DEFRA

DEFENCE-RELATED RESEARCH ACTION

DEFRA

Thematic Call for proposals: Pulsed Directed Energy Effectors

Information document including submission and evaluation guidelines and budget rules

Important dates:

Information session: 31 August 2026 (13h30 – 15h00)
Deadline Pre-proposals: 11 September 2026 (14h00)
Deadline Full proposals: 16 October 2026 (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. DEFRA - CONTEXT

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

For this purpose, the Ministry of Defence (2025)[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 Research, Development, Innovation & Industrialization (RDII)), the research programme of the Ministry of Defence. Although in the past this kind of programmes were 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 calls for proposals within the frame of its research programme.

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.

[1] Strategische visie 2025 / Vision Stratégique 2025

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE DEFRA 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.

2. THE THEMATIC CALL ON PULSED DIRECTED ENERGY EFFECTORS

This is a thematic call on **Pulsed Directed Energy Effectors** in the frame of the DEFRA programme.

This call focuses on delivering technology brick demonstrations up to TRL 4 for directed-energy Counter-UAS technologies, explicitly targeting pulsed microwave and waveform-controlled laser approaches, as a first step toward future proof-of-concept and technology-demonstrator activities.

2.1. CONTEXT OF THIS CALL

The increasing use of NATO Class I unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in military and security environments, including autonomous, coordinated, and swarm-based threats, creates a growing need for effective, scalable, and responsive countermeasures. In particular, directed energy approaches offer promising perspectives within future layered Counter-UAS architectures.

Among these approaches, pulsed microwave and pulsed laser technologies are of particular interest. Both offer the potential to affect unmanned systems at speed-of-light engagement timelines, while relying on fundamentally different physical mechanisms and subsystem architectures. Each technology raises distinct challenges in power generation, energy management, emission control, and target interaction.

INTERPRETATION OF "PULSED LASER"

For the laser technology stream, the term pulsed laser is used as a program-level descriptor for systems in which the temporal emission regime is a deliberate design variable. Admissible approaches may range from pseudo-continuous-wave and temporally modulated operation to burst-mode, discrete-pulse, picosecond, and femtosecond regimes. No universal pulse duration, repetition rate, duty cycle, or waveform is prescribed; proposals shall define and justify the selected temporal regime in relation to the intended effect mechanism, target interaction, scalability, and the proposed technology brick.

INTERPRETATION OF "PULSED MICROWAVE"

For the microwave technology stream, the term pulsed microwave is used as a program-level descriptor for systems in which the temporal emission regime is a deliberate design variable. Admissible approaches may range from continuous-wave and temporally modulated operation to burst-mode and discrete-pulse regimes. No universal pulse duration, repetition rate, duty cycle, or waveform is prescribed; proposals shall define and justify the selected temporal regime in relation to the intended effect mechanism, target interaction, scalability, and the proposed technology brick.

HARD-KILL PRIORITY

The primary purpose of proposals under this call shall be to mature technology bricks that contribute to a credible hard-kill Counter-UAS capability. In this context, hard kill means irreversible physical damage or permanent functional disablement of relevant UAS elements, sufficient to prevent continued operation or mission completion.

Soft-kill effects, including temporary disruption, deception, dazzling, jamming, or reversible loss of function, may be investigated where they provide useful additional operational value or support understanding of the hard-kill mechanism. However, soft-kill capability alone shall not constitute a sufficient basis for admissibility under this call.

To enable future Proof of Concept and Technology Demonstrator efforts, it is necessary to first mature and validate the critical technology bricks underlying these directed energy effectors.

WHY THE FOCUS ON PULSED TECHNOLOGIES

This call places particular emphasis on pulsed technologies because they offer a promising balance between operational relevance, scalability, and technological differentiation for future Counter-UAS capabilities. In the context of small and fast-evolving drone threats, specifically coordinated multi-drone and swarm scenarios, pulsed microwave and pulsed laser approaches are of interest due to their potential for rapid effect delivery, and suitability for repeated engagements within layered defence concepts. In addition, pulsed approaches raise distinct scientific and engineering challenges in energy generation, pulse control, power management, beam or emission shaping, and target interaction, making them especially relevant for early-stage technology brick maturation. By focusing on pulsed technologies at TRL 3–4, this call aims to reduce critical risks in those enabling subsystems that are most likely to determine the future performance, integrability, and operational value of directed energy Counter-UAS solutions.

2.2. OBJECTIVE OF THIS CALL

The objective of this call is to design, develop, and experimentally validate critical technology components ("technology bricks") enabling directed energy effectors for Counter-UAS applications, with explicit admissibility for:

- Pulsed microwave / high-power electromagnetic approaches, and/or
- Pulsed laser / waveform-controlled laser approaches,

both in accordance with the temporal-emission scope defined in Section 2.1.

Projects must:

- Demonstrate a credible and experimentally supported pathway by which the proposed technology brick could contribute to a future hard-kill Counter-UAS effector,
- Demonstrate the feasibility and performance of the critical subsystems,
- Provide experimental validation in laboratory or controlled environments,
- Address technical risks that currently prevent further integration into more complete systems,
- Advance the proposed technology bricks toward TRL 3–4.

2.3. INDICATIVE BUDGET

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

Theme	Indicative budget (M€)
Theme 1: Pulsed Microwave Technology Bricks	2.0
Theme 2: Pulsed Laser Technology Bricks	3.0
TOTAL	**5.0**

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. Passing the threshold of scientific quality, the best ranked proposal per theme will be funded. The remaining proposals will be put together in a common ranking list based on their final evaluation results (after the Scientific Experts Committee meetings, see Section 5.1).

Budget transfers between the themes are possible.

2.4. SCOPE OF WORK

Proposals may address pulsed microwave technology bricks and/or pulsed laser technology bricks. In all cases the technical rationale has to be clear and the work plan realistic.

COMMON TECHNOLOGY BRICKS

- Energy generation and conditioning
- Power supply and energy storage solutions
- Command, control, triggering, and timing subsystems
- Beam/emission control concepts
- Safety-by-design considerations
- Modelling, simulation, and performance prediction
- Laboratory test methodologies and representative target interaction analysis

PULSED MICROWAVE TECHNOLOGY BRICKS

For this microwave stream, “pulsed” shall be interpreted in accordance with the temporal-emission scope convention in Section 2.1.

- Development or improvement of pulsed microwave or high-power electromagnetic sources.
- Control of waveform characteristics, including frequency content, signal amplitude, pulse duration, repetition rate, and pulse repeatability.
- Pulse-forming and associated power-conditioning subsystems.
- Emission architectures, including directed energy delivery concepts.
- Antenna design, beamforming, and aperture technologies for wideband or frequency-agile systems.

- Integration between pulse-generation subsystems and emission apertures.
- Coupling mechanisms between emitted electromagnetic energy and representative target electronics.
- Experimental investigation of effects on representative electronic subsystems relevant to Class I UAS.
- Investigation of factors influencing target interaction, including spectral content, shielding effectiveness, system architecture and cable harness configuration.
- Power-efficiency optimisation, energy-management architectures, and reduction of subsystem-level energy requirements.
- Advanced material research and validation relevant to pulsed microwave generation, transmission.

PULSED LASER TECHNOLOGY BRICKS

For this laser stream, “pulsed” shall be interpreted in accordance with the temporal-emission scope convention in Section 2.1.

- Development or improvement of laser sources, temporal-emission architectures, or waveform-shaping subsystems relevant to directed energy applications.
- Selection, generation, measurement, and control of temporal waveform properties, including modulation or pulse duration, temporal profile, repetition rate, duty cycle, burst structure, timing, peak power, average power, and stability.
- Energy-delivery efficiency and temporal waveform control, including pulse control where discrete-pulse operation is selected.
- Thermal management and associated subsystem performance.
- Representative interaction of laser energy with relevant target materials, surfaces, or subsystems.
- Experimental investigation of repeatability, controllability, and boundary conditions in laboratory environments.

TARGET EFFECTS AND EXPERIMENTAL VALIDATION

For both technology families, projects shall address representative target interactions relevant to a future hard-kill effect against NATO Class I UAS. Depending on the chosen technology path, this may include irreversible damage to, or permanent functional disablement of, representative electronic, navigation, communication, power, structural, optical, or material elements.
Soft-kill effects may be considered supplementary outcomes, but proposals shall demonstrate how the selected technology brick supports a credible pathway to irreversible target disablement. Validation activities shall remain at the laboratory or controlled-test level and be proportionate to a technology-brick demonstration.

MODELLING AND SIMULATION

- Energy-generation and temporal waveform-control modelling, including pulse-control modelling where applicable.
- Target-interaction modelling.
- Performance envelope estimation.
- Correlation between model predictions and experimental observations.
- Identification of scaling effects and next-step integration constraints.

TECHNOLOGY-BRICK INTEGRATION CONTEXT AND OPERATIONAL RELEVANCE

To ensure that technology bricks developed under this call remain relevant to future system integration, proposals should demonstrate awareness of the broader system context in which the developed subsystems will ultimately function. This includes:

- Understanding of the subsystem interfaces and integration context relevant to future directed-energy Counter-UAS systems.
- Assessment of the operational role of directed-energy effectors within layered Counter-UAS defence architectures.
- Identification of platform integration constraints, including size, weight, power, and cooling requirements, and their implications for subsystem design choices at the technology brick level.
- Consideration of multi-target, swarm-engagement, and high-repetition-rate engagement scenarios, and the implications for pulse forming, temporal waveform generation, switching, and thermal-management subsystems.
- Preliminary assessment of scalability pathways from the demonstrated TRL 3–4 brick toward a Proof of Concept and Technology Demonstrator configuration, identifying the integration steps, remaining risks, and performance gaps that subsequent phases would need to address.
- Assessment of subsystem suitability for distributed, mobile, or deployable Counter-UAS architectures.

2.5. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Validated technology bricks for pulsed microwave and/or pulsed laser directed energy effectors.
- Quantified performance data obtained in laboratory or controlled environments.
- Improved understanding of the physical effect mechanisms, subsystem behaviour, and technical limitations.
- Identification of critical constraints affecting future scale-up or integration.
- A credible pathway toward subsequent Proof of Concept and Technology Demonstrator phases.
- Improved understanding of the scalability of directed-energy approaches for multi-target and swarm-engagement scenarios.

The focus of this call is on risk reduction, subsystem maturation, and knowledge generation, not on delivering a complete Counter-UAS system.

2.6. DELIVERABLES

1. Technical Design Description: Description of the selected technology brick(s), design logic, assumptions, trade-offs, and positioning within pulsed microwave, pulsed laser, or hybrid directed energy pathways.
2. Laboratory Demonstration Package: Experimental setup, test methodology, and demonstration of the functionality of the proposed brick(s) in controlled conditions.
3. Performance Characterisation Report: Measured subsystem performance, including the relevant microwave pulse characteristics or laser temporal waveform characteristics; stability, controllability, repeatability, identified limitations, and validation of relevant models where applicable.
4. Final Assessment Report: Assessment of achieved TRL (target TRL 3–4), remaining scientific and technical risks, and recommendations for next-step development toward Proof of Concept.

3. CALL INFORMATION

3.1. DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO THIS CALL

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 criteria for potential evaluators
- 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
- Submission guidelines: information for the applicants on the use of the SharePoint site
- FAQ
- Annexe II – general conditions applicable to the 2026 contracts
- Templates for PHASE 1: the submission of pre-proposals:
    - Pre-proposal template
    - Summary, keywords, partners
    - Proposed (and non-grata) evaluators
    - Veiligheidsverificatie toestemming – Vérification de sécurité consentement
    - Company Honourability & Vulnerability self-assessment declaration
- Templates for PHASE 2: the submission of full proposals (for projects that have been invited to submit a full proposal):
    - Full proposal template
    - Data Management Plan
    - Ethics self-assessment
    - Gantt chart
    - Budget file
    - Cash or in-kind commitment letter (for non-funded partners – non mandatory, only if applicable)
    - Visual/graphical abstract (non mandatory)

For more information on the submission procedure please see Section 4.

3.2. INFORMATION SESSION

To inform potential applicants about the context, scope and modalities of this call, an online information session will be held **on 31 August 2026 (13h30 - 15h00).**

Registration prior to the event is required. Deadline for registration is 28/08/2026, 17h00.

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

3.3. INDICATIVE CALENDAR OF THE CALL

	Date	**At / via**
Launch of the call	21 August 2026	DEFRA website
Information session	31 August 2026, 13h30-15h00	Online
Deadline Pre-proposals	11 September 2026 (14h00)	SharePoint site of the call
Communication of evaluation result pre-proposals	25 September 2026	Mail
Deadline Full proposals	16 October 2026 (14h00)	SharePoint site of the call
Ethical evaluation	Between 16 and 20 October 2026	RHID
Panel evaluation	26 & 27 October 2026	RHID
Communication of results to applicants	16 November 2026	Mail
Signature of contracts	November - December 2026	Online signature platform

3.4. PROJECT DURATION

The projects will have a duration of **12 to 18 months**.

3.5. PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

PARTNERSHIP

Proposals can be submitted by a **single organisation** or by a **coordinating organisation on behalf of a consortium of partners.**

Note that there is no triple helix requirement for this call.

In case of submission by a consortium, a coordinator must be appointed (see below for the role of the coordinator). All types of eligible organisations can act as project coordinator. The 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.

In case of submission by a single organisation, this organisation is considered to be the coordinator for what concerns budget rules (see Section 3.7.).

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).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR (FUNDED AND NON-FUNDED) PROJECT PARTNERS AND SUBCONTRACTORS

This call is open to **Belgian** public and private non-profit research institutes and private companies.

From the **public research sector**, all Belgian universities, colleges of higher education, federal scientific institutions, defence research institutes[2] 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.

See important notes for companies, a(i)sbl and foundations under Section 4.1.

[2] Belgian Defence research institutes (Royal Military Academy (RMA), Military Hospital Queen Astrid (MHQA) and the Defence Laboratories (DLD)) can be a partner in the consortium, but this is not mandatory. DLD and MHQA must inform the RMA of all proposals they are participating in.

Foreign organisations cannot participate as a funded partner nor as a subcontractor. They can only participate in the call as non-funded partner.

Non-funded partners must be registered in a country of the European Union or in a country of the European Free Trade Association or in a country that is a member of NATO. They will have to submit a cash or in-kind commitment letter at the stage of the full proposal.

ROLE OF THE COORDINATOR

In case of submission by a consortium, the coordinator is responsible for the overall project management and coordination. He/she is the contact person for the RHID to communicate with the partnership and must transfer all relevant information to the other project partners. 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.

Eligibility criteria for subcontractors are mentioned under Section 3.5.

In case the subcontractor needs access to classified information, the subcontractor must also obtain a security clearance (see Section 7.2).

Subcontractors must be registered in Belgium.

If they are a company, a(i)sbl or foundation, they must provide:

- an extract from the UBO register
- proof of delivery of security verification consent
- company honourability & vulnerability awareness self-assessment

3.6. RESEARCH ETHICS

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.

The code of ethics for scientific research in Belgium is available here: http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub_ostc/Eth_code/ethcode_en.pdf.

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

Applicants will be required to complete an “ethics self-assessment” when preparing the Full proposal. The Ethical Advisory Board of the RHID will assess this information and can advise the partnership how to deal with the ethical aspects of its 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. Therefore, 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, with a potential maximum of 80%, according to the size of the company.

The total project budget must be detailed in the tables of the budget file (100% cost) of the full proposal. 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. (section 6.5 of the full proposal template: Budget assessment)

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.

The RHID prefers staff to be hired under a labour contract.

Costs related to non-employee staff, i.e. staff working in a management company, as freelancer or interim staff on behalf of the partner are also accepted.

Tax-free doctoral or post-doctoral scholarships are not accepted.

For persons to be hired for the project (so not identified by name in the proposal), the staff costs are limited to a maximum amount of:

- 5 700 €/month FTE for a technician/bachelor (regardless of years of experience)
- 8 000€/month FTE for a Master (regardless of years of experience)
- 8 700 €/month FTE for a Master in engineering (regardless of years of experience)
- 10 500€/month FTE for a PhD (regardless of years of experience)

The funding is limited to the time and period in which the (employee and non-employee) staff participates in the project.

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. If no follow-up study or project is undertaken, the equipment purchased will be handed over to the Ministry of Defence.

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 need to be indicated in the proposal.

	STAFF COSTS (monthly costs)	GENERAL OPERATION COSTS	SPECIFIC OPERATION COSTS	OVERHEADS	EQUIPMENT	SUBCONTRACTING
PROJECT COORDINATOR*	**Technician**: 5 700€/month **Master:** 8 000€/month **Master (engineering):** 8 700€/month **PhD:** 10 500€/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**: 5 700€/month **Master:** 8 000€/month **Master (engineering):** 8 700€/month **PhD:** 10 500€/month	10% of Staff costs *(Automatically generated)*	-	10% of [Staff costs + Operation costs] *(Automatically generated)*	-	Max. 25% of the total budget of this partner
	* Or single submitting organisation in case of no consortium For equipment: Upon failure of the project, all equipment must be transferred to the RMA.					

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 proposals will be done in **two phases** on the following SharePoint site:

https://belspobelgium.sharepoint.com/sites/R-I_DEFRA_ENERGY_EFFECTORS

In order to get access to the SharePoint site, send an e-mail to defra@belspo.be indicating your name and email address, as well as the theme in which you want to submit a pre-proposal. **Access to the SharePoint site is restricted to the coordinator of the pre-proposal (only 1 person).**

4.1. PHASE 1 – PRE-PROPOSAL

Upon receiving your e-mail, the DEFRA team will grant you access to a folder on the SharePoint site that dedicated to your pre-proposal.

This folder will contain the templates that you'll need to complete:

- Summary, keywords, partners (excel)
- Proposed (and non-grata) evaluators (excel)
- Pre-proposal description (word)

A subfolder, called "Safety docs", is foreseen in which you can upload the extract(s) of the UBO register and the company Honourability & Vulnerability self-assessment declaration(s) of the partners in your proposal that are companies, a(i)sbl or foundations.

Summary, keywords, partners

This file contains:

- The acronym and title of the project
- The choice of the theme
- Keywords (min. 2; max. 6)
- The summary of the project (max. 2000 characters)
- The coordinates of the funded and non-funded partners and subcontractors

Proposed (and non-grata) evaluators

This file contains:

- the name and contact details of 4 to 6 scientific experts capable of assessing the proposal. The proposed experts must comply with the eligibility criteria for evaluators - see 'Evaluators eligibility'. The contact details of minimum 4 experts are required, of which at least 2 (but preferably all) Belgian experts. In case foreign evaluators are proposed, these evaluators should work in one of our neighbouring countries (the Netherlands, Germany, Luxemburg, France).
- 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.

Pre-proposal description

This file contains:

- The title and acronym of the project.
- The choice of the theme.
- 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 funded partners in relation to the project, incl. a short profile of the foreseen partner(s) and, if applicable, a description of the added value of the partnership in addressing the research topic.

The pre-proposal description must be completed on the SharePoint site. Once completed, a pdf-file of the pre-proposal description must be uploaded in your folder on the SharePoint site. **The upload of the pdf file will be considered as the formal submission of the pre-proposal.**

A pre-proposal must be submitted (= pdf version of pre-proposal description uploaded on the SharePoint site) at the latest on **11 September 2026 (14h00).**

If the pre-proposal has not been submitted in time, it will be impossible to submit a full proposal.

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR COMPANIES, A(I)SBL AND FOUNDATIONS:

The delivery of the following documents is a formal requirement for a valid application for the call:

- 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 extract of the UBO register must be uploaded in the folder of your pre-proposal on the SharePoint site of the call (in pdf format).**
- The consent form relating to the law of 11/12/1998 on classification and security clearances, security advice and the publicly regulated service (available in Dutch and French on the DEFRA website) must be completed by the **principal investigators** (who belong to a company, a(i)sbl or foundation) mentioned in the pre-proposal and sent to bureau.industrie@mil.be for verification. **Proof of dispatch of this form to the "bureau industrie" must be provided by e-mail to defra@mil.be before 11 September 2026 (14h00)**. A negative opinion from the administrative authority for a principal investigator may result in the legal entity being refused participation in the project.
- A **company Honourability & Vulnerability self-assessment declaration** must be delivered to guarantee the company honourability, ethics & professional conduct. **This declaration must be uploaded in the folder of your pre-proposal on the SharePoint site of the call (in pdf format).**

These documents must be delivered for this call and for each pre-proposal.

Documents previously submitted for other calls or other proposals will not be considered.

For funded partners, non-funded partners and subcontractors: You are a **company, a(i)sbl or a foundation**?		
Document	**Name and format of the file**	**How to deliver?**
Extract(s) from the UBO register	ACRONYM_UBO_COMPANY.pdf	Upload in folder on SharePoint site of the call
Consent form(s) for security verification	ACRONYM_CONSENT_COMPANY_PERSON.pdf	E-mail to bureau.industrie@mil.be
Proof(s) of dispatch of the consent form(s) for security verification	ACRONYM_PROOF_COMPANY_PERSON.pdf	E-mail to defra@mil.be **(grouped per pre-proposal)**
Company Honourability & Vulnerability self-assessment declaration	ACRONYM_DECLARATION.pdf	Upload in folder on SharePoint site of the call
The documents that must be sent by e-mail, must be grouped per pre-proposal. **Failing to deliver these documents before the deadline will result in exclusion of the pre-proposal.**		

BELSPO and the RHID will perform an eligibility check on the basis of the pre-proposal documents (see Section 5.1.).

The pre-proposals that have passed the eligibility check will be evaluated by an internal evaluation committee of the Belgian Defence (see Section 5.1.).

On **25 September 2026**, the internal evaluation committee will select for each of both themes maximum three (3) pre-proposals to submit a full proposal.

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

4.2. PHASE 2 – FULL PROPOSAL

For both themes maximum three (3) pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal. Applicants must submit the full proposal via the SharePoint site of the call.

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.

In case other companies, a(i)sbl and foundations join the network, they must provide the extract of the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) register to the call secretariat by e-mail to defra@belspo.be.

The **full proposal** must be submitted (= pdf version of full proposal description uploaded on the SharePoint site) at the latest on **16 October 2026 (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 template:

- The title, acronym and summary of the project.
- The name and contact details of the (funded and non-funded) project partner(s).
- The proposal description:
    - scope and objectives,
    - state of the art and innovative character,
    - relevance and potential impact for Defence
    - quality of the funded partner(s/partnership) of the project,
    - coherence between research objectives and methodology,
    - the work plan: work packages, the project risk assessment.

As a separate document:

- The GANTT chart (mandatory)
- Budget file (mandatory)
- Data Management Plan (mandatory)
- Research Ethics self-assessment (mandatory)
- Cash or in-kind commitment letter (not mandatory)
- Visual or graphical abstract (not mandatory)

Once completed, a pdf-file of the full proposal description must be uploaded in your folder on the SharePoint site. **The upload of the pdf file will be considered as the formal submission of the full proposal.**

5. EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA

5.1. EVALUATION PROCEDURE

PHASE 1 – EVALUATION OF PRE-PROPOSALS

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

BELSPO and the RHID will perform an eligibility check on the basis of the pre-proposal documents. Following criteria are applied:

- Completeness of the pre-proposal:
  - All three templates are fully completed,
  - A pdf version of the pre-proposal description is uploaded on the SharePoint site,
  - UBO register extract(s) available (if applicable),
  - Proof(s) of dispatch of the consent form(s) for security verification available (if applicable),
  - Company Honourability and Vulnerability self-assessment declaration available (if applicable),
- Eligibility of each project partner (see Section 2.2).

The pre-proposals that have passed the eligibility check 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 quality of the partner(s and the adequacy of the partnership, if applicable),
- The relevance and potential impact for Defence.

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	**THEMEs 1 - 2**
Quality of the pre-proposal	40%
Quality of the partners & Adequacy of the partnership	30%
Impact	30%

According to the scores obtained, the proposals will be ranked in a list per theme (Pre-proposal Ranking). These lists will serve as the base for the selection of the applicants who will be invited to introduce a full proposal. On **25 September 2026**, BELSPO will communicate the conclusions of the internal evaluation committee to the applicants and will invite the selected pre-proposals to submit a full proposal.

PHASE 2 – EVALUATION OF FULL PROPOSALS

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

The evaluation and selection of the full proposals will be done by two Scientific Experts Committees (one committee per theme) and will include interviews with the applicants.

The evaluation by the Scientific Experts Committee guarantees scientific excellence and the alignment of the projects with the thematic objectives of the call.

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

For each proposal, one of the experts of the SEC performs an individual written evaluation. This written evaluation takes place remotely based on an evaluation form. The expert 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 maximisation strategy

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

All members of the SEC will have access to the Full proposals (including the annexes) and the evaluation reports.

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

Agenda topic	**Timing**	**Participants**
Presentation of the evaluation report by the expert concerned	15 min	SEC only
Introduction	5 min	SEC & applicants
Presentation by the applicants, introducing the proposal	15 min	SEC & applicants
Questions and answers (Q&A)	25 min	SEC & applicants
Deliberation and finalisation of evaluation report	30 min	SEC only

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

After the interviews with the applicants, the SEC will determine the SEC Funding Scenario.

They will classify all proposals in:

- Recommended for funding.
- Not recommended for funding.

The outcome of each proposal's evaluation will be translated 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:

CRITERIA	WEIGHT
Scientific quality	35%
Quality and efficiency of the implementation	40%
Impact maximisation strategy	25%

According to the scores obtained, the proposals will be ranked in a list, i.e. the SEC Funding Scenario.

The best ranked proposal(s) per theme will be funded. The remaining proposals will be put together in a common ranking list based on their final evaluation results.

The RHID will perform a strategic selection of the proposals based on the following criteria:

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

5.2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation criteria that are used to evaluate the pre-proposals and full proposals are described in the evaluation matrix for pre-proposals and evaluation matrix for full proposals respectively.

6. ROYAL DECREE AND 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 2026.

The project contracts will have a duration of 12 to maximum 18 months (plus 3 months to allow meeting all administrative requirements before the effective start-up of the project).

6.2. ROYAL DECREE AND CONTRACTS

For the selected proposals, a Royal Decree is decided and a contract is conducted between Belgian Defence and the funded partners.

The Royal Decree determines the subsidised projects, designates the involved parties and lays down the general arrangements, in particular those relating to budgetary matters.

The contract is composed of three parts that make up the research contract:

- Basic contract
- Annex I: Technical specifications
- Annex II: General conditions applicable to the 2026 contracts.

The basic contract designates the contracting parties (partners and Defence) and contains the general implementation modalities applicable to the project, including the project and contract duration and budget. It **is signed by the heads of the partners involved (directors, rectors, CEOs).**

The content of Annex I "Technical specifications" is specifically related to the operational implementation of the project. It includes the detailed work description and schedule, details on funding by expenditure category etc. **Annex I "Technical specifications" is signed by the DEFRA programme manager and the promotors concerned.**

Annex II "General conditions applicable to the contract" contains all general provisions applicable to all DEFRA contracts. Annex II is the same for all DEFRA projects of a specific call. It is available on the DEFRA website and **will not be signed**.

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.

In case a "Cash or in-kind commitment letter" is associated to the selected project, this commitment and contribution will be formalised by means of a bilateral contract between the non-funded partner(s) and the project partner(s). The bilateral contract shall be in conformity with all the provisions contained in the DEFRA project contract. The provisions of the bilateral contract shall always be subordinate to the provisions of the DEFRA contract. A copy of the bilateral contract must be handed over to the Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID, defra@mil.be).

The partnership is encouraged to conclude a Consortium Agreement to define internal regulations regarding intellectual property (access to foreground and background, valorisation rights and modalities, and any other theme deemed necessary). A copy of the signed Consortium Agreement must be handed over to the Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID, defra@mil.be). A template for the Consortium Agreement is available on the website.

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, the research manager of Defence and the intended end user of Belgian Defence.

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 every six months 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:

- Project file: A short project description and contact information to be published on the DEFRA website.
- Initial report: to be submitted within three months after the start of the project.
- Semestrial progress report(s) and financial 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.

To evaluate the impact of the DEFRA programme, the RHID can ask input from the partnership until 3 years after the end of the project.

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. These principles can be included in a Consortium Agreement to be concluded between the partners.

7.2. CLASSIFIED INFORMATION/SECURITY RELATED ACTIVITIES

Certain activities undertaken in the frame of the projects may use or generate classified information. This paragraph solely concerns protective measures to be taken to preserve the confidentiality of security-sensitive information regarding these research projects.

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 the Royal Decree of 20 December 2024 implementing the “Wet van 11 Dec 1998 /Loi du 11 Déc 1998 ” on classification, security clearances, security advice and publicly regulated services; in NL – in FR).

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

- The "**TRES SECRET/ZEER GEHEIM**" level is assigned to information 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 information if its improper use could cause SERIOUS damage to the interests listed in the law.
- The "**CONFIDENTIEL/VERTROUWELIJK**" level is assigned to information if its improper use could harm any of the interests listed in the law.
- The **“RESTREINT/BEPERKT”** level is assigned to information when improper use could be detrimental to one of the interests listed in the law.

Information 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 “**SENSIBLE NON CLASSIFIE” (AR 20.12.2004) / “GEVOELIG NIET-GECLASSIFICEERD” (KB 20.12.2024)**.

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 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 annex to the contract.

More information can be found on the website of the National Security Authority (Nationale Veiligheidsoverheid – Autorité Nationale de Sécurité) https://www.nvoans.be/

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

Persons that are involved in a project 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.

Persons involved in a project may be subject to a verification. Only after a positive verification, can a person be recruited to 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.
- The complaint will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- An answer will be sent by e-mail or letter within 30 calendar days.

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