

EUROBENCH "European Robotic Framework for Bipedal Locomotion Benchmarking" H2020 Project - Grant Agreement No 779963

FSTP-2 Open Call "VALIDATION of the benchmarking framework"

Guide for applicants



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Executive Summary

This document includes instructions for preparing proposals to be submitted to the EUROBENCH FSTP-2 Open Call.

<u>Section 1</u> reports general information on how to participate in this Open Call.

Section 2 includes the options for participation and the expected outcomes with highest priority.

Section 3 describes the necessary steps to submit the proposals.

Section 4 describes the evaluation and selection process.

Section 5 highlights specific communication and confidentiality matters.

<u>Section 6</u> describes the Grant Agreement to be signed by selected parties and the EUROBENCH Consortium.

Section 7 describes how payments to sub-projects Consortia will be executed.

Section 8 specifies the different responsibilities of the sub-projects Consortia members.

Section 9 describes the different EUROBENCH Boards and Committees.

Section 10 provides a Checklist to help applicants to quickly verify the correctness of the proposal draft.

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Introduction

Goals of EUROBENCH

The EUROBENCH project aims to create the first unified benchmarking framework for robotic systems in Europe. This framework will allow companies and/or researchers to test the performance of their robots at any stage of development. The project is mainly focused on bipedal systems, i.e. exoskeletons, prosthetics and humanoids, but it is also opened to cover other robotic technologies. To this aim, EUROBENCH has developed:

- Two Testing **Facilities**, one for wearable robots (located in the <u>Hospital Los Madroños</u>, in Brunete, Spain) and the other for humanoid robots (located in the <u>Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia</u>, in Genova, Italy), to allow perform standardized tests on robotic prototypes in a unique location, saving resources and time.
- A unified Benchmarking **Software**, which includes: 1) common *protocols* to execute standardized tests in any lab setting, 2) *computational tools* to compute performance scores according to quantitative Performance Indicators, and 3) a unified *database* to compare the performance results with other systems.

To build this framework, the EUROBENCH Consortium relied on the collaboration with more than 50 external entities, a.k.a. Third Parties, through 17 sub-projects funded in the 1st Open Call (FSTP-1).

The entire EUROBENCH framework (Facilities & Software) will be now offered to participants of this 2nd Open Call (FSTP-2). Selected projects will receive funding to test and improve their own robotic/control systems using the EUROBENCH tools.

This call, based on a first-come-first-served scheme, will be open from September 1, 2020 until November 30, 2020, or budget depletion.

This document provides specific instructions for participating in the FSTP-2 Open Call.





1 General rules

1.1 Options for participation

Applicants (no matter if they are leaders or partners of consortia) have three options for participation. Each proposal can address only one option. An applicant cannot be funded for the same option and category (Wearable Robots or Humanoids) more than once. For example, if an applicant obtains funding for option 1 in the Wearable Robots category, no further grant for option 1 in the WR category can be awarded to that applicant. This applicant will be eligible for funding under Options 2 and 3 of any categories, or under Option 1 of the Humanoid category. Options are summarized below. More details are given in Section 2.

OPTION 1. *In situ* experiments. Proposals applying to this option should propose one or more testing experiments to be conducted in one of the two EUROBENCH facilities (either Wearable Robots or Humanoids facility). Experiments should aim to assess the performance of real robotic systems or control algorithms by using the EUROBENCH testbeds and software. Experiments should be conducted in one or more of the benchmarking scenarios included in Table 1. The grant will cover personnel costs, travel & accommodation to realize up to 2 weeks of testing in the facility (2 separate weeks or one 2-week session), and consumables needed to perform the experiments. The expected outcomes from this option are detailed in Section 2.

OPTION 2. *Remote* experiments. Applicants willing to participate in this option should propose testing experiments to be conducted in their own laboratory. Experiments should aim to assess the performance of real robotic systems by using the EUROBENCH software. Experiments should be conducted in one or more of the benchmarking scenarios included in Table 1, using testbeds able to reproduce these conditions. The grant will cover personnel costs and consumables needed to build a simplified version of the testbed(s). The expected outcomes from this option are detailed in Section 2.

OPTION 3. *Retrospective data analysis.* Proposals applying to this option should propose the use of the EUROBENCH Software to process retrospective data on robots (Wearable or Humanoid) and/or humans. Retrospective data refer to data obtained by experiments conducted before the opening of this call (September 1, 2020). No further experiments are allowed to be conducted. The goal should be the assessment of the performance of the robotic system and/or producing high-quality performance reference data from healthy or impaired individuals. All the collected and processed data should be uploaded and integrated in the EUROBENCH Database and made public. The grant will cover personnel costs for data preparation and analysis. Other expected outcomes from this option are detailed in Section 2.

1.2 Robotic technologies allowed

- Systems undergoing the experiments should belong to one of the following robotic technologies:
 - Lower limb exoskeletons (powered or unpowered). This category includes full leg, hip, knee, ankle, or lower back support exoskeletons, and any typology of exosuits. All typologies should be ambulatory. Stationary devices (e.g. Lokomat-like gait trainers) will NOT be accepted.
 - Lower limb prostheses (powered or unpowered). This includes transfemoral or transtibial prostheses, bilateral or unilateral.





- Bipedal legged robots. This category includes full body humanoids, as well as bipedal or monopodal robots.
- A limited amount (10%) until budget depletion of the total call budget will be reserved to proposals addressing other (non-bipedal) robotic technologies, such as:
 - Multi-legged robots, e.g. quadrupeds, hexapods.
 - Upper limb exoskeletons, e.g. industrial exosuits.
 - Wheeled robots.
- The following technologies are excluded:
 - Stationary upper limb exoskeletons, e.g. Hocoma Armeo ®
 - Industrial manipulators.
 - Simulated-only robots without any physical counterpart.

1.3 Deviations allowed

- Under OPTION 1, even if the main focus is using the EUROBENCH tools, other devices can be proposed, e.g. a different measurement system or hardware components necessary to run the test, which are not included in the EUROBENCH setup. In this case, the applicants are entirely responsible for bringing the additional equipment to the facility during the experiments. The costs for its development (either personnel or equipment costs) are not eligible.
- Under OPTION 2, the testbeds can be a highly simplified (e.g. made of wood) version of the testbeds included in the facility, e.g. absence of robotized parts or sensors. Testbeds can also be structural parts of existing buildings or environments (e.g. ramps or stairs, or outdoor terrains). Consumables needed for their development are eligible but cannot exceed the 15% of the entire requested budget.
- Under any option, applicants can also propose new algorithms to be integrated in the EUROBENCH Software. Nevertheless, the personnel costs necessary for their development are not eligible.

1.4 Collaborations

EUROBENCH aims to promote the adoption of benchmarking across domains, labs, and technologies. For this reason, collaboration is highly welcome. If you think that you can benefit from the collaboration with groups that are not eligible for funding (e.g. Third Parties that have reached the maximum funding in FSTP-1, or non-eligible countries), you can include them in the Consortium as "collaborators". In such a case, please justify why the participation of the external collaborator is needed. External collaborators will not receive any funding but will be formally part of the consortium.

Table 1. List of benchmarking scenarios covered by the EUROBENCH benchmarking scheme. The applicability to the Exoskeleton, Prosthesis, Humanoid or Person fields is indicated with the "•" symbol.

Benchmarking scenarios covered by EUROBENCH	Applicability			
	EXOSKELETONS	PROSTHESES	HUMANOIDS	PERSONS
Walking on Flat Ground	•	•	•	•
Ascending/Descending Slopes	•	•	•	•





Benchmarking scenarios covered by EUROBENCH	Applicability			
	EXOSKELETONS	PROSTHESES	HUMANOIDS	PERSONS
Ascending/Descending Stairs	•	•	•	•
Walking over Irregular Terrains	•	•	•	•
Walking on Treadmill	•	•	•	•
Walking/Standing on Moving Surfaces	•	•	•	•
Walking/Standing during Pushes	•	•	•	•
Standing during manipulation	•	•	•	•
Sit-to-stand, Stand-to-sit	•	•	•	•
Opening/Closing Doors			•	
Moving in Narrow Spaces	•	•	•	•
Pushing a Shopping Trolley / Walker			•	
Walking on virtual terrains	•	•		•
Overcoming obstacles			•	
Picking and carrying objects			•	
Characterization of user experience during exoskeleton-assisted walking	•			
Characterization of the effects of the exoskeleton over muscle coordination	•			
Force control characterization	•		•	
Magnetometer-free Inertial sensing system	•	•		•





1.5 Budget - Funding and Financial eligibility

Each sub-project (defined as a funded proposal to be implemented) will receive the funding on a **lump sum** scheme as defined by the EU Commission pilot 2018-2020¹. Each proposal should include a detailed work plan and a costs estimate. For the definition of this work plan, participants should take into account the estimated duration of the Validation Phase is 9 months (April-December 2021), in which all experiments should be conducted. This duration may be exceptionally increased if delays due to Covid-19 will imply a formal extension of the EUROBENCH project beyond the current ending date (December 31, 2021).

The estimated costs of the third parties to develop the defined work plan should be reasonable and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

All proposals should comply with the following budgetary limits:

- In order to achieve an equitable distribution of the budget, a minimum of <u>40% of the budget will be</u> reserved for Wearable Robots proposals (20% for exoskeletons proposals and 20% for prostheses proposals) and <u>40% for Humanoids proposals</u> until 1 November 2020. After that day, all proposals will be eligible for the full budget available.
- Under Option 2, consumables needed for the development of simplified testbeds are eligible but cannot exceed the 15% of the entire requested budget.
- A maximum of 10% of the entire budget for this call can be given to non-bipedal systems.
- Each proposal can request a <u>maximum contribution of 60k€ (option 1), 30k€ (option 2) or 15k€</u> (option 3), which can cover up to 100% of the total budget.
- Each participant can receive a <u>maximum contribution of 100k€</u>, across all proposals presented in this call. Therefore, once a beneficiary has reached 100k€, all other proposals in which they participate will be rejected.
- If you have been funded by the <u>1st FSTP Open Call</u>, you have a cumulative <u>limit of 100k€</u> applied to all EUROBENCH Open Calls as a whole. <u>If you already reached this limit in FSTP-1, you can still</u> <u>participate</u> in a Consortium, as a non-funded party ("collaborator").

General criteria for budget definition are:

- <u>Consumable and equipment</u> costs can include commercial measurement systems, software or other consumables needed to perform the experiments (OPTION 1 and 2), as well as materials to build a simplified replica of the testbed (OPTION 2), etc. Total costs of <u>consumables and equipment should not exceed</u> <u>15% of the budget requested</u>.
- <u>Personnel</u> costs will also depend on the complexity of the validation to be performed in a testbed or by using algorithms and datasets developed. As a general estimation, being the maximum duration of the sub-project 10 months, we expect total personnel efforts *per sub-project* between 5 and 8 person-months (PM). According to this estimate, we expect total personnel costs per sub-project between 25 and 40k€. This figure may change, if appropriately motivated.
- <u>Travel</u> costs: These costs will include transport and accommodation costs for all the people (technicians, volunteers of the experiments) that need to travel to the corresponding Facility to execute the tests (if OPTION 1 is selected). Other travel costs to allow meetings between partners of the sub-project can also be included.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/sites/horizon2020/files/lump_sum_factsheet_2018-2020.pdf



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1.6 Applicants eligibility

The following eligibility rules apply to this EUROBENCH Open Call:

- Participants can apply individually or as part of a consortium.
- Consortia can include partners from the same country, as well as partners from different countries.
- Applicants must be previously registered in the <u>Participant Register of the Participant Portal</u> and have a 9digit Participant Identification Code (PIC).
- Applicants cannot request any funding for activities that are already funded by other grants (principle of no double funding).
- Applicants can participate in more than one proposal according to budget limitations established in Section 1.5. Applicants that have been funded in FSTP-1 for the maximum budget can still participate, but only as part of a Consortium since they cannot be beneficiaries of the grant (they will be "collaborators").
- Countries eligible for funding are specified in <u>Section A</u> of the H2020 Work Programme. Non-eligible countries can still participate, but only as part of a Consortium since they cannot be beneficiaries of the grant (they will be "collaborators").
- All the consortia should contain at least one eligible partner for funding.

1.7 Templates

To prepare your proposal, please use the template available at <u>http://eurobench2020.eu/wp-</u> <u>content/uploads/2020/09/FSTP-2-Proposal-template V2.docx</u>. Submission guidelines are provided in Section 3 of this document.

1.8 Communication and FAQ

There will be several means to get in touch with the EUROBENCH Consortium and receive direct feedback on your idea. Applicants that participated in the pre-registration (now closed) will have the benefit of receiving an informal pre-evaluation of their proposal before submission. All other applicants can submit to the EUROBENCH Team any specific technical or administrative inquiries by email but will not receive a pre-proposal check.

Check also the EUROBENCH FAQ section (<u>http://eurobench2020.eu/ftsp-open-calls/fstp-2-validating-the-framework/</u>), to look for continuously updated questions and answers.





2 Proposal Preparation

This section provides indications and suggestions on how to prepare a good proposal. A proposal template is available at <u>http://eurobench2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/FSTP-2-Proposal-template V2.docx</u>. Please also refer to Section 4.2 to check the evaluation criteria, which can drive you in shaping the contents. Please, consider <u>the</u> **information here provided as a general advice**.

2.1 Option 1: In situ experiments

In this option, participants should travel physically to the corresponding (WR or humanoids) facility to perform testing experiments for a duration of maximum of two weeks (14 operative days). These two weeks should be preferably splitted into two separate weeks, called 'PRE' and 'POST'. In the 'PRE' testing week, the system will be evaluated for the first time to obtain baseline performance scores. Afterwards, teams have up to 6 months to improve their system (at any level, HW or SW), and go back to the facility to perform the 'POST' testing week. The goal of this 'PRE-POST' approach is to validate the ability of the EUROBENCH framework to monitor the differences in performance levels along a development process. In case the robotic system cannot be modified (e.g. being a system at very high TRL) or if the experiment duration is expected to be longer than 1 week, the applicants can merge the two weeks into a unique 2-week testing session.

Standard robotic platforms:

The EUROBENCH project will make available two robotic platforms to participants that don't have their own physical system. Participants can use these robots to test their own control algorithms. The implementation of the control algorithm into these robotic platforms should be done under the ROS environment.

- The WR facility will provide the Exo-H3 (Technaid S.L. Spain), a 6-DOF powered lower limb exoskeleton. This exoskeleton is provided by default with a control algorithm able to replicate the human joint trajectories of the hip, knee and ankle during flat ground walking at different speeds. It has been designed to assist healthy people or subjects with partially lost motor functions and is adaptable to different sizes. The exoskeleton includes the following sensors: six position sensors (one for each joint), six interaction force sensors (one per segment), four foot-ground pressure sensors (heel and toe). Applicants interested in using this robot in any modality different from that provided by default should implement their own control algorithm into the exo, using a ROS environment. More details on the requirements for ROS-based software integration will be made available at http://eurobench2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Brochure-Exo-H3_2020_ROS.pdf (please consider that the description on how you will implement your controller is not required in the proposal draft).
- The HUM facility will be endowed with a humanoid robot, i.e. PAL Robotics REEM-C robot, to perform tests on different benchmarking scenarios. REEM-C is able to walk stably at a speed of up to 2.5 km/h, and can even climb stairs or sit on a chair. In addition, REEM-C is provided with 68 DoF that enable a wide set of movements inspired by the human motions. The humanoid's F/T sensors, IMU, and RGB-D camera can help you smoothly implement and test your algorithms. REEM-C robot comes with a set of skills that work right out of the box, such as walking, grasping, Whole-Body Control or Text To Speech. The humanoid is fully ROS based, allowing the user to access the sensors and actuators through ros control, visualize the sensors and actual state using RViZ, or even run and deploy his own applications as ROS packages. All the controllers are implemented as plugins of ros_control, and all relevant data such as sensors, actual_state, etc. is published as a rostopic.





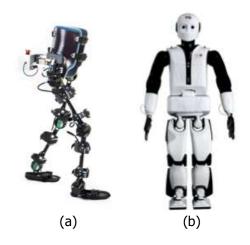


Figure 2.1. The standard robotic platforms provided by the consortium: (a) <u>Technaid Exo-H3</u> (b) <u>PAL</u> <u>Robotics REEM - C</u>

Design of the experiments:

In order to plan the experiments in the facility, please take into account the following considerations:

- One testing week is composed of 7 operative days of testing.
- One working day is estimated in 8 hours.
- One day of session can realistically allow for the execution of a maximum of 3 experimental protocols on the same bipedal system (human or robot). Always consider one extra day for the preparation of the setup, and 1 extra day for unexpected technical issues. This information is particularly relevant to experiments involving human participants: for instance, a realistic estimate would be 4 subjects per testing week over 3 scenarios, or 2 subjects over 6 scenarios. This estimation may change depending on the specific scenarios considered.
- In the experiments requiring the participation of healthy human participants (e.g. experiments in exoskeletons) the sub-project Consortium should provide at least 2 healthy volunteers. The local EUROBENCH Team will provide the additional healthy participants required.
- In the experiments requiring patients or persons affected by injuries (e.g. amputees or neurological patients), these should be provided by the sub-project Consortium.
- A synthetic list of the scenarios is provided in Table 1. A detailed description of the scenario is provided in the document "Description of scenarios", which can be downloaded at http://eurobench2020.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2020/09/EUROBENCH-benchmarking-scenarios-description v2.pdf. When choosing the scenarios, please list them in order of importance. The evaluation committee may be forced to exclude some of them, if they are covered by previously accepted proposals.
- Please list exactly which protocols of each scenario you are interested in evaluating.
- If you are interested in performing a variation of the EUROBENCH protocols or proposing a completely new protocol, this is possible, but should be strongly motivated.

<u>Budget:</u>

The grant will cover:

- Personnel costs for the preparation and execution of the tests, the analysis of data and the improvement of the system between the two weeks of testing (when applicable).
- Travel costs (transport & accommodation) to realize up to 2 weeks of testing in the facility.
- Consumables needed to perform the experiments.





Expected Outcomes:

- A deliverable including results from the first week of testing should be released at month 4.
- A deliverable including results from the second week of testing should be released at month 8.
- In the case the two weeks of testing are merged, only one deliverable should be released, not later than month 8.
- A final report including a detailed feedback on the EUROBENCH framework should be released at month 9.

2.2 Option 2: *Remote* experiments

In this option, participants are requested to perform a set of benchmarking experiments in their own laboratory. There are no limitations in the number and type of participants, robotic technologies tested, duration of the experimental sessions, number of scenarios or protocols tested.

The only requirement is that the scenarios and protocols used should belong to those included in the EUROBENCH framework (see a brief summary of them in the document "Description of scenarios", which can be downloaded at http://eurobench2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EUROBENCH-benchmarking-scenarios-description_v2.pdf. Data and performance scores obtained by these experiments should be included in the EUROBENCH Database.

Design of the experiments:

In order to plan your experiments, please take into account the following considerations:

- The environments (testbeds) where the experiments are conducted should be as close as possible to the EUROBENCH scenarios. Please look at the details of these scenarios in the document "Description of scenarios", which can be downloaded at http://eurobench2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EUROBENCH-benchmarking-scenarios-description-v2.pdf.
- To reproduce the scenarios, you can build a replica of the EUROBENCH testbeds, or use other testbeds you may already have in your laboratory. Please describe carefully the testbed dimension in the proposal.
- Please list them in order of importance. The evaluation committee may be forced to exclude some of them, if they are covered by previously accepted proposals.
- You can reproduce testbeds able to reproduce these conditions.
- The experiments should be executed during the first 4 months of the project.
- Data should be fully processed and provided to the Eurobench consortium by month 8.

<u>Budget:</u>

The grant will cover:

- Personnel costs for the preparation and execution of the tests, and for the analysis of data.
- Consumables needed to build a simplified version of the testbed(s), and for executing the test.

Expected Outcomes:

- A deliverable including the approval of the experiment(s) from the local ethical committee should be released at month 1 (applicable to any experiment involving humans).
- A deliverable including raw data should be released at month 4.
- A deliverable including all results (pre-processed data and scoring results) stored in the EUROBENCH Database should be released at month 8.
- A final report including a detailed feedback on the EUROBENCH framework should be released at month 9.





2.3 Option 3: Retrospective data analysis

In this option, participants should use the EUROBENCH Software to process data obtained by experiments conducted before the opening of this call (September 1, 2020). Of particular interest are data stored in publicly available databases, but also data stored in private (e.g. laboratories) databases are welcome. The goal of this option is twofold: 1) to gather the high volume of data already available in the scientific community into one unified database (the EUROBENCH database) with a common format, to ease its access and processing by any researcher worldwide, and 2) to extract relevant information on such data and create a solid reference on the performance of existing systems in the literature, against which future systems can be compared and benchmarked. This call is particularly open to data obtained by humans (healthy and/or injured), even in absence of any robotic system.

Data should be preferably obtained in conditions close to the EUROBENCH scenarios (see the document "Description of scenarios" at <u>http://eurobench2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EUROBENCH-benchmarking-scenarios-description v2.pdf</u>. Deviations are admitted, but they should be clearly identified in the proposal.

Due to the differences between the EUROBENCH data format/protocols with respect to those used in these retrospective datasets, a particular effort is required to 1) convert these data into the EUROBENCH data format so that they can be processed by the EUROBENCH algorithms, and/or 2) creating new algorithms to calculate new performance indicators that are currently not included in the EUROBENCH Software.

All the collected and processed data, as well as any new algorithms, should be uploaded and integrated in the EUROBENCH Database and Software, and made public.

<u>Budget:</u>

The grant will cover personnel costs for the analysis of data, the data conversion algorithm and generation of new benchmarking algorithms.

Expected Outcomes:

- A deliverable including all datasets appropriately labelled, segmented and converted into the EUROBENCH Data format should be released at month 4.
- A deliverable including performance scores obtained from all datasets should be released at month 8.
- An additional deliverable with new benchmarking algorithms may be eventually released by month 8.
- A final report including a detailed feedback on the EUROBENCH Software and Database should be released at month 9.

2.4 Ethics and legal issues

It is important that you consider the ethical aspects of your work and how you handle personal data. For this reason, we require your proposal to consider the following issues:

- If you are applying to Option 1 or 2: Indicate whether you wish to maintain the data collected confidential. Motivate your choice.
- If you are applying to Option 3: Provide explicitly your permission for the integration of the analysed data and resulting scores into the EUROBENCH Database.
- Where relevant, describe how sex and/or gender analysis is taken into account in the project's content.
- Specify what data will be collected/analysed, and how you plan to ensure compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Indicate whether any special safety device or measure is needed.





- With respect to the experimental protocols, at the stage of proposal drafting you are only required to report the protocol description (and only in the case that the protocol is different from the ones included in the EUROBENCH framework). In such case:
 - Under Option 1, The EUROBENCH team is going to submit protocol descriptions to the local ethical committee of the corresponding facility. If the same protocol has been already approved by your local ethical committee, this may facilitate the process of approval on our site. You can refer to it in the proposal stage.
 - Under Option 2, the protocol should be accepted by your local ethical committee, prior to the execution of the experiments.

The following regulations can help you in addressing the aforementioned issues:

- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (especially Article 3: right to the integrity of the person; and Article 8: protection of personal data).
- Regulation EU 536/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 on clinical trials on medicinal products for human use.
- Treaty on the European Union (TEU): Article 6.
- The "framework" Directive on occupational safety and health: Council Directive 1989/391.
- EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 9 "Any research involving human subjects will have to conform to current legislation and regulations in the countries where the activities will be carried out and will be conducted according to Good Clinical Practice guidelines and in agreement with the Declaration of Helsinki".

EUROBENCH collects personal information that will be subjected to computer processing in accordance with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council ("GDPR"). Your personal data are collected in order to become an applicant of the EUROBENCH FSTP-2 Open Call, considered under the project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 779963. Your personal data will be stored for no longer than the time required for the purpose for which it was collected and/or processed. Within the limits set forth the Personal Data Protection Regulation, especially articles 15 to 22 of the GDPR, after establishing your identity, you have the right to (1) access, (2) correct, (3) delete and/or (4) limit any or all your Personal Data. Where processing is based on your consent, you have the right to withdraw this consent at any time without affecting the lawfulness of processing based on consent before ist withdrawal.

If you wish to exercise this right and gain access to your Personal Data, please contact fstp@eurobench2020.eu

3 Submission of proposals

The second Open Call of the EUROBENCH project will follow a first-come first-served scheme, meaning that the proposals will be evaluated in chronological order of submission. The call will be open from **September 1st, 2020** to **November 30th, 2020 at 17h00 CET**, with **evaluation cut offs every 15 days**, or when the budget is totally distributed. In this case, the closure of the call will be announced through the platform and the website.

Being the call based on first-come first-served scheme, we strongly recommend participants to re-submit a proposal after making improvements in case of having received an unsuccessful evaluation.







Figure 1.1. The different steps an applicant should undergo from idea conception until sub-project selection and execution.

3.1 Open Call publication

A specific section of the EUROBENCH website (<u>http://eurobench2020.eu/ftsp-open-calls/fstp-2-validating-the-framework/</u>) will give applicants the full call details including:

A general description of the FSTP Call requirements

Any restrictions on participation in any part of each FSTP call. Especially regarding maximum contribution to each Third Party and sub-project

The amount of funding available for the FSTP call

This Guide for Applicants

The coordinates (email address) of a helpline that will be maintained for proposers during the call

A public FAQs section that will be regularly updated

Proposal technical templates and facsimiles

Link to the web platform to which proposals should be submitted

The deadlines for proposal submission, clearly specifying the local time involved (Central European Time -CET-)

3.2 Proposal submission

The submission of proposals will take place exclusively through the online platform linked in the EUROBENCH website <u>http://eurobench2020.eu/ftsp-open-calls/fstp-2-validating-the-framework/</u>. Please check manuals and facsimiles available on the website for details.

On receipt of each proposal the applicant will receive an electronic acknowledgment. Changes and additions will be allowed before the related cut-off deadline (one cut off every 15 days). In case of modifications and re-submission, the **latest update** will be considered as the official submission time and date for the chronological order of evaluation and selection of proposals.



Afterwards, if budget is still available, the eligibility check and evaluation process will begin (following the first-comefirst-served scheme). No changes or additions will be accepted.

When the budget will be exhausted, a public announcement will be made stating that the entire budget is temporarily allocated, pending the signing of the grant agreements. In this case, all the proposals will be put on hold until the closure of the call. If part of the budget is re-released, proposals in the queue will be resumed in order of arrival.

After the deadline (**November 30th, 2020 at 17h00 CET**), late submissions will not be accepted; late submitters shall receive a "call closed" message in response to their submission.

If there are applicants who submit more than one proposal asking for more than the budget limit per participant summing them all, the chronological order of submission will be taken into account. Thus, until the process of evaluation of the first submitted proposal has been completed, no decision will be made on evaluating the next one, since, if the first one is funded, the rest may not be eligible.

3.3 Helpline

For more information about the Open Call, please, check the FAQ section included in: http://eurobench2020.eu/ftsp-open-calls/fstp-2-validating-the-framework/

For further information on the call or if you have any doubts relating to the eligibility rules, technical specifications or the information to be provided in the Application Form, please contact the Helpdesk: <u>fstp@eurobench2020.eu</u>





4 Evaluation and selection of proposals

The evaluation and selection of proposals will be divided in three phases, performed by different committees, as described in Figure 4.1 and in the following sections.

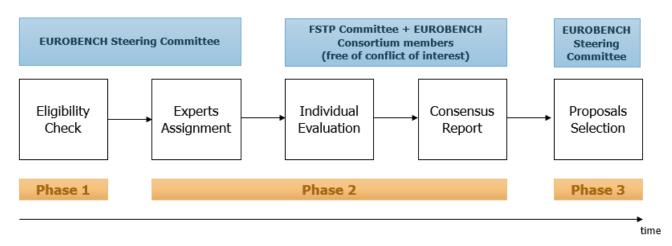


Figure 4.1. The different phases and subphases of the evaluation and selection of proposals

4.1 Phase 1: Eligibility Check

In order to determine if a submitted proposal is eligible, the EUROBENCH Steering Committee will perform the eligibility check according to the requirements defined in Section 1. If a proposal is eligible and there is still available budget (see point 4.2), it will go to Phase 2: Evaluation of proposals, as shown in Figure 4.1. If it is not, applicants will be notified of the proposal rejection.

4.2 Phase 2: Evaluation of proposals

The first proposals to be evaluated will be those pre-registered and submitted within the first 15 days from the opening of the call (from 1 September to 15 September). For them, the evaluation and funding priority will depend on the order of pre-registration. For the rest of the proposals, the evaluation and funding priority will depend on the order of submission (first-come-first-served scheme).

Every 15 days, proposals will be assigned to the evaluators, who will have 15 days as a maximum to evaluate them. After the evaluation of each batch, it will be determined how much budget is available. Once the budget is fully allocated, the evaluation process will be stopped and will only be resumed if part of the budget becomes available again.

The evaluation of each assigned proposal will be carried out by two experts acting as evaluators, one external (see Section 9.3 for details) and one internal expert, i.e. belonging to the EUROBENCH Consortium. The process will avoid any potential conflicts of interest. Furthermore, to ensure fairness and impartiality, the evaluators will be independent of the organisations involved in the proposals assigned to them.





Each expert will evaluate the proposals according to the following evaluation criteria (and associated weight):

- 1. Relevance of motivation, objectives and impact (<u>Weight: 25%, Threshold: 3/5</u>):
 - a. Is this proposal addressing a clear need?
 - b. Are concrete outcomes specified?
 - c. Is the impact on the sub-project partners/community/society specified?
 - d. (only under Option 1) Did applicants motivate the choice of the session modality (2 separate weeks or one 2-week session)?
 - e. Is it clearly specified why the EUROBENCH tools are needed to execute this project?
- 2. Compliance with the EUROBENCH tools and services (Weight: 25%, Threshold: 3/5):
 - a. Did the applicant choose a scenario/testbed included in the EUROBENCH framework?
 - b. Did the applicant choose a protocol included in the EUROBENCH framework? If not, is this choice motivated?
 - c. Did the applicant choose a performance indicator included in the EUROBENCH framework? If not, is this choice motivated?
 - d. (only under Option 2 or 3) Are the testbeds similar to those proposed by EUROBENCH? If not, is this choice motivated?
 - e. Is the system object of testing sufficiently described?
- 3. Feasibility of implementation (<u>Weight: 25%, Threshold: 3/5</u>):
 - a. Are testbeds/protocols/algorithms clearly selected or, if original, described in sufficient detail?
 - b. Were at least 5 scenarios selected? Were they listed in order of importance?
 - c. Are the deliverables in agreement with the contents and timeline established by EUROBENCH?
 - d. (only under Option 1) Can the proposed experiments in the selected scenarios be realistically tested in 2 weeks?
 - e. Are the different expenses well described and motivated? Are they in agreement with the eligible costs?
 - f. Does the team have sufficient technical background/equipment/capability to execute the activities proposed?
 - g. Are the resources well assigned with respect to the proposed experiment and/or data processing proposed?
 - h. Is the technical work plan realistic?
 - i. (only under Option 1 and 2) Are the robots/control algorithms at sufficient TRL to undergo the testing protocols? Is there any evidence provided?
- 4. Exploitation and sustainability of results (<u>Weight: 25%, Threshold: 3/5</u>):
 - a. Is the level of confidentiality regarding data sharing clearly stated? If confidentiality is required, is a strong and convincing motivation provided?
 - b. Is there high confidence that the data produced can be usable by others after the sub-project ending?
 - c. Are ethical/legal aspects related to the execution of the experiment, treatment and sharing of data, other GDPR-related issues, sufficiently addressed?
 - d. Is there evidence of realistic measures to ensure 'freedom to operate' (i.e., authorization to use the robotic device for making the stated experiments, authorization to upload the data in the EUROBENCH Database) reported?

Evaluation scores of up to 5 points (5 marks representing the highest quality) are awarded for each criterion:





- **O Fail:** The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information;
- **1** Poor: The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses;
- **2 Fair:** While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses;
- 3 Good: The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary;
- 4 Very good: The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible;
- **5 Excellent:** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

An <u>overall score</u> will be assigned to each proposal, according to the following equation:

Overall Score = 0,25* (S1+S2+S3+S4)*3

where:

 $S_{i}\xspace$ is the evaluation score for the i-th Criterion.

The maximum overall score will be 15 points. To ensure a good level of quality in the proposals, a global threshold of 10 and a criterion-specific threshold of 3 will be applied. Proposals below any of these thresholds will not be eligible for funding, independently from the number of submitted proposals.

Each expert will record his/her individual opinion of each proposal on the evaluation form. The (typically) two experts involved in the evaluation of a given proposal will then meet or communicate together to prepare a single **consensus form** for each proposal, representing opinions and scores on which both agree and which both will sign. If the individual reviews are heavily disagreeing, a third expert can be assigned to the proposal. The consensus report will be released to the Steering Committee (SC), which will be responsible for making a final decision among the following three options:

- **Rejected**: global OR criterion-specific score under the established thresholds.
- Accepted conditionally: minor or major modifications will be requested (priority will only be maintained if changes are made within a maximum of 2 weeks). Independently from the results of the experts' evaluation, the Steering Committee can ask for additional changes, e.g. removing a scenario that was already considered in several proposals previously funded.
- Accepted.

There is no "re-submission". If a proposal does not reach the threshold, applicants may submit another proposal if the budget is still available. However, this proposal will be treated as a new one.

4.3 Phase 3: Selection of proposals

The final review and decision on funding a proposal will be made by the Steering Committee (SC) of EUROBENCH based on the evaluations performed during the previous phase (see Figure 4.1).

The decision on each proposal will be made in strict order of submission (**first-come-first-served basis**), independently from the duration of the evaluation. Each time a proposal is selected for funding, its Grant Agreement signature process begins. Furthermore, the budget availability should be checked to determine whether to continue with the evaluation process or not.





When there is less budget available than that requested by a selected proposal which would be the next to be funded, the applicant(s) will be informed of the maximum possible contribution and will determine whether to accept or reject it. If it is rejected, the same action will be repeated with other proposals until the funds are allocated.

As soon as the available budget is allocated, the selection process will be stopped. If any of the selected proposals cannot finalize the signing of the Grant Agreement, the evaluation and selection processes will be resumed since there will be available budget again.

If after the evaluation of all the proposals submitted before the deadline, there is still available budget, there will be the possibility of reopening the call for the selection of new proposals, always respecting their order of arrival and the previous publication of the reopening.

Please consider that, under Option 1, the exact timing of the test's weeks may be shifted due the availability of facility (to avoid overlaps between sub-projects). The exact dates will be agreed with the Third party during the grant agreement preparation.



5 Communication with proposers

The applicants will receive the communication of being funded or not and the anonymous evaluation summary report as soon as the decision is made. Specific communication will be sent to the applicants eliminated from the process after the eligibility check. An individual communication will be sent to all participants passing the eligibility check. After the selection of a proposal, the Consortium will get into contact with the successful proposer(s) to prepare the conclusion of third-party agreements. As mentioned, the Consortium will also communicate to the other proposers that their proposal was not successful and, in this case, it is recommended for them to use the evaluation report to detect the weaknesses of the proposal, improve them and submit a new version if the call remains open. The sub-project coordinator should communicate (using the address <u>fstp@eurobench2020.eu</u>) about any change of persons or contact details to the EUROBENCH Consortium.

5.1 Appeal procedure

If, at any stage of the whole process, an applicant considers that a mistake has been made or that the evaluators have acted unfairly or have failed to comply with the rules of EUROBENCH FSTP-2 Open Call, and that her/his interests have been prejudiced as a result, an appeal procedure is available.

Rules of the appeal procedure:

• The complaint should be drawn up in English and sent to: <u>fstp@eurobench2020.eu</u> specifying **"APPEAL"** in capital letters as the only content of the subject of the email. The appellant should copy and fill in this template in the email content:

Appellant's name	
Postal address	
Institution	
Proposal acronym	
Subject of the complaint	
Information and evidence regarding the alleged breach	
What is requested to be done	



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 779963



- Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.
- Complaints should be made within **3 working days** of the appellant becoming aware of the grounds for a complaint.
- The EUROBENCH team has **3 working days** to request more information if necessary.
- The appellant has **3 working days** to provide the required documentation if applicable.
- The EUROBENCH team has **10 working days** from the reception of the complaint or from the reception of the new information if it has been required, to inform the appellant of the outcome of its investigation into the complaint and the decision made thereon.

5.2 Data Protection

This relationship of Financial Support to Third Parties constitutes a treatment of personal data on request, being the applicants responsible for the treatment in accordance with Regulation (UE) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 27 April 2016, Concerning the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and the free movement of these data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), hereinafter GDPR, and other applicable regulations on Protection of personal data.

5.2.1 Instructions from the person responsible (applicants)

Taking into account the nature and scope of the call, the personal data will be treated by the EUROBENCH Consortium only in accordance with the instructions of the person responsible (applicants) and used only for the fulfilment of the object of the call.

5.2.2 Duty of confidentiality

The EUROBENCH Consortium guarantees that the persons authorized to treat personal data and data generated in the experiments have been committed, in an expressed way, to respect confidentiality and maintain the duty of secrecy, even after the end of its object. The fulfilment of this obligation is documented and available to the person in charge.

No data shall be communicated to third parties not included in these Guidelines unless it is expressly authorized by the person responsible or by legal imperative.

5.2.3 Security measures

The EUROBENCH Consortium has adopted measures and implemented mechanisms for:

- Guarantee the confidentiality, integrity, availability and permanent resilience of treatment systems and services.
- Restore availability and access to personal data and data generated in the experiments as soon as possible in the event of a physical or technical incident, except for the causes of force majeure.
- Verify, evaluate and assess, on a regular basis, the effectiveness of the technical and organizational measures implemented to guarantee the safety of the treatment.
- Pseudonymize and encrypt personal data and data generated in the experiments, if applicable.

5.2.4 Collaboration with the person in charge to demonstrate compliance

The EUROBENCH Consortium will collaborate and make available to the responsible person(s) all the necessary information to demonstrate the fulfilment of its obligations in matter of personal data protection.





6 Grant Agreement

The standard contract will notably regulate: (i) the conditions of transfer and usage of the cascade funding, (ii) the IPR rules, and (iii) any other collaboration mechanisms.

The Grant Agreement (G.A.) will define the funded proposals to be developed as **sub-projects.**

The contract (G.A.) will be signed by each partner of the Consortium implementing the sub-project.

6.1 Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

The standard contract, or Grant Agreement as defined in Section 6, will have to protect the intellectual property of third parties and beneficiaries involved.

The standard contract will also protect the background of both beneficiaries and third parties.

Provisions regarding Access Rights will be set forth in accordance with the provisions of the EUROBENCH Consortium Agreement.

6.1.1 Originality of the sub-project

The applicants base their proposals on original works and going forward any foreseen developments are free from third party rights, or they are clearly stated. The EUROBENCH Consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the future products and services and any issues arising from third party claims regarding ownership are the sole responsible of the sub-granted parties.

6.1.2 Access Rights for implementation

Access Rights to Results and Background Needed for the performance of the own work of a Party under the Project shall be granted on a royalty-free basis, unless otherwise agreed for Background in the Consortium Agreement.





7 Sub-projects execution and payments

EUROBENCH will provide sub-granted Third Parties with financial support under a lump sum scheme contributing up to 100% of each sub-project costs. All payments will be made in euro.

Payments along the sub-project duration will be transferred to the sub-project Coordinator. Payments to the coordinator will discharge the EUROBENCH Consortium from its payment obligation. The coordinator must distribute the payments between the beneficiaries (partners of the sub-project) without unjustified delay.

The sub-projects execution will start after the pre-financing payment and then, after the evaluation of the technical reporting, beneficiaries will receive a second one. The last payment will be made when the EUROBENCH Project finishes (Figure 7.1).

The expected starting date of the project's execution is April 1, 2021. The projects must be executed within the nine months period established, what means that all the projects must have finished before December 31, 2021. Starting and ending date may vary depending on delay due to 1) delayed signature of the Grant Agreement between the sub-project Consortium and the EUROBENCH Consortium, 2) facility loads, and 2) delays due to Covid-19. In the two following months after the ending of each project, the technical report must be presented, having another month for the technical assessment / evaluation



Figure 7.1. The different phases of the sub-project execution

7.1 Phase 0 - Pre-financing

Third parties will receive a pre-financing of 70% of their respective total funding amount after the signature of the Grant Agreement.





7.2 Phase 1 - Validation

After the signature of the Grant Agreement, the Validation phase will start as soon as the required facility is available, as there may be other applicants using it or queuing. The maximum duration of the Validation phase will be 2 months in which there may be periods in which the facility is not being used because the participants are making improvements to have other iterations later. At the end of this phase, the Coordinator of each sub-project will have 1 month to submit a Technical Report, which should include:

- A description of the activities carried out by the beneficiaries.
- A detailed technical description of the obtained results.
- A description of the degree of achievement of the sub-project objectives and any deviation from them.

Specific templates for technical reporting will be prepared and published by the EUROBENCH Consortium. The EUROBENCH Consortium will assess the Technical Report in a period of 1 month. If the evaluation succeeds, the Validation Phase will be considered completed and Third Parties will be made eligible for receiving the remaining payment (30%) of the EUROBENCH fund. However, due to project funds retained by EC, Third Parties will only receive a 15% (reaching the 85% of the requested contribution). The final 15% of the sub-project funding will be released only after the EC transfers the final funding to the EUROBENCH consortium in 2022.

During the sub-project execution, the partners of the EUROBENCH Consortium will perform consulting/guidance activities to Third Parties, including technical support for the validation of prototypes, the analysis of the results, and for design/improvement suggestions.





8 Responsibilities of Consortia members

8.1 Conflict of interest

Third Parties must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the sub-project is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests'). They must formally notify to the EUROBENCH Consortium, without delay, any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The EUROBENCH Consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline. If the Third-Party breaches any of its obligations, the sub-contract, Grant Agreement with the Third Party, may be automatically terminated.

8.2 Assessment of the sub-project

If the technical report delivered for its assessment reflects that the project tasks have not been (either totally or partially) developed, the technical report will be re-evaluated together with the applicant. If this last review fails, the validation phase will be considered unsuccessful and the second round of payment will not take place and could take the form of recovery.

8.3 Confidentiality

During the implementation of the sub-project and during four years after its termination, both the Third Parties and the EUROBENCH Consortium must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at sub-contract signing time ('confidential information'). Under Third Party request, the Commission and the EUROBENCH Consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial four years. This will be explicitly stated in the Grant Agreement. If information has been identified as confidential during the sub-project execution or only orally, it will be considered to be confidential only if this is accepted by the EUROBENCH Consortium and confirmed in writing within 15 days of the oral disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the Agreement (to execute the sub-project). The sub-project Consortium may disclose confidential information to the EUROBENCH consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

8.4 Financial Audits and controls - EU Commission Access

The beneficiaries will ensure that the Commission, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) have the right to exercise their powers of control on documents, information, even stored on electronic media, or on the final recipient's premises according to the <u>General Annex K</u> of the Horizon 2020 Work Programme. The beneficiaries must also ensure that the Commission has the right to make an evaluation of the impact of the action measured against the objective of the work program.





8.5 Visibility of the EU Funding and the EUROBENCH Project

Communication or publication of the Beneficiaries shall clearly indicate that the sub-project has received funding from the European Union and the EUROBENCH Project, therefore displaying the EU and EUROBENCH logo on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases. Moreover, Beneficiaries should agree that the non-confidential information regarding the sub-projects selected for funding, such as title, abstract and partners of the consortium, can be used by EUROBENCH for communication purposes.





9 EUROBENCH Boards and Committees

9.1 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the governing body of EUROBENCH and chaired by the Project Coordinator. It will decide on modifications of the work plan and budget distribution. It will oversee innovation, communication and dissemination procedures. As to the FSTP programme, the SC will:

- Appoint the FSTP Committee,
- Perform the final review and selection of FSTP proposals based on the evaluations performed by the experts and avoiding conflicts of interest
- Prepare the final list of funded and not-funded proposals once the FSTP-2 Call is definitively closed.

If concerns or conflicts arise, the SC will be the body to deal with it and make a decision. In the unlikely case that a scientific, industrial, or ethical concern or issue should fail to be resolved within an institution or WP, it will be brought to the Project Coordinator who will in turn present it to the SC for discussion and decision making and if necessary to the General Assembly (all partners) for the final decision.

9.2 Scientific Advisory Board

The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) is an independent group composed by senior experts chaired by the Project Coordinator. The SAB will be instrumental in dissemination and exploitation of project results as well as quality of deliverables and overall project status.

The SAB will also support the EUROBENCH Consortium in disseminating the project results and the FSTP actions. With respect to the FSTP actions, the SAB members will help the Steering Committee in evaluating the proposals. Due to conflict of interest issues, SAB members cannot participate personally in the open calls.

9.3 FSTP Committee

A FSTP Committee will be appointed by the EUROBENCH Steering Committee advised by the Scientific Advisory Board. A pool of experts will be selected according to specific requirements previously defined in the D7.1 FSTP Procedures Manual of the EUROBENCH project and having already established contact with the FSTP-1 call experts. The evaluation experts will be individuals from the fields of science, industry and/or with experience in the field of innovation and also with the highest level of knowledge, and who are recognized authorities in the relevant technology areas.





10 Checklist

Please ensure that all questions below are addressed positively by your proposal. Proposals that do not comply with one or more items will be rejected.

- 1) **Does your proposal address the objective of the FSTP-2 Call?** Ensure that your proposal is addressing the goals established in one of the three Options available (see Section 2). One proposal cannot cover more than one option.
- 2) **Is your consortium eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in Section 1.3.2. In particular, make sure that all partners that are requesting funding belong to eligible countries.
- 3) **Are you in the budgetary limits?** Check that you comply with all budgetary limits as expressed in Section 1.3.3. In particular, if you are participating in more than one proposal, check that the total sum of amounts requested by your legal institution is lower than 100k€.
- 4) **Is the required budget realistic?** Check that your budget is well justified (the more detailed the better) according to the complexity and number of the outcomes proposed.
- 5) **Is your proposal complete?** Your proposal will be scored according to the Evaluation Criteria included in Section 4.2. Please address them comprehensively.
- 6) Is your proposal compliant? Please make sure that your proposal meets page and font size limits, as well as addresses all mandatory sections, as specified in the proposal template available on the website (<u>http://eurobench2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/FSTP-2-Proposaltemplate V2.docx</u>).
- 7) Have you submitted your proposal timely and in the right way? Be sure you have received the message of confirmation when submitting the proposal.

