



**GOVERNING BOARD OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH EDCTPP3 JOINT UNDERTAKING
Decision N°GB 08/2023**

approving the Back Office Arrangement - human resources support

THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH EDCTP3 JOINT UNDERTAKING, (hereafter referred as “GH EDCTP3 JU”)

Having regard to Council Regulation (EU) No 2021/2085 of 19 November 2021 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe and repealing Regulations (EC) No 219/2007, (EU) No 557/2014, (EU) No 558/2014, (EU) No 559/2014, (EU) No 560/2014, (EU) No 561/2014 and (EU) No 642/2014ⁱ, and in particular Article 13 thereof;

Whereas:

- (1) According to Article 13(1) of Council Regulation (EU) No 2021/2085, in order to gain synergies and efficiencies, joint undertakings established by this Regulation should operate back office arrangements (hereafter “BOAs) in several areas listed in this article,
- (2) Those BOAs should be operated by the joint undertakings established under Council Regulation (EU) No 2021/2085, within one year following the date of entry into force of this Regulation,
- (3) The establishment of those BOAs should take the form of service level agreements, subject to the need to guarantee an equivalent level of protection of the Union’s financial interest when entrusting budgetary implementation tasks to joint undertakings,
- (4) Following the formal proposal for BOA for human resources support sent by the Circular Bio-based Europe and Innovative Health Initiative joint undertakings, represented by

their executive directors *ad interim*, to all the Executive Directors of the Horizon Europe Joint Undertakings, the GH EDCTP3 JU expressed an interest in joining this BOA,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The Back Office Arrangement for human resources support proposed by the Circular Bio-based Europe and Innovative Health Initiative joint undertakings is hereby approved.

Article 2

This decision shall enter into force on the day of its adoption.

Done at Brussels, on 30 May 2023

For the Governing Board



Hering Gädeke

The Chairperson

ⁱ OJ L 427, 30.11.2021, p. 17–119

Background note: Back-office arrangement for HR support

Introduction

The Single Basic Act of the Joint Undertakings¹ establishes that the JUs shall achieve synergies via the establishment of a back-office arrangements, operating in some identified areas. The SBA also underlines that these synergies should be implemented where screening of resources has proved to be efficient and cost effective, while respecting the autonomy and the responsibility of each Authorising officer.

The SBA art. 13 identifies Human Resources Support among the areas where common back-office arrangements can be set up. The HR domain is a sensitive area for all Joint undertaking, where confidentiality is a key building block of effective HR policies and for staff management, taking into account the strategic objectives to be achieved. It is therefore welcome that the legislator focuses on the support area of HR where synergies can be achieved without impacting HR policies that must remain under the remit of the JU and ultimately under the responsibility of each appointing authority.

In order to obtain an independent view on the possible synergies among the JUs and the impact in terms of efficiencies, the JUs contracted an external consultant to perform a study on the Common back-office arrangements. The study was finalised in July 2022 and provided several areas where synergies can be achieved, together with conclusions on what possible “model” should be used to achieve the most cost-effective/efficient results.

For what concerns the HR domain, the study recommended to explore synergies by coordinating the management of SYSPER, possibly joining the future HR digitalisation project of the European Commission, perform joint recruitments, harmonise job profiles and procedures. These synergies will allow to obtain a better harmonisation among the JUs, exploiting best practices, achieving efficiency gains and economy of scale. Following the screening of HR resources in each JU, the study also points out no more than marginal FTE gains would be achieved in this area due to the very limited HR dotation of the JUs.

Participants Joint undertakings

The Joint undertakings that are under the Single Basic Act² will contribute to the Back Office Arrangements for HR Support. Euro HPC and SESAR – that despite being part of the SBA, is exempted

¹ Article 13, Council Regulation (EU) No 2021/2085, of 19 November 2021

² Circular Biobased Europe, Clean Aviation, Clean Hydrogen, Europe's Rail, EDCTP3 Global Health, Smart Networks and services, Key Digital Technologies (and in the future Chips JU), Innovative Health Initiative; SESAR JU despite being part of the SBA, is exempted by the provisions related to the Back-office arrangements

by the provisions related to the Back-office arrangements - are willing to participate on specific initiatives in line with their internal priorities and according to their own specificities.

The following table highlights the HR dotation of the JUs. Considering that part of tasks related to human resources management are very important and must remain under the responsibility of each appointing authority (Executive Directors), only a part-time contribution to the work of the Common Back Office is possible and no FTE savings are envisaged.

Joint Undertakings	Staff dotation (HR and HR support)
CBE (lead JU)	1
IHI (backup JU)	1.3
CH	0.8
CAJU	1
EURail	0.8
KDT-CHIPS	1
SNS	0.5
EDCTP3	1.5
EuroHPC	2
SESAR	2

Scope of the Back-Office arrangement HR support

In the abovementioned context, it is proposed that the Executive Directors of the JUs give mandate to the BOA HR to implement actions in three main areas of HR support:

- **Recruitment**
 - Alignment and harmonisation of our recruitment processes: while the JUs share the same legal framework on recruitment, the actual recruitment practices and templates may differ. The JUs will valorise the best practices by establishing a common recruitment procedure that shall then be applied across the board when launching a recruitment. This will include for example common scoring guides, templates, platforms and tools that will provide a consolidated ground for individual and common recruitments. This aspect is particularly interesting for those JUs having few resources devoted to HR and for newly established JUs.

- Organisation of joint selection procedures for same grade: this practice is already in place and need to be deployed to a larger extent in order to achieve efficiency gains. It is important though that the JUs identify a list of job profiles that would be recruited under the same grade and in line with the existing staff establishment plans. Typically, some horizontal profiles will be the easy targets to be reached with joint recruitments (financial officers, administrative officers, legal officer/assistant) while in other more specific areas the JUs will continue to run specific recruitment panels (project officers for example) due to the specificity of the JUs operations.
- Sharing of reserve lists/profile library: an additional synergy that can be achieved is the sharing of existing reserve lists and a harmonisation of job profiles. This would allow time saving and quicker recruitments.

- **2. HR Legal framework**

Given the fact that the JUs share a common legal framework in the HR domain, additional synergies can be achieved by enhancing the existing collaboration in this area:

- Shared network of CCs: the JUs already share a network of confidential counsellors and joint call for expression of interest are launched to expand the network, together with trainings, information campaigns and joint actions to ensure wellbeing of staff and prevention of harassment and conflicts. This initiative – coordinated by CBE JU – will be extended to a larger number of JUs and to new JUs.
- Ensure JUs' representation in EUAN meetings and liaise with DG HR/PMO about common HR matters: the JUs will be represented at the EUAN HR network by the lead JU (and the backups) providing feedback and stronger representation in the HR related working groups.
- Establish a common HR strategy in well identified areas where the JUs have strong interest in speaking with one voice towards staff and towards other EU institutions, for example: learning and development, staff motivation and mobility, new ways of working, employee health and wellbeing, work life balance, recruitment and selections.
- Other initiatives can be developed within the European Agencies Network, for example building on the good experience on the common disciplinary boards. The JUs could enhance their collaboration and find further synergies among their Staff Committee and ensure adequate staff representation even where there is no staff willing to stand for office in the given JU.

- **3. HR digitalisation**

Human resources management is moving more and more towards a digitalisation of HR processes and procedures. Given also the scarce dotation of HR staff among the JUs, it is fundamental to deploy the right IT tools in order to achieve harmonisation and efficiency.

Currently the JUs have quite different IT landscape in the HR area. Most of the JUs have SYSPER, although different modules are deployed, some of them use SYSTAL (e-recruitment tool), some have ARES, other use different IT tools. Such a scattered IT landscape make difficult to achieve synergies in the HR area and action should be taken to harmonise as much as possible.

In the same context it is fundamental that the JUs are included in the implementation of the new HR management tool the EC is developing over the next years. Another aspect that could provide benefits on the IT side could be the implementation of the electronic signature across the JUs.

Expected benefits per each area of the Back-office HR support

As concluded by the report from Deloitte, the expected advantages of the BOA HR in terms of FTE savings are marginal, also because the HR dotation for the JUs is extremely limited (most JUs have one FTE and some 0,5 FTEs). The greatest advantages of the proposed BOA are linked to harmonisation, streamlining procedures, economies of scale, simplification, sharing of good practices, faster procedures, harmonising the HR strategy in certain areas of common interest.

To summarise, the specific benefits expected from the implementation of the BOA HR in each identified area are:

Recruitment:

1. Harmonisation of the recruitment procedure by valorising the best practices and drafting internal recruitment procedures that will be used by all JUs' HR teams.
2. Faster, easier recruitment procedures.
3. Lower exposure to remarks in case of audit (ECA, IAS), also on joint recruitments.
4. More joint recruitment panels and access to joint reserve lists, leading to faster recruitments.
5. Added value for newly established JUs, knowledge and expertise sharing among the JUs.

Legal framework

1. Consolidation of the existing network of confidential counsellors and coordination of activities linked to wellness, anti-harassment and conflict resolution policy across the JUs.
2. Common approach for what concerns the adoption of some implementing rules in the HR area. Speaking with one voice towards the EC when IR are proposed for the JUs.
3. Representation at the EUAN meetings and in meetings with DG HR (e.g. mandatory presence of the lead JU or back up JU with a delivery of the minutes of the meeting to all JUs).
4. Common learning and development framework, potential common employer branding for the JUs, including a comprehensive "employer's offer" for candidates, common templates for staff surveys increasing and improving staff engagement, wellbeing and satisfaction leading to staff retention.

HR digitalisation

1. Harmonisation of SYSPER implementation across the JUs.
2. Extend the use of SYSTAL to all JUs.
3. Establish a joint planning for what concerns the development of IT tools from DG HR, with the objective of JUs progressing all at once.

Multi-annual action plan of the Back-office HR support

In order to achieve the expected results, it is proposed to implement gradually the BOA HR plan over the next 2 years.

Phase 0: [Q3 2022] – [Q4 2022]

- Finalisation of SLA for BOA HR by end of December 2022 (*ongoing*) and signature in January 2023.
- Recruitment and training of confidential counsellors, establishment of the JUs network and training of confidential counsellors (*ongoing*).
- Reinforce the sharing of existing reserve lists among JUs and other EU bodies.

Phase 1: [Q1 2023] – [Q4 2023]

- Launch of common FWC to support the recruitment procedures (already included in the planning of the common procurement BOA) for example for the supervision of the JU written tests, psychometric tests, etc.
- Communication campaign on confidential counsellors' role.
- Definition of the calendar of common recruitments for 2023.
- Analysis and comparison of recruitment procedures among the JUs, identifying the best practices.
- Mapping of our internal notices/procedures (including procedure and templates) in the recruitment area and "fill the gaps" among JU.
- Definition and implementation of a common recruitment procedure based on JUs' best practices.

Phase 2: [Q4 2023] – [Q2 2024]

- Mapping of job profiles and job descriptions among the JUs.
- Define a calendar of common recruitments for 2024.
- Optional: more JUs to join SYSTAL (JUs using the HR tool will "share" it with other JUs).

Phase 3: [end of 2024] – [onwards]

- Establish a common JUs HR strategy in well identified areas like recruitment and selections, new ways of working, employee health and wellbeing, work life balance, learning and development, staff mobility, staff motivation/engagement and retention.
- Digitalisation of HR processes with the harmonisation of the use of SYSPER, SYSTAL, ARES, Intranets (e.g.: harmonised local intranets for HR purpose).
- Challenges and opportunities of the New Ways of Working participation of the lead JU (HR Manager) to the EUAN Task Force on new ways of working, emerging challenges and opportunities with a clear reporting to other JUs and establishment of action plans per JU if necessary.
- Define a calendar of common recruitments for 2025.

Governance of the Back-office HR support

The governance of the BOA HR is particularly important to ensure leadership and commitment of all JUs involved. In this context it is also important to valorise to the maximum extent the competence of the existing JUs network of HR officers by ensuring a clear guidance in implementing the BOA HR annual work plans and the resources – internal and external – needed to achieve the set objectives.

The EDs will nominate a Steering committee for the BOA HR composed by the HoAF of the Lead JU, main JU contact point (HR Manager of the Lead JU), HoAF and HR officer of the backup JUs. This will be the main governance body of the BOA. They will meet once a month, will provide guidance to the HR officers' network in drafting the BOA work plan and will report to the EDs on the execution of the BOA work plan.

The existing Network of JUs' HR officers will be chaired by the Lead JU HR Manager of the CBE JU , will implement the BOA work plan, create ad hoc working groups, will assign and coordinate the tasks and monitor their execution on a mandate from the EDs. The Network will meet once a week, implement actions, ensure information sharing, update/report on progress of BOA tasks, AWP and objectives' definition. The Network will prepare a quarterly reporting of the BOA HR activities to be sent by the steering committee and to the JUs (ED level).

Mandate from the JUs Executive Directors (SLA)

- Define scope, objectives, governance and resources needed

BOA HR Steering Committee

- Lead JU + backup JUs (HoAFs and HR officers)
- Propose AWP, monitor progress in the execution of the BOA HR work plan
- Reports to the EDs

JUs Network of HR officers

- Network chaired by the lead JU (HR Manager of the CBE JU)
- HR officers of JUs under SBA, other JUs (EUROHPC, SESAR)
- Responsible for the implementation and reporting
- Assigns and coordinate tasks

Resources needed by the Back-office HR support

In line with the proposal of an enhanced coordination of the Network of JUs' HR officers, the JUs HR officers commit to implement the BOA HR action plan as part of their daily job. If additional resources might be needed for the implementation of some specific actions, the BOA HR shall then request to the EDs via the Steering Committee the authorisation to hire ad hoc interim agents or external contractors to perform specific tasks and for a determined period. The cost of these resources shall be shared proportionally among the participating JUs.

CBE JU will be the lead JU and its HR Manager will provide coordination and support to the BOA, IHI JU will act as the backup JU and will provide additional support in this sense. All JUs' HR officers commit to contribute to the implementation of the BOA HR action plan under a mandate from the EDs via the Steering Committee and the coordination of the Lead JU. A clear action plan and a clear timeline to deliver the BOA objectives will be proposed by the lead JU and all HR Officers will commit to deliver them on time.

Next steps

In line with the proposal of an enhanced coordination of the Network of JUs' HR officers, the conclusion of a SLA among the JUs is deemed as necessary since a clear commitment to the execution of the BOA HR AWP's must be made by the JUs under the coordination of the Lead JU.

The SLA shall be sent for signature of the EDs as soon as the respective Governing Boards have taken a decision on the BOA HR implementation.