ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY
BRUSSELS

27-28 JANUARY 2026

DEFRA

DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION

- DEFRA Calls -

- INFO DAY-

DEFENCE

ROYAL HIGHER INSTITUTE for DEFENCE

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DEFRA Calls 2026

- DEFRA call 2026
- Open call Human factors
- Space call

!! Subject to approval of Council of Ministers!!

AGENDA

1. General introduction
2. 6th DEFRA call: timeline and themes
3. Safety aspects
4. Ethical aspects
5. Q&A
6. Breakout sessions themes 1-9

PROGRAMME

08:30 Registration and coffee
09:00 General introduction
09:15 6th DEFRA call: timeline and themes (recap day 1)
09:45 Safety aspects
10:05 Ethical aspects
10:15 Q&A

10:25 Coffee & networking

10:25 - 12:00 Breakout sessions themes 1-9

10:55 Open Call Human Factors: content and timeline
11:10 The rules of the Open Call Human Factors
11:20 Q&A

12:00 Standing lunch

13:00 Space Call: content and timeline

13:00 - 14:00 Breakout session HF

14:00 Submission procedure and use of the platform
14:10 Evaluation procedure
14:20 Q&A

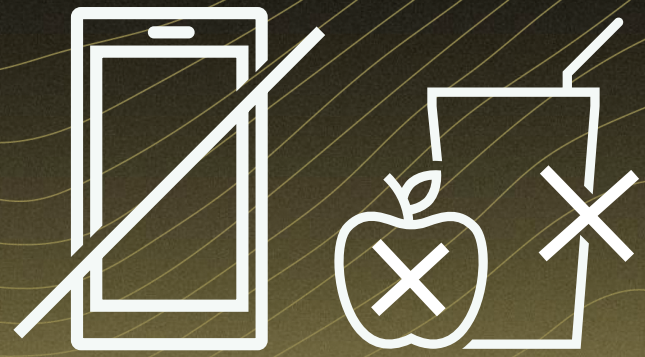
14:40 Breakout session Space Call

15:30 End of information days

Housekeeping rules

DEFRA
DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION

- Please put your **phone on silent mode**.
- For the smooth running of this conference and to respect the rights of the speakers, we kindly ask you to **refrain from using your phones to record the conference, either in audio or video format**.
  We also request that you **do not use AI tools to transcribe or distribute the content** of the conference.
- Do **not drink & eat in the meeting rooms**.
- Please **give back your neck lanyard** when leaving the event.



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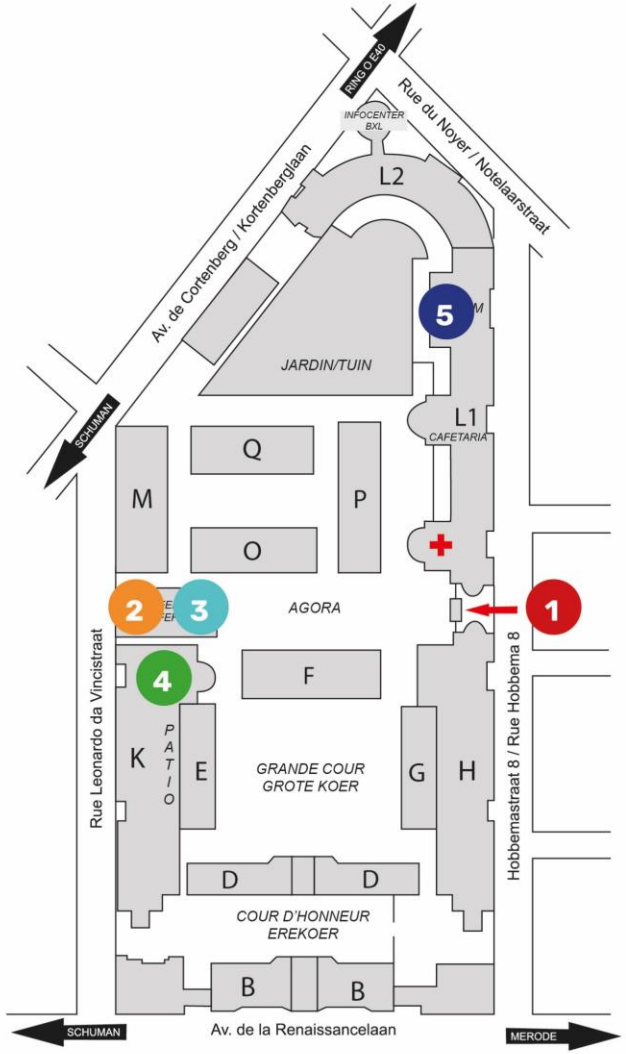


1. Entrance/exit + guardroom (registration)

2. Conference room Frank De Winne
   27-28 Jan: Registration & Coffee break
   27 Jan: Reception

3. *Breakout sessions*

   Symposium:
   - Innovative Solutions for Military Medical Logistics (theme 3)
   - Biomanufacturing (theme 4)
   - Conflict Dynamics & Warning Intelligence (theme 8)

   Studio 1:
   - Resilient Propulsion Tech for Strategic Autonomy (theme 1)
   - Next Generation Sensing (theme 6)

   Studio 2:
   - Cyber (theme 2)

4. *Breakout sessions*

   K.0019:
   Smart Energy Management & Energy Optimisation (theme 5)
   K.0020:
   Exploring & Integrating Unmanned Systems (theme 7)
   K.0029:
   Communications Technology (theme 9)

5. Restaurant 2: Lunch
   27-28 Jan: Standing lunch

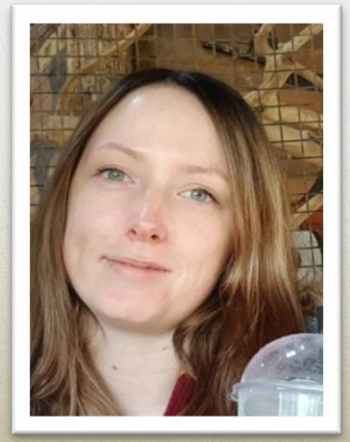
MEET THE DEFRA TEAM

RHID Royal Higher Institute for Defence – Research, Development, Innovation and Industrialization

&

BELSPO Belgian Science Policy

Marleen Bosschaerts
Deputy Director Research Programs



Silke Van Steelant
Program manager

Karen Pieters
Deputy Director RDII
Program Manager DEFRA

Fabian Van Haelst
Administrative support

CONTENT OF THE 6TH CALL: TIMELINE & THEMES

TIMELINE

	DATE	AT / VIA
Information session	27-28 January 2026	RMA, building I, meeting room Frank De Winne
Deadline Pre-proposals	**19 February 2026 (14h00)**	**Online submission platform**
Communication of evaluation result pre-proposals	23 March 2026	Mail
Deadline Full proposals	**4 May 2026 (14h00)**	**Online submission platform**
Remote scientific peer review evaluation	5 May – 1 June 2026	Online evaluation platform
Ethical evaluation	5 May – 5 June 2026	NA
Feedback to applicants in preparation of panel meeting (remote scientific peer evaluation, ethical evaluation & questions to applicants)	10 June 2026	Mail

TIMELINE

	DATE	AT / VIA
Written feedback by applicants (answers)	**19 July 2026**	**Mail**
Panel evaluation, incl. interviews with the applicants	Between 22 June and 15 July 2026	RHID
Selection proposal formulated by the scientific committee of the RHID	4 September 2026	NA
Final selection of proposals by the board of directors of the RHID and allocation of projects	10 September 2026	NA
Communication of results to applicants	**14 September 2026**	**Mail**

THEMES & INDICATIVE BUDGET

THEME	INDICATIVE BUDGET (M€)
Theme 1 – Resilient Propulsion Technologies for Strategic Autonomy	2.0
Theme 2 – Cyber: Advanced Data Management and Intelligence Concepts	3.0
Theme 3 – Innovative Solutions for Military Medical Logistics in Challenging Environments	2.0
Theme 4 – Biomanufacturing	2.0
Theme 5 – Smart energy management, energy optimisation (including optimised storage technologies)	3.0
Theme 6 – Next generation sensing	2.0
Theme 7 – Exploring and Integrating Unmanned Systems	2.0
Theme 8 – Conflict Dynamics & Warning Intelligence	2.0
Theme 9 – Communications Technology	2.0
Theme 10 - Open call: Defence relevant research	6.0
TOTAL	26.0

Theme 1: Resilient Propulsion Technologies for Strategic Autonomy

Context

Europe faces a critical dependency on non-EU rare earth supply chains for BLDC motors. This dependency undermines security, strategic autonomy and industrial resilience. To mitigate this dependency, alternative solutions must be developed

Research Scope

Proposals are expected to deliver one or more of the following topics, not necessarily all

- Development of novel materials or composites for magnet-free or low-dependency motor systems.
- Redesign of motor architectures to eliminate or drastically reduce the need for rare earth elements.
- Investigation into new production methods that support scalable, cost-effective manufacturing of next generation electromotors
- System-level analysis of performance, efficiency, manufacturability, and lifecycle impacts of proposed solutions

Expected impact for Defence

- Proof-of-concept prototypes demonstrating comparable or improved performance to existing BLDC motors.
- Feasibility studies or production process innovations that enable industrial adoption within a realistic timeframe.
- Contributions to strategic independence in critical technologies by reducing material dependencies.

Theme 1: Resilient Propulsion Technologies for Strategic Autonomy

POC :

Smart and Advanced Materials
Cdt Laurens Rottiers
Research Manager

Laurens.Rottiers@mil.be

Theme 2: Cyber: Advanced Data Management and Intelligence Concepts

Context

Coalition operations require joint analytics while respecting data sovereignty, operational security, and privacy regulations

Privacy-Preserving Federated Learning (PPFL) enables collaborative AI without sharing raw data, combining Federated Learning with cryptographic and statistical privacy mechanisms

Research Scope

- a modular PPFL toolbox, including client SDKs, with source-code access to enable verification and sustainability, while intellectual property remains with the consortium;
- a validated TRL 5 PPFL prototype, including at least one trained AI model demonstrably usable across
- distributed partners;
- a privacy accounting plan and artefacts defining epsilon (ε) privacy budgets, their composition over training rounds and enforced stop conditions.

! Collaboration with Royal Military Academy is preferred, not mandatory !

Impact for Defence

- Enables collaborative deployment of AI models without exposing sensitive data
- Supports coalition situational awareness, predictive analytics, and decision support
- Preserves control over data exposure and privacy loss
- Provides a concrete decision framework to balance intelligence value against privacy and security risks

Theme 2: Cyber: Advanced Data Management and Intelligence Concepts

POC :

Cyber
Mrs Paola Travella, PhD
Research Manager

Paola.Travella@mil.be

Theme 3: Innovative Solutions for Military Medical Logistics in Challenging Environments

Context

Critical enabler of operational readiness in expeditionary and large-scale operations
Timely and resilient medical supply directly affects casualty survival and mission effectiveness
High operational challenges in contested and resource-constrained environments
Need for agile and adaptive logistics across austere regions and extended frontlines
Growing logistical complexity due to advanced medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and blood products

Research Scope

Proposals must target one or more of the following thematic areas:

- Quality assurance and control of medical materials and medications
- Augmentation of shelf-life for consumables, and innovative strategies for managing stockpiling and end-of-life stock;
- Ensuring an unbroken logistic continuum for all classes of medical supplies (e.g. blood)
- Deployment of autonomous vehicles (ground or aerial) for supply delivery and evacuation
- Personalisation and adaptation of medical kits for frontline medics and nurses, leveraging modular design and advanced diagnostics.

Impact for Defence

- Strengthens Defence medical logistics by improving planning, coordination, agility, and resilience through evidence-based, field-deployable solutions for future complex operational environments.
- Enhances operational effectiveness by enabling interoperable, data-driven medical support, contributing to improved force health protection and overall operational readiness.

Theme 3: Innovative Solutions for Military Medical Logistics in Challenging Environments

POC :

Human Factors & Medicine
Mrs Lucie Geurts, PhD
Research Manager

Lucie.Geurts@mil.be

Theme 4: Biomanufacturing

Context

- Biomanufacturing and smart materials are NATO-recognized strategic emerging and disruptive technologies with transformative potential across defence capabilities.
- On-demand production and adaptive materials enable field-deployable medical, energy, protection, and soldier-support systems, even in austere operational environments.
- Convergence with AI and digital twins allows real-time optimization of material performance, enhancing Defence autonomy, survivability, and operational readiness.

Research Scope

Research should focus on one of the two following topics:

1. Biomanufacturing

- Synthetic biology and metabolic engineering for on-demand production of critical supplies
- Biofabrication of tissues, sensors, and structural components for medical, diagnostic and repair applications;
- Bioremediation systems to detoxify hazardous environments or recycle waste into usable materials;
- Sustainable bioprocessing and integration with AI and digital twins will be considered as an added value for any development within the scope of the above-mentioned research areas.

Theme 4: Biomanufacturing

2. Smart Materials Science

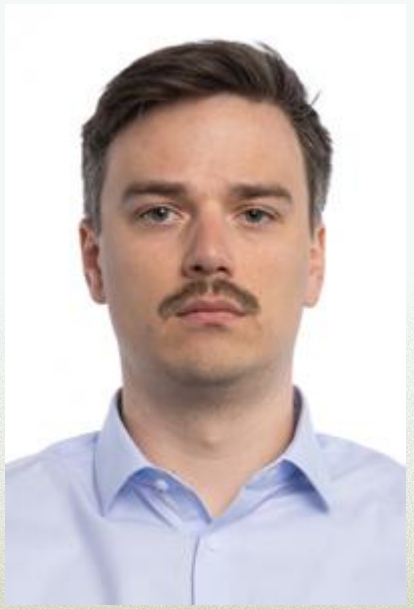
- Personal protective materials, e.g. self-healing materials for body armour
- Stimuli-responsive camouflage that adapts to environmental conditions for stealth operations;
- Bioinspired and multifunctional materials with integrated sensing, camouflage, or energy-harvesting capabilities;
- Nanostructured and programmable materials for enhanced performance and protection in extreme conditions;
- Integration with AI and digital twins for predictive material behaviour and lifecycle optimization logistics will be considered as an added value.

Impact for Defence

- Advance biomanufacturing and smart materials technologies to support personnel protection, military readiness, and operational effectiveness of Belgian Defence.
- Develop field-deployable, interoperable biomanufacturing solutions for rapid, secure, and responsible production of medical countermeasures, sensors, and mission-relevant biomaterials, with integrated biosafety, biosecurity, and supply-chain resilience.
- Strengthen resilience and sustainability of defence systems by reducing supply-chain dependencies and enhancing protection against chemical and biological threats through smart materials.
- Target TRL 4–6 with a strong focus on proof-of-concept and operational relevance.

Theme 4: Biomanufacturing

POC :



Protection of Personnel, Systems & Infrastructure
Mr Ruben Maes, PhD
Research Manager

Ruben.Maes@mil.be

Theme 5: Smart energy management, energy optimisation (including optimised storage technologies)

Context

- Modular, scalable energy storage is essential for modern defence platforms.
- Lithium-ion and solid-state batteries enable high power and fast recharging while nuclear-based batteries provide ultra-long endurance where resupply is limited.
- Modular integration of these technologies reduces energy burden and improves mission resilience.

Research Scope

Proposals may include research on:

- design and modelling of modular micro-energy units with reusable components
- development of plug-and-play interfaces enabling rapid integration across defence
- optimisation of reliability, maintainability, operational continuity, and system robustness under military conditions; strategies for scaling and adapting architectures to evolving mission requirements.

Impact for Defence

Outcomes are expected to:

- reduce reliance on vulnerable supply chains for energy and batteries; extend mission endurance for unmanned and remote systems
- enhance resilience of critical defence infrastructure; enable persistent, low-maintenance Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), security, CBRN monitoring capabilities, …;

Theme 5: Smart energy management, energy optimisation (including optimised storage technologies)

POC :

Sustainable Energy & Environment
Mr Lowie Vueghs, PhD
Research Manager

Lowie.Vueghs@mil.be

Theme 6: Next generation sensing

Context

- Next-generation military sensing requires high agility, resilience, and advanced data analysis in contested environments.
- Focus on innovative sensing technologies that enhance situational awareness and enable rapid decision-making.
- Multidisciplinary research is encouraged to address complex operational scenarios.

Research Scope

- Focus on advanced defence sensing technologies with high sensitivity and high resolution.
- Covers state-of-the-art and emerging approaches (e.g. hyperspectral, event-based, magnetic and quantum sensing).
- Applications include challenging target detection, GNSS-denied navigation, and platform health monitoring.
- Aim to design passive, compact, robust, field-deployable sensors up to TRL 6.

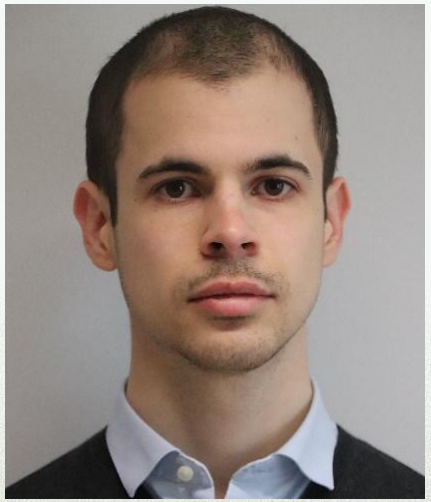
Impact for Defence

A non-exhaustive list of potential use-cases which can benefit from (disruptive) advances in sensor technology includes:

- Maritime security (above and/or under the surface) and safety
- Mine detection (both on land and at sea), especially:
  - o Buried mine detection (on land or at sea)
  - o Mines drifting just below the surface (at sea)
- Drone detection
- Detection of camouflage targets
- Target detection in degraded visual environments
- Positioning and navigation in GNSS-denied environments

Theme 6: Next generation sensing

POC :



Sensor Technologies
Mr Lieven Van de Vondel, PhD
Research Manager

Lieven.VandeVondel@mil.be

Theme 7: Exploring and Integrating Unmanned Systems

Context

Unmanned systems are becoming the backbone of the new era of armed conflict. While the use of drones is very known to the public, in reality, the threat when it comes to unmanned systems can come from not only the air, but as well from the land and sea domain.

Research Scope

Key elements include one or more of the following elements:

- Command & Control (C^2) Platforms
- Multi-Domain Coordination
- Cybersecurity & Resilience/Interoperability & Scalability/AI and automatization

Impact for Defence

The desired outcome is to provide Belgian Defence with:

- Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 5–6
- A C^2 solution that integrates unmanned systems into existing Belgian Defence platforms, ensuring compliance with current standards and enabling joint operations
- Enhanced situational awareness and mission effectiveness through improved coordination between manned and unmanned assets
- A secure and resilient architecture capable of withstanding cyber threats and electronic warfare attempts
- A foundation for future capability development, enabling Belgian Defence to expand and integrate unmanned systems into its operational doctrine

Theme 7: Exploring and Integrating Unmanned Systems

POC :

Intelligent & Autonomous Systems & Platforms
Mrs Claudia Verheyen
Research Manager

Claudia.Verheyen@mil.be

Theme 8: Conflict Dynamics & Warning Intelligence

Context

In the context of a (hybrid) conflict, the ability to effectively process vast amounts of information and data, is critical for correct decision-making. It is also essential to facilitate timely, preventive, defensive, and offensive actions. Therefore, the availability of accurate, integrated, and standardised tools to support this process is of vital importance,

Research Scope

Research into an integrated software tool that should take into account:

- A framework for conflict escalation and de-escalation
- A taxonomy based on any of the following domains such as politics, military, economy, social, information, infrastructure…
- The dynamic and complex interaction between variables
- Methods & techniques to exploit, analyse and assess retrieved information
- One or more ways to assess risks and their probability (ranges)/to deal with uncertainty
- A visually relevant and attractive early warning system

Impact for Defence

- Provide a coherently structured approach for event detection
- Provide a standardised overview of relevant elements supporting situational awareness and comprehensive preparation of the operational environment dealing with the full conflict spectrum
- Provide a scientifically sound approach for conflict escalation & de-escalation
- Support scenario design and effects-based operations
- Provide a scientifically sound approach to deal with uncertainty in decision-making;
-

Theme 8: Conflict Dynamics & Warning Intelligence

POC :

Human Factors & Medicine
Mrs Lucie Geurts, PhD
Research Manager

Lucie.Geurts@mil.be

Theme 9: Communications Technology

Context

- Secure, classified communications are critical for national defence and coalition operations.
- Mobile and digital networks introduce vulnerabilities to cyber, electronic, and hybrid threats.
- NATO SECRET–level data requires guaranteed confidentiality, integrity, authenticity, and availability.
- Belgian Defence needs a robust, mobile, future-proof communication architecture, resilient to quantum and contested-environment threats.

Research Scope

The research aims to develop a NATO SECRET mobile communication system that meets stringent security and interoperability requirements. Core elements include:

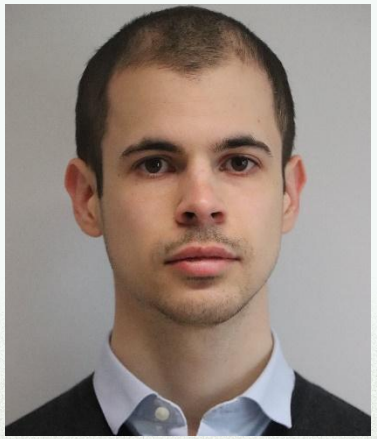
- Strong Cryptography and Key Management
- Zero-Trust Architecture/Multi-Bearer Resilience/Hardware Security

Impact for Defence

- Domestic development ensures full sovereign control over classified communications and accreditation.
- Enables tailored security architectures, including key management, lifecycle control, and EMSEC/TEMPEST compliance.
- Supports multi-bearer interoperability while remaining aligned with NATO standards.
- Delivers a robust, future-proof secure communication architecture for national and multinational operations.
- Strengthens Belgium's defence posture against current and emerging threats through integrated physical, digital, and procedural security measures.

Theme 9: Communications Technology

POC :



Communication Technologies
Mr Lieven Van de Vondel
Research Manager

Lieven.VandeVondel@mil.be

Theme 10: Open call Defence relevant research

This call is “open” to any research relevant for defence across a broad spectrum in the following research domains :

- Space technologies
- Communication Technologies
- Sensor Technologies
- Autonomous Systems and Artificial Intelligence
- Cybersecurity
- Smart and Advanced Materials
- Advanced Weapon Systems and Platforms
- Protection of Personnel, Systems, and Infrastructure
- Sustainable Energy and Environment
- Advanced Military Health
- Human Systems and Behaviour
- Security and Defence Policy

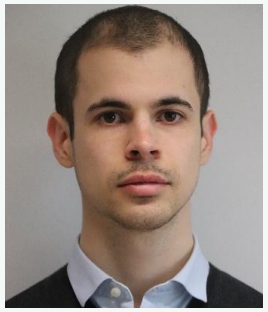
- To realize innovative and cost-effective solutions for defence applications, ground-breaking or novel concepts, new promising future technological improvements
- To improve readiness, deployability and sustainability across all spectrums of tasks and missions e.g. operations, equipment, infrastructure,…

Proposals only to be introduced in the open call if the subject of the proposal does not correspond with one of the other nine themes.

Theme 10: Open call Defence relevant research

Human Factors & Medicine
Mrs Lucie Geurts, PhD
Research Manager

Lucie.Geurts@mil.be



Sensor Technologies Communication Technologies
Mr Lieven Van de Vondel
Research Manager

Lieven.VandeVondel@mil.be

Intelligent & Autonomous Systems & Platforms
Mrs Claudia Verheyen
Research Manager

Claudia.Verheyen@mil.be

Sustainable Energy & Environment
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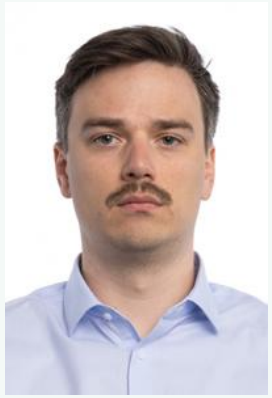

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Research Manager

Ruben.Maes@mil.be

Smart and Advanced Materials
Cdt Laurens Rottiers
Research Manager

Laurens.Rottiers@mil.be

Space
Mr Thomas Vangeebergen
Research Manager

Thomas.Vangeebergen@mil.be

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DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION

27-28 JANUARY 2026

Ethical Advisory Board Functioning & Importance for the DEFRA Call 2026

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1 Need for an Ethical Advisory Board

2 Ethical Advisory Board RHID

3 Mandate

4 Ethical Advisory Board and DEFRA Call 26

5 Importance

Need for an Ethical Advisory Board

Importance of Ethical Standards
Ethical oversight ensures research respects human rights and maintains public trust in science.

Triple Helix Collaboration
Cooperation between government, academia, and industry fosters innovation but introduces ethical complexities.

Dual-Use Research Concerns
Research with civilian and defense applications presents challenges requiring careful ethical evaluation.

→ Needs for a body that safeguards ethical aspects of scientific research conducted by, for, or in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence

Ethical Advisory Board RHID

- Independent advisory body
- The ethics committee includes representatives from:
  - The Defence organization
  - Civil society
- Multidisciplinary expertise (ethics, law, technology, military)
- This differs from university ethics committees, which usually limit membership to their own faculties
- Broad societal representation aims to:
  - Enable advice with wide societal support
  - Ensure independence from individual stakeholders
  - Allow participation of all relevant stakeholders

Mandate

- Provide ethical advice on defence-related research
- Act on own initiative or at the request of MOD, CHOD, or RHID Directors Board
- Covers scientific & technological research
- Excludes operational or political-ethical matters
- Distinction between
    - Ethics committees responsible for research-related ethical risks:
        - Dual-use research
        - Military use of research outcomes
        - Misuse of research
    - Committees with specific legal competence:
        - Ethics review under legislation on experiments involving human subjects

      e.g. Clinical studies: Military Hospital relies on external experts for ethical review (UZ Brussel)

DEFRA Call 2026 – Context

- Open to Belgian research & industry : national defence research stimulans
- Triple helix model encouraged
- Significance of ethical oversight

Role of Ethical Advisory Board in DEFRA

- Advice on full proposals
- Review of ethical self-assessment : self-assessment checklist, ensuring that only projects for which a potential ethical issue may arise are submitted to the committee. The categories for which an opinion must be requested include, among others:
  - Dual-use research
  - Military use of research
  - Misuse of research
  - Human subjects & data
  - AI

DEFRA Assessment Process

- Individual analysis by members
- Consolidation of remarks
- Plenary validation with possible outcomes :
  - Acceptance (with comments)
  - Request for modifications
  - Rejection
- Input for RHID Board

Importance of Ethical Advisory Board

- Ensures ethical integrity of defence research
- Enhances transparency & quality
- Mitigates misuse risks

Housekeeping rules

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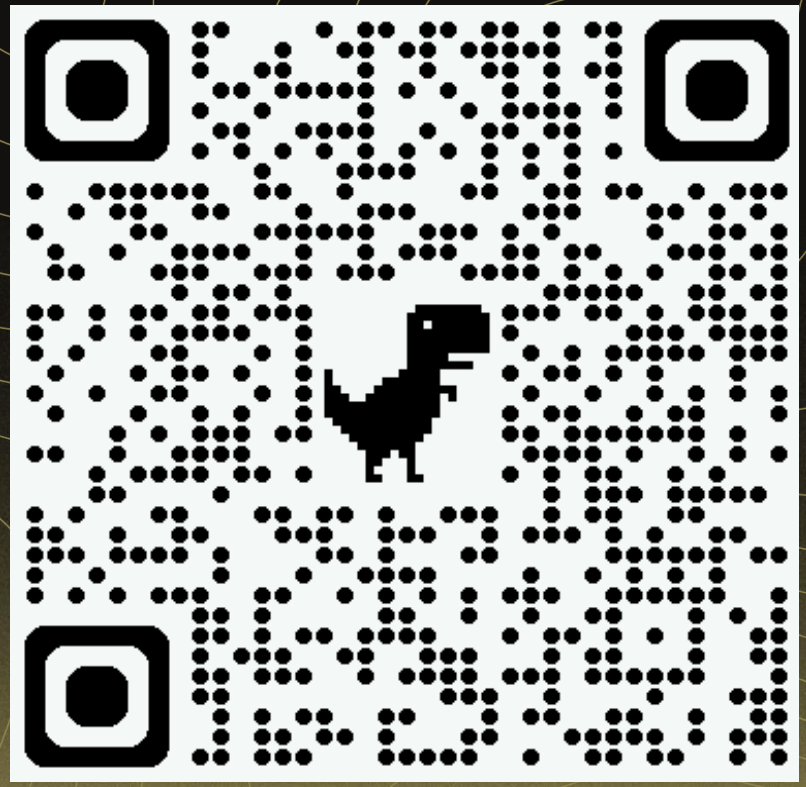
DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION

For your questions, please use **Slido** (slido.com):



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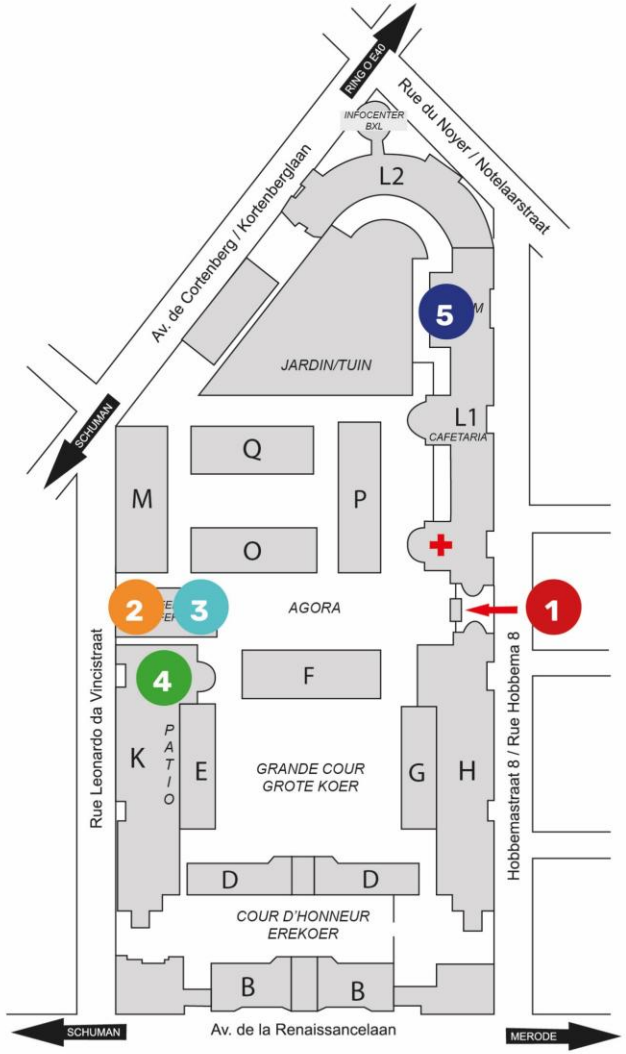

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Coffee break
& networking

10:25 – 12:00: Breakout session Themes 1 – 9

10:55 : Open Call Human Factors

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY
BRUSSELS

DEFRA
DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION

27-28 JANUARY 2026

DEFRA Calls 2026
Open call Human Factors

!! Subject to approval of Council of Ministers!!

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AGENDA

1. Open Call Human Factors: content and timeline
2. The rules of the Open Call Human Factors
3. Q&A

OPEN CALL HUMAN FACTORS: CONTENT & TIMELINE

HUMAN FACTORS OPEN CALL	INDICATIVE BUDGET (in M€)
	4.0

OPEN CALL HUMAN FACTORS

Context

Belgian Defence faces specific challenges such as budget constraints, personnel shortages, time limitations, information overload, sociocultural and operational complexity.

- a need to focus on optimising organisational and decisional processes and developing advanced operational and training methods.

Research scope

The research focuses on

- studying human behaviour, performance, and efficacy in high-technology, and extreme environments, considering humans as bio-psycho-social-spiritual beings.

Topics of interest

- cognitive and physical capabilities, human enhancement, team functioning, recruitment, leadership, organisational culture, training and education, personnel support, human-systems integration, human-machine teaming, cognitive warfare, and ethical considerations of military behaviour and technology, especially those involving artificial intelligence.

Impact for Defence

- To explore new solutions towards the development of optimised functioning and integration of human beings in complex organisations such as defence, from an economical, legal, psychological, sociological, or ethical point of view.

Open Call Human Factors

POC :

Human Factors & Medicine
Mrs Lucie Geurts, PhD
Research Manager

Lucie.Geurts@mil.be

TIMELINE

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THE RULES OF THE OPEN CALL HUMAN FACTORS

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The call is open to **Belgian** public and or private non-profit research institutes and private companies

Partnership

- At least two partners
- At least one (public or private non-profit) research institute
- Optional: private company

All types of organizations can act as project coordinator

! Foreign partners: only as **non-funded** partners. They must be registered in a country of the EU or of the EFTA or in a NATO member country

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Public research institutes	Private non-profit research centres	Private companies
• universities • colleges of higher education • federal scientific institutions • defence research institutes • other public research institutes	• operational and/or research activities in Belgium • legal personality and their registered office in Belgium. The legal personality is required at the latest when signing the research contract • must have fulfilled their obligations to pay taxes and social security contributions	

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Special requirements for **companies, a(i)sbl and foundations**

Document	Name and format of the file	How to deliver?
Extract from the UBO register	ACRONYM_UBO_COMPANY.pdf	Upload in online submission platform
Proof of dispatch of the consent form for security verification	ACRONYM_PROOF_COMPANY.pdf	E-mail to defra@mil.be (grouped per pre-proposal)
Company Honourability & Vulnerability self-assessment declaration	ACRONYM_DECLARATION.pdf	E-mail to defra@mil.be (grouped per pre-proposal)

!! Failing to deliver these documents will result in exclusion of the pre-proposal !!

RESEARCH ETHICS

It is the responsibility of the applicants to consult the relevant Ethical Board of their organisation before submitting a proposal.

- Full proposal contains an ethics self-assessment
- The Ethical Advisory Board of the RHID will assess this information and can advise the partnership how to deal with ethical aspects of the proposal

PROJECTS

- Duration: minimum 2 years – maximum 4 years
- Start of selected projects: December 2026
- Budget rules:

	Public Research Institute and Private non-profit research centre	Private company
Partner budget FINANCED BY DEFENCE	100% eligible costs	Maximum of 65% of the eligible costs, with a potential maximum of 80%, according to the size of the company

BUDGET RULES

Category of expenditure	Rules
STAFF	• Preferably under labour contract • Non-employee staff costs (management company, free-lance, interim staff) • Maximum amounts for persons to be hired for the project • NO tax-free scholarships!
GENERAL OPERATING COSTS	• For the coordinator: max 15% of staff costs • For other partners: max 10% of staff costs
SPECIFIC OPERATING COSTS	• Described in the proposal • Justified by invoices during project
OVERHEAD	• 10% of total staff and operating costs

BUDGET RULES

Category of expenditure	Rules
EQUIPMENT	• Described in the proposal • Justified by invoices during project
SUBCONTRACTING	• Max 25% of partner's budget • ! Subcontractors must be registered in Belgium • ! If applicable submit UBO register to DEFRA secretariat • ! If applicable, obtain security clearance

ATTENTION POINTS FOR EXPERTS

Eligibility criteria for potential remote evaluators

In Pre-proposal phase: propose minimum 4 evaluators (min. 2 Belgian and 2 foreign experts)

Experts must meet following criteria:

- Be outstanding and (inter)nationally (well) recognised in their research field (e.g. peer-reviewed publications in the given research field for academic researchers)
- Be able to evaluate all the aspects covered by the proposal
- Be external experts (not belonging to Belgian Defence)
- Be **free of conflict of interest**

ATTENTION POINTS FOR EXPERTS

Regarding nationality:

Experts must be nationals of a country of the European Union or nationals of a country of the European Free Trade Association or nationals of a country that is a member of NATO

Experts are considered to have a conflict of interest if they stand to **profit professionally, financially or personally** from approval or rejection of an application.

Eligible experts must:

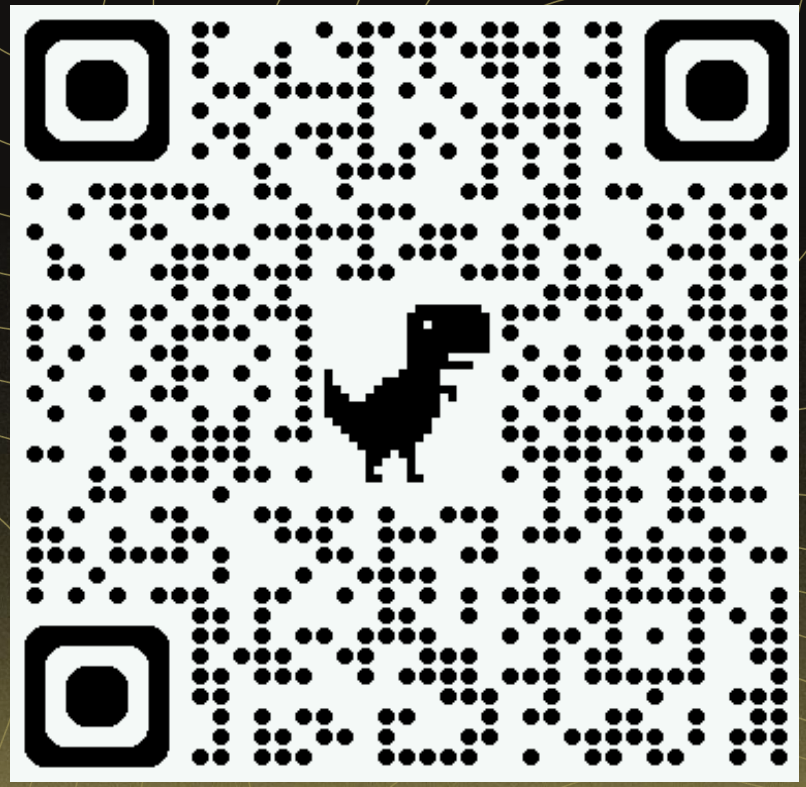
- have no direct link with the project;
- not be involved in the preparation of the pre-proposal and/or the full proposal;
- not directly benefit from the acceptance of the proposal;
- not be a family member or partner relative to the first degree of any of the applicants;
- not belong to applicants' institutions/companies;
- not be a director, a trustee or a partner of the applicants' institutions/companies;
- not have been employed within the applicants' institutions/companies in the past 5 years;
- not have held a contract or collaborated in any way with any of the applicants or their research groups in the past 5 years;
- not be a(n) (ex) PhD-promotor (one of the) of (the) applicants;
- have no common projects or co-publications with any of the applicants or their research groups within the last 5 years;
- not be in any other situation which compromises or casts a doubt on his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.

See eligibility criteria for potential remote evaluators on DEFRA website

Housekeeping rules

DEFRA
DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION

For your questions, please use **Slido** (slido.com):



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PROGRAMME

08:30 Registration and coffee
09:00 General introduction
09:15 6th DEFRA call: timeline and themes (recap day 1)
09:45 Safety aspects
10:05 Ethical aspects
10:15 Q&A

10:25 Coffee & networking

10:25 - 12:00 Breakout sessions themes 1-9

10:55 Open Call Human Factors: content and timeline
11:10 The rules of the Open Call Human Factors
11:20 Q&A

12:00 Standing lunch

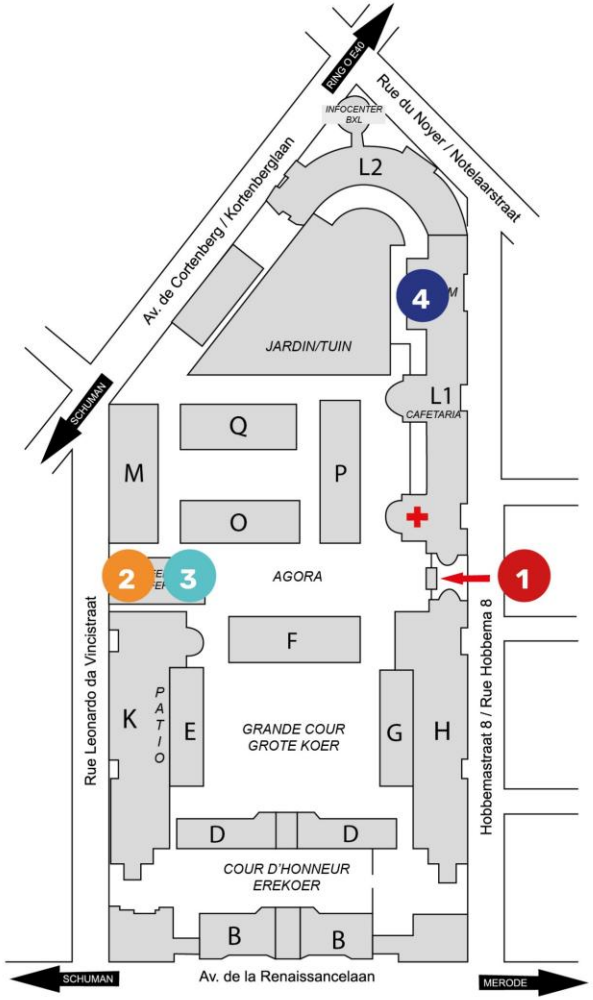
13:00 Space Call: content and timeline

13:00 - 14:00 Breakout session HF

14:00 Submission procedure and use of the platform
14:10 Evaluation procedure
14:20 Q&A

14:40 Breakout session Space Call

15:30 End of information days



1. Entrance/exit + guardroom (registration)

2. Conference room Frank De Winne
   27-28 Jan: Registration & Coffee break
   27 Jan: Reception

3. *Breakout sessions*

   Studio 1 & 2:
   - Human Factors Open Call
   - Space Call

4. Restaurant 2: Lunch
   27-28 Jan: Standing lunch

Lunch break
& networking

13:00 – 14:00: Breakout session Human Factors

13:00 : SPACE Call

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY
BRUSSELS

DEFRA
DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION

27-28 JANUARY 2026

DEFRA Calls 2026
SPACE CALL

!! Subject to approval of Council of Ministers!!

DEFENCE

ROYAL HIGHER INSTITUTE for DEFENCE

belspo

AGENDA

1. Space Call: content and timeline
2. Submission procedure and use of the platform
3. Evaluation procedure
4. Q&A

SPACE CALL: CONTENT & TIMELINE

SPACE CALL	INDICATIVE BUDGET (in M€)
Theme 1 – Earth Observation	10.0
Theme 2 – Space Situational Awareness	6.0
TOTAL	16.0

Theme 1: Earth Observation

Context

Space-based Earth Observation systems provide critical intelligence to support **strategic decision-making** and **tactical operations**. They enable monitoring of **adversary activities**, **battlefield** assessment, and **compliance** with international agreements. Current research should prioritize LEO mini-satellites as a balanced solution for capability, flexibility, and cost.

Research Scope

- **Disruptive payload and ISR capabilities**

Focus on next-generation payloads and ISR solutions enabling enhanced interoperability, direct-to-device services, end-user tasking, and tactical-level insights, supported by very high-resolution multi-sensor payloads and edge data processing.

- **Advanced sensor technologies**

Priority on high-performance sensors, including improved cooling systems for infrared sensors, miniaturized optical systems with photonic wide-spectrum imagers, and low-power, compact Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) payloads.

- **On-board data processing and optimization**

Emphasis on automated on-board processing, fully autonomous multi-sensor data fusion in space, and drastic reduction of size, weight, and power through optimized data handling.

Impact for Defence

The foreseen solutions and technologies are expected to equip Belgian/European defence with the right capabilities, the ability to achieve military objectives and perform space support to operations with decupled efficiency (highly accurate data collection and accelerated process)

Theme 2: Space Situational Awareness

Context

By 2030, space will become increasingly congested, contested, and competitive, with growing satellite numbers and debris threatening safe operations. Rising military threats to space-based infrastructure could turn space into a direct conflict domain by 2030–2035. **Protecting, understanding, and actively operating** in space will be essential for operational superiority and strategic autonomy.

Research Scope

To strengthen defence Space Situational Awareness, faster and more accurate data collection and processing are required, enabled by automated, near-real-time multi-sensor data fusion and AI-driven analytics. The focus is on

- innovative space-based sensing, integrated ground- and space-based sensors, automated on-board processing, and cost-effective satellite constellations for persistent monitoring.
- Priority is given to developing sovereign systems rather than relying on commercial products and services.

Impact for Defence

- SSA RTD aims to deliver operational, real-time situational awareness in an increasingly congested and contested space environment. By leveraging AI, adaptive optics, and low-power sensor technologies, it enables a transition from initial mission-level demonstrations to persistent SSA with advanced threat and behavior analysis.
- Increased automation and edge autonomy reduce human workload, allowing limited defence resources to be focused on high-value tasks.

SPACE CALL

POC :

Space
Mr Thomas Vangeebergen
Research Manager

Thomas.Vangeebergen@mil.be

TIMELINE

	DATE	AT / VIA
Information session	28 January 2026	RMA, building I, meeting room Frank De Winne
Deadline Pre-proposals	**19 February 2026 (14h00)**	**Online submission platform**
Communication of evaluation result pre-proposals	23 March 2026	Mail
Deadline Full proposals	**4 May 2026 (14h00)**	**Online submission platform**
Remote scientific peer review evaluation	5 May – 1 June 2026	Online evaluation platform
Ethical evaluation	5 May – 5 June 2026	
Feedback to applicants in preparation of panel meeting (remote scientific peer evaluation, ethical evaluation & questions to applicants)	10 June 2026	Mail

TIMELINE

	DATE	AT / VIA
Written feedback by applicants (answers)	**19 June 2026**	**Mail**
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SUBMISSION PROCEDURE & USE OF THE PLATFORM

DEFRA WEBSITE

https://www.belspo.be/defra

Available documents:

- Information document, incl. submission & evaluation guidelines and budget rules
- Evaluation matrices (pre & full proposals)
- Evaluators eligibility criteria
- Platform submission guidelines
- FAQ
- Templates pre & full proposals & annexes
- General conditions of the contract

DEFRA ON-LINE SUBMISSION PLATFORM

PHASE 1 - submission of pre-proposals:

- Pre-proposal template
- Extracts UBO register (if applicable)

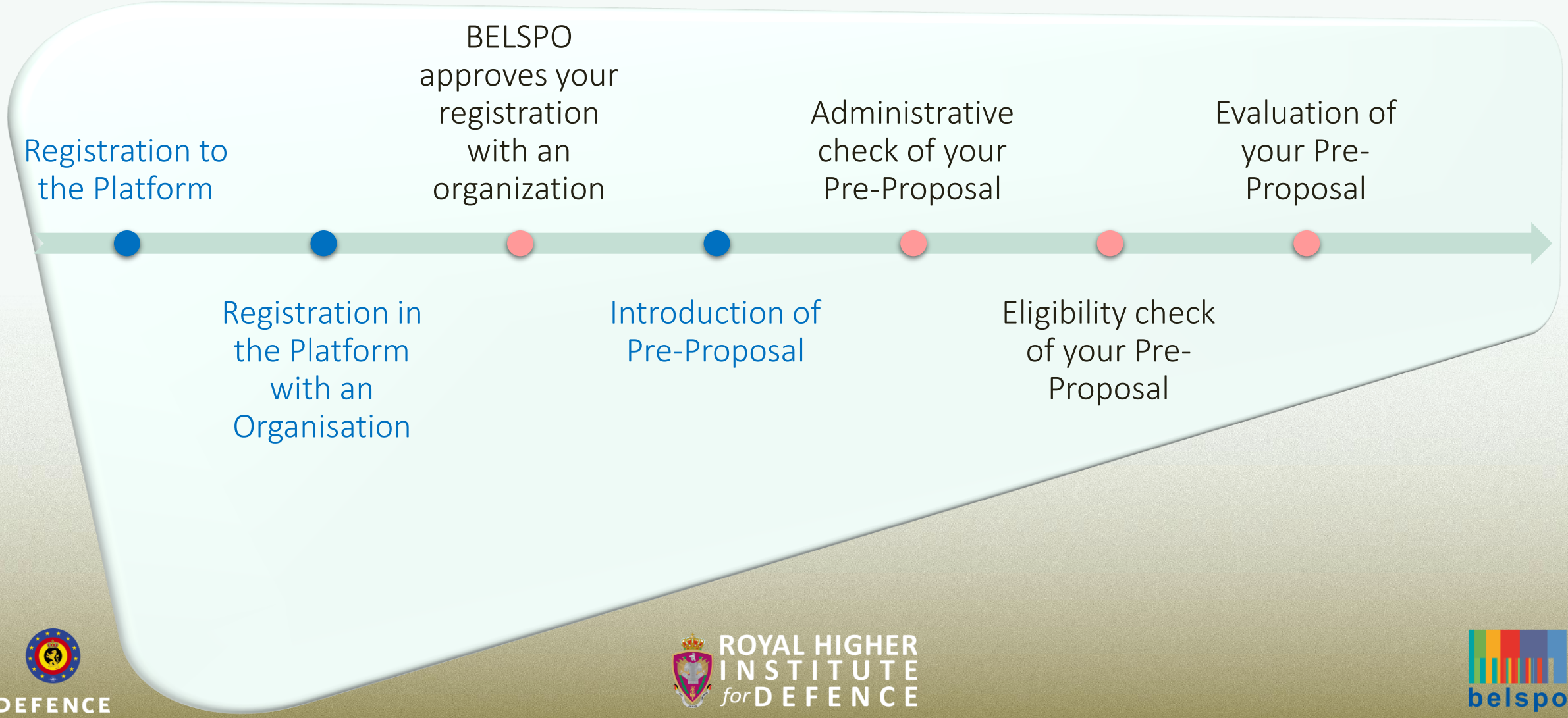
PHASE 2 – submission full proposals:

- Full Proposal template
- Gantt chart
- Budget file
- Data Management Plan
- Research ethics self-assessment
- Cash or in-kind commitment letter – non mandatory
- Visual or graphical abstract – non mandatory

https://belspo.aimsgrants.com

Consult the platform submission guidelines on the DEFRA website

SUBMISSION PROCEDURE PRE-PROPOSAL & USE OF THE PLATFORM



EVALUATION PROCEDURE

Two-step procedure

- PHASE 1 – pre-proposals
- PHASE 2 – full proposals

PHASE 1: PRE-PROPOSAL

- General eligibility check
- Evaluation by internal evaluation committee Defence
- Criteria:

More details on evaluation criteria: evaluation matrix pre-proposals

CRITERIA	Call 2026 Theme 1 -9	Call 2026 Theme 10	HF CALL	SPACE CALL
Quality of the pre-proposal	40%	30%	50%	40%
Quality of the partners & adequacy of the partnership	30%	30%	25%	30%
Impact	30%	40%	25%	30%
Maximum number to submit Full proposal	5 per theme	10	10	10 theme 1 5 theme 2

PHASE 2: FULL PROPOSAL

More details on evaluation criteria: evaluation matrix full proposals

- Step 1 - Remote scientific peer review evaluation by independent experts

  → Compiled evaluation report, ethical evaluation and questions

  ← Written answers to the questions

CRITERIA	2026 CALL – all themes	HF CALL	SPACE CALL
Scientific quality	35%	40%	35%
Quality and efficiency of the implementation	40%	30%	40%
Impact maximisation strategy	25%	30%	25%

PHASE 2: FULL PROPOSAL

- Step 2 – Scientific Experts Committee (SEC) evaluation, incl. interviews with the applicants (45 minutes per proposal)

  → Funding scenario per theme

- Step 3 - Selection proposal formulated by Scientific Committee RHID

  → Proposed funding scenario

- Step 4 - Final decision by Board of Directors RHID

AFTER SELECTION

- Selection decided by Royal Decree
- Royal Decree and signature of contract (at least basic contract)
- First advance payment → follow invoicing instructions of the RHID
- Selected projects start in December 2026
- Provide technical sheets with project description (for website)
- Kick-off meetings (after signature of Annex I to the contract) in the beginning of 2027

CONTRACTS

3 parts	Content	Who signs?
Basic contract	• Designates the contracting parties • Contains the implementation modalities applicable to the project • Includes the contract and project duration and budget	Heads of the partners: directors, rectors, CEOs
Annex I: technical specifications	• Operational implementation of the project • Work description and planning • Details on funding by expenditure category	Persons in charge of the realization of the project (principal investigators, “promotor”)
Annex II: General conditions applicable to the DEFRA contract	• General provisions applicable to all DEFRA contracts (incl. IPR rules)	Must not be signed – and is already available on the DEFRA website

COMMUNICATION

For questions about the call for proposals, the call procedure and documents, the submission and evaluation of proposals	For questions about the content of the call and themes, the conclusion of the contract for selected proposals, and everything related to the implementation (reporting, invoicing, communication, follow-up) and valorisation of the projects
defra@belspo.be	defra@mil.be

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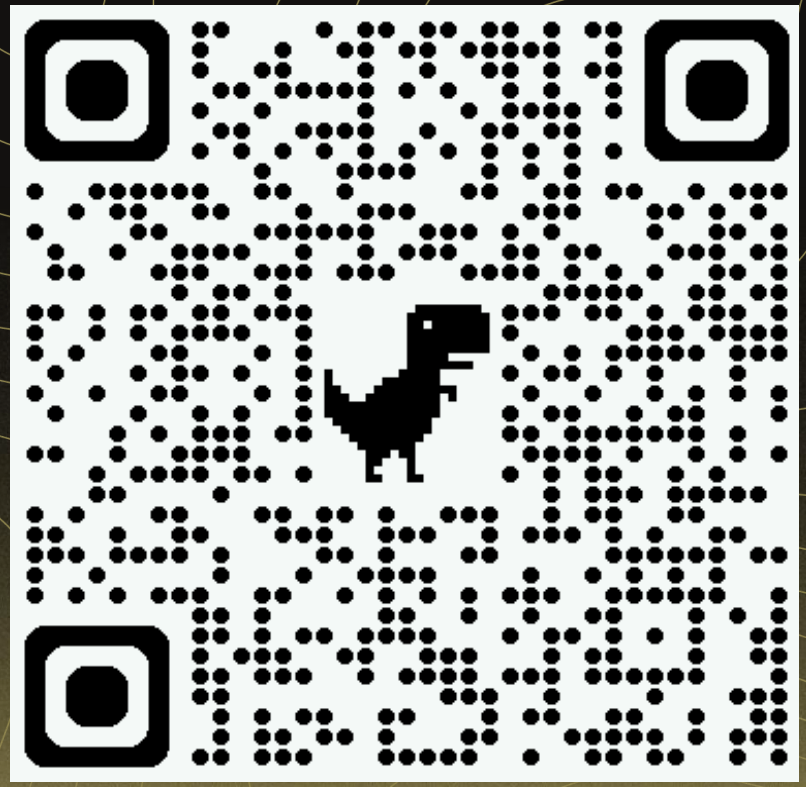

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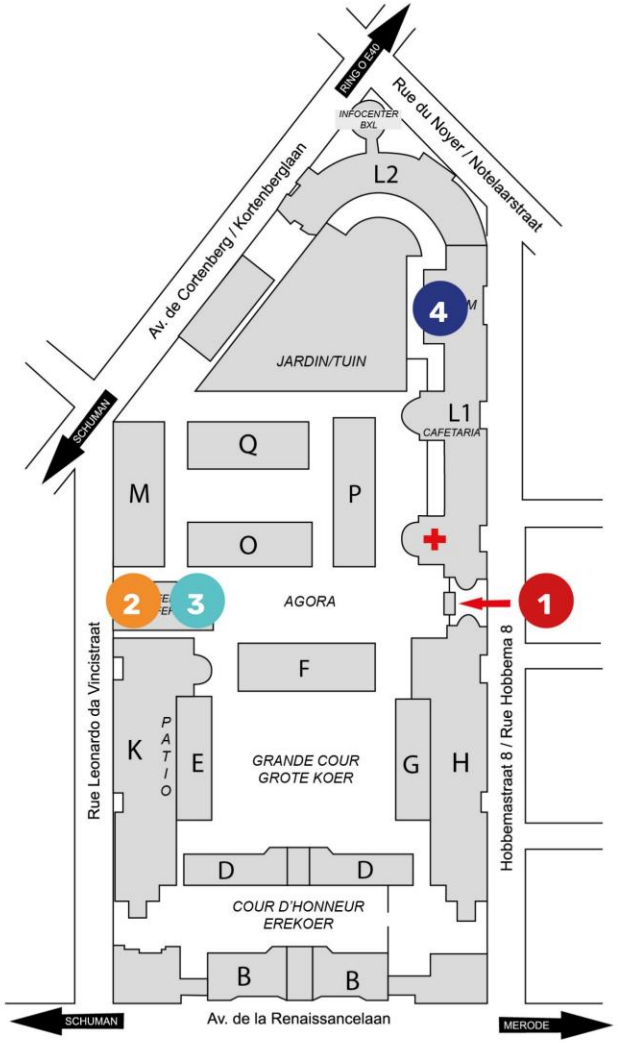
14:40 – 15:30: Breakout session Space Call



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FURTHER QUESTIONS

FAQ on website

defra@belspo.be

GOOD LUCK!