

ANNEX 1

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE SUBMISSION OF FEASIBILITY STUDIES ON COLLABORATIONS, ACTIVITIES OR POTENTIAL ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTES INTERESTED IN OPERATING IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION.

Context

The Emilia-Romagna Region supports and promotes strategic investments aimed at strengthening the regional research and innovation ecosystem, fostering the activation of collaborations with national, European and international universities and research organisations and, supporting, in particular, pathways aimed at the development of joint activities, structured collaborations or the potential establishment of international research organisations within the regional territory. Such actions contribute to enhancing the regional research network, increasing the attractiveness of Emilia-Romagna and promoting the circulation of skills, knowledge and talents, consistently with regional policies on research, innovation, internationalisation and the attraction of highly specialised profiles.

1. Scope of the call

This call, adopted pursuant to Article 4 of Regional Law No 7/2019 “Investments of the Emilia-Romagna Region in the fields of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence, meteorology and climate change”, aims to support feasibility studies concerning the activation of collaborations, the development of joint activities, or the potential establishment in one of the Technopoles of Emilia-Romagna of European and International universities and research institutes interested in operating in the regional territory, according to the objectives of Pact for Work and Climate, the Emilia-Romagna Digital Agenda 2025-2029, the Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021–2027, the Regional Programme for Productive Activities 2023–2025, the Regional Programme for Industrial Research, Innovation and Technology Transfer 2023–2025 and Regional Law No 2/2023 concerning the attraction, retention and valorisation of highly specialised talents.

The Emilia-Romagna Region has a structured and highly qualified research and innovation ecosystem, characterised by the presence of universities, research entities and infrastructures, technopoles, technology transfer networks, innovative enterprises and start-ups. This context represents a favourable environment for the development of scientific collaborations at national and international level and for strengthening the Region’s positioning as an attractive territory for high value-added research initiatives.

Strengthening the attractiveness of the regional territory for International universities and research institutes represents a strategic interest for the Region, as it enables the expansion of scientific cooperation networks, increases the critical mass of competences, promotes the circulation of knowledge and talents and generates new opportunities for research, innovation and technology transfer for the benefit of the productive and social system of Emilia-Romagna.

Funding requested under this call shall support the preparation of a feasibility study, to be elaborated only after the potential award of financial contribution. The feasibility study shall enable a preliminary assessment of the proposed collaboration, activity or establishment, with particular reference to the scientific, organisational and economic-financial sustainability of the initiative and to the capacity of the research organisation involved to effectively contribute to the development of the regional knowledge and innovation ecosystem. In particular, the feasibility study must allow a preliminary assessment with regard to the following aspects of the Research Organisation involved:

1. **Scientific excellence:** the Research Organisation must demonstrate a high level of expertise and scientific productivity in its field of specialisation.
2. **Internationalisation:** the Research Organisation must enable the participation of researchers and staff members from different countries, promoting cultural diversity and international collaboration.
3. **Social and economic impact:** the Research Organisation must contribute to the progress of society and the local economy through applied research and knowledge transfer, while also facilitating participation in calls for proposals for the funding of European and international research projects

The application for financial contribution must include a project proposal clearly describing the initiative to be further developed through the subsequent feasibility study and must highlight in particular the initiative's scientific excellence, internationalisation capacity, potential social and economic impact and the sustainability of the proposed development pathway. Project proposals shall be considered eligible for funding if they achieve a total score higher than 35 points, on the basis of the following evaluation criteria:

- **Quality of the project proposal and experience and competences of the team (maximum 20 points):** the scientific robustness of the proposed initiative, the quality of the applicant and the research organisation involved, as well as the relevance of the research topic and its potential impact on the territory shall be assessed. The proposed topic must fall within the area of the Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021–2027. The number, competence and experience of the researchers involved, the academic background, scientific publications, previous collaborations and capacity to attract funding shall also be considered.
- **Social and Economic Impact (maximum 20 points):** the potential impact of the Research Organisation on society and the regional economy, as well as its ability to translate research results into practical applications and tangible benefits, shall be assessed.
- **Development Plan (maximum 10 points):** the medium- and long-term development plan of the Research Organisation shall be assessed, including how it intends to grow, attract talent, collaborate with other entities and contribute to the scientific community.

Terminological specification

Application: the document submitted by the applicant to describe the initiative to be further explored.

Feasibility study: the document to be prepared only after the potential award of financial contribution and to be submitted to the Region in accordance with the procedures set out in the call.

2. Applicants

The application may be submitted by a university or an International research institute involving one or more entities from the regional scientific community, or by a university of the Emilia-Romagna Region or a research organisation established in Emilia-Romagna, in collaboration with an International university or research institute interested in operating in Emilia-Romagna through collaborations, joint activities or possible establishment processes.

The application for financial contribution must be submitted by a single eligible applicant pursuant to this call for proposals. Joint applications submitted by multiple co-applicants shall not be permitted. The application must necessarily concern a project proposal developed in collaboration with an entity belonging to the other category provided for in this call of proposals. In particular, where the applicant is a university based in the Emilia-Romagna Region or a research organisation established in Emilia-Romagna, the application must provide for the involvement of an International university or research institute (qualifying as a research organisation) interested in operating in Emilia-Romagna. Conversely, where the applicant is an International university or research institute, the application must provide for the involvement of at least one entity belonging to the regional scientific community of Emilia-Romagna. The collaboration between the applicant and the involved entity constitutes an essential element of the application and must be clearly described in the submitted project proposal; it must be supported by appropriate documentation, such as a letter of intent, agreement, or memorandum of understanding signed by the parties. The feasibility study covered by the application for must clearly identify, as its specific objective one of the following outcomes: the establishment of an international centre in Emilia-Romagna at one of the regional Technopoles or the creation of a joint centre with a university or a regional research centre at one of the regional Technopoles. The project proposal must therefore clearly demonstrate how the planned activities, the adopted methodology, and the expected outputs are directly functional to the achievement of one of these outcomes.

Applicants must qualify as a research organisation as defined in Article 2, point 83 of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014: “an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic

activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, in the quality of, for example, shareholders or members, may not enjoy preferential access to the results generated by it". Different accredited entities, even if belonging to the same organisation, for example several laboratories belonging to the same university, shall in any case be considered individually.

3. Procedures and time limits for the submission of application for financial contribution

Interested parties may submit, within the time limits indicated in this call, an application for financial contribution accompanied by a project proposal relating to the initiative to be further developed through a feasibility study. **The application may be submitted from 20 July 2026 until the available resources have been exhausted.** The procedure is one stop shop; the submission period may be closed in advance in the event of exhaustion of the available resources, amounting to EUR 300.000,00.

Applications must be submitted by the legal representative of the proposing research organisation or by an authorised representative holding a special power of attorney (mandate). They must be sent to the following certified email address (PEC): ricercainnovazione@postacert.regione.emilia-romagna.it The subject of the e-mail must include the following wording: "Submission of proposals for feasibility studies for the establishment of international research centres".

Application must be submitted by completing the appropriate application form approved under this call of proposals. Applicants must use the attached templates without making any modifications.

Applicants must submit the following documents; otherwise, the application will be considered inadmissible:

- Application form for financial contribution and project proposal submission, duly completed and signed;
- Special power of attorney (mandate). The power of attorney must be signed by the legal representative of the applicant and by the authorised person. The power of attorney is required only if the application is submitted by a person other than the legal representative;
- Declaration relating to the possession of the requirements provided for in regulation 651/2014 for research organisations;
- Charter of Principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (to be signed and submitted only in the case of a private entity).

All annexes must be digitally signed using one of the methods provided for in Article 65 of Legislative Decree No 82/2005 in compliance with the applicable Italian legislation on digital administration (Legislative Decree No 82/2005, Article 65) and EU Regulation (eIDAS), or,

alternatively, signed in handwritten form. In the case of a handwritten signature, a copy of a valid identification document must be attached.

Digital signatures shall be affixed in compliance with the applicable technical rules governing advanced, qualified and digital electronic signatures. For further information, see: <https://www.agid.gov.it/en/>

Currently, CadES (files with .p7m extension) and PadES (files with .pdf extension) signatures are accepted or equivalent formats compliant with the European interoperability standards under eIDAS.”

At the time of submission of the application, applicants shall pay a stamp duty (€16.00), in accordance with applicable Italian legislation (marca da bollo).

4. Public funding and State aid scheme

The feasibility studies selected for funding may receive a maximum financial contribution of EUR 50.000,00.

Financial contribution shall cover up to 100% of the eligible costs incurred for the implementation of the feasibility study, as detailed in the budget annexed to the application form.

The financial contributions under this call are exclusively addressed to entities qualifying as research organisations within the meaning of Article 2, point 83, of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014. Therefore, no financial contribution may be awarded to entities that do not meet the requirements set out in Section 2 of this call.

5. Eligible costs

Costs incurred for the implementation of the feasibility study and consistent with the objectives of the call shall be considered eligible. The starting date of the activities and the related costs shall be the date of submission of the application. In particular:

a) Staff costs

Costs related to staff engaged in the implementation of the feasibility study shall be eligible:

- employees with permanent or fixed-term contracts, as well as equivalent personnel, including research grants and fellowships, doctoral fellowships, coordinated and continuous collaboration contracts, occasional collaborations, technologists and research contracts.

Costs for staff involved in project management activities shall also be eligible.

Costs related to staff engaged in routine activities (e.g. secretarial work, administration, security, routine maintenance, cleaning, etc.) shall not be eligible.

Costs related to staff under apprenticeship contracts shall not be eligible.

b) Consultancy costs (subcontracting): this category includes contracts concluded with private companies, public entities and individual professionals for the implementation of the feasibility study.

Where applicable, procedures ensuring transparency and competition, as provided for under the Italian public procurement code (Legislative Decree No. 36/2023), shall be complied with.

6. Evaluation procedure

The selection procedure for application for financial contribution accompanied by the project proposals shall be evaluated one stop shop. Applications shall be registered and assessed according to the chronological order of submission; resources shall therefore be awarded to positively evaluated applications, in the same order, until the available budget is exhausted.

The procedure for the applications shall consist, in particular, of the following stages:

- formal eligibility check of the applications for financial contribution: the eligibility of the applicants and the compliance with the requirement to qualify as a research organisation shall be assessed;
- evaluation on the merits including the attribution of a score on the basis of the criteria set out in Section 1, carried out by the Evaluation Committee established by the Head of the Directorate-General for Economic Development, Culture and Tourism.. The Evaluation Committee may also propose a revision of the financial contribution amount in relation to the submitted feasibility study. Following the formal and substantive eligibility assessment and the evaluation on the merits, the Head of the Research and Internationalisation of Enterprises Unit or a delegated authority shall adopt the administrative acts approving the project proposals and, where applicable, granting and paying the related financial contributions, in accordance with this call.

7. Duration

The feasibility study, covering by the financial contribution awarded following approval of the project proposal, must be completed and submitted to the Region within 12 months from the date of financial contribution award. An extension of up to 3 months may be granted, by administrative act, upon a duly justified request by the beneficiary.

8. Payment procedures and time limits

The financial contribution shall be paid in accordance with the procedures set out in the regional guidelines on cost reporting and shall be subject to the submission, by the beneficiary, of supporting documentation for the eligible costs incurred for the implementation of the feasibility study, as well as to the positive verification thereof by the competent regional authorities. The cost reporting shall be submitted via certified electronic mail (PEC), duly digitally signed by the legal representative, in accordance with the procedures set out by the Region in Section 3. The financial contribution shall be paid in a single payment following the submission of the final feasibility study and the reporting of the entire approved investment.

For the purposes of eligibility, costs must be relevant and attributable to the approved project, actually incurred by the beneficiary, paid using verifiable and traceable payment methods, incurred within the eligibility period set out in the call, recorded in accordance with the applicable legislation and supported by invoices or equivalent accounting documents with fiscal validity. All supporting documents for eligible costs must be addressed to beneficiary and include the project CUP (unique project code) and a reference to the funded project; where this is not possible, The CUP must be affixed subsequently in an indelible manner on the copy of the document kept on file, accompanied by a specific declaration by the beneficiary.

The cost reporting documentation must include, depending on the types of eligible costs, contracts or assignment acts, electronic invoices or other equivalent accounting documents, reports on the activities or services performed and, for personnel costs, assignment orders or equivalent acts, the determination of the hourly cost and signed timesheets. Proofs of payment, bank statements and any other evidence of payment shall be retained by the beneficiary and made available upon request by the Region in the context of administrative or sample analysis.

The Region shall carry out formal, administrative and financial checks on the submitted documentation, verifying the correspondence between the approved project and the project as implemented, the regularity of the beneficiary, and the consistency and traceability of the reported costs. The beneficiary shall retain the supporting documentation relating to expenditure for at least five years from 31 December of the final payment of the financial contribution's year and shall make it available in the event of checks. Where the eligible costs reported are lower than those approved, the financial contribution shall be reduced proportionally, without prejudice to the achievement of the project objectives. In any event, the amount payable may not exceed the financial contribution awarded. Failure to comply with the cost reporting requirements and failure to provide the requested documentation or the detection of irregularities may result in the total or partial recovery of the financial contribution and of any amounts already paid.

9. Further development for project proposals

On the basis of the results of the feasibility studies carried out, the Region reserves the right to adopt a subsequent measure to fund the initiatives covered by the project proposals admitted for funding.

The award of a financial contribution for the implementation of the feasibility study shall not entail, either directly or indirectly, any automatic entitlement to the allocation of spaces, premises, workstations or other forms of availability within the Technopoles of the Emilia-Romagna Region or other regional research infrastructures. Any subsequent forms of collaboration, as well as the possible use of spaces or infrastructures, shall in any event be subject to regional planning and the actual availability of space. They shall also be subject to consistency with the objectives and characteristics of the proposed initiative, the applicable

regulatory framework, and the adoption of any subsequent acts or agreements by the competent authorities.

10. Information

Information regarding the contents and requirements set out in this call, as well as any clarifications and communications, may be obtained as follows:

- on the regional portal dedicated to enterprises, in the section dedicated to this call for proposals;
- by contacting the Business Support Desk (Sportello Imprese) of the Emilia-Romagna Region, in accordance with the contact details and opening hours published on the regional portal.

The organisational unit responsible for the procedure referred to in this call is the Research and Internationalisation of Enterprises Unit of the Directorate-General for Economic Development, Culture and Tourism.

The right of access to administrative documents, pursuant to Article 22 of Law No 241/1990 and subsequent amendments, may be exercised by means of a written and reasoned request, to be submitted in accordance with the procedures published in the “Transparent Administration” section of the institutional website of the Emilia-Romagna Region, at the address already indicated in this call. The request must indicate the details of the requested documents or the elements enabling their identification, as well as the applicant’s details and evidence of a direct, concrete and current interest in the access request.

Privacy policy on the processing of personal data according to Article 13 of the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council (General Data Protection Regulation)

1. Introduction

In accordance with art. 13 of the European Regulation n. 679/2016, the Council of the Emilia-Romagna Region, as the "Data Controller", is required to provide you with information regarding the use of your personal data.

2. Identity and contact details of the data controller

The Data Controller of the personal data referred to in this Notice is the Council of the Emilia-Romagna Region, with legal headquarters in Bologna, Viale Aldo Moro n. 52, CAP 40127.

In order to simplify the methods of forwarding and reduce the times for the reply, we invite you to submit the requests referred to in paragraph no. 10, to the Emilia-Romagna Region, Public Relations Office (URP), writing or going directly to the Urp front office.

The URP is open from Monday to Friday from 9 to 13 and on Monday and Thursday also from 14,30 to 16,30: telephone 800-662200, e-mail urp@regione.emilia-romagna.it. PEC: urp@postacert.regione.emilia-romagna.it

3. The Data Protection Officer

The Data Protection Officer designated by the public authority can be contacted at the email address dpo@regione.emilia-romagna.it or at the headquarters of the Emilia-Romagna Region in Viale Aldo Moro n. 30.

4. Data processors

The public authority may make use of third parties for the performance of activities and related processing of personal data of which we maintain the ownership. In accordance with the provisions of the legislation, these subjects ensure levels of experience, ability and reliability such as to guarantee compliance with the current provisions on processing, including the data security profile.

We formalize instructions, tasks, and duties for these third parties with their designation as "Data Processors". We submit these subjects to periodic checks in order to ascertain the maintenance of the guaranteed levels recorded on the occasion of the initial assignment.

5. Subjects authorised to process

Your personal data are processed by internal personnel previously authorised and designated as data controller, who are given suitable instructions regarding measures, precautions, modus operandi, all aimed at the concrete protection of your personal data.

6. Purpose and legal basis of the processing

The processing of your personal data is carried out by the Council of the Emilia-Romagna Region for the performance of institutional functions and, therefore, pursuant to art. 6 paragraph 1 letter. e) does not require your consent. Personal data are processed for the following purposes:

- a) management of the administrative procedure relating to the present "Call for proposals for the submission of feasibility studies on collaborations, activities or potential establishment of international universities and research institutes interested in operating in Emilia-Romagna Region";
- b) compliance with obligations relating to publicity, transparency and dissemination of information provided for by the applicable legislation.

7. Recipients of personal data

Your personal data may be disclosed or disseminated in accordance with: Articles 26 and 27 of Legislative Decree No 33/2013 and the relevant regional provisions on publication and transparency obligations.

8. Transfer of personal data to non-EU countries

Your personal data are not transferred outside the European Union.

9. Storage period

Your data are kept for a period not exceeding that necessary for the pursuit of the mentioned above. For this purpose, also through periodic checks, the strict relevance, non-excess and indispensability of the data with respect to the relationship, performance or ongoing assignment, to be established or terminated, is constantly checked, also with reference to the data that you provide on your own initiative. The data that, even following the verifications, are excessive or irrelevant or not essential are not used, except for the possible conservation, according to law, of the deed or document that contains them.

10. Your rights

As a data subject, you have the right:

- access to personal data;
- to obtain the rectification or erasure of personal data of the same or the limitation of the treatment concerning the data subject;
- to object to the processing;
- to lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Supervisor Authority.

11. Data provision

The provision of your data is optional, but necessary for the purposes specified above. Failure to provide it will result in the non-award of the financial contribution.