



**Selection notice and
Terms of Reference (ToR)
for engaging an Ethics Advisor
under the Horizon Europe Project “BOOSTER”
(BOOSTING DROUGHT TOLERANCE IN KEY CEREALS IN THE ERA OF CLIMATE
CHANGE)**

Funding Programme: HORIZON EUROPE PROGRAMME of the European Union

Project Title: BOOSTING DROUGHT TOLERANCE IN KEY CEREALS IN THE ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Grant Agreement number: 101081770

CUP number: C83C22001680006

Granting Authority: EUROPEAN RESEARCH EXECUTIVE AGENCY (REA)

Contracting Beneficiary: EUCORE Consulting S.r.l. (EUC)

Start date: 01/05/2023

End date: 30/04/2027

Project Coordinator: CONSIGLIO PER LA RICERCA IN AGRICOLTURA E L'ANALISI DELL'ECONOMIA AGRARIA (CREA)

Other Beneficiaries

- HEINRICH-HEINE-UNIVERSITAET DUESSELDORF (UDUS), Germany;
- VIB VZW (VIB), Belgium;
- ETHIOPIAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (EIAR), Ethiopia;
- UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN (UCT), South Africa;
- TSENTAR PO RASTITELNA SISTEMNA BIOLOGIYA I BIOTEHNOGIYA (CPSBB), Bulgaria;
- BIOATLANTIS LIMITED (BIOAT), Ireland;
- APHEA.BIO (Apeha.Bio), Belgium;
- IDCONSORTIUM SL (IDC), Spain.

Associated Partners

- UNIVERSITAET BERN (UBERN), Switzerland;
- MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (MSU), USA;
- KWS SAAT SE & Co KgaA (KWS), Germany;
- QUANTIS SARL (QUA), Switzerland.

Type of Contract: Subcontract

A. Background

The present service contract is to be carried out under the Project BOOSTER, as identified above, whose general aims are defined in the Project Summary below.

Project Summary

Prolonged drought due to climate change has a severe impact on agriculture, requiring measures to secure yield stability under water shortage conditions. This project aims to be a BOOSTER for developing innovative and sustainable strategies to create climate resilient and drought tolerant cereals. Two synergistic strategies will be implemented to achieve this goal. Firstly, a new approach will identify genomic variants in regulatory regions functionally associated with drought tolerance. Novel regulatory elements underlying resilience will inform efficient breeding efforts to create new drought tolerant cereal varieties. Secondly, novel seaweed extracts and microbial biostimulants will be developed as an eco-friendly approach for improving drought resilience. The two strategies will be tested in two cereals with different responsiveness to drought: European maize and Ethiopian teff, a cereal with high genetic similarity to the desiccation tolerant *Eragrostis nindensis*. BOOSTER will improve drought tolerance in both maize and teff, while simultaneously exploring the potential for transferring species-specific drought responsive features. By exploiting natural genetic variation to achieve drought tolerant genotypes and by developing biostimulants derived from living organisms, BOOSTER will take advantage of the already available natural resources to steer our agriculture towards novel drought tolerant varieties. Importantly, BOOSTER approaches and results are transferable to other crops. A tailored communication/dissemination strategy and a stakeholders' engagement plan will ensure the expected outcomes and impacts. The project will produce increased maize- and teff-derived biomass resources under harsh drought conditions, will lower irrigation requirement, will strengthen competitiveness of European and African agri-food industry, and will provide concrete examples for improving public awareness about a sustainable use of bio-based technologies.

B. Ethics management

The Project encompasses the following activities in relation to ethics management:

- in the framework of the Work package (WP)6 (Project management and quality control) the consortium will “ensure efficient management of ethics issues”, by monitoring the correct implementation of the Project contractual provisions in relation to ethical issues.
- in the framework of the Work package (WP)7 (Ethics requirements) BOOSTER is expected to ensure compliance with the Horizon Europe 'ethics requirements', and in particular with the specific requirement 'Other Ethics Issues – OEI', according to which an independent external Ethics Advisor should be identified and appointed to advise the consortium in relation to the activities described in points C and D to follow. The accomplishment of the selection procedure and the management of the related expenditure has been entrusted to the Contracting Beneficiary as above identified (EUC).

All the ethics-related activities part of WP6 and WP7 shall be performed in compliance with i) Article 19 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/695; and ii) Article 14 and the Annex 5 to the General Model Grant Agreement.

C. Scope of the Work

The Ethics Advisor is expected to manage the ethical issues of the project and to comply with ethics requirements as provided by the legal basis of the Programme Horizon Europe.

In particular, the Ethics Advisor shall provide guidance and consultancy to the consortium on all the issues related to the use of GMOs, particularly with regard to the relevant differences in GMO legislation in force in the BOOSTER participating countries, also taking into consideration that some Beneficiaries are from Third countries (in particular Ethiopia, South Africa, Switzerland and USA).

D. Activities to be carried out

The Ethics Advisor shall work in close cooperation with the Contracting Beneficiary and the Coordinator to perform the activities listed in what follows:

- be a member of a BOOSTER Ethics Advisory Group, which involves key representatives of the consortium with specific expertise in legal and ethics issues, by taking part in its meetings (organised in a hybrid manner to allow the Advisor to connect remotely, to be held no more than three times per year) and liaising with its members whenever needed.
- actively cooperate with the Ethics Advisory Group in the drawing up of D7.1 – Other Ethics Issues requirements, ensuring that it contains specific information in relation to the use of GMOs, especially in relation to the differences in the legislation between the consortium countries. In addition to this main

requirement, the Ethics Advisor shall provide assistance to the consortium in dealing with any other potential emerging ethical issues, especially in relation to the stakeholders' engagement and communication strategies as well as with any matter related to legislation compliance between EU countries and the non-EU Countries taking part in the project (USA, Switzerland, Ethiopia, South Africa). The document shall be finalized and submitted to the European Commission by 31/10/2023.

- provide an online training section (envisaged duration: 2-3 hours) for the benefit of the entire BOOSTER consortium in relation to the followings: **i)** the ethics principles and rules applicable to the Project; **ii)** the role of the Ethics Advisor and the Ethics Advisory Group; **iii)** the contents of D7.1;
- provide consultancy and monitor the implementation of the BOOSTER activities with ethical implications, especially for what concerns the aspects related the management of genetically modified/edited plants;
- to assess the status of the implementation of the project ethics issues to ensure high-quality management and full awareness of the consortium regarding the issues at stake;
- provide relevant information in relation to the activities performed in occasion of the end of the three Reporting Periods (RPs), planned as follows: **i)** RP1: 31/10/2024; **ii)** RP2: 30/04/2026; **iii)** 30/04/2027. In case the deadline of the reporting periods is modified by the Granting Authority during the project implementation, the above-mentioned deadlines shall be modified accordingly;
- update D7.1 in case of need during the project implementation time-frame;
- participate in meeting with the Granting Authority or other EU bodies, in case the need emerges.

E. Expected Deliverables /Outputs.

- Deliverable D7.1 OEI - Requirement No. 1, due by 31 October 2023 and any updates thereof.
- Reports on the implementation of the activities carried out by the Ethics Advisor according to the reporting timeframe, namely: **i)** RP1: 31/10/2024; **ii)** RP2: 30/04/2026; **iii)** 30/04/2027.
- Any other document as requested by the Granting Authority.

All the above-mentioned documentation shall be drawn up in English which is the BOOSTER working language.

D. Duration of the Work

- a) The activities of the Ethics Advisor shall be carried out starting from the signature of the appointment letter (see the point F below) till the end of reporting activity to the Granting Authority, which shall be concluded within 60 days after the end of the Project, namely by 29/06/27. However, the Ethics Advisor shall carry out his/her activity also beyond the above-mentioned timeframe, in case the consortium asks for a formal extension of the project duration and/or in case the final reporting activities may require more than 60 days.
- b) In addition, also beyond the terms under point a), the Ethics Advisor shall promptly provide any document and information in any case of the audit, checks and reviews carried out by the bodies mentioned in Article 25 Grant Agreement (e.g. Granting Authority, OLAF, Court of Auditors (ECA), etc.).

E. Required expertise and qualifications

The Applicant is requested to have:

- demonstrated knowledge and skills in the field of legislation in GMOs (in EU and worldwide).
- Proven knowledge of and experience with ethical and broader societal issues related to modern (bio)technology in agriculture and food.
- at least a proven basic knowledge of technologies used for producing plant GMOs (e. g. classical GMO approaches and new genome editing-based technologies).

In addition, the Applicant shall comply with the requirements of the document "Ethics Advisors and Ethics Advisory Boards Roles and Function in EU-funded Projects" issued by the European Commission, last version (available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/roles-and-functions-of-ethics-advisory-ethics-advisory-boards-in-ec-funded-projects_he_en.pdf), especially under the paragraph 2.2 (Appropriate competencies) and 2.3 (Independence and impartiality).

Furthermore, the candidate shall not be in any of the situations provided by Article 136 ("Exclusion criteria and decisions on exclusions") of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union.

F. Obligations of the Ethics Advisor

The relationship between the Ethics Advisor and the Contracting Beneficiary will be regulated by an appointment letter. According to the appointment letter the Ethics Advisor, qualified as "subcontractor" according to the legal basis of the Horizon Europe Programme, shall comply with the obligations and the requirements of the present ToR and of those

provided by the Grant Agreement (hereinafter referred to as “GA”)¹ for the Project in particular with respect to the followings (see Article 9, paragraph 3, GA:

- Subcontractors must implement their action tasks in accordance with Article 11 GA;
- The costs for the subcontracted tasks (invoiced price from the subcontractor) are eligible and may be charged to the Project, under the conditions set out in Article 6 of the GA;
- The Subcontractor must comply with the obligations under Articles 12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping);
- The Subcontractor must ensure that the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g. Granting Authority, OLAF, Court of Auditors, etc.) can exercise their rights.

In addition, the Ethics Advisor shall:

- implement the applicable EU law (e.g. Charter of Fundamental Rights; Treaty on European Union; Treaty on Functioning of European Union; Directive 2001/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 March 2001 on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms) and International rules;
- respect the legal base of the Programme Horizon Europe;
- follow the documents elaborated by the European Commission for the ethics assessment of the Projects, i.e. “EU Grants: How to complete your self-ethics assessment”; the above-mentioned “Ethics Advisors and Ethics Advisory Boards Roles and Function in EU-funded Projects”; and any other useful text and interpretation adopted by the European Commission.

G. Fee and Schedule of Payments

1. The Ethics Manager will be remunerated with a maximum lump sum fee of EUR 15 000.00 inclusive of all expenses to be incurred for carrying out the activities, among which travel costs (although it is granted to the expert to possibility to work remotely). The amount includes VAT and any kind of taxes or social charges. Such an amount constitutes a basic tender price which may be reduced in the application (see points H and I hereinafter).
2. The payments will be made in instalments based on the positive evaluation of the activities provided under this ToR, in the occasion of the report submitted and accepted.

Payment Schedule will be as follows:

- 20% upon contract signature.
- No. 3 instalments equal to the of 26.67% of the total amount, to be transferred to the Appointed Advisor upon acceptance of the three reports on the activities performed by the Ethics Advisor (see point E as above).

The payment will be made in Euro on the bank account duly indicated by the Ethics Advisor to the Contracting beneficiary (EUC).

H. Documents to be enclosed to the Application

The Applicant shall provide the Contracting Beneficiary with the following documents:

1. Application form, duly dated and signed
2. Summary of the Applicant’s profile of (max 2 pages), highlighting the most relevant expertise with respect to the assignments.
3. Recent CV, dated and signed, focusing on the experiences and achievements which are mostly relevant for the assignments.
4. Economic offer (with the proposed reduction of the price), to be proposed by filling the relevant section of the application form.

In the application, the Applicant shall, by duly filling in the application form:

- give his/her consent to the processing of personal data (see point J hereinafter);
- declare to accept the provisions contained within the present ToR;
- declare that he/she in not be in any of the situations provided by Article 136 (“Exclusion criteria and decisions on exclusions”) of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union.

¹ The text of the General Model Grant Agreement is available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/agr-contr/unit-mga_he_en.pdf.

I. How to submit the application and evaluation process

Prospective applicants may submit their application by **7/09/23** to the following email to the address: info@eucore.eu. The object of the mail should contain the following text: BOOSTER project – Application for the Ethics Advisor position.

LANGUAGE OF APPLICATION:

The application documents, as well as all correspondence, shall be written in English.

PERIOD OF VALIDITY OF APPLICATION:

Application shall remain valid for the period of 90 days after the date of the end-date for the submission of applications as specified above. All applicants will be notified in relation to the outcomes of their application.

SELECTION PROCEDURE:

Subject to the criteria as follow, the selection shall be carried out by the Contracting Beneficiary, that will organise an adequate selection panel in close cooperation with the Project Coordinator. The panel will be composed by experts on the topics concerning the selection procedure.

If considered necessary, the Applicant may be convened for an on-line interview. The lack of response of the Applicant may be considered a refusal to be appointed as Ethics Advisor of the Project.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Weight (%)</i>	<i>Max. Point</i>
• Years of experience in dealing with ethics issues in EU projects, especially in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects	35	35
• Demonstrated knowledge and skills in the field of EU legislation in GMOs	45	45
• Price reduction of the maximum lump sum of EUR 15.000,00	20	20
Total	100	100

J. Protection of personal data

The Applicant shall give consent to the Contracting Beneficiary to process his/her personal data (i.e. name, family name, contact details, data contained in the CV and the related documentation).

EU CORE Consulting s.r.l., acting as controller, shall process such personal data exclusively for the purpose to carry out the activities concerning present selection procedure and to manage the contract with the successful Applicant. Personal data shall be considered as confidential. Nevertheless, such a data may be shared with the evaluators involved in the selection process (to be identified within the members of the consortium), as well as with the Granting Authority and/or with any other authority as provided by the law.

The data subject shall have the rights set out by the European Union Law, and in particular by Regulation (EU) 679/2016 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data. Especially, the data subject shall be entitled to obtain from EU CORE Consulting s.r.l. the rectification, erasure or blocking of data the processing of which does not comply with the provisions of the Regulation (EU) 2016/679, in particular because of the incomplete or inaccurate nature of the data.

K. Other issues.

To present selection procedure shall be governed by the further additional rules:

1. This procedure may be revoked at any time and it cannot generate any legitimate expectations for Applicants that their proposal is accepted;
2. No reimbursement of costs or payment of fees are foreseen for the Applicants for the sole reason of the participation in the selection procedure;
3. The results arising from the activities of the Ethics Advisor (e.g. data, reports, deliverables) shall be owned by the Contracting Beneficiary which can be use them for all uses it deems necessary;
4. The present procedure is subject to Italian Law;
5. Any controversy which may arise shall be subject to the exclusive competence of the Tribunal of Turin.