><i>Proposal Submission Deadline</i></b>	<b>Tuesday, 15 September 2020 at 17:00:00 (Brussels local time)</b>
<i>Evaluation</i>	September to November 2020
<i>Notification of the evaluation results to all applicants</i>	Before 15 February 2021
<i>Grant Agreement signature for projects retained for funding</i>	Before 15 June 2021
<i>Payment of first pre-financing</i>	July-September 2021
<i>Target start date of projects</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2021 or 1 <sup>st</sup> of September 2021

### **5.5.2 VALIDATION OF THE LEGAL ENTITIES AND ASSESSMENT OF FINANCIAL CAPACITY.**

Applicants must be aware that the grant agreement will not be signed until the situation of each beneficiary is cleared on the two following issues:

- the complete validation of the references of the legal entity (legal name, legal form, address, registration number, VAT number) and the allocation of powers within the legal entity (LEAR and LEAR extended mandate) which must be made on the basis of supporting documents required by the Research Executive Agency (REA);
- for private law legal entities: the assessment of the financial capacity of the beneficiary which is also done by the Research Executive Agency (REA) on the basis of the most recent approved annual accounts (balance sheet and profit & loss account). The objective is to ensure that the beneficiary will have the financial resources to carry out the tasks allocated to it until the end of the project.

Where the ratios based on the net worth asset and on the annual result of the entity are not satisfactory, an in depth assessment is made by the Authorising Officer to consider whether pre-financing guarantees must be provided of the consortium be modified.

Therefore, beneficiaries are requested to follow carefully this process managed by the Research Executive Agency and answer in a timely manner to its mail requests send to the contact person to the mail address declared at the time of the PIC registration (Personal Identification Code of each beneficiary).

A complete explanation is available on the Funding & Tenders Portal:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/register-an-organisation/registration-of-organisation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/register-an-organisation/registration-of-organisation_en.htm).

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/lev/h2020-rules-lev-lear-fvc\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/lev/h2020-rules-lev-lear-fvc_en.pdf).

## 6 INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

### 6.1 HELPDESKS

For general information concerning the RFCS programme please contact our helpdesk:

[rtd-steel-coal@ec.europa.eu](mailto:rtd-steel-coal@ec.europa.eu)

or check our new pages on the Industrials Technologies website of the European Commission:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial\\_technologies/rfcs\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial_technologies/rfcs_en.html)

All necessary documents, templates, links and informative material for proposals submission and evaluation are available on the pages of the RFCS calls hosted on the Funding & Tenders Portal of the European Commission:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-search>

You may also wish to contact the IT Helpdesk of the Funding & Tenders Portal for general IT issues and questions such as forgotten passwords, access rights and roles, guidance on the steps for submission of proposals, etc:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/api/contact/index.html>

### 6.2 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

When preparing the proposals, applicants may also wish to refer to the following supporting documents:

- the full list of projects (completed and on-going) funded by the RFCS programme (2003 – 2018):

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial\\_technologies/rfcs\\_pubs.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial_technologies/rfcs_pubs.html)

For completed projects, the link to the final report published on EU Bookshop is also given.

- a selection of RFCS success stories:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/theme\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/theme_en.cfm)

The published reports of finalised RFCS projects are available from the EU bookshop, which is the portal of the Publications Office of the European Union:

<http://bookshop.europa.eu>

## 6.3 CONFIDENTIALITY AND PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION

Proposals and any related information, data, and documents will be treated confidentially by the Commission and by the independent experts acting as evaluators and observers. All proposals will be archived under secure conditions.

Personal data will be processed in accordance to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC and according to the 'notifications of the processing operations' to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) of the Commission (publicly accessible in the DPO register).

## **ANNEXES**

ANNEX I: COUNCIL DECISION 2008/376/EC<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008D0376>

## II

(Acts adopted under the EC Treaty/Euratom Treaty whose publication is not obligatory)

## DECISIONS

## COUNCIL

## COUNCIL DECISION

of 29 April 2008

**on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel and on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme**

(2008/376/EC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to the Protocol, annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel,

Having regard to Council Decision 2003/76/EC of 1 February 2003 establishing the measures necessary for the implementation of the Protocol, annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel <sup>(1)</sup>, and in particular Article 4(3) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament <sup>(2)</sup>,

Whereas:

(1) The revenue from investments of the net worth of the assets of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in liquidation and, on completion of the liquidation, the assets of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, are being assigned to the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, which is intended exclusively to fund research projects outside the Community framework programme for research,

technological development and demonstration activities in the sectors related to the coal and steel industry.

(2) The Research Fund for Coal and Steel is to be managed by the Commission in accordance with principles similar to those governing the former ECSC coal and steel technical research programmes and on the basis of multi-annual technical guidelines which should constitute an extension of those ECSC programmes, providing a high concentration of research activities and ensuring that they supplement those of the Community framework programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities.

(3) The Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013) set out in Decision No 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 <sup>(3)</sup> (hereinafter referred to as 'the Seventh Framework Programme') provides an incentive to review Council Decision 2003/78/EC of 1 February 2003 laying down the multi-annual technical guidelines for the research programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel <sup>(4)</sup> in order to ensure that the Research Fund for Coal and Steel complements the Seventh Framework Programme in the sectors related to the coal and steel industry.

(4) Research and technical development constitute a very important means of supporting Community energy objectives with regard to the supply of Community coal and its competitive and environmentally friendly conversion and utilisation. Moreover, the growing international dimension of the coal market and the global scale of the problems confronting it means that the

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 29, 5.2.2003, p. 22.

<sup>(2)</sup> Opinion of 10 April 2008 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 412, 30.12.2006, p. 1.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ L 29, 5.2.2003, p. 28.

Community has to take a leading role in meeting challenges relating to modern techniques, mine safety and environmental protection at worldwide level by ensuring the transfer of know-how required for further technological progress, improved working conditions (health and safety) and enhanced environmental protection.

- (5) With the general aim of increasing competitiveness and contributing to sustainable development, the main emphasis of research and technological development is on the development of new or improved technologies to guarantee the economic, clean and safe production of steel and steel products characterised by steadily increasing performance, suitability to use, customer satisfaction, prolonged service life, easy recovery and recycling.
- (6) The order in which the research objectives for coal and steel are presented in this Decision should not represent a priority as between those objectives.
- (7) In the framework of the management activities of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, the Commission should be assisted by advisory groups and technical groups representing a wide range of interests of industries and other stakeholders.
- (8) The recent enlargement incorporating new Member States requires modification of the multiannual technical guidelines laid down in Decision 2003/78/EC, notably as regards the composition of the advisory groups and the definition of coal.
- (9) In accordance with Statement No 4 of the Decision of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council 2002/234/ECSC of 27 February 2002 <sup>(1)</sup>, the Commission has re-examined the definition of steel and come to the conclusion that it is not necessary to change that definition. Indeed, steel castings, forgings and powder metallurgy products are topics already covered by the Seventh Framework Programme.
- (10) The general approach for revising the Decision 2003/78/EC should be to keep intact the procedures that were considered by the assisting groups as effective, together with a limited but necessary number of modifications and administrative simplifications in order to ensure complementarity with the Seventh Framework Programme.
- (11) Those modifications include the deletion of some accompanying measures as already foreseen in the Seventh Framework Programme. It is also necessary to align the periodicity of the revision and the experts' nominations concerning the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel on those used in the Seventh Framework Programme.
- (12) The rules on the composition of the advisory groups should be revised, notably as regards the representation of interested Member States and gender balance according to Commission Decision 2000/407/EC of 19 June 2000 relating to gender balance within the committees and expert groups established by it <sup>(2)</sup>.
- (13) The Commission should be given the opportunity to launch dedicated calls in the framework of the research objectives defined in this Decision.
- (14) The maximum total financial contribution from the Research Fund for Coal and Steel for pilot and demonstration projects should be increased to 50 % of the eligible costs.
- (15) The eligible costs approach should be kept together with a better definition of the cost categories and a revised percentage for the calculation of the overheads.
- (16) The Commission has reassessed the multiannual technical guidelines laid down in Decision 2003/78/EC and found that in view of the changes required it is appropriate to replace that Decision.
- (17) In order to ensure the necessary continuity with Decision 2003/78/EC, this Decision should apply from 16 September 2007. Applicants submitting proposals between 16 September 2007 and the date this Decision takes effect should be invited to resubmit their proposals in accordance with this Decision, which should enable them to benefit from the more favourable conditions provided by this Decision, notably as regards the financial contribution to pilot and demonstration projects.
- (18) The measures necessary for the implementation of this Decision should be adopted in accordance with Council Decision 1999/468/EC of 28 June 1999 laying down the procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission <sup>(3)</sup>.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

#### CHAPTER I

#### GENERAL PROVISIONS

##### Article 1

##### Subject matter

This Decision provides for the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel and lays down the multiannual technical guidelines for the implementation of that programme.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 154, 27.6.2000, p. 34.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 184, 17.7.1999, p. 23. Decision as last amended by Decision 2006/512/EC (OJ L 200, 22.7.2006, p. 11).

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 79, 22.3.2002, p. 42.

## CHAPTER II

**RESEARCH PROGRAMME OF THE RESEARCH FUND FOR COAL AND STEEL**

## SECTION 1

***Adoption of the Research Programme****Article 2***Adoption**

The Research Programme for the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (hereinafter referred to as 'the Research Programme') is hereby adopted.

The Research Programme shall support the competitiveness of the Community sectors related to the coal and steel industry. The Research Programme shall be consistent with the scientific, technological and political objectives of the Community, and shall complement the activities carried out in the Member States and within the existing Community research programmes, in particular the framework programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities (hereinafter referred to as 'the Research Framework Programme').

Coordination, complementarity and synergy between these programmes shall be encouraged, as shall the exchange of information between projects financed under the Research Programme and those that are financed under the Research Framework Programme.

The Research Programme shall support research activities aimed at the objectives defined for coal in Section 3 and for steel in Section 4.

## SECTION 2

***Definitions of coal and steel****Article 3***Definitions**

For the purposes of this Decision, the following definitions shall apply:

1. coal shall mean any of the following:
  - (a) hard coal, including the high and medium-ranking 'A' coals (sub-bituminous coals) as defined in the international codification system of coal of the UN Economic Commission for Europe;
  - (b) hard coal briquette;
  - (c) coke and semi-coke derived from hard coal;
  - (d) lignite, including the low-ranking 'C' coals (or ortho-lignites) and the low-ranking 'B' coals (or meta-lignites) as defined in the above codification;
  - (e) lignite briquettes;

(f) coke and semi-coke derived from lignite;

(g) oil shales;

2. steel shall mean any of the following:

- (a) raw materials for iron and steel production, such as iron-ore, sponge iron and ferrous scrap;
- (b) pig iron (including hot metal) and ferro-alloys;
- (c) crude and semi-finished products of iron, ordinary steel or special steel (including products for reuse and re-rolling), such as liquid steel cast by continuous casting or otherwise, and semi-finished products such as blooms, billets, bars, slabs and strips;
- (d) hot-finished products of iron, ordinary steel or special steel (coated or uncoated products, excluding steel castings, forgings and powder metallurgy products), such as rails, sheet piling, structural shapes, bars, wire rods, plates and universal plates, strips and sheets, and tube rounds and squares;
- (e) end products of iron, ordinary steel or special steel (coated or uncoated), such as cold-rolled strips and sheets and electrical sheets;
- (f) products of the first-stage processing of steel that can enhance the competitive position of the above iron and steel products, such as tubular products, drawn and polished products, cold-rolled and cold-formed products.

## SECTION 3

***Research objectives for coal****Article 4***Improving the competitive position of Community coal**

1. Research projects shall aim to reduce the total costs of mining production, improve the quality of the products and reduce the costs of using coal. Research projects shall encompass the entire coal production chain as follows:
  - (a) modern techniques for surveying deposits;
  - (b) integrated mine planning;
  - (c) highly efficient, largely automated excavation and new and existing mining technologies corresponding to the geological characteristics of European hard coal deposits;
  - (d) appropriate support technologies;
  - (e) transport systems;
  - (f) power supply services, communication and information, transmission, monitoring and process control systems;



- (g) coal preparation techniques, oriented to the needs of the consumer markets;
- (h) coal conversion;
- (i) coal combustion.

2. Research projects shall also aim to achieve scientific and technological progress with a view to gaining a better understanding of the behaviour and control of deposits in relation to rock pressure, gas emissions, the risk of explosion, ventilation and all other factors affecting mining operations. Research projects with these objectives shall present the prospect of results applicable in the short or medium term to a substantial part of Community production.

3. Preference shall be given to projects that promote at least one of the following:

- (a) integration of individual techniques in systems and methods and the development of integrated mining methods;
- (b) substantial reduction of production costs;
- (c) benefits in terms of mine safety and the environment.

#### Article 5

##### Health and safety in mines

Issues concerning mine safety, including gas control, ventilation and air-conditioning with a view to improving underground working conditions and occupational health and safety as well as environmental issues shall also be taken into account in the projects covering the activities referred to in Article 4(1)(a) to (f).

#### Article 6

##### Efficient protection of the environment and improvement of the use of coal as a clean energy source

1. Research projects shall seek to minimise the impact of mining operations and the use of coal in the Community on the atmosphere, water and the surface within the framework of an integrated management strategy with respect to pollution. As the Community coal industry is undergoing constant restructuring, the research shall also be geared towards minimising the environmental impact of underground mines destined for closure.

2. Preference shall be given to projects that envisage one or more of the following:

- (a) a reduction in emissions from coal utilisation, including capture and storage of CO<sub>2</sub>;
- (b) a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, in particular methane, from coal deposits;

- (c) the return to the mine of mining waste, fly ash and desulphurisation products, accompanied, where relevant, by other forms of waste;
- (d) the refurbishment of waste heaps and the industrial use of residues from coal production and consumption;
- (e) the protection of water tables and the purification of mine drainage water;
- (f) a reduction in the environmental impact of installations which mainly use Community coal and lignite;
- (g) the protection of surface installations against the effects of subsidence in the short and long term.

#### Article 7

##### Management of external dependence on energy supply

Research projects shall relate to the prospects for long-term energy supply and concern the upgrading, in economic, energy-related and environmental terms, of coal deposits which cannot be extracted economically by conventional mining techniques. Projects may include studies, the definition of strategies, fundamental and applied research and the testing of innovative techniques which offer prospects for the upgrading of Community coal resources.

Preference shall be given to projects integrating complementary techniques such as the adsorption of methane or carbon dioxide, coal bed methane extraction and underground coal gasification.

#### SECTION 4

##### Research objectives for steel

#### Article 8

##### New and improved steelmaking and finishing techniques

Research and technological development (RTD) shall aim to improve steel production processes with a view to enhancing product quality and increasing productivity. Reducing emissions, energy consumption and the environmental impact as well as enhancing the use of raw materials and the conservation of resources shall form an integral part of the improvements sought. Research projects shall address one or more of the following areas:

- (a) new and improved iron-ore reduction processes;
- (b) ironmaking processes and operations;
- (c) electric arc furnace processes;
- (d) steelmaking processes;
- (e) secondary metallurgy techniques;

- (f) continuous casting and near net shape-casting techniques with and without direct rolling;
- (g) rolling, finishing and coating techniques;
- (h) hot- and cold-rolling techniques, pickling and finishing processes;
- (i) process instrumentation, control and automation;
- (j) maintenance and reliability of production lines.

#### Article 9

##### **RTD and the utilisation of steel**

RTD shall be undertaken in respect of the utilisation of steel to meet the future requirements of steel users and to create new market opportunities. Research projects shall address one or more of the following areas:

- (a) new steel grades for demanding applications;
- (b) steel properties addressing mechanical properties at low and high temperatures such as strength and toughness, fatigue, wear, creep, corrosion and resistance against fracture;
- (c) prolonging service life, in particular by improving the resistance of steels and steel structures to heat and corrosion;
- (d) steel-containing composites and sandwich structures;
- (e) predictive simulation models on microstructures and mechanical properties;
- (f) structural safety and design methods, in particular with regard to resistance to fire and earthquakes;
- (g) technologies relating to the forming, welding and joining of steel and other materials;
- (h) standardisation of testing and evaluation methods.

#### Article 10

##### **Conservation of resources and improvement of working conditions**

In both steel production and steel utilisation, the conservation of resources, the preservation of the ecosystem and safety issues shall form an integral part of the RTD work. Research projects shall address one or more of the following areas:

- (a) techniques for recycling obsolete steel from various sources and classification of steel scrap;

- (b) steel grades and design of assembled structures to facilitate the easy recovery of steel scrap and its reconversion into usable steels;
- (c) control and protection of the environment in and around the workplace;
- (d) restoration of steelworks sites;
- (e) improvement of working conditions and quality of life in the workplace;
- (f) ergonomic methods;
- (g) occupational health and safety;
- (h) reduction of exposure to occupational emissions.

#### CHAPTER III

##### **MULTIANNUAL TECHNICAL GUIDELINES**

#### SECTION 1

##### **Participation**

#### Article 11

##### **Member States**

Any undertaking, public body, research organisation or higher or secondary education establishment, or other legal entity, including natural persons, established within the territory of a Member State may participate in the Research Programme and apply for financial assistance, provided that they intend to carry out an RTD activity or can substantially contribute to such an activity.

#### Article 12

##### **Candidate countries**

Any undertaking, public body, research organisation or higher or secondary education establishment, or other legal entity, including natural persons, in candidate countries shall be entitled to participate without receiving any financial contribution under the Research Programme, unless otherwise provided under the relevant European Agreements and their additional Protocols, and in the decisions of the various Association Councils.

#### Article 13

##### **Third countries**

Any undertaking, public body, research organisation or higher or secondary education establishment, or other legal entity, including natural persons, from third countries shall be entitled to participate on the basis of individual projects without receiving any financial contribution under the Research Programme, provided that such participation is in the Community's interest.

## SECTION 2

**Eligible activities**

## Article 14

**Research projects**

A research project shall be intended to cover investigative or experimental work with the aim of acquiring further knowledge to facilitate the attainment of specific practical objectives such as the creation or development of products, production processes or services.

## Article 15

**Pilot projects**

A pilot project shall be characterised by the construction, operation and development of an installation or a significant part of an installation on an appropriate scale and using suitably large components with a view to examining the potential for putting theoretical or laboratory results into practice and/or increasing the reliability of the technical and economic data needed to progress to the demonstration stage, and in certain cases to the industrial and/or commercial stage.

## Article 16

**Demonstration projects**

A demonstration project shall be characterised by the construction and/or operation of an industrial-scale installation or a significant part of an industrial-scale installation with the aim of bringing together all the technical and economic data in order to proceed with the industrial and/or commercial exploitation of the technology at minimum risk.

## Article 17

**Accompanying measures**

Accompanying measures shall relate to the promotion of the use of knowledge gained or to the organisation of dedicated workshops or conferences in connection with projects or priorities of the Research Programme.

## Article 18

**Support and preparatory actions**

Support and preparatory actions shall be those appropriate to the sound and effective management of the Research Programme, such as the evaluation and selection of proposals as referred to in Articles 27 and 28, the periodic monitoring and assessment referred to in Article 38, studies, the clustering or the networking of related projects funded under the Research Programme.

The Commission may, where it deems appropriate, appoint independent and highly qualified experts to assist with support and preparatory actions.

## SECTION 3

**Management of the research programme**

## Article 19

**Management**

The Research Programme shall be managed by the Commission. It shall be assisted by the Coal and Steel Committee, the Coal and Steel Advisory Groups and the Coal and Steel Technical Groups.

## Article 20

**Establishment of the Coal and Steel Advisory Groups**

The Coal and Steel Advisory Groups (hereinafter referred to as 'the Advisory Groups') shall be independent technical advisory groups.

## Article 21

**Tasks of the Advisory Groups**

For the coal- and steel-related RTD aspects respectively, each Advisory Group shall advise the Commission on the following:

- (a) the overall development of the Research Programme, the information package as referred to in Article 25(3) and future guidelines;
- (b) the consistency and the possible duplication with other RTD programmes at Community and national level;
- (c) the setting-out of the guiding principles for monitoring RTD projects;
- (d) the work being undertaken on specific projects;
- (e) the research objectives of the Research Programme listed in Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter II;
- (f) the annual priority objectives listed in the information package and, where appropriate the priority objectives for dedicated calls as referred to in Article 25(2);
- (g) the preparation of a manual for evaluating and selecting RTD actions, as referred to in Articles 27 and 28;
- (h) the evaluation of proposals for RTD actions and the priority to be given to those proposals, having regard to the funds available;
- (i) the number, competence and composition of the Technical Groups referred to in Article 24;
- (j) the drawing-up of dedicated calls for proposals as referred to in Article 25(2);

(k) other measures when requested to do so by the Commission.

#### Article 22

##### Composition of the Advisory Groups

1. Each Advisory Group shall be composed in accordance with the tables set out in the Annex. Members of the Advisory Groups shall be appointed by the Commission to serve in a personal capacity for a period of 42 months. Appointments may be withdrawn.

2. The Commission shall consider proposals for appointments received in the following ways:

(a) by the Member States;

(b) by the entities referred to in the tables in the Annex;

(c) in response to a call for applications for inclusion on a reserve list.

3. The Commission shall ensure, within each Advisory Group, a balanced range of expertise and the broadest possible geographical representation.

4. Members of the Advisory Groups shall be active in the field concerned and be aware of the industrial priorities. In addition, the Commission, when appointing members, shall seek to achieve a gender balance.

#### Article 23

##### Meetings of the Advisory Groups

The meetings of the Advisory Groups shall be organised and chaired by the Commission, which shall also provide the secretariat.

If necessary, the Chairman may request members to vote. Every member shall have the right to one vote. The Chairman may invite visiting experts or observers to take part in meetings where appropriate. The visiting experts and the observers shall have no voting rights.

If necessary, such as to provide advice on matters of relevance for both the coal and steel sectors, the Advisory Groups shall convene in joint meetings.

#### Article 24

##### Establishment and tasks of the Coal and Steel Technical Groups

The Coal and Steel Technical Groups (hereinafter referred to as 'the Technical Groups') shall advise the Commission on the monitoring of research and pilot or demonstration projects

and, where necessary, in the definition of the priority objectives of the Research Programme.

Members of the Technical Groups shall be appointed by the Commission and shall come from the sectors related to the coal and steel industry, research organisations or user industries where they shall have responsibility for research strategy, management or production. In addition, the Commission, when appointing members, shall seek to achieve a gender balance.

Meetings of the Technical Groups shall, whenever possible, be held at venues chosen in such a way that project monitoring and results assessment are best ensured.

#### SECTION 4

##### Implementation of the research programme

#### Article 25

##### Call for proposals

1. An open and continuous call for proposals is hereby launched. Unless otherwise specified, 15 September of each year shall be the cut-off date for the submission of proposals for evaluation.

2. Where the Commission, in accordance with Article 41(d) and (e), decides to modify the cut-off date referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article for the submission of proposals, or to launch dedicated calls for proposals, it shall publish that information in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Dedicated calls shall indicate the dates and modalities for the submission, including whether it shall take place in one or two steps, and for the evaluation of the proposals, the priorities, the type of eligible projects as referred to in Articles 14 to 18, where necessary, and the envisaged funding.

3. The Commission shall establish an information package setting-out the detailed rules for participation, the methods of managing proposals and projects, application forms, rules for the submission of proposals, model grant agreements, eligible costs, the maximum financial contribution allowable, methods of payment and the annual priority objectives of the Research Programme.

The Commission shall make the information package public on the Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) or corresponding website.

Applications shall be submitted to the Commission in accordance with the rules laid down in the information package, of which a paper copy can be obtained from the Commission on request.

*Article 26***Content of proposals**

The proposals shall relate to the research objectives laid down in Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter II and, where applicable, to the priority objectives listed in the information package in accordance with Article 25(3) or to the priority objectives defined for the dedicated calls for proposals referred to in Article 25(2).

Each proposal shall include a detailed description of the proposed project and contain full information on objectives, partnerships, including the precise role of each partner, management structure, anticipated results, expected applications and an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits.

The proposed total cost and its breakdown shall be realistic and effective, and the project shall be expected to produce a favourable cost/benefit ratio.

*Article 27***Evaluation of proposals**

The Commission shall ensure a confidential, fair and equitable evaluation of proposals.

The Commission shall establish and publish a manual for the evaluation and selection of RTD actions.

*Article 28***Selection of proposals and monitoring of projects**

1. The Commission shall register the proposals received and shall verify their eligibility.

2. The Commission shall evaluate the proposals with the assistance of independent experts.

3. The Commission shall draw up a list of the proposals adopted in order of merit. The ranking list shall be discussed by the relevant Advisory Group.

4. The Commission shall decide on the choice of projects and the allocation of funds. Where the estimated amount of the Community contribution under the Research Programme is equal to or more than EUR 0,6 million Article 41(a) shall apply.

5. The Commission shall, with the assistance of the Technical Groups referred to in Article 24, monitor research projects and activities.

*Article 29***Grant agreements**

Projects based on selected proposals and measures and actions as specified under Articles 14 to 18 shall form the subject of a grant agreement. Grant agreements shall be based on relevant model grant agreements drawn up by the Commission, taking account, as appropriate, of the nature of the activities concerned.

Grant agreements shall define the financial contribution allocated under the Research Programme on the basis of the eligible costs, as well as the rules concerning cost reporting, the closure of accounts and certificates on financial statements. In addition, they shall provide for provisions on access rights and dissemination and use of knowledge.

*Article 30***Financial contribution**

1. The Research Programme shall be based on cost-sharing RTD grant agreements. The total financial contribution including any other additional public funding shall conform to the applicable rules on State aid.

2. Public contracts shall be used for the supply of movable or immovable assets, the execution of works or the provision of services which are necessary for the implementation of the support and preparatory actions.

3. Without prejudice to paragraph 1 of this Article, the maximum total financial contribution, expressed as a percentage of the eligible costs defined in Articles 31 to 35, shall be:

(a) for research projects up to 60 %;

(b) for pilot and demonstration projects up to 50 %;

(c) for accompanying measures, support and preparatory actions up to 100 %.

*Article 31***Eligible costs**

1. The eligible costs shall consist of the following:

(a) equipment costs;

(b) staff costs;

(c) operating costs;

(d) indirect costs.

2. The eligible costs shall cover only actual costs incurred for the execution of the project under the terms of the grant agreement. Beneficiaries, associated beneficiaries and sub-beneficiaries shall not be entitled to claim any budgeted or commercial rates.

*Article 32***Equipment costs**

The costs of purchasing or hiring equipment which are directly related to the execution of the project shall be chargeable as direct costs. The eligible costs for the leasing of equipment shall not exceed any eligible costs for its purchase.

*Article 33***Staff costs**

The costs of actual hours devoted exclusively to the project by scientific, postgraduate or technical staff and the staff costs of manual workers directly employed by the beneficiary shall be chargeable. Any additional staff costs, such as scholarships, shall require the Commission's prior written approval. All working hours charged must be recorded and certified.

*Article 34***Operating costs**

Operating costs directly related to the execution of the project shall be limited solely to the cost of:

- (a) raw materials;
- (b) consumables;
- (c) energy;
- (d) transportation of raw materials, consumables, equipment, products, feedstock or fuel;
- (e) the maintenance, repair, alteration or transformation of existing equipment;
- (f) IT and other specific services;
- (g) the rental of equipment;
- (h) analysis and tests;
- (i) dedicated workshop organisation;
- (j) certificate on financial statements and bank guarantee;
- (k) protection of knowledge;
- (l) assistance from third parties.

*Article 35***Indirect costs**

All other expenses, such as overhead costs or overheads, which may arise in connection with the project and which are not specifically identified in the preceding categories including travel and subsistence costs, shall be covered by a flat rate amounting to 35 % of the eligible staff costs as referred to in Article 33.

## SECTION 5

**Evaluation and monitoring of the research activities***Article 36***Technical reports**

For research, pilot and demonstration projects referred to in Articles 14, 15 and 16 periodical reports shall be drawn up by the beneficiary or beneficiaries. Such reports shall be used to describe the technical progress made.

On completion of the work, a final report comprising an assessment of exploitation and impact shall be provided by the beneficiary or beneficiaries. That report shall be published by the Commission in full or in summarised form depending on the strategic relevance of the project and following consultation, if necessary, of the relevant Advisory Group.

The Commission may require the beneficiary or beneficiaries to provide final reports on the accompanying measures referred to in Article 17 as well as on the support and preparatory actions referred to in Article 18 and may decide to have them published.

*Article 37***Annual review**

The Commission shall conduct an annual review of activities under the Research Programme and the progress of the RTD work. The report containing the review shall be forwarded to the Coal and Steel Committee.

The Commission may appoint independent experts and highly qualified experts to assist with this annual review.

*Article 38***Monitoring and assessment of the Research Programme**

1. The Commission shall carry out a monitoring exercise of the Research Programme, including an assessment of the expected benefits. A report on that exercise shall be issued by the end of 2013, and thereafter every seven years. These reports shall be made public on the Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) or corresponding website.

2. The Commission shall assess the Research Programme on completion of the projects financed during every period of seven years. The benefits of the RTD to society and to the relevant sectors shall also be assessed. The assessment report shall be published.

3. In carrying out the monitoring and assessment referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2, the Commission shall be assisted by panels of highly qualified experts appointed by the Commission.

*Article 39***Appointment of independent and highly qualified experts**

For the appointment of independent and highly qualified experts referred to in Article 18, Article 28(2) and Article 38, the provisions set out in Articles 14 and 17 of the Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 <sup>(1)</sup>, shall apply by analogy.

## CHAPTER IV

## FINAL PROVISIONS

*Article 40***Review of the multiannual technical guidelines**

The multiannual technical guidelines laid down in Chapter III shall be reviewed every seven years, first period ending on 31 December 2014. To this end, and at the latest in the first six months of the last year of each seven-year period, the Commission shall reassess the operation and the effectiveness of the multiannual technical guidelines and, where appropriate, propose any amendment.

If it sees fit, the Commission may carry out such reassessment and shall submit proposals for any appropriate amendments to the Council before the expiry of the seven-year period.

*Article 41***Implementing measures**

The Commission shall, in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 42(2), adopt the following implementing measures:

- (a) the approval of the funding actions where the estimated amount of the Community contribution under the Research Programme is equal to or more than EUR 0,6 million;
- (b) the drawing-up of terms of reference for the monitoring and assessment of the Research Programme referred to in Article 38;
- (c) amendments to Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter II;

(d) changes to the cut-off date referred to in Article 25;

(e) the drawing-up of dedicated calls for proposals.

*Article 42***Committee**

1. The Commission shall be assisted by the Coal and Steel Committee.

2. Where reference is made to this paragraph, Articles 4 and 7 of Decision 1999/468/EC shall apply.

The period laid down in Article 4(3) of that Decision shall be set at two months.

*Article 43***Repeal and transitional measures**

Decision 2003/78/EC shall be repealed. However, Decision 2003/78/EC shall continue to apply until 31 December 2008 to the financing of actions resulting from proposals submitted by 15 September 2007.

*Article 44***Applicability**

This Decision shall take effect on the day following its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

It shall apply from 16 September 2007.

*Article 45***Addressees**

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Luxembourg, 29 April 2008.

*For the Council*

*The President*

D. RUPEL

<sup>(1)</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013) (OJ L 391, 30.12.2006, p. 1).

## ANNEX II: SCOPE OF THE TECHNICAL GROUPS

Proposals submitted to the RFCS call should indicate the targeted Technical Groups which will be monitoring the project in case of successful signature of the Grant Agreement with the Commission. The selected Technical Group should be in line with the subject of the proposal; if this is not the case, the Commission reserves the right to re-assign the proposal to a Technical Group different from the one indicated by the applicants. The applicants will be informed in due time about this re-assignment.

The Technical Groups in 2020 are the following: 2 TGK for Coal and 5 TGA for Steel.



## Coal Technical Groups – TGK

### TGK1

#### **POST-MINING ISSUES, SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE COAL MINING OPERATIONS**

- Highly efficient, largely automated excavation and mining technologies
- Health and safety in coal mining operations
- Upgrading coal deposits; (enhanced) coal bed methane, underground coal gasification
- Support technologies and services, transport systems and monitoring & process control systems
- Reduction of the environmental impact of mining
- Post-mining environmental issues and land rehabilitation, including energy projects
- Waste management

### TGK2

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES RELATED TO COAL TREATMENT AND USE**

- Clean and efficient coal technologies
- Zero-emission and high-efficiency power generation
- Coal gasification and conversion
- Integration of the coal chain from mining to the final products (electricity, heat, hydrogen, coke, syngas)
- Co-combustion of coal with solid waste or biomass
- Reduction of the environmental impact of installations using coal and lignite
- CO<sub>2</sub> capture and storage (CCS)
- Other energy and non-energy uses of coal
- Chemical processing of CO<sub>2</sub> captured from combustion or gasification processes and used to produce fuels, petrochemicals and plastics (CCU)

## **Steel Technical Groups – TGA**

### **TGA1**

#### **IRON- AND STEELMAKING**

- Ore agglomeration, sintering and pelletising processes
- Physico-chemical metallurgy of liquid steel related to primary/secondary steelmaking and to slag formation
- Optimised sustainable iron- and steelmaking processes and operations (BF, EAF, DRI ...),
- New and improved processes for sustainable iron and steel production (hydrogen, electrolysis...)
- New and improved technologies for scrap classification, preparation and recycling for integration in iron- and steelmaking
- Recovery and valorisation of by-products (solids, liquids, gases)
- Instrumentation, modelling, control and optimisation of iron and steelmaking processes
- Reduction of emissions (including CO<sub>2</sub>), energy consumption and improvement of the environmental impact in iron- and steelmaking processes
- Energy, water and material flow management in iron and steelmaking processes, including recovery of waste heat
- Restoration of steelworks sites

### **TGA2**

#### **DOWNSTREAM STEEL PROCESSING**

- Chemistry and physics of solidification & precipitation related to casting processes
- Continuous casting, ingot casting and near net shape casting techniques with or without direct rolling for flat and long products
- Heat treatment technology, including reheating furnaces, and thermal treatments
- Hot and cold rolling
- Reliability of production processes and maintenance of production lines
- Surface engineering, chemical treatments, finishing and coating technologies
- Instrumentation, modelling, control and optimisation of downstream steel production processes
- Reduction of emissions, energy consumption and improvement of the environmental impact in downstream processes
- Energy, water and material flow management in downstream processing

### **TGA3**

#### **CONCEPTION OF STEEL PRODUCTS**

- Phase transformation, precipitation, re-crystallisation, microstructure & texture and ageing
- Predictive simulation models on microstructures & mechanical properties

- Development of steel with improved properties at low and high temperatures such as strength and toughness, corrosion, fatigue, wear, creep and resistance against fracture
- Steel products with improved physical properties including electro-magnetic behaviour
- Innovative steel grades for demanding applications
- Coating development and coated steel products with appropriate surface characteristics (corrosion protection, damage control, other aspects)
- Standardisation of testing and evaluation methods

#### TGA4

### **STEEL APPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS FOR EXISTING AND NEW MARKETS**

- Technologies relating to the transformation of steel products: cutting, forming, welding and other assembling technologies of steel products (and other materials)
- Structural safety and design methods, in particular with regard to resistance to fire and earthquakes
- Design of assembled structures to facilitate the easy recovery of steel scrap and its re-conversion into usable steels and techniques for recycling
- Steel-containing composites and sandwich structures
- Prolonging service life of steel based assemblies
- Innovative steel applications for emerging markets
- Innovative steel solutions for automobiles, packaging and home appliances
- Innovative steel solutions for building, construction, energy production and industry
- Life cycle assessment of sustainable steel applications

#### TGA5

### **STEEL FACTORIES - SMART AND HUMAN**

- Analytical and measurement techniques related to steelmaking/steel processing (quality control), work place (human impact) and to environment (external impact)
- Instrumentation, control and automation with focus on artificial intelligence and information technologies
- Decision support systems (Big Data, data analytics, interpretation and use)
- Knowledge management systems and knowledge handling
- Cyber security of steel production processes
- Social aspects of new automation or IT systems
- Working conditions and quality of life at the work place, ergonomic methods, reduction of occupational exposure (emissions, noise, ...)
- Control and protection of the environment in and around the workplace

## ANNEX III: EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Overall score Threshold: Minimum 10,00 points

### 1 Excellence

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 1

- 1.1 Does the proposal address at least one of the research objectives of the RFCS programme, relates to the European Green Deal Communication's elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the 2020 RFCS Information Package, and includes an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits, as per article 26 of Decision 2008/376/EC (Y/N)? Please justify.
- 1.2 To what extent do the applicants demonstrate their knowledge of the international state-of-the-art?
- 1.3 Does the proposal have an appropriate level of innovative value?
- 1.4 Are the proposed methods and techniques clearly described?
- 1.5 Is the scientific and technical feasibility of the proposed work convincingly addressed?

### 2 Impact

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 2

- 2.1 Are there relevant and substantial industrial Coal/Steel sector participation and expected benefits for the related European sector?
- 2.2 Do the expected results offer the perspective of a wider and general use in the European Union beyond a specific application, product and/or company?
- 2.3 Do the expected results address climate change or environment-related challenges and/or bring other important benefits for society, considering appropriately the European Green Deal elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the 2020 RFCS Information Package?
- 2.4 Are aspects of dissemination and (if applicable) standardisation convincingly addressed?

### 3 Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 3

- 3.1 Are the Work Packages and claimed financial resources clearly described, well defined and appropriate?
- 3.2 Is the overall scheduling suitable for achieving the project objectives?
- 3.3 Is the interaction of the partners and tasks clearly defined and appropriate?
- 3.4 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity to carry out the proposed action?

### Annual Priorities

Is the current annual priority for the relevant topic (coal or steel), as listed in the 2020 RFCS Information Package fully addressed in the proposal?

## ANNEX IV: EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR PILOT AND DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Overall score Threshold: Minimum 10,00 points

### 1. Excellence

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 1

- 1.1 Does the proposal address at least one of the research objectives of the RFCS programme, relates to the European Green Deal Communication's elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the 2020 RFCS Information Package, and includes an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits, as per article 26 of Decision 2008/376/EC (Y/N)? Please justify.
- 1.2 Does the proposal rely on well-established scientific and technical results obtained in former research projects or by any other means?
- 1.3 Does the proposal have an appropriate level of innovative value?
- 1.4 Are the proposed methods and techniques clearly described?
- 1.5 Is the technical feasibility of the proposed work convincingly addressed and risks well mitigated?

### 2 Impact

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 2

- 2.1 Are there relevant and substantial industrial Coal/Steel sector participation and expected benefits for the related European sector?
- 2.2 Do the expected results offer the perspective of a wider and general use in the European Union beyond a specific application, product and/or company?
- 2.3 Do the expected results address climate change or environment-related challenges and/or bring other important benefits for society, considering appropriately the European Green Deal elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the 2020 RFCS Information Package?
- 2.4 Will the project provide a step forward in the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) beyond TRL 6 of the proposed application?
- 2.5 Are economic issues adequately addressed and is the further demonstration or deployment of the proposed technology credible?

### 3 Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 3

- 3.1 Are the Work Packages and claimed financial resources clearly described, well defined and appropriate?
- 3.2 Is the overall scheduling suitable for achieving the project objectives?

3.3 Is the interaction of the partners and tasks clearly defined and appropriate?

3.4 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity to carry out the proposed action?

### **Annual Priorities**

Is the current annual priority for the relevant topic (coal or steel), as listed in the 2020 RFCS Information Package, fully addressed in the proposal?

## ANNEX V: EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ACCOMPANYING MEASURES

Overall score Threshold: Minimum 10,00 points

### 1 Excellence

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 1

- 1.1 Does the proposal address at least one of the research objectives of the RFCS programme, relates to the European Green Deal Communication's elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the 2020 RFCS Information Package, and includes an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits, as per article 26 of Decision 2008/376/EC (Y/N)? Please justify.
- 1.2 Is the proposal in line with the role of accompanying measures and does it disseminate new information?
- 1.3 Does it effectively address the appropriate audience in the field concerned?

### 2 Impact

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 2

- 2.1 Does the proposal demonstrate a strategic importance for the European coal/steel industry?
- 2.2 Do the applicants indicate clear and quantitative objectives? Are they credible?
- 2.3 Does the proposal indicate how the intended accompanying measure could have a direct impact e.g. on EU regulations and standards, on potential application at industrial level, on exploitation of new market opportunities, on climate change or environment-related challenges and/or bring other important benefits for society, considering appropriately the European Green Deal elements listed in the Introduction chapter of the 2020 RFCS Information Package?

### 3 Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Threshold: Minimum 3,00 points

Order in the cascade mechanism: 3

- 3.1 Are the Work Packages and claimed financial resources clearly described, well defined and appropriate?
- 3.2 Is the overall scheduling suitable for achieving the project objectives?
- 3.3 Is the consortium well balanced?
- 3.4 Do the individual partners have the necessary operational capacity to carry out the proposed action?

### Annual Priorities

Is the current annual priority for the relevant topic (coal or steel), as listed in the 2020 RFCS Information Package fully addressed in the proposal?

## ANNEX VI: TECHNOLOGY READINESS LEVELS

Where reference is given in this Information Package to Technology Readiness Levels (TRL), the following definitions apply:<sup>28</sup>

TRL 1 – basic principles observed

TRL 2 – technology concept formulated

TRL 3 – experimental proof of concept

TRL 4 – technology validated in lab

TRL 5 – technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 6 – technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 7 – system prototype demonstration in operational environment

TRL 8 – system complete and qualified

TRL 9 – actual system proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies; or in space)

---

<sup>28</sup> This Information Package uses the same definition of the Technology Readiness Levels as in the General Annexes of the Horizon 2020 Work Programmes 2018-2020.



## ANNEX VII: UNIT COST FOR SME OWNERS OR NATURAL PERSONS NOT RECEIVING A SALARY

### Costs of beneficiaries that are SMEs for their owners not receiving a salary – Costs of beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary

**What?** These budget categories cover the costs of SME owners and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary that worked on the action.

This includes SME owners who are remunerated/compensated for their work for the SME by any other means than a salary (for example, dividends, service contracts between the company and the owner, etc.).

**What not?** SME owners who receive a salary (registered as such in the accounts of the SME) cannot declare personnel costs under this budget category, unless s/he can show that this salary corresponds exclusively to the management of the SME (and is therefore not linked to the action).

(In this case, the salary for the management of the SME cannot be declared.)

If the remuneration status of the SME owner changes during the course of the action, the beneficiary has to request an amendment (see Article 55), in order to change the form of costs used (e.g. from unit cost to actual costs).

These costs must be **declared** on the basis of the unit cost (hourly rate) fixed by Commission Decision C(2013) 8197, authorised in the Commission Decision C(2016) 1502 and set out in Annex 2 and 2a of the GA.

The precise unit cost is not pre-fixed by the Decision; the 'amount per unit' (hourly rate) must be calculated for each individual — before signature of the GA — according to the following formula:

$$\text{Amount per unit} = \{ \{ \text{EUR } 4,880/143 \text{ hours} \} \\ \text{multiplied by} \\ \{ \text{country-specific correction coefficient of the country where the beneficiary is} \\ \text{established} \} \}$$

The country-specific correction coefficient is the one set out in the *Main Work Programme — MSCA* in force at the time of the call:

#### For EU Member States

country	coefficient	country	coefficient	country	coefficient	country	coefficient	country	coefficient
AT	106.7%	DK	135.0%	HR	83.9%	LV	77.7%	SE	121.8%
BE	100.0%	EE	79.4%	HU	77.4%	MT	84.4%	SI	86.1%
BG	62.0%	EL	88.7%	IE	115.6%	NL	107.9%	SK	80.4%
CY	82.6%	ES	95.4%	IT	104.4%	PL	75.5%	UK	139.8%
CZ	81.78%	FI	120.8%	LT	72.5%	PT	84.2%		
DE	97%	FR	115.7%	LU	100.0%	RO	68.8%		

The costs must comply with the following **conditions for eligibility**:

- fulfil the **general conditions** for unit costs to be eligible (i.e. units used during the action duration, necessary, linked to the action, correct calculation etc.);
- be declared for an owner of an SME/beneficiary that is natural person, who works on the action but does not receive a salary.

The owner may be compensated by means such as dividends, service contracts between the company and the owner, etc.

The Commission/Agency may verify that the beneficiary fulfils the conditions for using this unit cost.

## ANNEX VIII: ARTICLE 50 TEU – IMPACT ON MANAGEMENT OF EU PROCUREMENT, GRANTS, PRIZES AWARD PROCEDURES AND INDIRECT MANAGEMENT.

For British applicants: please note that the timetable for RFCS-2020 call, same as in the previous years, is such that the resulting grant agreements will be signed in April-June next year, specifically they may be signed after the end of the transition period established in the UK Withdrawal Agreement. This would mean that UK participants would not be eligible to receive call funding and may therefore only remain in consortia provided they fund their own participation. If this situation changes, this notice will be updated.

## ANNEX IX: MANUAL OF EVALUATION PROCEDURES.

This Manual of Evaluation Procedures explains the procedures adopted for the evaluation of proposals submitted to the RFCS programme by 15 September 2020.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The evaluation of proposals submitted to the RFCS programme before the annual cut-off date of 15 September 2020 will be carried out in several steps under the responsibility and coordination of the Commission. The Commission ensures a confidential, fair and equitable evaluation as well as a proper planning, coordination and monitoring of the overall evaluation exercise.

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by the Commission with the assistance of:

- **Independent external experts acting as evaluators :**

Proposals are evaluated by the Commission with the assistance of independent external experts acting as **evaluators**. These are appointed in their personal capacity and do not represent any specific organisation or interest.

When considering evaluators for appointment, the Commission refers to the database of independent experts established to provide experts to research and innovation EC programmes (registration in this database is via the Funding & Tenders Portal of the European Commission, in the section dedicated to "Experts"). In order to populate this database, specific calls for expressions of interest can be published periodically by the Commission.

Evaluators appointed by the Commission must have the **skills** and **knowledge** appropriate to the technical field (Technical Group) in which they are asked to assist. They must also have a high level of professional experience in the public or private sector related to: research in the relevant scientific and technological fields; administration, management or evaluation of projects; dissemination and use of the results of research and technological development projects, technology transfer and innovation; international cooperation in science and technology; development of human capital.

In addition, experts are selected also considering the following criteria:

- An appropriate balance between academic and industrial expertise
- An appropriate gender balance
- A balanced distribution of geographical origins
- A minimum of 25% of new experts<sup>29</sup>
- For each expert, a maximum of three consecutive participations are allowed
- Appropriate language and communication skills.

---

<sup>29</sup> A "new expert" is defined here as an expert who has not participated in the RFCS evaluation in the previous 3 years.

For each annual evaluation exercise, the Commission establishes a list of experts based on the criteria described above and taking into account the number of proposals to be evaluated, including a reasonable reserve list.

Once a year, the Commission publishes the full list of independent experts participating in the evaluation exercise. However, the names of the experts assigned to each specific proposal are not made public.

When signing the standard electronic contract for appointment, the experts commit to comply with the **Code of Conduct for Evaluators**<sup>30</sup>, which binds them to perform their duties without any conflict of interest and ensuring the necessary confidentiality to the information handled during the evaluation. According to this Code of Conduct, evaluators are not permitted for example to disclose to third parties details on the proposals, on the experts assigned to examine proposals, or on the discussions which take place within the evaluation panels. Moreover, they cannot act as evaluators for a given proposal if they have a conflict of interest with this proposal, according to the definition of conflicts of interest given in the above-mentioned Code of Conduct. They cannot be members of the RFCS programme committee and advisory groups assisting the Commission in the implementation of the RFCS programme.

▪ **Independent external experts acting as observers :**

Independent experts acting as **observers** are appointed in their personal capacity and do not represent any specific organisation or interest. They shall apply their professional skills, knowledge and ethics to the best of their abilities, in accordance with the guidelines and time schedule provided by the Commission.

The role of the observer is to give independent advice to the Commission on the conduct and fairness of all phases of the evaluation sessions, on ways in which the experts acting as evaluators apply the evaluation criteria, and on ways in which the evaluation process could be improved. The observer also verifies that the procedures set out in this *RFCS Information Package 2020* are correctly applied. Observers are encouraged to liaise with the Commission officials involved in the evaluation sessions and to make observations on any possible improvements that could be put into practice. During the execution of their tasks, observers shall not express views on the proposals under evaluation or on the experts' opinions on the proposals.

The observers will report their written findings to the Commission. Subsequently, these findings will be summarised into one report which is finally presented to the Advisory Group members and to COSCO during the relevant annual plenary meetings.

---

<sup>30</sup> The Code of Conduct is part of the general model contract for independent experts assisting the Commission, available on the Funding & Tenders Portal at the link: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/experts\\_manual/h2020-experts-mono-contract\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/experts_manual/h2020-experts-mono-contract_en.pdf) Experts are recommended to regularly check this link for updates of the model contract and the annexed code of conduct.

When signing the standard electronic contract for appointment, the experts commit to comply with the **Code of Conduct for Observers**<sup>31</sup>, which binds them to perform their duties without any conflict of interest and ensuring the necessary confidentiality to the information handled during the evaluation. According to this Code of Conduct, observers are not permitted for example to disclose to third parties details on the proposals, on the experts assigned to examine proposals, or on the discussions which take place within the evaluation panels. Moreover, they cannot act as observers if they have a conflict of interest with any of the proposals to be evaluated, according to the definition of conflicts of interest given in the above-mentioned Code of Conduct. They cannot be members of the RFCS programme committee and advisory groups assisting the Commission in the implementation of the RFCS programme.

### **Before the Evaluation**

Proposals are submitted electronically.

### **Proposals admissibility and eligibility check**

After the call deadline, the Commission verifies that the proposals meet the admissibility and eligibility criteria given in this RFCS Information Package 2020. If a proposal is inadmissible or ineligible, it will not be evaluated. In this case the Commission informs the applicants in due time, also explaining the reasons for a rejection decision and how to appeal.

A proposal may be declared ineligible also at a later stage of the evaluation process, should evidence arise of non-compliance with the eligibility and admissibility criteria. The fact that a proposal is evaluated in such circumstances does not constitute proof of its admissibility or eligibility.

The project coordinator may be asked to provide the missing information by the Commission e.g if obvious clerical errors are found (omission to submit evidence or information on a non-substantial element of the proposal). If the information provided by the applicants would substantially change the proposal (for example affecting its admissibility and eligibility or the evaluation outcome), it will not be taken into account.

### **The Evaluation Process**

#### **Step 1: Briefing of evaluators**

The independent experts appointed as evaluators receive in advance all necessary information on how to carry out their duties. The briefing material is composed of two main parts:

1) At the beginning of the remote evaluation phase (see Step 2), experts receive a specific briefing document which will include the necessary information on the

---

<sup>31</sup> The Code of Conduct is part of the general model contract for independent experts assisting the Commission, available on the Funding & Tenders Portal at the link: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/experts\\_manual/h2020-experts-mono-contract\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/experts_manual/h2020-experts-mono-contract_en.pdf) Experts are recommended to regularly check this link for updates of the model contract and the annexed code of conduct.

evaluation exercise as well as guidelines and recommendations for a smooth and effective execution of their tasks. In addition, they receive other fundamental documents such as this *RFCS Information Package 2020*, the *Synopsys of RFCS projects*, the guidelines on the use of the on-line evaluation platform (SEP). The experts asked by the Commission to act as rapporteurs will receive additional specific guidance on how to best carry out this task.

2) At the beginning of each central evaluation phase (see Step 4), an oral briefing is organised by the Commission to explain how the session will be organized and how the consensus meetings will be carried out, to remind experts of their duties and obligations, to give practical information on the evaluation premises and its surroundings, and any other information deemed necessary to guarantee a transparent, effective and high-quality central evaluation session.

## **Step 2: Remote evaluation phase**

Each proposal is normally evaluated by at least three independent experts. This number can be increased in particular cases, for example if additional expertise appears necessary.

For the evaluation, each evaluator receives access to the SEP online system, where he/she can see only the proposals he/she is asked to evaluate. If the expert finds that he/she has a conflict of interest with a given proposal, or feels not fully knowledgeable on the topic, he/she can decline the task and report this to the Commission, which will assign this proposal to a different expert.

During the remote evaluation phase, an expert does not have any contact with other experts evaluating the same proposals and does not know their names.

For each proposal, the experts fill in electronically an Individual Evaluation Form reporting written comments for each evaluation criterion. Different evaluation criteria are used for Research projects, Pilot and Demonstration projects and for Accompanying Measures (see section 5.2 and Annex III, Annex IV and Annex V to this *Information Package 2020*). The experts shall evaluate proposals as they were submitted, without giving recommendations on how to improve them and without evaluating their potential should certain changes be made. Therefore, if important information is missing or not supported, or shortcomings/weaknesses are found, this shall result in a lower scoring of the proposal. The evaluation criteria are described in this *Information Package 2020*.

Based on the written comments, experts score each evaluation criterion on a scale from 0 to 5 (with a 0.5 granularity), according to the following definitions:

0 - The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information (unless the result of an 'obvious clerical error').

1 - Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 - Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 - Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4 - Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 - Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

**Annual priorities:** 0.5 additional bonus point will be granted to proposals if they address the annual priority in the relevant topic (see point 2.2 and 5.2 in this Information Package 2020).

**Resubmitted proposals:** A proposal that has been evaluated in one or several prior RFCS evaluations and was not retained for funding may be resubmitted and re-evaluated. Resubmitted proposals are re-evaluated independently from the scoring obtained in the previous evaluations. However, resubmitted proposals include a copy of the previous Evaluation Summary Report and an explanation from the applicants (Form B4) on how the shortcomings identified therein have been addressed in the revised proposal.

### **Step 3: Draft consensus report**

For each proposal evaluated remotely, one of the evaluators is asked by the Commission to act as Rapporteur, i.e. to summarize into one common Draft Consensus Report the comments made by the individual evaluators. The rapporteur can decline this task in SEP, explaining to the Commission the reason for the rejection.

The Draft Consensus Report follows the same template of the Individual Evaluation Reports. This task shall be carried out electronically in the SEP system before the start of the central evaluation session (deadlines will be given by the Commission in the appointment letter). When carrying out his/her task, the rapporteur can see the comments made by the other two experts but does not know who their names.

The draft consensus report should reflect the views of all experts and highlight possible divergence, to serve as a basis for discussion during the central evaluation session. The granularity of the score is 0.25 for the draft consensus report.

### **Step 4: Central Evaluation Phase (Consensus Meetings)**

Once the draft consensus reports have been prepared remotely by the Rapporteurs, central evaluation sessions are organized in the premises of the European Commission in Brussels. On this occasion, a consensus meeting is convened for each proposal to discuss the quality of the proposal and address open issues and divergences of the experts as identified by the rapporteurs in the draft consensus report. Participants are the experts who evaluate the proposal and a Commission representative acting as moderator. The independent observer may also be present.



The objective of the consensus meeting is to reach a fair consensus and generate a full consistent final evaluation, represented by a comprehensive, concise and clear final consensus report. The consensus report follows the same structure of the individual evaluation reports, i.e. it contains specific comments for each evaluation criterion and the relevant consensus scores. The consensus score for each criterion must be consistent with the definition of the scores given under Step 2 (Remote Evaluation Phase) and should reflect the text of the consensus report. In order to better differentiate proposals based on their merit and to facilitate achieving a consensus among evaluators, a 0.25 granularity in the consensus scores is adopted for the 2020 central evaluation session.

A Commission official chairs the consensus meeting and acts as moderator, ensuring that the consensus report faithfully reflects the evaluators' views and the consensus reached. If necessary, he/she assists the rapporteur with the task of recording the comments of the evaluators in the consensus report.

If the evaluators cannot reach a consensus on a particular aspect of the proposal, the Commission services may ask one or more additional evaluators to examine the proposal. In this case, the moderator may decide to suspend the meeting to give sufficient time to a new expert to read the proposal and form his/her own view. The consensus meeting is then reconvened at a suitable time and the new expert is invited to participate and contribute to the discussion.

Once all experts participating in the consensus meeting agree with the text and scores of the consensus report, they sign in the SEP system for its formal approval.

### **Step 5: Quality Control**

The Consensus Report produced by the consensus meeting is checked by a Commission representative (different from the one moderating the meeting), who verifies the consistency between the comments and the scores for each criterion and the quality and clarity of the text produced.

In case of problems (for example inconsistencies between scores and comments, ambiguous comments, etc.), the consensus report is rejected and the rapporteur receives in SEP the task to revise it together with the comments of the Commission's officer responsible for the quality control. This task can be carried out by the experts either centrally in Brussels or remotely. The revised consensus report is submitted to the other experts for their approval and then once again to the Quality Control.

### **Step 6: Ranking list**

After the evaluation, all proposals for Research, Pilot and Demonstration projects and for Accompanying Measures submitted under the same topic (Coal/Steel) will be ranked together in one list. The lists will be prepared as follows:

- proposals passing all evaluation thresholds will always precede proposals failing on one or more thresholds, regardless of the total score obtained;
- within each group, proposals will be ranked according to the total score given by the evaluators (this includes the additional priority bonus point, if granted);

in case of proposals with equal total score, the cascade mechanism is explained at point 5.3.1 in this Information Package.

Starting from the top of the two ranking lists (coal and steel), funding will be allocated to proposals that have passed all evaluation thresholds according to the requested EU contribution, until the annual budget of the RFCS for the current call and the corresponding topic is fully assigned.

For each topic, the complete ranked list will therefore consists of the following different sections:

- the main list of proposals that have passed all thresholds and for which there is sufficient RFCS funding;
- the reserve list of proposals that have passed all thresholds and can be funded only in case proposals in the main list are withdrawn, excluded or if extra RFCS funding becomes available;
- the list of proposals that didn't pass all evaluation thresholds;
- the list of inadmissible and/or ineligible proposals.

Within six months from the deadline for submission of proposals, the applicants will receive a notification from the Commission informing them about the evaluation outcome and giving indications on how to appeal if not invited to the Grant Agreement Preparation process.

### **Advisory Group Plenary meetings**

The Coal and Steel Advisory Groups are two independent technical advisory groups established according to Art 19 to 23 and to Art 28.3 of the Decision 2008/376/EC. Their role is to advise the Commission on specific coal- and steel-related RTD aspects.

Following the central evaluation session, the Commission organises a plenary meeting with each Advisory Group (Coal and Steel) to discuss the ranking lists of coal- and steel-related proposals, and to address issues concerning to the evaluation exercise. The findings and recommendations of the observer(s) who attended the central evaluation session are also presented and discussed.

Members of the Advisory Groups shall inform the Commission of any potential conflicts of interests which could be considered prejudicial to their independence (for that reason Advisory Group members sign, at the time of their appointment, a declaration regarding conflict of interest). Advisory Group members have a task of considerable responsibility and it is in the interest of the Advisory Group members, the Commission and the wider research community that they are not in a position to take undue advantage of or exercise undue influence on the implementation of the RFCS.

The Advisory Group members shall not disclose information received during the fulfilment of their tasks. To this purpose, they are required to sign a confidentiality declaration valid throughout their appointment with the Commission. The Commission may adopt supplementary measures of confidentiality, if necessary.

## COSCO Plenary Meeting

After discussing with the Advisory Groups, the Commission organises a plenary meeting with the COSCO programme committee composed of representatives of all Member States. During the meeting, the COSCO committee is asked to approve by a qualified majority (in accordance with Article 5(1) of Regulation (EU) No 182/2011) the draft Commission implementing decision on the granting of financial aid to successful proposals and the rejection of unsuccessful proposals.

At the beginning of each meeting, any person designated by the Member States shall inform the Commission of any conflict of interest with regard to a particular item on the agenda. In the event of such a conflict of interest, the person concerned shall, at the request of the chair, withdraw from the meeting whilst the relevant items of the agenda are being dealt with. In addition, the COSCO representatives are requested to respect confidentiality obligations concerning the discussion carried out during the meeting and the documents received.

Following the approval by the COSCO, the implementing act can be finally adopted by the Commission through a dedicated Commission Decision and the project Grant Agreement can be signed (this normally happens within 3 months from the notification of the evaluation results to the applicants).

### Planning of the 2020 Evaluation Exercise.

The selection of proposals to be funded consists of the following steps. The dates presented in this table might be subject to change.

Proposal Submission Deadline	15 September 2020, 17:00:00 Brussels local time
Evaluation Session Remote	30 September – 14 October 2020
Evaluation Session Central	2 November – 13 November 2020
CAG Meeting	8 December 2020
SAG Meeting	9 December 2020
COSCO Meeting	21 January 2021
Notification of evaluation results to applicants	February 2021
Grant Agreement signature for projects retained for funding	before 15 June 2021