



## Procedure for submission and evaluation of relevance-driven proposals

### 1. Submission of proposals

A dedicated public portal at the EU Science Hub manages the Access to all JRC Research Infrastructures (RI). Each JRC RI, or pool of RIs, issues calls for proposals announced on a yearly basis, at six-month intervals, or depending on the availability of the RI. The call for proposals will include the following information:

- Description of the Research Infrastructure(s)
- Priority topics of the Research Infrastructure(s)
- Opening and closing dates of the call
- Expected date of communication to the Lead User<sup>1</sup> of the assessment of proposals
- Definition of an Access Unit
- Estimated additional costs per Access Unit
- Estimated total number of Access Units allocated to the call
- Estimated number of Access Units per User Access Project
- Estimated total number of User Stay Days<sup>2</sup> eligible for T&S allocated to the call
- Estimated number of User Stay Days eligible for T&S per User Access Project
- Maximum duration of the User Access Project
- Eligibility criteria, including list of international organisations where relevant
- Option for the allocation of intellectual property rights
- Option for operating the Research Infrastructure
- Instructions for the submission of proposals

Research Infrastructures providing Access free of charge or waiving the access costs will specify so in the call for proposals.

The portal will also provide the following documents:

- Framework of access to JRC physical Research Infrastructures ("Framework")
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Proposal submission Form
- Research Infrastructure Access Agreement template (RIAA)
- User Access Agreement template (UAA)
- Terms of reference of the User Selection Committee
- Rules on the contribution to travel and subsistence expenses of external users
- Privacy statement – open access to JRC physical RIs
- Privacy statement – collection of audio-visual material

Prospective users prepare a proposal following the publication of a call for proposals. Proposals must be submitted using the Proposal Submission Form annexed in the call. The Lead User must submit a PDF file of the Proposal Submission Form to the functional mailbox listed in the call for proposals for the RI(s) to which access is asked for by the closing date of the call.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Lead User' is a User from the User Institution responsible for the preparation and submission of the proposal for access. The Lead User acts as main point of contact with the JRC.

<sup>2</sup> A User Stay Day is a day of physical presence of a User at the concerned Research Infrastructure for Access related to the User Access Project. A User Stay Day counts as a registered entry to the JRC site where the Research Infrastructure is located.



The Lead User is encouraged to contact the RI(s) during preparation of the proposals, in order to assess feasibility aspects related to the capacity of the RI(s).

The Lead User is notified by e-mail for the receipt of the proposal. The Lead User may re-edit or withdraw a proposal until the deadline for submission. Withdrawn proposals are not considered for evaluation or for selection, nor count against possible reapplication restrictions. Once the deadline has passed, no further corrections or resubmissions are possible.

## 2. Eligibility check of proposals

Submitted proposals are first checked for eligibility by the Scientific Development Unit of the JRC. Eligibility consists of the following criteria:

- For non-nuclear RIs, the Lead User Institution and User Institutions must be from an EU Member State, or country associated to the Horizon Europe programme. For nuclear RIs, the Lead User Institution and User Institutions must be from an EU Member State, or country associated to the Euratom research programme<sup>3</sup>. User Institutions from international organisations are eligible, as announced in the call for proposals and under the conditions as detailed in the Framework.
- The scope of the work for nuclear RIs must be in line with the activities defined in Annex I of Council Regulation (Euratom) 2021/765<sup>4</sup>.
- The Lead User Institution must be from a university, research or public institution, or from a Small-Medium-Enterprise (SME).
- Ethical considerations in accordance with EU Law, in particular Art. 19 of Regulation (EU) 2021/695, and applicable laws and regulations in the EU Member States.
- The proposal submission form is complete and complies with the instructions.

The Scientific Development Unit of the JRC will communicate the Lead User of its decision on non-eligible proposals within three weeks after closure of the call for proposals.

## 3. User Selection Committee

Eligible proposals are evaluated by a User Selection Committee (USC). Each JRC RI or group of RIs delivering access within the same field of science has its own USC, as deemed necessary by the JRC. The USC is composed of a minimum of three to a maximum of five members: one representative of the JRC acting as chair of the USC and two to four independent European experts. In case of calls addressing more than one RI, the USC will have a representative from each of the RIs, with a minimum of five members for the USC. The USC may also have a secretary from the JRC with no grading rights.

The members of the USC receive the eligible proposals after the deadline for submission. The USC meets to evaluate the proposals. The USC meetings are convened by the JRC according to the time schedule of each RI and shall take place preferably at the JRC site hosting the RI. It is also possible to convene the meetings remotely via video conference.

The USC will convene with a minimum of three members, of which one from the RI, while the remaining ones, in case of impossibility of attending the meeting, shall send their signed evaluation forms one day prior to the meeting.

Each member of the USC evaluates independently each proposal according to a set of selection criteria and provides an evaluation form with the grades of all eligible proposals. The individual

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<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation-horizon-euratom\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation-horizon-euratom_en.pdf) and [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/updates-association-third-countries-horizon-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/updates-association-third-countries-horizon-europe_en)

<sup>4</sup> Council Regulation (Euratom) 2021/765 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for the period 2021-2025 complementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and repealing Regulation (Euratom) 2018/1563



grades of each of the members of the USC are discussed and consolidated at the USC meeting. The chair of the USC will coordinate the drafting of a qualitative evaluation of each proposal. Indicatively, the qualitative evaluation will be sent by the Scientific Development Unit of the JRC to the Lead User two (2) months after the closing date for submission of proposals.

The USC may be consulted by the RI to discuss issues related to the implementation of a User Access Project, in particular when there are strong deviations from the project plan as contained in the Description of Work of the Research Infrastructure Access Agreement.

#### 4. Evaluation of proposals

Proposals are evaluated by each member of the USC for the selection criteria listed in Table 1. The grades given by individual USC members are averaged for each selection criterion. Proposals that do not meet a minimum of 30 points for the criteria of "Scientific Implementation", and a minimum total (considering all criteria) of 60 points, are rejected. The USC establishes a list of the evaluated proposals ranked according to their final grade.

**Table 1**

<b>Criterion for selection</b>	<b>Points</b>
<u>Scientific Implementation</u>	
Scientific and technical value	10
Description of work	10
Originality and innovation	15
Dissemination and exploitation plan	5
Quality of the proposing team	10
<u>Collaboration and access to new Users</u>	
Uniqueness and availability of similar facilities and expertise in any of the Users Institution's countries	5
Previous use of the RI by any User or User Institution	5
Training (involvement of young scientists)	5
Synergies and complementarities with existing research projects and the ESFRI/ERIC	5
<u>Strategic relevance</u>	
Relevance to priority topics of the RI(s)	20
Importance for European standardisation and harmonisation	5
Importance for European integration and cohesion	5
	100

In addition, the JRC member(s) of the USC will evaluate the cost and feasibility according to the RI. The evaluation of the JRC for cost and feasibility will be discussed and agreed at the USC meeting. Proposals that cannot be carried out in terms of cost and feasibility will be rejected. Alternatively, the JRC may propose re-dimensioning the experimental campaign to fit the capacity of the RI while not substantially changing the scope of the proposal.

The JRC member(s) of the USC will also identify the relevance of the proposal to the priorities of the JRC. Proposals that do not meet any of the priorities of the JRC will be signalled to the USC for special decision on the acceptance of the proposal based on grounds of exploring new



research topics not fully aligned with JRC's Work Programme.

A proposal evaluation form is released by the USC. The evaluation forms are kept at the JRC. The USC establishes a shortlist, composed of the selected proposals, ranked according to their final grade. The remaining eligible, non-rejected proposals are put on a waiting list.

Selected proposals enter into negotiation for signature of a Research Infrastructure Access Agreement. In case an agreement is not reached, the JRC RI(s) will start negotiations with the Lead User Institution having submitted the first ranked proposal on the waiting list.

## 5. Selection Criteria

In the following is provided a description of each of the selection criteria:

### Scientific Implementation

#### ***Scientific and technical value***

Description of the objectives of the proposed project, the way these objectives will be fulfilled through the proposed work, as well as indications on the expected outcome and the fundamental scientific and technical value and interest of the proposal.

#### ***Description of work***

Test program at the JRC: Type (size, scale, materials) and number of specimens, and where relevant, indicative drawings. Number of tests to be carried out and their sequence, input quantities or needed characterisation, the (output) response quantities to be measured and the required instrumentation.

Preparatory activities: Delivery to the premises of the JRC RI of (any) specimens, instrumentation, testing rigs and components, equipment, or any other material or in-kind contribution needed for the proposed project.

Complementary testing outside the JRC: provision of complementary testing carried out in other research infrastructures outside the JRC.

Special requirements: for equipment, safety measures, etc.

Assessment of risks: regarding the fulfilment of the project, as well as the means to mitigate such risks.

Estimated time schedule: for the proposed work and tentative starting date.

These aspects will be discussed with the RI in case of approval of the proposal and will be specified in the Research Infrastructure Access Agreement to be signed between the JRC and the User Institutions.

#### ***Originality and innovation***

The proposal should demonstrate the originality and innovation of the proposed work with the state-of-the-art and the impact the expected results will have on current and future research or practice.

#### ***Dissemination and exploitation plan***

Strategy and concrete actions related to the dissemination and exploitation of the project results.

For dissemination: identification of areas and stakeholders that could make use of the results, concrete and well-timed measures for dissemination of key results, use of effective channels and platforms for all groups of potential users with a long-term perspective.

For exploitation: utilisation of results in further research activities other than those covered by the action concerned, or in developing, creating and marketing a product or process, or in creating and providing a service.



Indication of how the JRC can be involved in further dissemination and exploitation of results, including data.

### ***Quality of the proposing team***

The quality of the proposed team and the experience of the User Institutions in the proposed field of research will be assessed through the CVs of Users annexed at the end of the proposal.

## Collaboration and access to new users

### ***Uniqueness and availability of similar facilities and expertise in any of the Users Institution's countries***

Justification of why the specified JRC RI is essential for carrying out the proposed project, on the grounds, for example, of the test set-up, testing method, equipment, past experience in relevant subjects, expertise of the JRC, etc.

If the concerned JRC RI exists in the countries of the users, the proposal should explain why recourse is made to the JRC for the use of this type of facility.

Higher grading for this criterion will be given to proposals from User Institutions in countries that do not possess similar RIs to those of the JRC, where such RIs are fully booked or not available for access, or where the type of expertise of the JRC RI is essential for achieving the aims of the proposal.

### ***Previous use of the RI by any User or User Institution***

Use of the JRC RI in the past five years. This includes inter alia the physical, remote and virtual access to machine time, computing resources, software, data, sample preparation, archives, the set-up, execution and dismantling of experiments, education and training, expert support and analytical services.

Higher grading for this criterion will be given to proposals with Users and User Institutions that have not accessed the concerned JRC RI in the past five years.

### ***Training (involvement of young scientists)***

Participation of young researchers (PhD, post-docs) as Users in the project.

### ***Synergies and complementarities with existing research projects and the ESFRI/ERIC***

Information on any concurrent research projects in Europe or internationally related with the proposal and description of possible synergies and interactions.

Synergies and complementarities (if any) with existing research projects in Horizon Europe and the European Research Area, as well as with the European Strategy for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI)<sup>5</sup> / European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC).

Synergies with JRC ongoing work and with previous User Access Projects at the Research Infrastructure.

## Strategic relevance

### ***Relevance to priority topics of the RI(s)***

Description of how the proposed work is relevant to the priority topics of the JRC RI(s) as published in the call.

### ***Importance for European standardisation and harmonisation***

Contribution of the proposal to the development of standards at European and International level, such as **pre-normative research**, drafting of standardisation guidelines, contribution to databases, promotion of regulatory standards and best practices, and scientific and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.esfri.eu/>



technical support to CEN standardisation deliverables (i.e. European Standards, CEN Workshop Agreements, Technical Specifications, Technical Reports, CEN Guides).

The proposal may also contribute to harmonisation work such as: development and validation of harmonised testing, measurement and calibration methods, certification, measurement, reference materials.

### ***Importance for European integration and cohesion***

Higher grading for this criterion will be given to proposals with User Institutions from several countries, in particular from the Widening participation and spreading excellence action of Horizon Europe<sup>6</sup>. **Note:** The evaluation for this criterion will be made based on the information provided in the first part of the proposal – the Lead User does not provide input for this criterion in the proposal.

## **6. Contact Point**

A member of the JRC staff from the concerned RI is designated as the local scientific contact with the Lead User of the successful user team. In case of calls addressing a pool of RIs, the call will identify one of the RIs as main contact point. He/she is the first contact point during the assessment of the project technical details and negotiation of the Research Infrastructure Access Agreement, and is in charge of the user team during their stay at the RI. The local contact functions as liaison between the RI operators and the JRC administration.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/widening-participation-and-spreading-excellence\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/widening-participation-and-spreading-excellence_en)