

PRIMA Training and Mobility Award (PTMA)

National Rules for Participation – Public Entities and Public Research and Knowledge Dissemination Organisations that do not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU

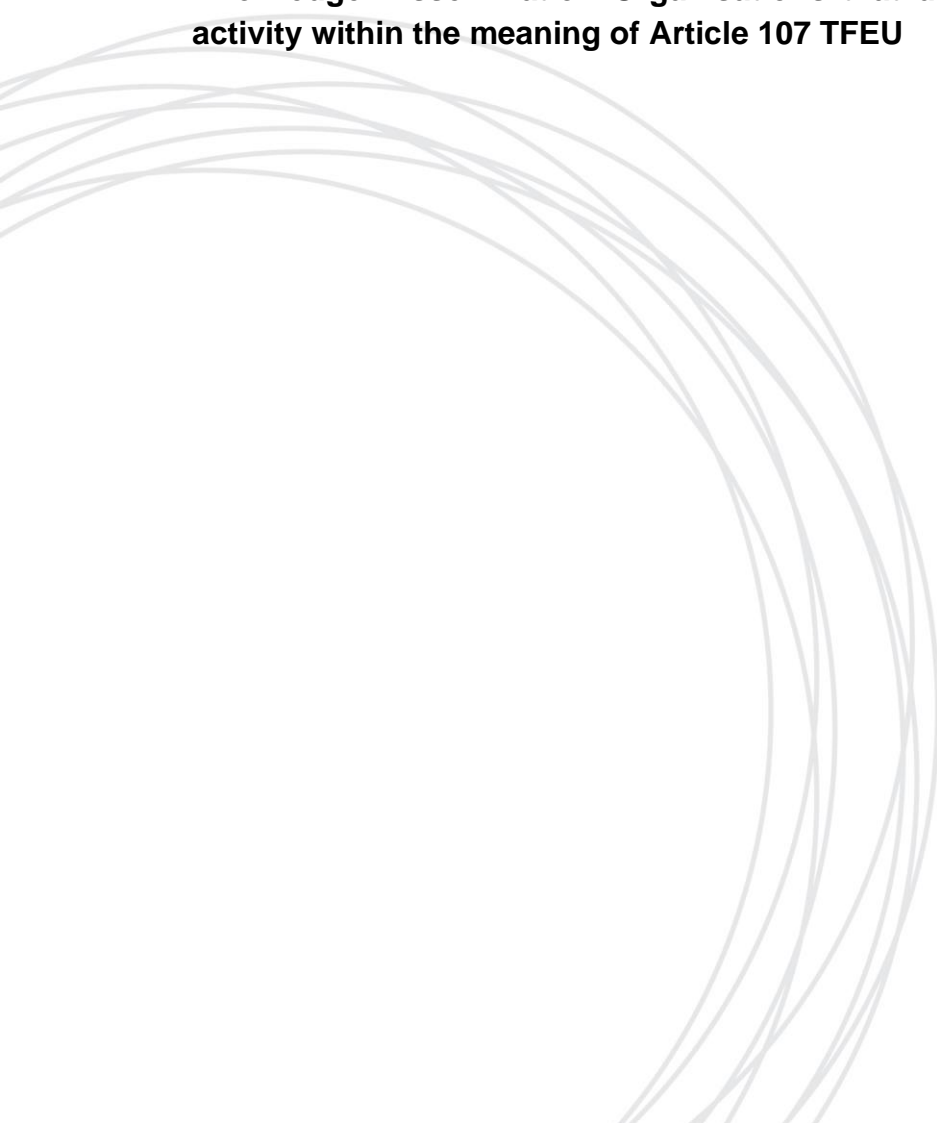
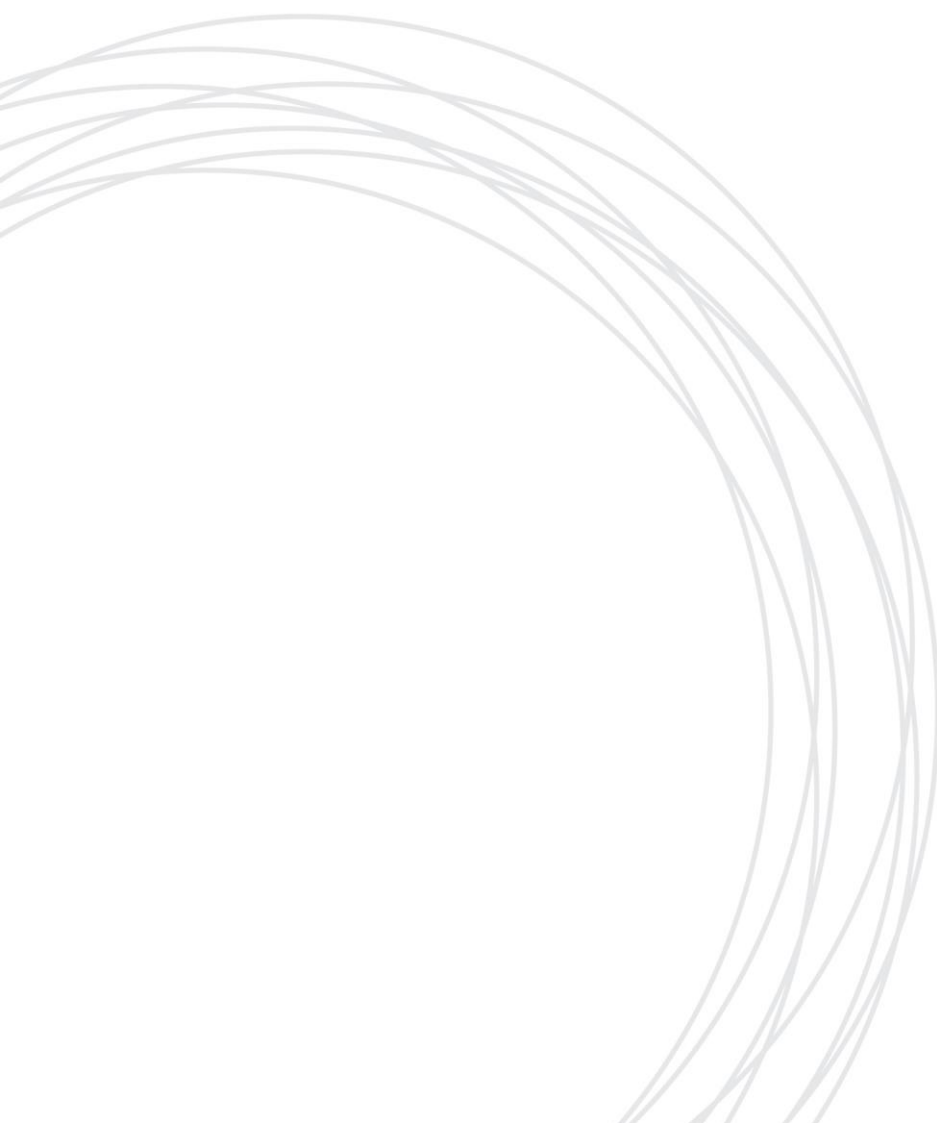


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1.0 Introduction

The Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) is receiving proposals under the PRIMA Training and Mobility Award (PTMA). It focusses on research and innovation (R&I) activities supporting the [Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area \(PRIMA\)](#). PRIMA is an initiative launched by 19 Euro-Mediterranean Countries, including 11 EU States (Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain) and 8 non-EU Countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey) to participate in an EU joint programme funding R&I projects in the field of **Water Management, Sustainable Agriculture and the Agri-Food Value Chain**.

PTMA will support opportunities for collaborative initiatives between **Malta-based** eligible undertakings (*vide* Section 2) and at least one **foreign** counterpart of proven track record of excellence that is eligible for funding under the respective PRIMA Participating State (PS) funding organization's national rules. Applicants shall be required to demonstrate that the scope of the proposed action is to develop effective cross-border collaborations, undertake research activities and/or training activities in the thematic areas of PRIMA, leading to the submission of a proposal to any PRIMA-related Call.

PTMA activities that will be funded should promote internationalisation through at least one of the following:

- In-person short training and/or placements for local researchers in foreign entities for the purposes of fostering human capacity building and furthering R&I collaboration.
- The arrangement of strategic and targeted visits by local applicants to foreign entities in PRIMA-PS in order to share best practices and/or participate in R&I activities of an exploratory and developmental nature.
- The organisation of knowledge-transfer and/or seminars or workshops **held** in Malta, on specific PRIMA R&I thematic areas that would benefit from the participation of foreign experts.

2.0 Definitions

- **Applicant** means any representative of a local entity that is eligible for participation in a project in terms of these National Rules for Participation and applies for funding under this initiative.
- **Arm's length** means that the conditions of the transaction between the contracting parties do not differ from those which would be stipulated between independent enterprises and contain no element of collusion. Any transaction that results from an open, transparent and non-discriminatory procedure is considered as meeting the arm's length principle. Having family ties or a personal relationship between the service provider and the applicant will lead to a breach of the arm's length principle.
- **Council** refers to the Malta Council for Science and Technology.
- **End Date** means the date when the project/activity period, having commenced on the Start Date, expires. The **Project Period** is the time required to execute the project/activity as indicated in the Grant Agreement.
- **Letter of Support** is a document where the entity listed as partner in the project is showing their commitment in supporting the project/activity including (if applicable) the confirmation of additional funding.
- **Partner** is defined as an entity within a consortium of a funded transnational project and as a foreign partnering entity that would have signed a letter of support to be involved in a proposed joint activity/project as part of this Call.
- **Project Coordinator** is one of the beneficiaries of a project consortium that is appointed as the single point of contact between the PRIMA Secretariat and/or the funding bodies (e.g., MCST) and the consortium partners from proposal submission to project end. The Coordinator will have the responsibility of ensuring that all the partners involved in the consortium are eligible and supervises the project workflow with the help of WP leaders. Additionally, the Coordinator will be required to submit the project application on behalf of the consortium and must also compile and submit reports / deliverables to the funding bodies which in turn will relay these documents to the Lead Agency.
- **Public Entity** is any Ministry, Department, Entity, Authority, Public Commission, Public Sector Foundation, or similar organisation that does not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU and that exercises public power, or else acts in its own capacity as public authority, where the activity in question forms part of the essential function of the State or is connected with those functions by its nature, its aim and the rules to which it is subject. However, the classification of a particular entity as an undertaking depends entirely on the nature of its activities, and the overriding criterion of consideration is whether it carries out an economic activity or not, e.g. an entity that is formally part of the public administration may nevertheless have to be regarded as an undertaking within the meaning of Article 107(1) of the Treaty. Thus, an entity that carries out both economic and non-economic activities is to be regarded as an undertaking only with regards to the former.
In this case, if the economic activity can be separated from the exercise of public powers, then that entity acts as an undertaking in relation to that activity and the financing, the costs and the revenues of that economic activity shall be accounted for separately from the other non-commercial activities.

If an economic activity cannot be separated from the exercise of public power, the activities exercised by that entity as a whole, remain connected with the exercise of those public powers and therefore fall outside the notion of an undertaking.

- **Research and Development** is defined as the systematic investigation, work or research carried out in any field of science or technology through experiment, theoretical work or analysis undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge, primarily directed towards a specific practical aim or objective, and includes:
 - a. **Fundamental Research** means experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any direct commercial application or use in view.
 - b. **Industrial Research** means the planned research or critical investigation aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes or services or aimed at bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services including digital products, processes or services, in any area, technology, industry or sector (including, but not limited to, digital industries and technologies such as super-computing, quantum technologies, block chain technologies, artificial intelligence, cyber security, big data and cloud technologies). It comprises the creation of components parts of complex systems and may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines, when necessary for the industrial research and notably for generic technology validation.
 - c. **Experimental Development** means acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technological, business and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes or services in any area, technology, industry or sector (including but not limited to, digital industries and technologies, such as for example super-computing, quantum technologies, block chain technologies, artificial intelligence, cyber-security, big data and cloud or edge technologies). This may also include, for example, activities aiming at the conceptual definition, planning and documentation of new products, processes or services. Experimental development may comprise prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, testing and validation of new or improved products, processes or services in environments representative of real-life operating conditions where the primary objective is to make further technical improvements on products, processes or services that are not substantially set. This may include the development of a commercially usable prototype or pilot which is necessarily the final commercial product, and which is too expensive to produce for it to be used only for demonstration and validation purposes. Experimental development does not include routine or periodic changes made to existing products, production lines, manufacturing processes, services and other operations in progress, even if those changes may represent improvements.
- **Research and Knowledge-dissemination Organisation** means an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law)

or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, in the quality of, for example, shareholders or members, may not enjoy preferential access to the results generated by it.

- **Retention Money** is a percentage of the total Award that the Council disburses only upon successful completion of the proposed project/activities, following any necessary verifications and audits.
- **Start Date** means the date which is stated in the Grant Agreement as the official start of the project/activity.

3.0 Eligibility Criteria

Any Public Entity / Public Research and Knowledge-dissemination Organisation registered in Malta, that does not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU may apply and will be eligible for funding subject to the terms and conditions laid out in this document and in particular the conditions for eligibility.

Applicants who have other funded projects with the Council and are in default, and/or have gone beyond the timelines of the project, are not eligible to participate. Any application submitted by or including the participation of any legal person or legal entity having, in totality or in majority ownership, the same shareholders, partners or persons holding and/or exercising a controlling power in any other legal entity which will have been at any time prior to such application declared as non-compliant or defaulting on any other contract or agreement entered into with the Council, shall be automatically declared as inadmissible.

Funding under this Call is made available on the basis that the Applicant has not benefited and will not benefit from any other grant of financial incentive of whatever nature, applied for and/or utilised for the same scope as the subject of the funding requested under this Call.

Eligible Applicants are to partner up with foreign entities established in PRIMA Participating States, and which have a proven track-record of excellence and experience in the R&I field. Proposed activities should (i) relate to the PRIMA thematic areas, (ii) contribute towards the goals of the [PRIMA Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda \(SRIA\)](#), and (iii) have the potential to become self-sustaining or generate longer-term outcomes.

Moreover, eligible Applicants are to:

- i. Submit a pre-/full proposal to any PRIMA-related Call for funding in 2025 or 2026.
- ii. The pre-/full proposal needs to meet the eligibility criteria of PRIMA-related Call for funding and of the National Rules associated with them.
- iii. Any verifications and/or audits are concluded.

4.0 Budgeting and Financing

Each Applicant is invited to provide a breakdown of the anticipated costs to carry out the proposed activities as part of the application form. The Council reserves the right to negotiate any amount quoted by the Applicant should this be considered as being over-estimated.

Applicants may request up to a maximum budget of **€8,000**. Funding for a successful proposed submission will be based on a cash advance of 70% and will be regulated through a contractual agreement establishing the terms and conditions governing the financing of the project. The re-imbusement of the remaining 30% of the requested amount (i.e., the Retention Money) will take place upon successful completion of the proposed activities, *vide* Section 3.

The financial contribution to a Partner where State Aid is not applicable shall be 100% of the eligible costs incurred by that Partner.

All applications should be accompanied by the relevant declaration forms. Applicants should quantify any possible indirect State aid to undertakings through public research and knowledge dissemination organisations and public entities in cases of collaboration with undertakings or contract research or research services on behalf of undertakings.

4.1 Eligible costs:

- Flights for travel related to the project (the total amount for each flight should be estimated as costing no more than €1,000 for EU countries and €2,000 for non-EU countries and should be an economy class ticket).
- Travel insurance (obligatory with all flights funded under this Call).
- Subsistence allowance (inclusive of accommodation) - when subsistence costs are calculated the local entity's pre-approved subsistence allowances should be used. If this is not available, official [per diem rates](#) established by the Ministry of Finance could be used for guidance.

- Conference Registrations attended abroad and related to the project (up to €2,000).
- Catering and up to two hosted meals per day (strictly in relation to meetings, workshops and seminars hosted by the applicant in Malta).
- Information and promotional material (essential for the effectiveness and success of the collaboration).
- Media Articles and outreach related to the project (up to €1,500).
- Other expenses – Details of such costs shall need to be provided in the application form and must be approved beforehand by the Council. These should not fall under ineligible costs.

Award holders will be responsible for arranging all relevant activities including, but not limited to, travel plans, accommodation, logistics planning, insurance coverage for any participant travel, etc. Furthermore, any supplementary or match-funding from the foreign partner is allowed and encouraged, as long as it does not finance the same activities that will be funded through this Call. Proposals including such supplementary or match funding from partner institutions will be prioritised.

4.2 Ineligible costs

- Consumables and equipment
- Internal invoices issued by the Award holders (i.e., to hire their own venue).
- Expenses related to loans, interests and recoverable value added tax.
- Expenses related to travel and subsistence for the international partners.

To apply under these National Rules, the Applicant needs to adhere to the justifications found in the application form as to why the activities to be undertaken do not meet the criteria of Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (i.e., not falling under State Aid implications).

Additional Provisions

Eligible Costs are to conform to the following and are subject to the final audit scrutiny:

- Any expenses incurred during the project must be consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- Commercial transactions between any applicants or consortium partners, or between any applicants or a consortium partner and a company with similar shareholding to a consortium partner, is not

allowed. All transactions need to be carried out in line with the arm's length principle outlined in Section 2.

5.0 Submission of Applications

Interested Applicants are to submit electronically their complete application forms to the Council at prima.mcst@gov.mt with "PTMA – Application 2024" as subject heading by no later than **5th of September 2024 (23:59 CET)**.

The application forms must be dated and signed by the legal representative of the Eligible Entity. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

PTMA complete application forms need to include:

- The "PRIMA Training and Mobility Award – 2024 Application Form" available on the [Council's website](#) and associated with this Call.
- Letters of Support from all partner institutions, confirming any matching or additional funding.
- *Curriculum Vitae* of Project Coordinator/s from local and partner institution/s.
- Declaration that the eligible Applicant is a public entity or public RKDO that does not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU. Where applicable, declarations of any indirect state aid, when an eligible undertaking (as defined in Section 1.1 of the National Rules for Participation – State Aid) is a partner in the same project consortium as a public entity and/or public research and knowledge dissemination organisation that does not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU.
- Other supporting documents related to the project/activity e.g., agenda of event, proposed activities, training etc.

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure the timely and correct delivery and receipt of the application form to MCST. It should be noted that emails larger than **20MB** will be automatically rejected by the mail system. The Applicant may make use of cloud storage.

6.0 Selection Process and Evaluation

Applications will be assessed by a selection panel set up by the Council against the following criteria:

- **Quality of Project/Activity:**
 - Proposals will be evaluated on the quality of the collaboration activities with the foreign partners. Activities must either be, or be supportive of, high quality international research & innovation with the potential to yield mutually beneficial results and demonstrate innovation and interdisciplinary in the selected field of interest. The involvement of early career researchers (i.e., at Master's or PhD level) in the implementation of the internationalisation activities will be considered an advantage.
- **Strength of Partnership and Leadership:**
 - Projects/activities must be led by recognised experts with a demonstrated track record in research and innovation and good leadership ability. Evidence of past collaborative work between the partnering institutions, for example, joint projects or publications, and any other relevant past achievements will be considered a testament to the strength of the partnership.
 - New partnerships between local and foreign entities in the interest of furthering R&I collaboration are also encouraged with the aim of fostering closer ties between local and international institutions. A convincing case should be made for the benefits of the partnership(s).
- **Outcomes and Sustainability:**
 - Proposed activities must have significant potential outcomes, including, for example, joint publications, subsequent grant bids, development of innovative products, etc., and will build longer term international relationships based on a genuine commitment by the partners to invest in a sustained successful partnership. Evidence of the potential to attract or generate external funding will be considered an asset.

Priority will be given to well-defined proposals which demonstrates increased odds of success for securing third party-funding or which demonstrate a clear benefit to enhancing the international dimension of local Research & Innovation activity.

7.0 Post-selection Phase and Award Duration

Upon successful completion of the evaluation stage, it may be necessary for the Council to negotiate the amount of the awarded funds requested in the application form. The Council retains the right to provide funds of a different sum should the amount in the 'breakdown of costs' appears to have been overestimated. The Council reserves the right not to proceed with signing of the Grant Agreement if it results that doing so would be too high an exposure risk to the Council.

Award holders must keep a separate bank account or records, which must be clearly distinguishable from their other accounting records. All relevant expenses must be recorded in this account. Eligible expenses must have been determined in accordance with the usual accounting and management principles and practices of the award holder. Eligible costs must be backed up with the relevant documentation as specified in the Grant Agreement.

The deadline for completion of the projects/activities funded through this Award is **one (1) year** from the Start Date of the Grant Agreement, although projects may be completed at any point within a 1-year time frame. **Request for extension of the award will not be considered.** Any activities/deliverables related to the Call must take place between the Start and End Dates stipulated in the Grant Agreement.

All financial invoices/receipts should be dated through the lifetime of the project. Payments done outside the lifetime of the project will not be accepted. Upon completion of the activities/projects, the successful Applicant is to submit a **final report within thirty (30) days** according to a standard template developed by the Council. The final report will need to be accompanied by all relevant documentation, including receipts demonstrating how the awarded funds were spent. The Council retains the right to take any necessary legal action should such reporting not be submitted, to audit the financial documentation and to request further proof of expenditure of the awarded funds. Should there be a significant discrepancy between the awarded funds disbursed by the Council and the amount spent by the Applicant (as substantiated) through receipts or other financial documentation), the Council retains the right to request a reimbursement of the unspent funds.

Any communication, notice or report shall quote the Agreement number in the subject or title.

Successful applicants will be required to regularly inform the Council of any direct or indirect outputs resulting from this award during and beyond the lifetime of the award.

The Retention Money will only be disbursed to the successful Applicant once the final report is submitted, and all criteria for re-imburement (*vide* Section 3) have been satisfied.

7.1 Referencing and Acknowledgements

Reference to the awarded funds should be made on any publication, marketing or PR material that is generated in relation to the project or activity undertaken.

The following acknowledgment should be included:

‘Project <Project Name> financed by the Malta Council for Science and Technology through the PRIMA Training and Mobility Award’.

In the case where dissemination material is published without a mention of PTMA and the Council, the beneficiary shall be obliged to publish a correction at its own expense in the subsequent issue of the publication. If PTMA and the Council are not appropriately acknowledged, any associated costs will be deemed ineligible.

8.0 Deviations

Applicants should note that:

- Transfers of project funds between line items over the duration of the project that are cumulatively less than 20% of the grant value are automatically eligible provided that:
 - i. the limits mentioned in the Rules of Participation are adhered to
 - ii. expenses are exclusively used throughout the project lifetime to the sole benefit of the project
 - iii. requested costs should be eligible as per Rules of Participation
- Should transfers of project funds between line items are cumulatively greater than 20% of the grant value, these will be considered as significant alterations to the proposal and will not be eligible.

Kindly note that with respect to transfer of project funds, these should be reflected in the final report. Applicants are reminded of the importance of retaining all documents proving expenditure of the awarded funds for submission with the final report.

If the implementation of a project becomes impossible, the Council shall be entitled to take any action it deems necessary, including, but not limited to, the withdrawal of funding for the project and the collection of refunds of money already paid out. A similar course of action may be followed if a project is in default as a result of not meeting one or more of its obligations. In such cases, the Council will provide a notice indicating a rectification period of one (1) month.

9.0 Interpretation of the Rules

This document endeavours to establish comprehensive and unambiguous rules governing participation in this initiative. However, should circumstances arise where the rules are inadequate, unclear, ambiguous, or conflicting, the Council shall exercise its discretion in the interpretation of the rules through the setting up of an *ad hoc* committee.

10.0 Confidentiality of Submissions

Unless otherwise indicated, all application submissions shall be treated in strict confidence.

The data collected by the Council via the application for the aid and its subsequent processing by the Council to evaluate data subject's request for aid under this Call is in line with:

- i. The National Rules for Participation.
- ii. Data Protection Act, Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).
- iii. The legitimate basis to process personal data submitted by the data subject by virtue of his/her written application for aid is Regulation 6 (1)(b) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as 'processing is necessary in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract'.

11.0 Further Information and Correspondence

For further information on the PRIMA Training and Mobility Award (PTMA), kindly contact Dr Annalisa Cartabia as per details below:



Internationalisation Unit

The Malta Council for Science and Technology

Tel: +356 2360 2175

General Email: prima.mcst@gov.mt

Email: annalisa.cartabia@gov.mt