

ECIU University Strategic European Projects Office (SEPO) platform

Annex to D7.3.3

SEPO Handbook

V1.0 15th of February 2022

1 Introduction

This handbook should be used as a consultation manual for the operational aspects of planning, executing and evaluating the processes and tools of the SEPO platform. In separating the contextual information and strategy from the handbook, we hope to create a more accessible and easier to use manual. The manual will be updated by the joint meeting of the ECIU Expert Groups on R&I and Education, independently of the cooperation strategy.

2 Strategic European Projects Office

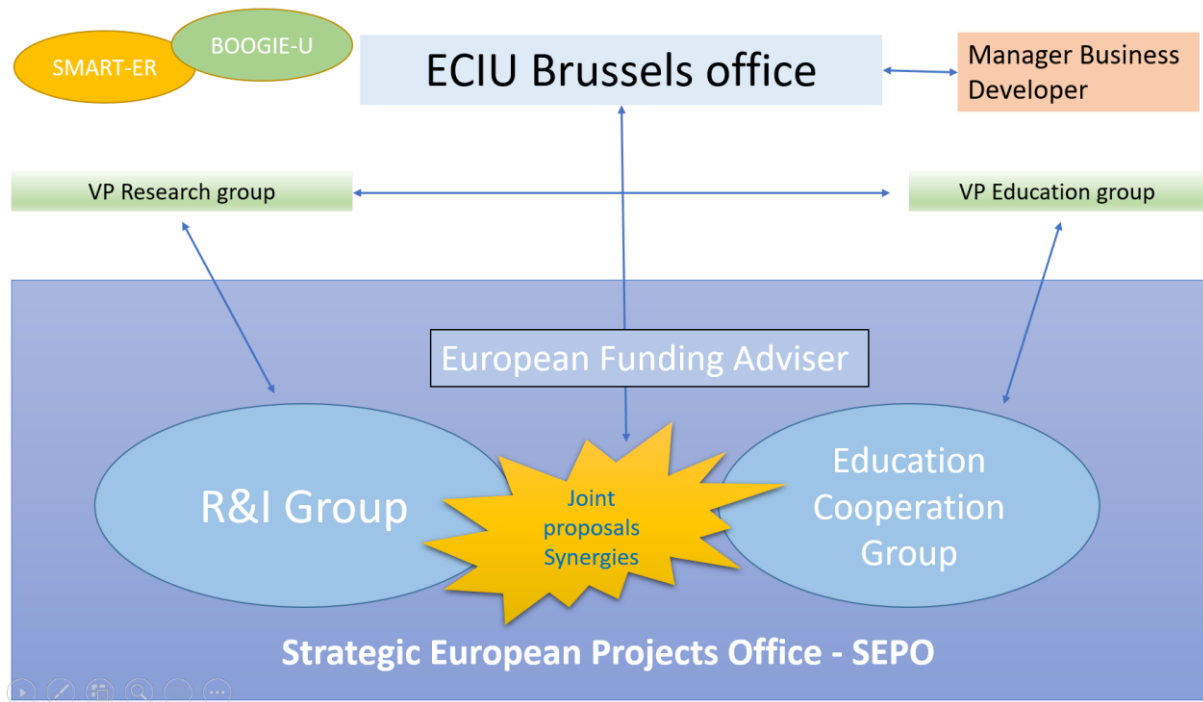
2.1 The SEPO: organization and processes

The background for and decisions leading up to the establishment of SEPO as a platform is described in the main document of D7.3.2: Strategy for cooperation projects. The following text focuses on the organization and definitions of SEPO, working process for call scouting and analysis, and criteria for categorization of project proposals.

The aim of the SEPO platform is to provide:

- A **single platform** to pool expertise for all external grants relating to ECIU University alliance priorities and needs for the Vision 2030
- A **service to member institutions** to scout for calls, provide strategic support decisions for project development and lead initiatives for project proposals
- A **competence centre** for training, capacity building and project management communities
- A **lobbying mechanism** towards the EU and national level regarding funding and financial investments in close cooperation with the ECIU Brussels office

Figure 1: The SEPO structure outlined



The above outline shows the interaction and dependencies between the SEPO actors with regards to how strategic project development can be organized.

2.2 Definitions

Expert groups are ECIU groups comprised by institutional members with experience in externally funded project development and management, working to identify and promote calls relevant for the Vision 2030 and support project development led by ECIU University member institutions.

Strategic projects in ECIU University are understood as projects developed by a consortium of predominantly ECIU University member institutions using external funding to support actions that contribute towards achieving the goals of the ECIU University vision 2030.

Bodies of the SEPO platform:

- **Research & Innovation (R&I) Group and the Educational Cooperation Policy and Programmes (Edu) Group.** Their interaction through joint meetings and training events will facilitate synergies between programmes and actions, and their focus is on building trust and communities through training activities and meetings for sharing experiences and knowledge
- The **European Funding Adviser** is integrated in the SEPO platform, acts as SEPO leader and coordinates work between the expert groups. The adviser is located at one of the ECIU member institutions and will lead main scouting efforts, analysis and proposals to ECIU University management
- **SEPO core team** consists of the European funding adviser, the head of the ECIU Brussels office and the two chairs of the ECIU expert groups

Bodies outside the SEPO platform:

- The **Manager Business Developer** is outside the SEPO platform, working with stakeholders, networks and organizations and is based in the ECIU Brussels office

- The **Vice-President Research & Innovation group (VPR)** and **Vice-President Education group (VPE)** set the strategy for prioritizing between calls for proposals and connect funding opportunities to the overall vision of the ECIU University
- The **ECIU Brussels office** links the operations of the working groups and the VP groups with the Brussels networks and the European Commission through lobbying and information sharing efforts

Note on the use of ECIU and ECIU University:

ECIU is a university network established in 1997 as a foundation under Dutch law. It currently has 14 members, 13 European higher education institutions and one in Mexico. ECIU as a network collaborates on all aspects of higher education with a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship in education, joint research cooperation and regional innovation partnerships.

ECIU University is a European University alliance established in 2019 that has currently 13 European higher education institutions. It is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme EUI action, together with the Horizon2020 Swafs action (SMART-ER project) and EIT (BOOGIE-U project). The name ECIU University is also the name of the current pilot project co-funded by the EUI-action.

2.3 Expert groups

The ECIU Expert Groups serve as pools of expertise for the SEPO platform, which is coordinated by the European Funding Adviser. Each institution nominates one representative per expert group, but more than one person from each institution can take part in the operational work of the expert groups. Group members can be appointed to more than one expert group at the same time.

Overview of institutional members (updated 28th of January 2022):

University	Educational Cooperation (Edu)	Research & Innovation (R&I)
Aalborg (AAU)	Nils Peter Terp Uhre	Anne Drivsholm Sand
Aveiro (UA)	Niall Power	Luisa Fernandes
Barcelona (UAB)	Xavier Biarnes	Nuria Claver
Dublin (DCU)	Sophie Ball	Sophie Ball
Hamburg (TUHH)	Nicole Frei	Monica Schofield
INSA Toulouse	Laure Fabre / Mohamed Djemai	Laure Fabre / Sebastien Leveneur
Kaunas (KTU)	Vilma Karobliene	Vilma Karobliene
Linköping (LiU)	tbc	Svjetlana Stekovic
Lodz (LUT)	Dorota Piotrowska	Agnieszka Tiele
Tec de Monterrey	tbc	Antoinio Pita
Stavanger (UiS)	Trym Holbek (chair) / Olga Fagerland	Kyrre Ås
Tampere (TAU)	Kirsi Hasanen	Jörg Langwaldt (chair)
Trento (UNITN)	Viviana Caldara	Barbara Zamboni
Twente (UT)	Koen De Pryck	Telma Rodrigues/Andrea Guarise

Brussels Office	Olga Wessels	Olga Wessels
SEPO	Laura Paternoster (European Funding Adviser)	
Chair as guest	Jörg Langwaldt	Trym Holbek

2.4 Criteria for proposal alignment with ECIU University

This chapter discusses how ECIU University manages information and support systems sparked by project proposals that come from communities within the network members. ECIU member institutions plan and execute a large number of projects every year.¹ Some of these will not be considered under the SEPO platform as they do not align with ECIU University 2030 Vision document. In order to manage expectations for involvement and support, it is necessary to categorize project proposals according to alignment with the ECIU as a network and ECIU University as a European University alliance. Please note the use of *ECIU* and *ECIU University* as defined in chapter 2.2.

Table 1: Criteria for determining SEPO involvement

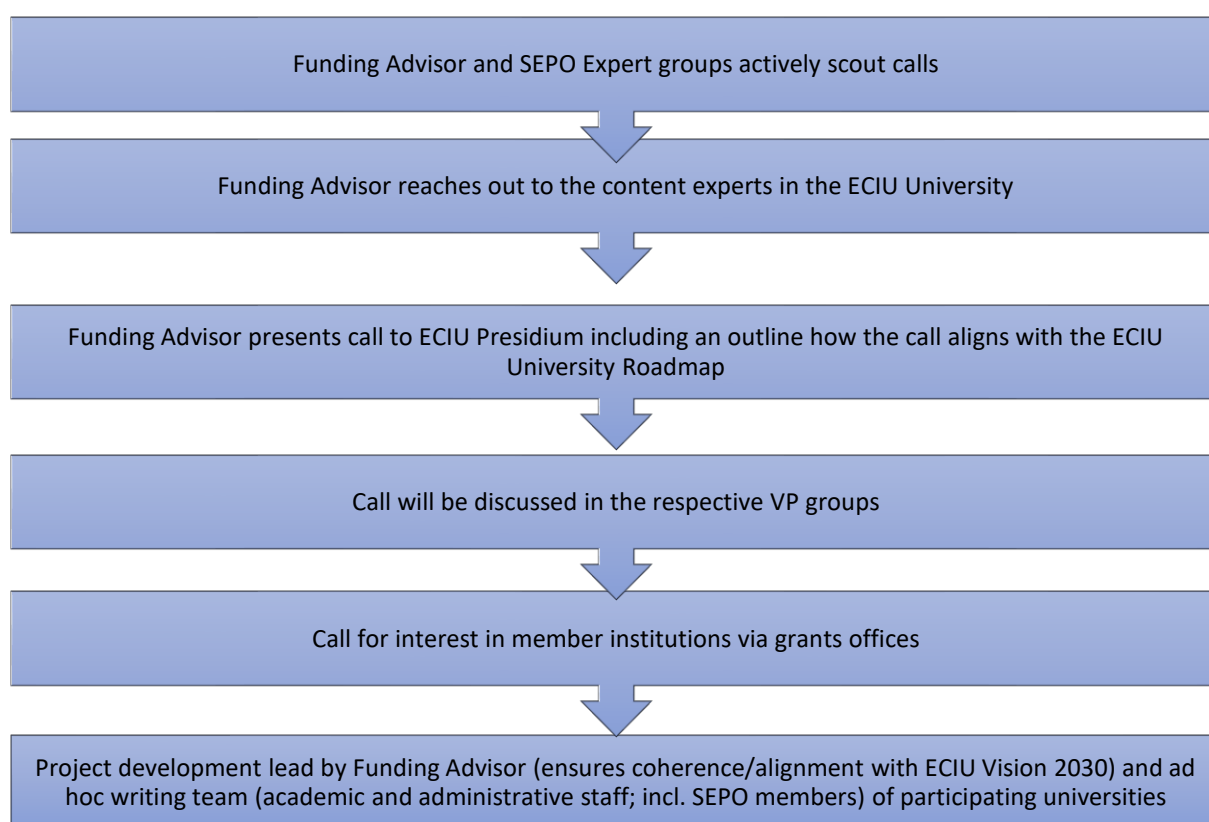
Proposal type no.	Proposal type description	Analysis	Follow-up
1	Bottom-up initiatives of academic staff “making use” of the ECIU as a framework and using it to proof the sustainable, long-term collaboration of the project partners	No resources included / No links to ECIU University	We encourage collaboration of ECIU partners and support if requested by a letter of support
2	Project applications for calls (going via the grants officers (organized in the R&I / Edu groups and the VPs) that are using ECIU as a framework and support the research agenda	No resources / commitment from ECIU or links to the content of ECIU University	We encourage collaboration of ECIU partners and support if requested by a letter of support
3	Project applications in line with the objectives of ECIU University	Request for the ECIU infrastructure/resources (incl. Funding Adviser) and commitment of ECIU University project partners	Follow-up via SEPO working process 2
4	External request for ECIU to join as a legal entity	ECIU to serve as partner as legal entity	Follow-up via SEPO working process 2

¹ ECIU University 7.3.1 Report on cooperation projects

2.5 Working process 1: Scouting calls and strategic proposal development

External funding is generally offered for consortia composed carefully in line with award criteria. Even though the initial Erasmus+ pilot project consortium for ECIU University comprises all of the original European² member institutions, consortia are then generally carefully composed according to award criteria of the single call for proposal/topic, with complementary roles and expertise. It is generally expected that all forthcoming opportunities for external funding are offered for a *selection* of the ECIU University member institutions, and not automatically applicable for a consortium of “the whole family”. Consequently, the working process reflects that the quality of the composition of the consortium will be dependent mainly on award criteria, and not primarily on partner inclusion of all alliance members.

Figure 2: Working process 1: scouting calls and proposal development



As a rule, member institutions will take the role of coordinator and partners in a consortium. However, following a decision to develop a project proposal, finding a lead can be both demanding and time consuming. As such, the SEPO can assume the role of lead for the purpose of kicking off a writing process for the proposal. It is expected that one member institution will assume the role of lead partner well before the deadline. Academic leadership of project development is necessary in the project types included in this working process. However, asking senior researchers to coordinate proposal preparation can be demanding, and made more attractive through allowing it to be handled in partnership by professional support staff. SEPO can provide this initial coordination task until the proposal gains momentum.

² Erasmus+ programme countries

2.6 Working process 2: Supporting proposals for ECIU University alignment

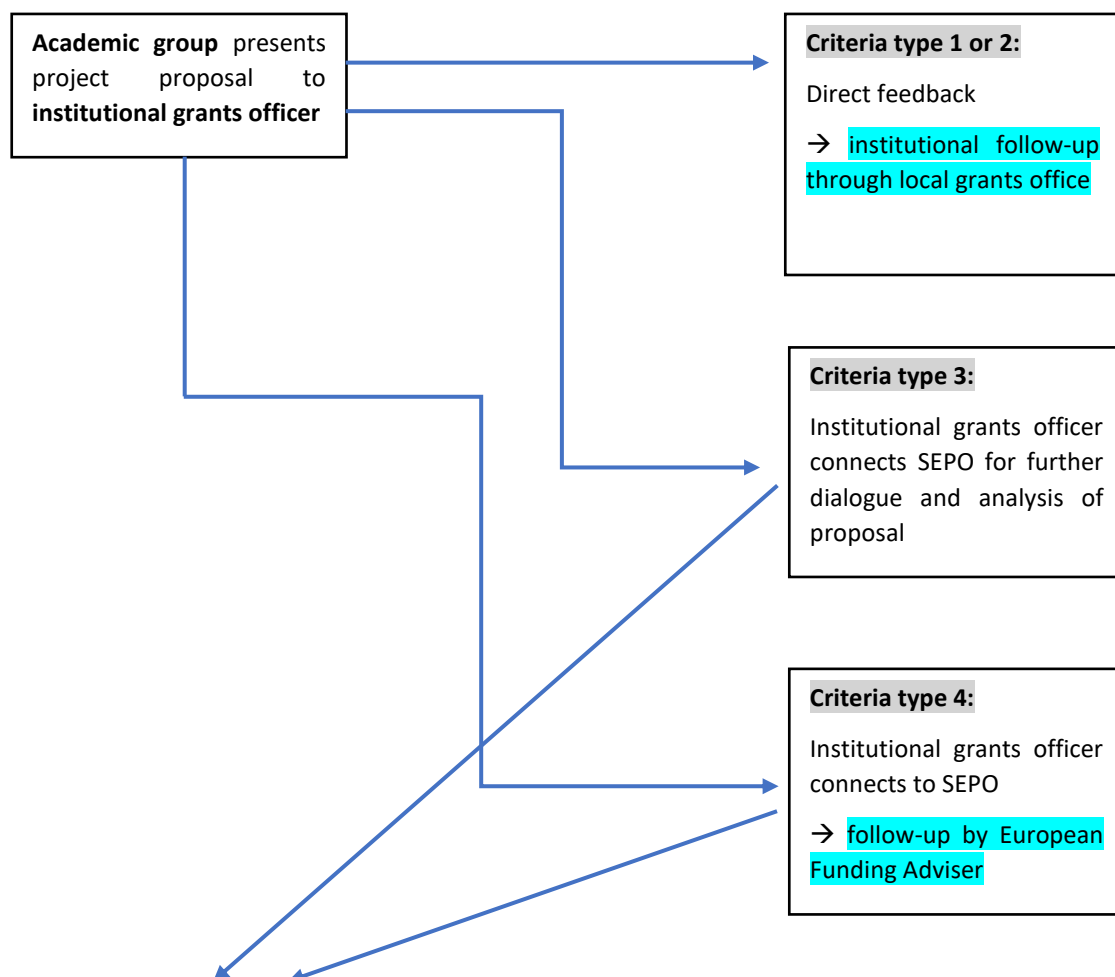
In all cases where academic communities start developing proposals that may have an alignment with the ECIU University vision, we need a working process that efficiently can identify, analyse, and conclude on necessary steps.

Principles for response to proposal initiatives by academic groups:

- Institutional grants officers are always the first responders to initiatives for external funding. These officers may be representatives in the SEPO platform or other members of the project development support teams at our member universities

These steps include an overview of the timeline and roles involved:

Figure 3: Working process 2: supporting proposals for strategic alignment



For **criteria type 3 and 4**, a **core group will be formed** to kick-off the dialogue between SEPO and the academic group of the institution(s). This core group will comprise the project director, the head of the Brussels office, the European Funding Adviser and the two chairs of the expert groups.

3 Other programmes

The current organization of the SEPO platform focuses on the two main external funding programmes in the EU directed towards higher education institution and society – Horizon Europe for R&I and Erasmus+ for educational cooperation. New programmes will emerge such as Digital Europe, and further into the start-up phase of the ECIU University our attention will be expanded to other sources of external funding.

4 Revision of the handbook

This handbook shall be revised in Q2 of 2022 and be republished following the joint annual meeting of the expert groups on the 30th of May 2022. Future revisions will take place annually, the cycle to be decided by the joint annual meeting.