EGI.eu Project Engagement Policy

1 Introduction

This policy was approved at the EGI Council meeting on 22nd September 2011 to clarify EGI.eu's activity in collaborative projects. The statutes of EGI.eu explicitly state that in support of creating and maintaining a pan-European grid infrastructure in collaboration with NGIs, and to ensure its long-term availability for performing research and innovation activities it should encourage, coordinate and participate in grid related projects. This policy defines the procedures and policies around such engagement by ensuring there is:

a) a clear policy as to the priorities for the organisation for a particular call, and
b) a clear procedure for obtaining support (letter or partnership) around such support.

2 Scope

It is expected that EGI.eu will only engage in projects funded at a European or wider level. Engagement in nationally funded projects is seen as outside its remit. However, it is appropriate for EGI.eu to provide letters of support to project proposals to national funding agencies. Such requests for letters of support **must** be endorsed by the appropriate NGI Council representative and will normally be issued automatically by the Director. The reminder of this document focuses on pan-European projects such as FP7/8.

3 Policy

The calls for EC projects are issued well in advance and are therefore within the scope of Council deliberations. For each call the Council should establish priority areas for EGI.eu (possibly following proposals from the Executive Board). Such a Call (or an objective within a call) would be considered a priority if EGI.eu should:

- Coordinate a project proposal(s) and in which area(s)
- Participate in project proposal(s) and in which area(s)
- Provide letters of support to project proposal(s) and in which area(s)

The policy should be clear and unambiguous. Variations from the policy would be exceptional and need explicit endorsement from the Executive Board.

If the Council/Executive Board believe it is strategically important that EGI.eu lead a proposal in a call a *small* working group will be established in advance of the call opening to supervise the writing of the proposal. Members of the working group will be there representing the Council or Executive Board. Inclusion/exclusion in the working group must not be seen to be equated with inclusion/exclusion in the project proposal. The project structure remains a decision of the coordinator (EGI.eu), however, the working group should provide advice on possible NGIs and other partners who could be included in the project.

4 Conflict of Interest

The policy concerning conflict has to be applied in the case of a:

- Executive Board member (taking part in decisions concerning a project).
- Council member in a designated working group or meeting concerning a specific project proposal.

A potential conflict of interest will be recognised if the Executive Board or Council member:

- Is a member of an institution that is part of the proposed project being discussed.

- Is a member of, or aware of, a project (either directly or by an institution within their country) that is being submitted into the same call.

- Identifies a conflict from the circulated project summary.

The member must declare the potential conflict of interest to the chair of the EGI Council or Executive Board meeting as soon as it is evident, This may be before any discussion takes place, or immediately that any potential conflict of interest emerges during the discussion. The declaration of a potential conflict of interest does *not* automatically exclude the member from the discussion. They may have a legitimate interest in the discussions but should be excluded from any final decision. Once a potential conflict of interest has been recorded it will be up to the meeting (Executive Board or Council) to determine if the member *must* be excluded from the decision making.

5 Procedure

This section describes the process for a request for interaction in relation to an EC project.

1. A written request for interaction (see section 7 for details) is sent to the director@egi.eu. Requests that are missing information or that need additional clarification will be returned to the requesting project coordinator. Requests containing all the required information will be circulated to the Executive Board for review with a proposed recommendation from the Director as to the level of engagement that EGI.eu should have with the project. Members of the Executive Board **must** declare any potential conflict of interest in the proposal. Due to the time critical nature of these requests unless there are clear objections to the proposed course of action within 3 working days from the Executive Board, then the proposed action will be initiated.

From this initial review by the Executive Board two course of action can be followed:

For a letter of support:

2. A letter of support will be drafted by the Director in consultation with members of the Executive Board who have not declared a conflict of interest in the proposal.

3. The agreed letter of support will be sent to the members of the Council who are geographically associated with partners involved in the proposed project (i.e. the partner is in the country) for their review along with the original details of the proposal. A Council member **must** declare if they have a potential conflict of interest in the proposal. Feedback may result in further

iterations. No response from the contacted Council members after 3 working days will be taken as agreement with the letter's contents.

4. The letter will be signed by the Director on behalf of the organisation and returned to the proposal coordinator.

For participation in an EC project as a partner:

2. The Director (or their technical delegate) will negotiate EGI.eu's role in the project within the project consortium within any restrictions imposed by the Executive Board (e.g. matching funding, scope of work undertaken, other NGIs, etc.).

3. As part of EGI.eu's condition for being involved in the project the coordinator will agree that:
    a. all information (i.e. proposal, GPF, etc.) can be made available to the Executive Board.
    b. the relevant NGIs in their Council will be informed that an organisation in their country is involved in the project proposal.
    c. the relevant NGIs may choose to contact that organisation and see if there is technical assistance that the NGI can or must provide to the partner to undertake their role in the proposed project.
    d. the relevant NGI may determine there are costs to the NGI for the partner's participation in the proposed project. EGI.eu (and the affected partner) can then lobby strongly for these costs to be covered as part of the proposal.
    e. if the work falls outside the scope of EGI.eu's work (i.e. its EGI Global Tasks) and into an area of expertise (i.e. another EGI Global Task) of another EGI partner then the project coordinator will be encouraged to contact the NGI responsible for that task for inclusion in the project (See section 6).

4. EGI.eu's involvement in the project will be reviewed by the Executive Board prior to the project's submission. Consideration will be given to EGI.eu's work in the final proposal compared to that detailed in the original request for collaboration and the response made by the coordinator for the requested inclusion of other NGI partners. Unsatisfactory handling of these issues by the coordinator may result in EGI.eu withdrawing at a late stage in the project.

This process can be initiated by the Director through step (1) and following the rest of the process.

6   Delegating Work through EGI.eu

Discussions are continuing with the EC to see how EGI.eu could delegate work within the EGI community without having to include every participant explicitly in the proposal. A number of options are still viable:

1. Secondment: Staff from NGIs could be seconded to EGI.eu to undertake explicit technical work that EGI.eu has committed to as part of a project. These staff would have to be on a leave of absence from their home institute and have a short fixed-term contract for the work. The place of work (in Amsterdam or at the home institute) could be negotiated, but as EGI.eu would be contractually responsible for the work and its supervision a substantial proportion of the time would need to be in Amsterdam.

2. Third Party: Staff from a third party (such as an NGI) can apparently undertake work on a project provided just the direct costs of the staff are charged to EGI.eu and the EC. This would avoid any need for secondment but the NGI would remain responsible for overheads etc. for the staff member.

3. European Economic Interest Grouping (http://go.egi.eu/eeig): This is a legal entity based on Community law that facilitates and encourages cross-border cooperation. The grouping is non-profit and has a defined governance structures. Its members are bound financially to the organisation which allows financial guarantees to be given. Members are therefore responsible for any debt. A JRU can join if it is a legal entity. Establishing such an entity for EGI.eu as a 'service delivery' organisation for engagement in EC projects would allow any member of the entity to deliver services. This model has been used within the OGF-Europe and ERCIM projects.

4. Association internationale sans but lucratif (AISBL - http://go.egi.eu/AISBL): Is an 'International association without lucrative purpose' that is established under Belgium law. It is a non-profit association with at least two people who decide to pool resources to engage in an activity whose purpose is not personal enrichment. The distribution of a benefit to its partners is prohibited, but a profit can be generated to develop the legal entity.

A European level JRU does not exist (the EEIG is seen as the alternative) and extensive subcontracting is not encouraged or endorsed by the EC.

7   Request for Interaction

The initial request for any support from EGI.eu (participation in a project proposal or letter of support) MUST be initiated by *at least 45* calendar days before the close of the call. All communication should be through director@egi.eu with an email subject of "Request for Support for [your_project]". All communication relating to your request for support (including the details mentioned below) **will** be shared in confidence with the EGI.eu Executive Board and **may** be shared with the full EGI Council.

Your initial request must contain the following information:

- To which programme (i.e. national, EC, etc.) and call the proposal will be submitted
- The deadline of the call and any internal deadline you may have
- The type of support (letter of support, project participation, use of resources, etc.)

A short document with the following information must also be sent with the request:

- Project name
- Project coordinator and contact details (name, email, institution)
- Letter of support from the coordinator's NGI identifying why they believe EGI.eu should be engage with this project.
- Project abstract and goals (max 1 page)
- Estimated project start date and duration if funded
- Relevance to the EGI in terms of contributing or use of the infrastructure
    - Which EGI resources/services will you be using?
    - Have the NGIs providing these resources been contacted (if so who?)
- Details of all the project partners, contact details, role in the project and their country.

- o Which of the project partners are affiliated to their NGIs?
  - o If they are affiliated what is their relationship?
- How do you foresee collaboration with EGI developing if your project is funded, for instance:
  - o Signing a Memorandum of Understanding
    - Virtual Research Community – Encompassing one or more VOs that are users of the e-infrastructure and have an open sustainable structure that can including other users/groups/resources.
    - Technology Provider – Providing sustainable software of interest to EGI for deployment into production or to make the infrastructure easy to use/access.
    - Infrastructure Provider – Commitment to bring new or existing production resources into use alongside EGI's for the benefit of the common user community.
    - Other Collaboration – Some other defined interaction with the EGI community.
  - o A joint work progamme
  - o Joint events/dissemination
  - o Service Level Agreement/Description relating to outputs from your project
  - o Other…