



Selection Procedure for
Scientific – Technical
collaborators of the Spanish
State Research Agency



State Research Agency

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1. Introduction

The mission of the State Research Agency is to finance, evaluate, manage and track scientific and technical research activities designed to generate exchange and exploit knowledge, as fostered by the Central Government. Agency objectives therefore comprise, *inter alia*, fostering of scientific and technical research in all areas of knowledge, the promotion of excellence, duly encouraging cooperation between System agents and providing support for generating high-impact scientific and technological, economic and social knowledge, forming new generations of future scientists and disseminating scientific and technical achievements across society.

The State Research Agency (AEI), by virtue of Article 28.6 of the AEI Statute and as established in Article 19 of Law 14/2001, 1 June, on Science, Technology and Innovation, may provisionally engage full-time or part-time scientific-technical collaborators.

The purpose of this document is to establish the procedure for selecting those collaborators.

This procedure, which was approved by the AEI Executive Board on 30 January 2018, was drawn with the advice of the Scientific and Technical Board, and subsequently approved by the S&T Board at the session held on 22 June 2017. This is one of the procedures AEI committed to in its Annual Action Plan for the year 2017, within Line 3: “Scientific-technical evaluation of proposals”, Program 3: Drafting of protocols.

The AEI Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Division is responsible for leading the procedure for selecting scientific-technical collaborators as well as monitoring their progress.

2. Functions of AEI scientific-technical collaborators

The purpose of engaging scientific-technical collaborators is so they can advise and collaborate with managing, evaluating and monitoring AEI programmes and calls, thereby taking advantage of their knowledge and experience in various areas and programmes related to the creation, exchange and exploitation of knowledge.

This document refers to ST collaborators in charge of a specific field or sub-field of science.

AEI management may also specifically mandate CT collaborators to act in one or in several external missions or meetings on behalf of the Agency, but only within the remit of functions allocated to that collaborator, and only if the Agency is certain this will not lead to a conflict-of-interest scenario.

Likewise, the opinion of ST collaborators may be sought with regard to projects, or possible lines of research in their field, international promotion and collaboration activities, or to identify researchers or special interest groups, *inter alia*.

It is expected that ST collaborators will have a positive effect on the relationship between the community of scientists in their field and the AEI throughout the collaboration period, and act as interlocutors.

3. Characteristics and qualifications of AEI scientific-technical collaborators

ST collaborators are researchers or technical experts at public or private centres and temporarily engaged by the AEI, either on a full-time or part-time basis, for AEI to benefit from their knowledge of a particular field of science.

ST collaborators are appointed on the basis of personal capabilities and chosen through a process that confirms their high level of scientific-technical knowledge, renowned leadership within the scientific community, as well as their experience in developing and assessing research projects.

The AEI Scientific and Technical Community will provide consultancy on the appropriate number of ST collaborators and size of teams. The number of collaborators and team sizes may vary according to the characteristics of State RDI Plans, areas of science and the challenges concerned, as well as the working system established for the evaluation of the various different instrument types, the management of calls for which the AEI is responsible, and any other science policy decision affecting the AEI workload.

4. Selection procedure

ST collaborators are selected through a transparent and open procedure that allows candidates to be proposed by the AEI Scientific and Technical Committee, by AEI personnel and through the reception of expressions of interest open to the entire scientific community.

Before entering into a collaboration arrangement, AEI will take steps to ensure compliance with the available budget limits established at the start of each budget year with regard to the maximum amounts payable to specialists and experts, as approved by the Ministry of Finance and Public Administration.

Pursuant to Article 12.2.o) of the AEI Statute, the overall head of AEI is responsible for appointing and dismissing collaborators. The appointment of collaborators must be authorised in advance by the Government Delegated

Commission for Scientific, Technological and Innovation Policy and also by the expert's current employer entity.

The main factor for consideration when selecting collaborators is their scientific and technical qualities. Nevertheless, AEI will guarantee compliance with the principles of equal opportunity and will also take into account the gender equality policy of the State Secretariat for RDI, assumed in its entirety by AEI. Also, pursuant to Additional Provision Thirteen of Law 14/2011 which refers to implementing the gender perspective, AEI will seek gender balance when selecting collaborators, as well as balance among the organism from which they are recruited. AEI management will follow through on this undertaking and, if a significant imbalance is found, the Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Division will propose the necessary corrective measures to AEI Management. The mid-term objective is for at least 40% of the least represented gender to be present in each programme or area of expertise.

The names of ST collaborators will be published annually on the AEI website.

5. Selection criteria

In order to be considered as an AEI ST Collaborator, experts must have worked continuously in their current position (employed on a long-term or short-term basis) for at least 12 months, and must remain actively working at their centre throughout the period of engagement with AEI. The 12-month continuous working period condition is subject to review when justified grounds exist for having worked at the current workplace centre for a shorter period.

Any scientist wishing to collaborate with AEI as an ST collaborator must additionally have at least 5 years' of scientific, technical or innovation-related experience in a public or private national or international research centre.

Selection criteria for ST collaborators will be defined in accordance with the proposed collaboration role. The selected experts must meet at least the

following criteria:

- 1) Scientific- technological excellence, established by means of the quantity and especially the quality and impact of their scientific- technological contributions in the specialist field.
- 2) Proven competence in management, direction, involvement in basic/applied research and innovation projects, including drawing up proposals; implementation and use of project resources; management of human resources allocated to the research, including student supervision, and especially those studying a PhD. Periods in contractual research with relevant industrial experience are also valued as well as the involvement in developing or licensing projects that have entered the market.
- 3) ST collaborators must be active researchers or technology experts renowned as leaders in the scientific community and with a broad disciplinary perspective. AEI can therefore be sure their opinions have the due authority and that they are respected by the scientific community, with capacity to appropriately resolve any conflicts of interest that may arise.
- 4) ST collaborators must not have any connection to the financing body.
- 5) There must be no conflict of interest in relation to the collaborator obligations that his or her collaboration with the AEI entail (Annex 1).
- 6) ST collaborators must be capable of carrying out assessments and evaluating proposals written in English and must be able to participate in discussions in English.

When applying the aforesaid criteria, the individual career path should be considered including any circumstances that may have career breaks, especially family circumstances or time off for any reason (health issues, maternity or paternity, working in the industry, etc.).

Additionally, ST collaborators must have:

- a. Leadership skills, organisational skills, planning and decision-making skills,

handling priorities.

- b. Capacity to work effectively as part of the team in a changing environment, with high performance and subject to strict deadlines.

6. Selection Committee

The Selection Committee will draft a proposal taking into account the candidate applications, which will be placed before the AEI Management. This committee will be comprised by 3 members:

- 1) the manager of the AEI Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Division.
- 2) the outgoing ST collaborator.
- 3) an independent, renowned expert in the scientific field of reference, appointed by the Scientific and Technical Committee from among its members.

The manager and sub-managers from the AEI Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Sub-Divisions will take part with voice but no vote, in advisory capacity.

The selection committee will issue a report, setting out grounds and subject to the criteria defined in the section above. Once the AEI Scientific and Technical Committee has accepted the proposal, a prioritised list of candidates will be proposed to the AEI Director, who will make the ST collaborators appointment.

The ST collaborators will then propose their team members to the Selection Committee, and the latter will either accept these or propose others, in a report setting out due grounds. The AEI director will approve and proceed to appoint the selected team components. Experts from national and foreign public and private centres may become ST collaborator team members.

7. Collaboration term

As a general rule, collaboration agreements are renewed annually over an initial maximum four-year term. As an exception, and at the request of the Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Division, the collaboration can be renewed once or twice up to a maximum period of six years. Expert collaboration will end when the period of their appointment terminates, when they retire, or if they do not adequately fulfil their obligations. The AEI management, the ST collaborator or the ST collaborator's current employer may terminate the collaboration early, by informing the other party sufficiently in advance, providing at least two months' notice.

8. AEI scientific technical collaborators' remuneration

ST collaborators will be paid the amount established as the minimum amounts authorised by the Ministry of Finance and Public Administration, in the Communiqué dated 9 October 2017, for the years 2018- 2019, and replacement figures for successive years, for attending for continuous collaboration purposes in consideration of their part-time engagement with AEI. The aforesaid amounts have been decided bearing in mind the full or part-time dedication during the collaboration, the ST collaborator specialisation in the mandated tasks and the degree of responsibility for those tasks.

The current applicable amounts are:

Module A	€465/month
Module B	€595/month
Module C	€725/month
Module D	€855 month

Generally speaking, ST collaborators with responsibility for coordinating an area or sub-area come under modules C or D, whereas assistant collaborators or other collaborators performing specialist tasks will be paid according to modules A or B.

Payment to the ST collaborators assisting AEI on a continuous collaboration basis, as defined above, will be incompatible with the payment of attendance fees for both attending AEI meetings or evaluations.

Collaborators will also receive compensations for travel expenses from their place of residence or for service commissions carried out within the framework of their collaboration with AEI. Travel costs, board and lodging will be limited to the amounts established for group 2 in the Royal Decree 462/2002, of 24 May, on compensation for services. Compensation payable for use of a private vehicle will be subject to the provisions of Order EHA/3770/2005, of 1 September.

ANNEX I. Obligations of the experts

a. Autonomy

Actions of ST collaborators are deemed subject to the basic principles of AEI actions (Article 6 of the AEI Statute) and especially to the principles of autonomy, objectivity, duty to abstain and confidentiality.

ST collaborators must carry out their obligations and take decisions bearing in mind the interests of the Spanish R&D+i system in general and AEI in particular. They must neither seek nor accept instructions from any other body, centre or individual, other than the AEI. ST collaborators must also have regard for significant scientific-technical or social interests in their area of expertise, avoiding personal viewpoints and partial views of reality.

b. Objectivity

ST collaborators will carry out assigned tasks independently, objectively and impartially, with regard for the public interest and the principles of the Spanish and AEI RDI system. To that end, they shall:

- avoid negative or positive bias.
- avoid personal comments unrelated to the scientific content of the proposal.
- give constructive, respectful responses based on scientific-technical arguments, including recommended references or relevant works, specific experiments, etc., that may improve the proposal content, and should also make suggestions to improve the clarity of the proposal, if necessary.

c. Diligence

Diligence is also necessary and implies careful, appropriate and honest evaluation of proposals, carried out within the designated time period. Additionally, collaborators must inform AEI of any potential ethical problem, such as plagiarism, duplicate projects, artificial manufacturing of data or unethical, hazardous or illegal experimental designs.

d. Duty to abstain

CT collaborators shall not manage any issue in which they have a direct or indirect personal interest or an interest which may detract from their impartiality. In that regard, they should immediately inform their manager in the AEI Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Division, who will take the appropriate measures and propose to release the ST collaborator from the responsibility of managing that specific matter.

ST collaborators must declare any conflict-of-interest or competitive interest or interests, such as the same subject of research or direct competition, close personal relationship or collaboration with the interested parties or recent co-authoring of scientific publications. The ST collaborators must also bear in mind and accept that applicants may reject evaluators to whom they do not wish their work to be sent, if the objection is based on a known conflict of interest.

e. Duty of Confidentiality

ST collaborators must bear in mind that the information provided within the framework of collaboration with the AEI must only be used for that purpose. All information provided must be treated as strictly confidential and ST collaborators may be required to sign non-disclosure agreements in that regard.

Any ST collaborator (or former ST collaborator) wishing to publish a text using information arising from collaboration with AEI, either alone or together with other authors, must request prior authorisation from the AEI Director.

The ST collaborators and experts must bear in mind that confidentiality is critical for safeguarding the originality of proposals. For that reason, no details of any proposal may be shared except with the manager and personnel of the AEI Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Division. Nor may any confidential information contained in proposals be used to benefit ST collaborators.

ANNEX II. Conflict of interest

Conflict of interest may be defined as a scenario in which a person can find him or herself in a position to benefit either financially, professionally or personally from the outcome of an evaluation. Properly defined guidelines must be applied to identify and handle potential conflicts of interest throughout the proposal evaluation procedure.

AEI deals with conflict of interest scenarios in a similar way to agencies in other countries and in the European Union.

In general, collaborators and evaluators may not take part in tasks included in their collaboration with AEI if they find themselves in any of the following scenarios, *inter alia*:

- Being a relative of the applicant or applicants.
- Directed or co-directed the doctoral thesis of the applicant or applicants (last 5 years).
- If they normally contribute to publications or patents of the applicant or applicants (last 5 years).
- If they have a contractual relationship, share funding or research projects with the applicant or applicants (last 3 years).
- Similar scenarios in other economic or scientific-technical activities.
- If they have been rejected by any applicant or are clearly friends or enemies.
- Take part in the proposal.

The scenarios established as grounds for abstaining and rejection in the administrative procedure as set out in Articles 23 and 24 of Law 40/2015, of 1 October, on the Legal System applicable to the Public Sector should also be taken into account as possible conflict-of-interest scenarios.

In order to avoid or minimise any possible conflict-of-interest scenarios, it is necessary to ensure that collaborators and experts only carry out their obligations in the interests of AEI.

In order to manage any possible conflict of interest scenarios, the Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Division must inform the ST collaborator of his or her expected obligations related to the collaboration before they start their collaboration with AEI, and obtain confirmation in writing that the ST collaborator is not aware of any reason why the tasks corresponding to his or her functions should not be allocated to them.

The ST collaborator's current work centre and the ST collaborator must inform the Coordination, Evaluation and Scientific and Technical Monitoring Division of any change to the circumstances that occur during collaboration which may result in a conflict of interest.

ANNEX III. AEI Scientific-technical Areas

AEI scientific-technical areas are organised into 3 major knowledge groups:

- Social Sciences and Humanities
- Physical sciences, Mathematics and Engineering
- Life Sciences

Social Sciences and Humanities

Area	Sub-Area
CSO / Social Sciences	SOC / Sociology COM / Communication CPO / Political science GEO / Geography FEM / Studies of feminism, women, and gender studies
DER / Law	
ECO / Economy	MAE / Methods of economic analysis ECA / Economics and its applications EYF / Companies and finances
MLP / Mind, language and thinking	LIL / Linguistics and languages FIL / Philosophy
FLA / Culture: Philology, literature and art	LFL / Literature, philology, languages and ancient cultures ART / Art, fine art, museum studies
PHA / Studies of the past: History and archaeology	HIS / History ARQ / Archaeology
EDU / Education sciences	
PSI / Psychology	

Physical sciences, mathematics and engineering

Area	Sub-Area
MTM / Maths	
FIS / Physical sciences	FIA / Physics and its applications FFP / Basic physics and particle ESP / Space research AYA / Astronomy and astrophysics
PCA / Industrial production, civil engineering and architecture. Engineering for society.	ICA / Civil engineering and architecture IME / Mechanical, naval and aeronautical engineering IEA / Electrical, electronic and automation engineering
TIC / Information and communication technologies	MIC / Microelectronics, nanotechnology, photonics TCO / Communications technologies INF / Computer sciences and computer technologies
ENT / Energy and transport	ENE / Energy TRA / Transport
CTQ / Chemical science and technologies	QMC / Chemistry IQM / Chemical engineering
MAT / Materials science and technology	FUN / Functional materials BMA / Biomaterials MEN / Materials for energy MES / Structural materials MDC / Carbon derivative materials
CTM / Environmental sciences and technologies	BDV / Biodiversity MAR / Marine science and technologies POL / Polar research TMA / Environmental technologies CTA / Land and water sciences CLA / Climate and atmosphere

Life Sciences

Area	Sub-Area
RTA / Agricultural resources and technologies	ALI / Food science and technology AGF / Agriculture and forestry GAC / Livestock and aquaculture
BCT / Biosciences and biotechnology	BIF / Integrative biotechnology and physiology BMC / Molecular and cellular biology BTC / Biotechnology
BME / Biomedicine	FPO / Pathophysiology of organs and systems CAN / Cancer ESN / Nervous system DPT / Diagnostic, prognostic and therapeutic tools. INM / Immunology, infection and new therapies MCL / Clinical medicine