



ESFRI-FED  
PROGRAMME

IN SUPPORT OF THE VALORISATION OF FEDERAL COMPONENTS IN ESFRI  
DISTRIBUTED AND VIRTUAL INFRASTRUCTURES]

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# TERMS OF REFERENCE

## STRATEGIC COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

On 16 July 2021, the Council of Ministers approved the implementation of the first phase of the ESFRI-FED programme in support of the valorisation of the federal components in ESFRI distributed and virtual infrastructures, to be carried out under the responsibility of the Federal Science Policy (BELSPO).

This document concerns the Terms of Reference (ToR), defining the working arrangements of the Strategic Committee of the ESFRI-FED programme.

## 2. COMPOSITION

The members of the Strategic Programme Committee are appointed for the duration of the program.

The Strategic Programme Committee is composed in consultation with the General directors of the Federal Scientific Institutions<sup>1</sup> (FSI) and the Chair of the Board of Directors of the concerned Federal departments (FPS).

The Committee is composed of the following members:

- 1 effective FSI representative for the "art pole"
- 1 effective FSI representative for the "documentation pole"
- 1 effective FSI representative for the "nature pole"
- 1 effective FSI representative for the "space pole"
- 1 effective representative for the FPS Social security
- 1 effective representative for the FPS Public Health, Safety of the Food Chain, and Environment
- 1 effective representative for the FPS Employment

And:

- BELSPO: One representative with no voting right, except in the case of a tie
- BELNET: One representative, in quality of expert (as an observer with no voting right)

In case an effective member cannot participate to the meeting, she/he can be replaced by the appointed substitute member.

The members will be designated by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of BELSPO.

In case existing members need to be replaced, the appointed replacements will be approved by the concerned General directors of the FSI or the Chair of the Board of Directors of the FPS.

BELSPO will take up the secretariat role for the Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Art, Documentation, Space and Nature poles (cfr [www.belspo.be](http://www.belspo.be)), also including: WHI, INCC and Sciensano.

### 3. MANDATE

The Strategic Programme Committee will give advice at different implementation stages of the programme, from the preparation of a new call to the selection of the projects until the potential renewal of a new phase of the programme. These tasks are elaborated below, in order of execution.

#### 3.1. Provide advice on the roadmap of the programme through the selection of eligible ESFRI infrastructures.

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The Programme Committee will assist BELSPO in establishing a rolling call agenda allowing each ESFRI Research Infrastructure (RI) filling the eligibility conditions (see below) to be addressed and enriched with a federal component by the end of the ESFRI-FED programme time span.

Boundary conditions regarding eligible infrastructures:

- They have Belgium among its members; either as a legal entity or via a formal participation agreement (i.e. signature of a 'political support' document in the name of Belgium, a 'memorandum of understanding', a 'letter of intent', or its equivalent)
- They are in implementation or operation phase
- They have a 'federal node'; this is, activities performed by federal actors (particularly FSI), or activities performed by non-federal actors in support of federal competencies

Strategic decisions include the following considerations (non-exhaustive list):

- The importance and added value for the ESFRI-RI to integrate a federal component
- The importance for the FSI to integrate an ESFRI-RI
- The relevance and possible complementarities amongst FSI components
- The potential synergies with federated components

#### 3.2. Provide advice on the call text produced by BELSPO

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Before the launch of each call, the Strategic Programme Committee will give advice on the call text drafted by BELSPO.

#### 3.3. Provide advice on the selection of proposals

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The Strategic Programme Committee will take notice of the Ranking of Proposals and Consensus Reports drafted by the peer review evaluators and will approve the list of selected proposals for funding that will be made following this ranking, from the highest scoring proposals to the lowest, within the available budget.

In the case of *ex-aequo* ranked proposals, the Strategic Programme Committee will be asked to make a strategic selection among those proposals, preferably by consensus.

The Strategic Programme Committee will dispose of the following elements, provided by BELSPO:

- The proposals
- The evaluation criteria provided by BELSPO and used by the foreign peers

- The outputs of the evaluation: The Consensus Report per project and the Ranking of Proposals

Remarks:

- Under no circumstances will the Strategic Programme Committee consider proposals labelled 'not recommended for funding'
- To ensure a neutral outcome and to avoid any conflict of interest, the members of the Strategic Programme Committee belonging to the same institution as the applicants or having a direct or indirect personal implication with a given proposal shall refrain from favouring said proposal.

### 3.4. Provide advice on the proposal evaluation procedure

The Strategic Programme Committee will provide their advice on the evaluation process after each project selection round. This advice will be addressed to BELSPO and used to improve or adjust the implementation of the subsequent calls.

The advice will concern the quality and development of the implementation of the procedures, the quality of the peer review, transparency of the results, etc.

### 3.5. Provide advice on the evaluation of the programme

An external evaluation of the programme will be organised after two calls for proposals in each programme phase, so that the results will be available in time to prepare the possible next phase of the programme. The Strategic Programme Committee will advise on the procedure and criteria of this evaluation to be developed, organised and coordinated by BELSPO.

## 4. FUNCTIONING / DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The Strategic Programme Committee will meet in function of the needs and the call calendar. Meetings may be held either in-person or via a videoconference call. BELSPO shall determine the way a meeting will be held in close consultation with the Committee members.

Meetings will be organised by BELSPO and chaired by the chairman of the board of Directors of BELSPO or by her/his delegate. The minutes of the meeting shall be drawn up by BELSPO in its secretariat role for the Committee.

The Strategic Programme Committee can only take valid decisions in a meeting in which at least half of the members are present. The temporary absence of a member shall be notified to BELSPO as soon as possible. In case an effective member cannot participate to a meeting, she/he can be replaced by the appointed substitute member for that meeting.

Whenever possible, decisions will be taken by consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached, decisions will be taken by simple majority, each member having one vote. In case of a tie, BELSPO has one voting right.

Decisions may also be taken outside of the meeting, for example via a mailing consultation provided at least half of the members, of which at least one third per organisation type, have provided feedback.

Meeting documents and information will be provided by BELSPO to the members 7 working days in advance of a meeting. As a rule, and unless requested specifically otherwise, members have a maximum of 7 working days to respond to a query by BELSPO.

## 5. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PUBLICITY OF INFORMATION

All information exchanged between BELSPO and the Strategic Programme Committee (i.e. call texts, proposals....) shall be strictly treated as confidential for the full term of the Strategic Programme Committee. No part of this information can be disclosed to third parties, nor reproduced and/or distributed in any possible way. This obligation of confidentiality is alleviated when information enters the public domain (i.e. when the call text is published on the BELSPO website).

The information exchanged between BELSPO and the Strategic Programme Committee shall be used within the strict public service obligations.

The website of BELSPO will mention the composition of the Strategic Programme Committee upon explicit consent of the members, in conformity with the GDPR.