Royal Higher Institute for Defence

DEFRA
Defence-related Research Action

Call for proposals 2023
Information document including submission and evaluation guidelines and budget rules

Important dates:

Information session: 13 February 2023 (14h00 - 16h00)
Deadline Pre-proposals: 16 March 2023 - 14h00
Deadline Full proposals: 27 April 2023 - 14h00

For more information on the programme, please visit https://www.belspo.be/defra

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1. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

1.1. CONTEXT

Scientific and technological research in the domain of security and defence is key to maintaining the Belgian Defence military and technological edge, to face current and future security challenges.

For this purpose, the Ministry of Defence (2022)[1] seeks to further develop and strengthen the links between Defence, the national research institutions and the industry by gradually increasing its R&T contribution as from 2022, with a view to reaching 2% of the total defence effort in 2030.

The setup of the Defence-related Research Action - DEFRA - fits perfectly in and contributes to the implementation of this strategic vision and general policy for Defence.

1.2. ROLE OF THE ROYAL HIGHER INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE - RHID

As a "smart hub" and "honest broker" for scientific and technological research, the Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID) is responsible for the development and implementation of the Ministry of Defence's policy on scientific and technological research. Within this policy, twelve focus areas have been identified, in which research is actively supported and stimulated.

As a "smart hub", RHID aims to promote the growth of Belgian scientific and technological research in the field of defence and security, as well as to restore and strengthen the links between administrations, universities and companies at this prospect. It wishes to achieve this, among others, by promoting and facilitating the participation of Belgium and the Belgian Ministry of Defence in international, national and regional research programmes. In addition, the results of research are published annually for a wide audience and colloquia are held regularly.

As an "honest broker", RHID manages and facilitates, through the department Scientific and Technological Research of Defence (STRD), the research programme of the Ministry of Defence. Although in the past this programme was primarily reserved for Defence research institutions, collaboration with other partners, including Belgian research institutes and industry, is increasingly becoming the norm.

The Ministry of Defence wants to further develop its capabilities through collaborative research with external partners by launching annual open calls for proposals within the frame of its research programme. The current call is the third open DEFRA call, based on five selected research themes.

More information on the institute and its activities can be found on the website: https://www.defence-institute.be/en/accueil-english/

1.3. COLLABORATION WITH THE FEDERAL SCIENCE POLICY - BELSPO

For organising and managing the DEFRA calls for proposals, a long-term collaboration agreement has been signed on 13 December 2021 between the Ministry of Defence and the Federal Science Policy (BELSPO). BELSPO will manage these calls for proposals on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. For the selected projects, funding is granted by, and contracts will be concluded with the Ministry of Defence.

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[1] Policy Declaration Defence 2022.

2. DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION - DEFRA

2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

Through the funding of research projects based on scientific excellence, the DEFRA programme allows meeting the scientific knowledge needs of the Belgian Defence.

The general objectives of the programme are the following:

- Support and strengthen scientific excellence.
- Develop and realise a critical research mass on themes considered to be a priority for Belgian Defence in order to:
  - contribute to short- and long-term capacity development, in line with the Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP) and the Strategic Vision for Defence.
  - contribute to the culture of innovation planned within Defence, both in terms of technology and process improvement.
  - foster employment for Defence.
  - contribute, in accordance with the Defence, Industry and Research Strategy (DIRS), to the development of a competitive and credible national industrial and technological base in the field of security and defence.
- Encourage the participation of highly qualified Belgian research institutes and industry in Defence and security related research activities.
- Promote systemic, multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary and integrative approaches.
- Strengthen transdisciplinary research in order to enable potential users to make better use of the research achievements.

> **This is the third call in the frame of the DEFRA programme.**

2.2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PROJECT PARTNERS

This call is open to Belgian public and private non-profit research institutes and private companies (both as funded and non-funded partners in the project).

The project partnership must be in a triple helix composition where academia and industry work together to foster R&T for Defence (see section 0).

From the **public research sector**, all Belgian universities, colleges of higher education, federal scientific institutions, defence research institutes and other public research institutes are eligible partners.
Private non-profit research centres must have operational and/or research activities in Belgium. They must have legal personality and their registered office in Belgium.

From the **private sector**, companies (including SMEs) complying with the following criteria are eligible partners:
- The company must have operational and/or research activities on the Belgian territory.
- The company must have a legal personality and its registered office in Belgium. The legal personality is required at the latest when signing the research contract.

- At the moment of signing the contract, the company must have fulfilled its obligations to pay its taxes and social security contributions.

Specific partnership requirements per theme are set out in section 3.5.

Research institutes and/or companies external to the project (other than funded and non-funded project partners) can confirm their interest and commitment to provide input to the project via cash or in-kind contributions by completing the cash or in-kind commitment letter available on the platform.

NOTE: As foreseen in the law of 18 September 2017, **companies, a(i)sbl and foundations** must have submitted accurate and current information on their beneficial owners to the UBO (Ultimate Beneficial Owner) register of the FPS Finances. **The delivery of an extract of the UBO register is a formal requirement for a valid application for the call.**

2.3. INFORMATION SESSION

To inform potential applicants about the context, scope and modalities of this call, a physical information session will be held on **Monday 13 February 2023 (14h00 - 16h00) at the Royal Military Academy.**

Registration prior to the event is required.

More details are announced through the **DEFRA-website** and the website of the RHID as well as through social media.

3. CALL INFORMATION

3.1. DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO THIS CALL

3.1.1. DEFRA WEBSITE

The following documents are available on the **DEFRA website** (https://www.belspo.be/defra):

- Information document, including submission and evaluation guidelines and budget rules: general information on the programme and the call, overview proposal content and corresponding evaluation criteria for the applicants and the evaluators (the present document)
- Evaluators eligibility: eligibility rules of proposed experts for the evaluation of the proposal
- Evaluation matrix for pre-proposals: overview of the evaluation ratings for the pre-proposals
- Evaluation matrix for full proposals: overview of the evaluation ratings for the full proposals
- Platform Submission guidelines: information for the applicants on the use of the submission platform
- FAQ
- Pre-proposal structure (word-file available on online platform)
- Full Proposal structure (word-file available on online platform)
- Annexe II - general conditions applicable to the 2023 contracts

3.1.2. DEFRA SUBMISSION PLATFORM

The following templates will be made available on the **DEFRA online SUBMISSION platform** (https://defra.belspo.be) and must be used compulsorily unless otherwise stated. Applicants must log in to the platform in order to access them:

In PHASE 1 of the call (submission of pre-proposals):
- Pre-proposal template (Word file)

In PHASE 2 of the call the following documents will be made accessible to the applicants that are invited to submit a full proposal:
- Full Proposal template (Word file) - only accessible to the selected pre-proposals
- Gantt chart (Excel file)
- Cash or in-kind commitment letter (from institutes/companies which are not partners of the project) – non mandatory, only if applicable (Word file)

3.2. INDICATIVE CALENDAR OF THE CALL

	Date	At / via
Information session	13 February 2023 (14h00 - 16h00)	RMA, building I, meeting room Frank De Winne
Deadline Pre-proposals	16 March 2023 - 14h00	Online submission platform
Communication of evaluation result pre-proposals	30 March 2023	Mail
Deadline Full proposals	27 April 2023 - 14h00	Online submission platform
Remote scientific peer review evaluation	1 May – 25 May 2023	Online evaluation platform
Feedback to applicants in preparation of panel meeting (consensus reports and questions to applicants)	9 June 2023	Mail
Written feedback by applicants (answers)	30 June 2023	Mail
Panel evaluation, incl. interviews with the applicants	Between 28 August and 6 September 2023	RHID
Selection proposal formulated by the scientific committee of the RHID	15 September 2023	NA
Final selection of proposals by the board of directors of the RHID and allocation of projects	28 September 2023	NA
Communication of results to applicants	3 October 2023	Mail
Signature contracts	14 November 2023	Online E-sign platform

3.3. RESEARCH THEMES AND INDICATIVE BUDGET OF THIS CALL

The present call covers the following research themes, with their indicative budget:

	Indicative budget (M€)
Theme 1 – CYBER: Automated certification of software	1,6
Theme 2 - Autonomous systems: Human-machine Teaming	1,6
Theme 3 - Open theme SMEs: Research on innovative and future-oriented defence solutions with specific interest for CBRN-Medical Response, Decontamination and Protection and Weapon Systems - Improved ammunition systems	2,4
Theme 4 - Advanced sensor technologies: Radar and (multi)-sensor systems	1,6
Theme 5 – Materials: Protective characteristics	1,6
TOTAL	**8,8**

There is no set maximum budget per project. However, applicants should take into consideration the total available budget for each theme. The objective is to develop a project with the most efficient use of public resources.

The number of projects that will be funded per theme depends on the evaluation of the proposals and the requested budget per proposal. It is envisaged to have 1 or more projects funded for each of the themes. Budget transfers between the themes are possible.

Proposals can only be introduced in the "Open theme SMEs" if the subject of the proposal does not correspond with one of the other four themes.

3.3.1. THEME 1 - CYBER: AUTOMATED CERTIFICATION OF SOFTWARE

Context

Determining whether the cybersecurity risk, associated with using a specific software in a given environment, is acceptable or not, is referred to as "certification". Certification is currently a slow and complex process, that does not scale with the increasing amount of software that is present in both our corporate IT environment and in our operational and weapon system networks. This is due to the important workload that a certification process generates for the human evaluators, as well as the fact that an evaluation cannot easily be decomposed into smaller (reusable) parts.

Moreover, the overwhelming amount of assurance evidence that must be evaluated by the human experts leads to certification processes that take very long, are often incomplete or superficial, and do not generate reproducible results. A solution to this problem would be to produce software design models that facilitate the automatic evaluation, and to have a trustworthy manner to independently evaluate the components or subsystems that make up a system and subsequently aggregate the resulting assurance evidence.

The goal is to automate the generation and evaluation of software assurance evidence, making it possible to rapidly determine whether system risk is acceptable when adding a specific new software or a software update into an environment. This will make it possible to adopt a continuous certification and mission risk evaluation attitude.

Research scope

The applicants will therefore focus on the following aspects:
- solutions for automating the generation of assurance evidence, both for new and for legacy software;
- solutions for curating the in this way produced evidence while preserving traceability in order to facilitate the mining of this evidence for assurance arguments;
- solutions for automatically building assurance cases from the assurance evidence;
- solutions for automatically assessing the confidence of these assurance cases.

Expected impact

The result for Defence should be a technology demonstrator of TRL 4, that shows how the automated certification of software can be applied to simple software applications.

3.3.2. THEME 2 – AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS: HUMAN-MACHINE TEAMING

Context

Autonomous systems have the potential to accomplish missions more quickly and effectively, while reducing risks to human operators and costs. Thanks to the developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning, their implementation is expected to bolster many fields of human activities, as they can support operators in tasks that are very hard or hazardous, difficult or unpleasant, or by extending human capabilities. However, as the use of autonomous systems increases in sensitive domains, such as the military, a number of challenges associated with well-founded and well-balanced trust in these systems need to be addressed. Indeed, while mistrust will lead to a reduced use of automation, complacency can lead to a loss of agency and engagement in the task, a loss of situation awareness, and loss of skills. Both situations of mistrust and complacency raise significant concerns associated with endangering human lives, damaging equipment, or incurring costs. Those concerns are particularly alarming when automation fails and operators have to take back manual control over the machine or need to recover the deployed assets. In situations where human lives are at stake, these challenges also raise moral questions. Innovative technological solutions that foster well-calibrated trust in autonomous systems need to be clearly defined and developed.

Research scope

The build-up of trust from humans to autonomous systems is comparable to the development of trust between people. Human-to-Human trust relies on three antecedents: skill (the ability to perform effectively), integrity (behaving in a consistent way according to a set of values) and benevolence (acting in the best interest of the other). Similarly, Human-to-Machine trust develops on three perceived characteristics of the machine: performance, process, and purpose, that is, the ability of the machine to execute its task reliably, the understanding by the operator of the internal processes of the machine, and the degree to which the behaviour of the machine matches the operator's objectives.

The focus of this call is on developing technological solutions that foster a well-balanced trust in the machine by improving the human's perception of performance, process, and purpose, from the commission of the technology, to its use in training and operation. The final aim is to improve thereby human-machine interaction and teaming.

The call is open to a multidisciplinary approach, including all fields of human factors and ergonomics, for example but not limited to AI/computer science, robotics, engineering psychology, cognitive sciences and ethics. Proposals should explicitly focus on human-centred design.

Expected impact

The result for Defence should be the provision of a technology of TRL 5-6, in compliance with the main objectives set out in the 'research scope' section. The proposed solutions will offer a way to build up trust in automation in a comprehensive way from the commission of the technology, through training and to its use in operations. These solutions must also allow the swift introduction of these innovative technologies within a military context, by identifying and defining the essential steps for an efficient integration. Subsequently, this validated technology could be demonstrated in a usability test through a scenario (to define in the project) representative for the type of activities described above, combined to measurements of effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction by the end user and by the organisation employing the human-machine team as well.

3.3.3. THEME 3 – OPEN THEME SMEs: RESEARCH ON INNOVATIVE AND FUTURE-ORIENTED DEFENCE SOLUTIONS WITH SPECIFIC INTEREST FOR CBRN-MEDICAL RESPONSE, DECONTAMINATION AND PROTECTION AND WEAPONS SYSTEMS - IMPROVED AMMUNITION SYSTEMS

Context

Under the Open Call, the driving role of innovative SMEs in bringing forward innovation in defence research is encouraged. Proposals are welcome to address new, upcoming or unforeseen challenges and/or creative or disruptive solutions.
Proposals can only be introduced in the "open theme SMEs" if the subject of the proposal does not correspond with one of the other 4 themes.

Research scope

This call is open to any research for defence across a broad spectrum within the following Defence focus areas: Space technologies, Communications, Sensor Data Processing and Sensor Fusion, Big Data, Cybersecurity, Intelligent Autonomous Systems (and platforms), Novel Weapon systems, Protection of personnel, systems and infrastructure, Sustainable New Generation Energy Systems, Advanced Military Health, Human Systems and Behaviour and Security & Defence Policy.

Collaboration with at least one SME is required: this call encourages the driving role of SMEs in bringing forward innovation, agility and ability to progress technologies, possibly adapting them from civil to defence applications. The proposals can address any subject of interest for defence with a specific interest for:

CBRN – Medical Response, Decontamination and Protection:

There is an increasing concern about effects from weapons, agents or courses of action used in warfare, terrorism as well as indirect and/or unintended threats evolving in hot conflicts, including the use or release of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and radiological hazards. Appropriate medical support makes a major contribution to both force protection and morale through prevention of and fight against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats, rapid evacuation and treatment of the sick, wounded and injured, and the return to duty of as many individuals as possible. Actions also focus on the research of vaccines and drugs and other antibiological substances against biological agents that may affect a sizable number of the military and/or be used on the battlefield. Next to these issues, other CBRN topics have to be dealt with such as CBRN decontamination systems and technologies and innovative and sustainable personal protective equipment. The number of classical and new CBR agents, the uncertainty in being exposed to agents, the different regions of conflict, technological developments and different ways to disseminate CBR agents will influence the types of physical protection required by personnel. Focus should lie in innovative thinking & technologies such as intelligent Individual Protective Equipment (IPE), modular approach, reactive protection, broadening protection,

one size fits all approach, …. Investigation in current decontamination systems against low volatility agents and microencapsulated chemical and biological agents and, if required, research of improved decontamination systems

Weapon Systems – Improved Ammunition Systems

In the face of a threat, the survival and success of the armed forces will depend on a deliberate, rapid and effective action. Current weapon systems and ammunitions however are not necessarily effective against emerging threats. The combination of three strategic and complementary research domains i.e. improved conventional effectors and ammunition, new generations of effectors and integration allows the production of tangible effects, either independently or in the context of collaborative combat. New systems whose effect is ensured by electromagnetic/energetic radiation (laser, millimetric waves, electromagnetic effects) or by a guidance system (guided projectiles), or whose projectile is launched by technologies other than pyrotechnics (electromagnetic launchers) are growing but still require significant effort.

Expected impact

The proposals must address innovative defence technologies and solutions, including those that can improve readiness, deployability and sustainability in all spectra of tasks and missions, for example in terms of operations, equipment, basing, energy solutions…. The goal of this open call is to achieve innovative and cost-effective solutions for defence applications, ground-breaking or novel concepts, new promising future technological improvements or the application of technologies previously not applied in the defence sector.

3.3.4. THEME 4 – ADVANCED SENSOR TECHNOLOGIES: RADAR AND (MULTI)-SENSOR SYSTEMS

Context

Many sensor systems exist today to allow surveillance operations, going from detection to identification and tracking, and provide valuable information to various departments of the Belgian Defence. Nowadays the technology is mature enough to offer good observation capabilities not only in a stand-alone configuration, but also in multi-sensor systems.

Emerging technologies will probably lead to the increased appearance of threats that are difficult to detect and track causing existing surveillance systems to reach their limits in terms of e.g. detection range or angular domain coverage.

Given this ever-evolving threat and the challenging environment that a typical military scenario implies, a progress beyond the state of the art can be achieved by: (1) optimally combining different sensor systems and implementing different levels of integration and fusion, (2) searching for maximum performance in an environment where space and spectral bands must be shared, and (3) increasing the level of automation to better support the operator in taking decisions in complex situations.

Firstly, radar operations must be compatible with other communication and control systems running concurrently. New radar systems should allow flexible management of emissions and sensing in both space and frequency, increasing the systems covertness and improving the system's ability to discriminate reliably signals.

Secondly, Radio Frequency (RF) sensing systems may reveal the presence of different types of RF transmitters such as remotely controlled bombs, drones, jammers, network cameras or any wireless connected device. The detection and classification of these RF signals can on the one hand give early warnings and complement the information from other sensors to enhance the situational awareness. On the other hand, they allow to detect available portions of the RF spectrum.

Thirdly, Electro-Optical/InfraRed (EO/IR) systems must be equipped with powerful Detection, Recognition and Identification (DRI) and tracking software to enhance the capability of these systems to extract information necessary for decision-making. The level of integration when using different EO/IR systems together, often still remains limited. Deepening that level of multi-sensor integration and fusion can increase the quality of the

obtained information. The hardware-implemented multispectral sensing, emerging from agriculture applications, can also offer new detection capabilities in a military environment.

Finally, the multilayer integration of sensors over broader spectral bands,… can provide an improved observation capacity supporting military and security related operations.

Research scope

Research efforts need to focus on the creation of more flexible and adaptive systems in terms of modes of operation and different environments (including battle space and propagation medium). These systems should offer possibilities to explore different frequency and wavelength ranges while maintaining a high signal-to-noise ratio. Advances in computing power, digital data and signal processing, have paved the way for better sensors, with increased sensitivity, better detection characteristics, and a higher level of automation. The goal is enhancing detection performance of sensor systems to detect low signature and/or low contrast targets, while maintaining as much as possible covert operation, without exposing presence, identity and location. The proposed solution should allow for integration into current and foreseen operational systems. The reliability of the information should be as high as possible as to facilitate the alert of and decision-making by the operator. Finally, the research scope encompasses innovative concepts of sensor use, in particular the combination of multiple, heterogeneous (current and future) sensors and their data fusion. The sensors' integration and interoperability with other sensors e.g. non-military networks and connection to battlefield management systems can also be addressed.

Expected impact

The result for Defence should be the provision of a technology of TRL 5-6, in compliance with the main objectives set out in the 'research scope' section. The output of the research proposal should contribute to an enhanced surveillance capability (thanks to an innovative integration of military and commercial sensors and their data), and consequently an optimal preparation of the battlefield (through an improved situational awareness). The proposed solution should be flexible enough to cope with a dynamic battlespace, mitigating thereby the typical risks of a single sensor approach and the loss of capability due to a changing physical environment.

3.3.5.   THEME 5 – MATERIALS: PROTECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Context

This theme brings together all the technologies related to innovative materials and their protective characteristics, in the context of optimising the protection of weapon systems and other platforms, personnel and infrastructure in a variety of situations and circumstances against existing and future man-made or natural threats.

Topics include but are not limited to novel composite structures and/or materials, near-net shape production techniques (e.g. 3D-printing) and design against emerging or future blast and ballistic threats.

Novel structures in advanced composite materials for instance have as a possible main advantage their lighter weight, and they can hence improve the performance of air, sea and land vehicles and in particular their speed and manoeuvrability.

Another possible subtopic would be the development of specific structures and/or materials in the military field that are subject to relatively aggressive environments, and are not sensitive to the effect of prematurely aging e.g. due to water or wind erosion, extreme high and low temperatures or more generally humidity. An improvement in environmental resistance will improve product performance and reduce the need for maintenance, thereby increasing their rate of operational readiness.

Another example can be 3D-printing that allows room for design freedom, which in turn can improve the performance of military applications, for example by making weapons or vehicles lighter.

Ballistic protection is always a balanced choice between the risk and the downside of the provided protection (higher weight, complex technology…).

Research scope

The "protective characteristics" may be interpreted as protection against a variety of man-made or natural threats. These threats may be actual or emerging, and they include:
•   Projectile impact, …
•   Improvised Explosive Devices (shock and blast effect)
•   Other threats with shock, blast or ballistic effect
•   Harsh environmental conditions and their chemical and mechanical impact

The innovativeness in "innovative materials" may lie in different aspects. Examples include:
•   Chemical and/or mechanical composition and/or properties
•   Production techniques (near net shape, additive manufacturing (3D), novel textiles, novel composite production technologies…)
•   Structural or material-based aspects
•   Novel testing methods
•   Impact of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) on any of the above-mentioned points

Expected impact

Improved protection usually has a trade-off in terms of production complexity and/or cost, and in terms of system properties, such as weight. Nevertheless, novel protective materials may definitely increase the number of options in terms of system configuration and performance. Some disadvantages may be outweighed by an overall prior advantage, thus increasing the total net performance. This reasoning may be implemented cross-domain, and it is applicable to many defence-related programs such as the next generation aerial platform (helicopters, drones...), future land and naval platforms, the equipment of the soldier in the future, etc. The expected impact is a potential increase of the strategical, operational or tactical efficiency and/or effectiveness.

Examples include:
•   Improved platform resistance and resilience, increasing the mission success probability
•   Improved protection of personnel, increasing their physical and mental performance
•   Reduced weight may increase a vehicle's autonomy, speed, and manoeuvrability, which in turn increases the tactical or operational advantage
•   Improved environmental resistance improves product performance and reduces maintenance efforts and premature aging, thereby increasing operational readiness and lifetime
•   Improved protection of compound infrastructure may decrease the vulnerability of mission command, physically or in terms of detection (intel)

3.4. PROJECT DURATION

The projects will have a duration of **2 to maximum 4 years**.

3.5. PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

3.5.1. PARTNERSHIP

For all themes, proposals must be submitted by a **network** composed of **at least one public research institute** - receiving at least 10% of the project budget - **and one private company**. Both types of organisations can act as the coordinator. Private non-profit research centres can participate as a partner but cannot coordinate a project. Belgian Defence research institutes (Royal Military Academy (RMA), Military Hospital Queen Astrid (MHQA) and the Defence Laboratories (DLD)) can be a partner in the network. It is not mandatory to have one of these institutes as a partner; it will neither have a beneficial effect on the evaluation result (no bonus).

Only for **theme 1 – CYBER**, it is **MANDATORY** to have the Royal Military Academy (RMA) as a partner in the network.

For **theme 3 – open theme SMEs** it is **MANDATORY** to have at least one SME in the partnership.
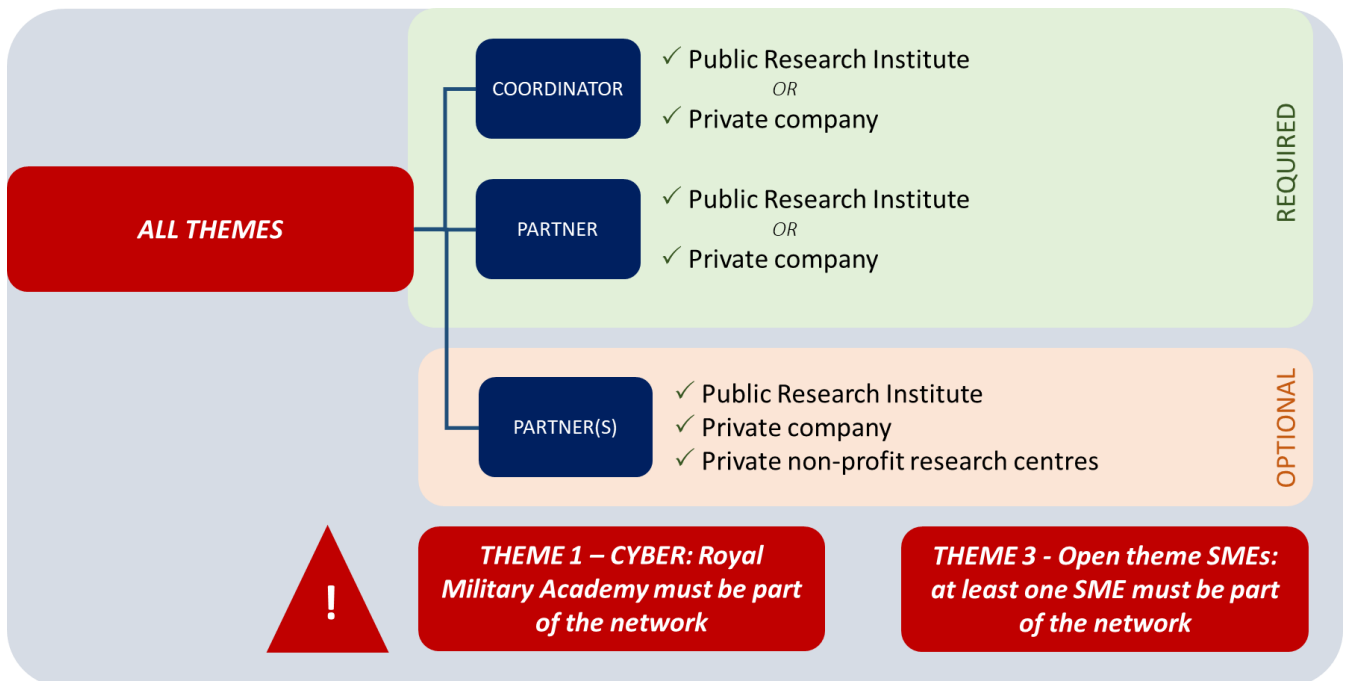
3.5.2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE PROJECT

Project partners jointly share obligations and responsibilities during the implementation of the project. The project should be fairly balanced, even if different partners may have different tasks and subsequently different budgets.

A **coordinator** must be appointed in each network proposal.

For each project, a **Steering Committee** shall be established at the start of the project to act as the governing body (see section 6.3.).

ROLE OF THE COORDINATOR

The coordinator is responsible for the overall project management and coordination. He/she shall:

- Coordinate all activities to be carried out in the framework of the project.
- Coordinate the internal meetings between the network members.
- Coordinate the production of the required project reports intended for Belgian Defence as described in section 6.4.
- Coordinate the synthesis and translation of the research results, with a view to applications and support for decision-making.
- Coordinate the publication and dissemination of the research results.
- Chair all meetings of the Steering Committee, unless decided otherwise in a meeting of the Steering Committee.
- Convene meetings of the Steering Committee and write the reports of these meetings. The Coordinator shall give notice in writing of a meeting with the agenda to each Member no later than fourteen (14) calendar days in advance.
- Inform the Steering Committee and the RHID of any problems that might hinder the implementation of the project.

SUBCONTRACTORS

The project may require specific or punctual expertise, which can be delivered in the form of **subcontracting**. It is the responsibility of the project team to ensure that the rules and practices of the subcontractor, and in particular the ownership and valorisation of research results, publications and communications, are compatible with the rules governing the call. The project team takes full responsibility for the final result of the subcontracted work.

3.6. RESEARCH ETHICS

The first code of ethics for scientific research in Belgium was drawn up in 2009 (see http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub_ostc/Eth_code/ethcode_en.pdf).

The "Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium" is a joint initiative of the Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, the Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique, the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten and the Koninklijke Academie voor Geneeskunde van België, with the support of BELSPO.

All projects must take this code of ethics into account in their research. If applicable, **it is the responsibility of the applicants to consult the relevant Ethical Board for their organisation before submitting a proposal.**

3.7. BUDGET RULES

Financing by Defence: This call is subject to the European legislation on State Funding (Art 107 (1) TFEU and the General Block Exemption Regulation in particular:

- Financing a public research institute or a private non-profit research centre is set to a maximum of 100% of the eligible costs.

- Financing a private company is limited to a maximum of 65% of the eligible costs for LargeCap enterprises, maximum 75% for MidCap and 80% for SME. The remaining % is indicated in the proposal as the partner contribution.

	REQUIRED PARTNERS		OPTIONAL PARTNERS
ALL THEMES	Coordinator: Public Research Institute *OR* Private Company	Partner: Public Research Institute *OR* Private Company	Public Research Institute *OR* Private Company
TOTAL PARTNER BUDGET **financed by Defence**	**Public Research Institute:** 100% eligible costs **Private Company**: • LargeCap enterprises: 65% eligible costs • MidCap enterprises: 75% eligible costs • SME: 80% eligible costs		**Public Research Institute** *OR* **Private non-profit research centre:** 100% eligible costs. **Private Company:** • LargeCap enterprises: 65% eligible costs • MidCap enterprises: 75% eligible costs • SME: 80% eligible costs

In the full proposal (section 6.5 Budget assessment) the total project budget should be detailed in the tables (100% cost). Additional columns are foreseen to indicate the partner contribution to the total project cost (depending on the partner type) and the subsequent RHID funding contribution.

The project budget is reserved exclusively for the project activities. The different categories of expenditure financed by Defence are:

Staff: Pre-tax wages associated with increases in the cost of living, employers' social security and statutory insurance contributions, as well as any other compensation or allowance due by law and secondary to the salary itself. Defence does not allow cumulative wages for Staff. Staff members bound contractually to a public institution - full time or part time - cannot apply for him/herself for Defence staff budget for that part.

For persons not identified by name in the proposal, the staff costs are limited to a maximum amount of:

- 5 100 €/month FTE for a technician/bachelor (regardless of years of experience)
- 7 200€/month FTE for a Master (regardless of years of experience)
- 7 900 €/month FTE for a Master in engineering (regardless of years of experience)
- 9 500€/month FTE for a PhD (regardless of years of experience)

The RHID only accepts staff to be hired under a labour contract. Tax-free doctoral or post-doctoral scholarships are not accepted.

General operating costs: this includes daily/usual supplies and products for the laboratory, workshop and office, documentation, consignments, use of daily software and IT facilities, organisation of internal meetings, etc. The general operating budget may not exceed 15% of the overall project staff budget for the project coordinator and 10% for the other project partners. The amounts claimed must correspond to actual expenditures strictly related to the project, even if supporting documents are not requested. Although no detailed justification is required for these costs, the administration of the concerned partner must keep these invoices in its accounts in the event of an audit.

Specific operating costs: this includes a list of operating costs specific to the execution of the project tasks, such as costs for project analyses, testing, maintenance and repair of equipment purchased by the project, use of specific IT facilities and software, costs for surveys, open data publications, organisation of workshops and

events, etc. These costs need to be clearly described in the proposal and each of them shall be justified by invoices during the project.

Overheads: Institutions' general overheads that cover, in one lump sum, administration, telephone, postal, maintenance, heating, lighting, electricity, rent, machine depreciation, and insurance costs. The total amount of this item is set as a fix amount of 10% of the total staff and operating costs.

Equipment: List of investment goods specific to the implementation of the project and to be purchased on the project budget. It concerns the purchase and installation of scientific and technical equipment and instruments, including computer equipment, to be entered in the inventory or assets of the institute/company. Equipment needs to be clearly described in the proposal and shall be justified by invoices.

Subcontracting: Expenses incurred by a third party to carry out project tasks or provide services that require special scientific or technical competences outside the partner's normal area of activity. The amount may not exceed 25% of the total budget allocated to the partner concerned. If the subcontractor is not yet known then only the nature, the planned duration and the estimated amount needs to be indicated in the proposal.

	STAFF COSTS (monthly costs)	GENERAL OPERATION COSTS	SPECIFIC OPERATION COSTS	OVERHEADS	EQUIPMENT	SUBCONTRACTING
PROJECT COORDINATOR	**Technician**: 5 100€/month **Master:** 7 200€/month **Master (engineering):** 7 900€/month **PhD:** 9 500€/month	15% of Staff costs *(Automatically generated)*	-	10% of [Staff costs + Operation costs] *(Automatically generated)*	-	Max. 25% of the total budget of this partner
OTHER PROJECT PARTNERS	**Technician**: 5 100€/month **Master:** 7 200€/month **Master (engineering):** 7 900€/month **PhD:** 9 500€/month	10% of Staff costs *(Automatically generated)*	-	10% of [Staff costs + Operation costs] *(Automatically generated)*	-	Max. 25% of the total budget of this partner

3.8. GENDER

The RHID strongly encourages the applicants to take into account the equality between women and men and to ensure gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the project. The project should include this both in the choice of the researchers and, where relevant, by integrating the gender dimension into their research.

4. SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

The submission of projects will be done in two phases using the DEFRA on-line submission platform:

https://defra.belspo.be

4.1. PHASE 1 – PRE-PROPOSAL

> A **pre-proposal** must be submitted at the latest on **16 March 2023 (14h00).**
> If the pre-proposal has not been submitted in time, it will be impossible to submit a full proposal.

The following information needs to be filled in directly into the online platform:

- The choice of the theme
- The title and acronym of the project
- The coordinates of the foreseen partners
- Summary of the project (1/2 page)
- Keywords (min 2; max 6).
- The name and contact details of 4-6 scientific experts (minimum **2 Belgian** and **2 foreign** experts) capable of assessing the proposal. See also document 'Evaluators eligibility'.
- Optionally, the name and contact details of 2 non-grata scientific experts to be excluded from the evaluation of the proposal under the condition of sufficient motivation.

The pre-proposal form can be downloaded from the platform and will contain:

- The title and acronym of the project.
- The coordinates of the foreseen partners.
- A brief description of the intended project: the scope, objectives, the innovation with respect to the state of the art, the relevance and potential impact of the project for Defence.
- Relevant references of the partners in relation to the project, incl. a short profile of the foreseen partners.

The total length of the **pre-proposal** should not exceed **8 pages** format A4. Besides the extracts of the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO), no other annexes are allowed.

Companies, a(i)sbl and foundations must upload the extract of the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) register as an annex to the pre-proposal (in pdf format). F

The pre-proposals will be evaluated by an internal evaluation committee of the Belgian Defence (see section 5.1.1.).

> On **30 March 2023**, the internal evaluation committee will invite for each theme maximum five pre-proposals to submit a full proposal.

The pre-proposals will also be used by BELSPO / RHID to seek experts for the evaluation of the full proposals.

The project objectives of the full proposal may vary from that of the pre-proposal to some extent. However, it cannot diverge to the point that the expertise mobilised for the evaluation of the proposal will become irrelevant.

Changes in the project partnership (changes in participating institute(s)/company(ies), including the coordination role) can only be accepted after the explicit approval of RHID. The keywords must remain the same since they are used for composing the evaluation panel.

4.2. PHASE 2 – FULL PROPOSAL

For each theme, maximum five pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal. Applicants must submit the full proposal via the online DEFRA submission platform.

> The **full proposal** must be submitted at the latest on **27 April 2023 (14h00).**
> If the full proposal does not comply with the submission rules or has not been submitted in time, it will not be taken into account for evaluation.

Content of the full proposal:

Within the full proposal form:
- The title, acronym and summary of the project.
- The name and contact details of the project partner(s).
- The proposal description:
  - scope and objectives,
  - state of the art and innovative character,
  - relevance and potential impact for Defence, including the data management plan,
  - quality of the partners/partnership of the project,
  - methods and tools used,
  - the work plan: work packages, the project risk assessment, the budget assessment.

As a separate form:
- The GANTT chart (mandatory)
- Cash or in-kind commitment letter (not mandatory)

5. EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA

5.1. EVALUATION PROCEDURE

5.1.1. PHASE 1 – EVALUATION OF PRE-PROPOSALS

> Only pre-proposals that are complete and submitted in time will be taken into account.

The pre-proposals will be evaluated by an internal evaluation committee of the Belgian Defence on the basis of the following criteria:
- The correspondence of the pre-proposal with the scope of the call themes
- The quality of the pre-proposal, based on the description of the project objectives and the innovation with respect to the state of the art)

- The relevance and potential impact for Defence.
- The quality of the partners and the adequacy of the partnership.

More information about the criteria used can be found in the evaluation matrix for pre-proposals.

The RHID will translate the outcome of each pre-proposal's evaluation into numeric scores. In practice, this will be done as follows:

1. Translating the appreciations given to each sub-criterion into scores.
2. Adding the scores of the sub-criteria to obtain a total for each criterion.
3. Performing a weighted sum of the criteria in the following way:

WEIGHT OF THE DIFFERENT CRITERIA	CYBER	AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS	OPEN THEME SMEs	ADVANCED SENSOR TECHNOLOGIES	MATERIALS
Quality of the pre-proposal	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%
Impact	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%
Quality of the partners & Adequacy of the partnership	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%

According to the scores obtained, the proposals will be ranked in a list (Pre-proposal Ranking). This list will serve as the base for the selection of the applicants invited to introduce a full proposal.

This evaluation will take place within two weeks after the submission of the pre-proposals. On **30 March 2023**, BELSPO will communicate the conclusions of the internal evaluation committee to the applicants and will invite for each theme maximum five pre-proposals to submit a full proposal.

5.1.2. PHASE 2 – EVALUATION OF FULL PROPOSALS

> Only full proposals that are complete and submitted in time will be taken into account.

The selection of proposals is based on a peer-review evaluation that guarantees scientific excellence and the alignment of the projects with the thematic objectives of the call. The evaluation of the full proposals runs in four steps:

Step 1 - Remote scientific peer review evaluation
Step 2 - Scientific Experts Committee (SEC) evaluation, including interviews with the applicants
Step 3 - Selection proposal formulated by the Scientific Committee of the RHID
Step 4 - Final selection of proposals by the Board of Directors of the RHID

STEP 1 - REMOTE SCIENTIFIC PEER REVIEW EVALUATION

BELSPO organises and coordinates a scientific peer review evaluation of each proposal. The principles of this evaluation are the same for the five themes.

Each of the full proposals will be evaluated by a team of 3 independent experts having an adequate combined expertise to evaluate the research proposal. Each expert team will be composed of minimum one Belgian and minimum one foreign expert.

BELSPO is responsible for composing this remote 'written evaluation team' with experts from BELSPO's and RHID's own databases and experts suggested by the applicants.

For each proposal, an individual written evaluation is performed. The written evaluation takes place remotely, via the online DEFRA evaluation platform, based on an evaluation form. During this assessment, the experts will only have access to the proposals they will evaluate. They will not know who the other two reviewers are for that proposal, nor will they have access to each other's evaluations.

Each reviewer will assess the proposal and provide comments taking into account a variety of (sub)criteria, namely in the following categories:

- Scientific quality
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation
- Impact

More information about the criteria used can be found in the [evaluation matrix for full proposals](#).

Once all written evaluations have been introduced for a given proposal, BELSPO will compile the evaluation reports into a Consensus Report for each proposal. The Consensus Report will consist of appreciations and comments for the different (sub)criteria. The report will also include questions to which the applicants must **respond in writing** prior to the presentation to the Scientific Expert Committee (SEC) (step 2).

At this stage, the Consensus Reports are definitive. They will not be modified in the subsequent steps of the evaluation.

> The individual evaluations are neither communicated to the Scientific Expert Committees,
> nor to the applicants.

Applicants will get access to an anonymised version of their definitive Consensus Report, in preparation of the presentation for the SEC.

STEP 2 – SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS COMMITTEE EVALUATION, INCLUDING INTERVIEWS WITH THE APPLICANTS

Preparation of the Scientific Experts Committee (SEC) evaluation

BELSPO will translate the outcome of each proposal's evaluation into numeric scores. In practice, this will be done as follows:

1. Translating the appreciations given to each sub-criterion into scores.
2. Adding the scores of the sub-criteria to obtain a total for each criterion.
3. Performing a weighted sum of the criteria in the following way:

WEIGHT OF THE DIFFERENT CRITERIA	CYBER	AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS	OPEN THEME SMEs	ADVANCED SENSOR TECHNOLOGIES	MATERIALS
Scientific quality	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%
Quality and efficiency of the implementation	35%	35%	35%	35%	35%
Impact	35%	35%	35%	35%	35%

According to the scores obtained, the proposals will be ranked in a list (Proposal Ranking). This list will serve as a base for the panel discussion.

Scientific Experts Committee (SEC) evaluation

For each theme, the Scientific Expert Committee of Defence will be composed of members that are relevant for the theme.

Each SEC will receive the corresponding Proposal Rankings, and will have access, via the online DEFRA evaluation platform, to the proposals as well as the anonymised Consensus Reports. The Consensus Reports shall not be modified by the SEC.

Each SEC will organise interviews[2] with the applicants of the full proposals according to the following schedule:

- Presentation by the applicants, including an introduction of the proposal and integrating the answers to the questions of the remote experts (15 minutes).
- Questions and answers (Q&A) (15 minutes).
- Deliberation (10 minutes).

The applicants will assist in the meeting for the presentation and Q&A session of their proposal only.

Each SEC will classify the full proposals into (a) Panel Funding Scenario(s) according to specific criteria:

- Budget availability.
- Complementarities and/or overlaps between proposals.
- The coherence of the proposals with the strategic objectives (scope) of the themes.
- The cohesion of the partnership.
- General appreciation of the presentation by the applicants.

The SEC Funding Scenario(s) will classify all proposals in:

- Recommended for funding.
- Not recommended for funding.

The SEC will list the proposals that are recommended for funding by order of preference for funding.

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2 Physical meeting if possible - online meeting if necessary. Detailed instructions to adequately prepare the panel presentation will be sent separately.

STEP 3 - SELECTION PROPOSAL FORMULATED BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE RHID

The Scientific Committee of the RHID is composed of senior scientists and research directors and guarantees the quality level of Defence research. It proposes evaluation methods and research objectives, participates in the drafting of the research programme (ranking and selection of research projects) and evaluates its implementation. The composition of the Scientific Committee is currently defined in the Ministerial Decree of 11 January 2022.

The Scientific Committee will receive the following documents:

- SEC Funding Scenarios(s) per theme, including its motivation
- Full proposal and Consensus Report of each proposal (on demand)

Based on these documents, the Scientific Committee will perform a strategic selection of the proposals based on the criteria and rules explained hereunder, delivering the Scientific Committee Funding Scenario.

The following aspects will be taken into account when formulating the Scientific Committee Funding Scenario to the governance board of the RHID:

- Alignment of the proposal in relation to Defence priorities.
- Added value of the proposal in relation to Defence priorities.

The Scientific Committee will formulate the Scientific Committee Funding Scenario taking into account the following rules:

- In NO case will proposals deemed 'out of scope' be considered.
- In NO case will proposals deemed 'not recommended for funding' be considered.

STEP 4 - FINAL SELECTION OF PROPOSALS BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RHID

The final selection decision of proposals to be funded is made by the Board of Directors of the RHID on the basis of the Scientific Committee Funding Scenario.

5.2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation criteria that are used in each step of the evaluation procedure are described in the evaluation matrices (pre- and full proposal).

6. CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS FOR SELECTED PROJECTS

6.1. PROJECT STARTING AND END DATE

> The projects selected within the context of the current call will start in December 2023.

The project contracts will have a duration of 2 to maximum 4 years (plus 3 months to allow meeting all administrative requirements before the effective start-up of the project).

6.2. CONTRACTS

For the selected proposals, a contract is concluded between Belgian Defence and the funded partners.

The Technical Annex to the contract will be drawn up in consultation between the funded partners of the selected proposals and the Belgian Defence/RHID. Recommendations formulated by the evaluators and the Scientific Committee will be taken into account when drafting the Technical Annex to the contract.

Adaptations to the original proposal may relate, among other things, to the content of the research, the composition of the project partnership, the budget, the proposals for valorising the research.

Belgian Defence/RHID grants the selected projects the funds required for their implementation. The RHID shall reimburse at most, and up to the amount specified in the granted budget, the actual costs proven by the partners providing these costs are directly related to the implementation of the project.

6.3. COMPOSITION AND ROLE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Each project will be accompanied by a **Steering Committee**, to be set up at the start of the project. The Steering Committee is composed of the project managers of the partners, the programme manager and the domain manager of Defence. The intended end user of Belgian Defence can decide if they want to be represented in the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee acts as a governance body, to ensure that the project remains in line with the research objectives and adapt the project plan accordingly whenever necessary. It ensures that the project reporting is done in accordance with section 6.4.

The Steering Committee should meet at least once a year to discuss the project's progress. The organisation of such meeting must be included in the project work plan and the project budget. Ideally, this(these) meeting(s) should take place in the same period as the delivery of the progress report(s).

The following actions and decisions will be taken by the Steering Committee:
- Examine information collected by the Coordinator on the progress of the Project, to assess the compliance of the Project with the Proposal and, if necessary, propose modification of the Proposal.
- Determine the policy for press releases, joint publications and other public disclosures regarding the Project.
- Keep a register of Foreground generated within the Project and patents filed thereon, which is concluded at the end of the Project.
- Examine and approve proposed changes to the work programme. In case of actions with a budgetary impact, the Steering Committee will make proposals to the funding authority but cannot decide without the approval of this funding authority.
- If necessary, propose the termination of all or part of the Project.

6.4. REPORTS

The contract foresees the following reports to be submitted to the RHID:

- Initial report: to be submitted within three months after the start of the project.
- Progress report(s): to be submitted according to the specifications in the contract (annex 1, technical specifications).
- Final report: to be submitted three months after the end of the project.
- If deemed useful by the RHID, an additional report may be requested for an external evaluation of the project.
- The RHID can ask for a report or other input at any time during the course of the project in order to provide scientific support to valorisation and service actions related to the programme.

These reports are to be included in the project work plan and the cost of preparing them (including possible translations) must be covered by the project budget.

They should contain all necessary information to assess the progress of the project in relation to the work packages, deliverables and budget. Problems must be identified, including possible solutions.

7. DATA, RESULTS, INTELLECTUAL OWNERSHIP AND SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

7.1. GENERAL CONDITIONS

The Data Management Plan (DMP), to be submitted as part of the proposal, describes how the project partners deal with the collected data before, during and after the project. It is a key element of good data management.

For all aspects regarding the use of data, intellectual ownership and valorisation of the project results and the confidentiality or security requirements, the conditions of the General Conditions (Annex II of the contract and the articles 12, 13 and 14 in particular) apply.

Ownership of existing information and data (the individual background) remains with the original owner.

As a principle, the Foreground - the results (including information) produced by the project - shall be the property of the partner carrying out the work generating this foreground.

The principles for the use of joint foreground will have to be determined by the project partners, with respect for these General Conditions.

7.2. SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

For social and humanities data, a copy of the data and/or metadata can be transferred to SODA (Social Sciences Data Archive) (https://sodabelgianproject.wixsite.com/sodaproject) after explicit approval of RHID.

7.3. CLASSIFIED INFORMATION/SECURITY RELATED ACTIVITIES

For the themes 2-AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS, 4-ADVANCED SENSOR TECHNOLOGIES and 5-MATERIALS there are no specific security requirements.

For the themes **1-CYBER** and **3-OPEN THEME SMEs** certain activities may use or generate classified information. This paragraph solely concerns protective measures to be taken to preserve the confidentiality of security-sensitive information regarding research projects under these themes.

A classification is given to documents to prevent their improper use which could damage, among other things, the fulfilment of the tasks of Defence, the external security and international relations of the State and the scientific and economic potential of the country (for the complete list see "Wet van 11 Dec 1998 Art 3/Loi du 11 Déc 199 Art 3").

According to the same law this identification should be based on the following classification levels:

- The "**TRES SECRET/ZEER GEHEIM**" level is assigned to a piece if its improper use could cause EXTREMELY SERIOUS damage to the main Belgian interests listed in the law. Topics that qualify under this category cannot be part of the project.
- The "**SECRET/GEHEIM**" level is assigned to a document if its improper use could cause SERIOUSLY damage to the interests listed in the law.
- The "**CONFIDENTIEL/VERTROUWELIJK**" level is assigned to a document if its improper use could harm any of the interests listed in the law.

Documents of which the originator wants to limit the distribution to persons who are authorized to use them on a need-to-know basis, without however attaching legal consequences to this limitation, are marked with the indication "**DIFFUSION RESTREINTE/BEPERKTE VERSPREIDING**".

These classification levels should be applied taking into account both the need to protect information and the need to avoid unnecessary obstruction to the use of research information and results.

Applicants for this theme should identify in the Full-Proposal the classification needs for the work packages of the project that involve threat and /or vulnerability assessments and the information on specifications or capabilities of the tool(s) used.

- threat assessments (i.e. estimation of the likelihood of a malicious act against an asset, with particular reference to factors such as intention, capacity and potential impact)
- vulnerability assessments (i.e. description of gaps or weaknesses which can be exploited during malicious acts, and often contain suggestions to eliminate or diminish these weaknesses)
- specifications (i.e. exact guidelines on the design, composition, manufacture, maintenance or operation of threat substances or countermeasure substances, technologies and procedures)
- capability assessments (i.e. description of the ability of an asset, system, network, service or authority to fulfil its intended role — and in particular the capacity of units, installations, systems, technologies, substances and personnel that have security-related functions to carry these out successfully)

Based on the assessment of the provided input a security screening by Belgian Defence might be imposed in the contract on ALL partners of the selected project(s). In that case, these beneficiaries should obtain a security clearance before starting work on classified parts of the project.

The applicable security framework for the action must be in place at the latest before the signature of the contract and will be considered as an annexe to the contract.

More information can be found on the NVO website: https://www.nvoans.be/nl/private-ondernemingen/industriele-veiligheid

This security analysis will not be part of the evaluation process but is essential to be able to start the project.

8. COMPLAINTS

Both BELSPO and RHID place great importance on the quality of their service and on improving the way they operate. A complaint about the administrative handling of this call for proposals will be handled by BELSPO, RHID will handle complaints about the content of the call and the contracts that are concluded as a result of the call.

A special form to handle complaints has been created.

The complaint form is available at the following address:
http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/complaints_en.stm

Complaints submitted anonymously or which are offensive or not related to our organisation will not be processed.

A complaint is handled as follows:

- Once your complaint has been filed, a notification of receipt will be sent.
- The complaint will be forwarded to the relevant departments and individuals and will be processed within one month.
- An answer will be sent by e-mail or letter.
- The complaint will be treated with strict confidentiality.

If you are dissatisfied by the initial response to a complaint, you can always contact the Médiateur Fédéral / Federal Ombudsman, rue de Louvain 48 bte 6 / Leuvenseweg 48 bus 6, 1000 Brussels (email: contact@mediateurfederal.be / contact@federaalombudsman.be).

9. CONTACTS

Further information can be obtained by contacting the **secretariat**: defra@belspo.be