

Reviewed process for the evaluation and follow-up of LTCs (Joint Transborder Laboratories) October 2019

Joint Transborder Laboratories (LTCs) have been developed since 2015 in the frame of the euroregional campus between the University of Bordeaux and the University of the Basque Country and their partners. Currently, three LTC projects have been labeled, in physical chemistry, engineering and mathematics. This note highlights the current discussions with the University of the Basque Country to strengthen the collegiality of governance around these flagship projects of the Euroregional campus dynamics. Our aim is therefore to establish a common framework to harmonize the objectives, the instruction and procedures, the follow-up and the proposed support of the LTCs.

1. Definition: what are LTCs?

A LTC is a lab without walls whose aims are:

- To provide a framework to carry out research projects in a specific field with the objective to increase the added-value of scientific outputs as well as the visibility of our joint research at the EU and international level,
- To act as an incubator for larger projects with a view to attract external funding (notably EU funding),
- To create a sustainable transnational community of researchers, thus involving students, PhDs, junior and senior researchers,
- To develop a joint training offer, in particular at the master's level.

The LTC comes as a significant step in the recognition of an already existing partnership. Project coordinators should therefore provide evidence to demonstrate the anteriority and solidity of the partnership.

It is also expected that LTCs shall not cover too wide a scientific perimeter, but rather focus on a specific research and training project in a given scientific area.

A LTC is coordinated by two PIs, one from the Basque Country, one from Bordeaux.

LTCs are 4-year projects. There will only be one new LTC selected per year.

2. Common process to the establishment of a new LTC and allocated means

2.1 Financial support

It is suggested that the financial support to LTCs be as follows:

- Funding for the everyday operation of the LTC (travels, stipends for students, organizational costs for workshops, summer schools, etc.) for a maximum amount of 10K€ per year (5K€ from each side).
- UPV/EHU commits to fund a doctoral researcher under cotutelle per LTC over the period of the agreement (this means a doctoral contract for four years with UPV/EHU)

- UBx commits to fund a postdoc researcher per LTC over the period of the agreement (this means a postdoc for two years, under a postdoc contract with UB).
- Access to other funding opportunities through local programs (doctoral scholarships, visiting scholars, etc.).

Funding will not be renewable. After the four-year agreement completion, the LTC could maintain the LTC recognition/label, but without any further commitment of funding by UPV/EHU and UB. After this time, it is expected that the LTC have been able to leverage their own funding for running costs and temporal hiring of predocs and postdocs.

2.2 Stakeholders in the selection and evaluation process

University of Bordeaux:

- VP Research ; VP External Relations ; Director of the research department and of the research lab
- International Office ; Office for Research

UPV/EHU – TECNALIA - DIPC:

- VP Research / Scientific Development ; Scientific directors
- Office for Research

2.3 Process to select new LTCs

The Call for LTCs will be managed by Euskampus Fundazioa: publication of the call, reception of proposals and evaluation.

1. The PIs submit an application, using a common application form (see appendix). This form also includes an estimated budget for the running of the LTC.

2. The application is evaluated by an external committee according to a set of criteria. The list of criteria is as follows:

- Track record of the collaboration – period of the collaboration, how and why it started, main achievements during the collaboration in terms of common projects, publications, patents, contacts, PhD theses under cotutelle/co-supervision, connection to other partners, main outcomes, etc.;
- Quality of the scientific proposal – detailed presentation of the scientific project including objectives of the project (in terms of research, training including training at the doctoral level, innovation and industrial collaborations), activities that the LTC will carry out as well as a detailed plan for the first year of the project, possible theses, opportunities for post-docs, dashboard of indicators for follow-up and assessment (after 2 years / after 4 years: external funding obtained, co-tutelles, seminars, workshops, summer schools, joint publications, etc.), etc.;
- CV of PIs (excellence of the PIs);
- Critical mass, size and complementarity of the teams involved in the project - researchers involved in the project on both sides as well as opportunities for other teams, researchers to join in the future; complementarity of the teams, balance between senior researchers and junior researchers, gender balance, opportunities for PhDs and post-docs, etc.;
- Connection with the regional ecosystem and potential for international outreach - connections with the industry and local stakeholders as well as potential opportunities at the European and international level (existing networks, new funding opportunities, etc.).

Euskampus will order the *external evaluation* to the Spanish State Research Agency, *AEI-Agencia Estatal de Investigación*. Expenses for this evaluation process will be covered by Euskampus Fundazioa.

Evaluation by AEI can take up to 3 months.

3. Once the results of the external evaluation are received, a Committee composed of 1-2 persons of UPV/EHU, 1-2 persons of UB, plus 1 person Euskampus Fundazioa, will make the decision for the final selection of the LTC of the year.¹

The launch of the LTC will be announced during the yearly event “Bordeaux-Euskampus Eguna” in November each year. Funding for running costs is allocated to both teams as of January (year n+1).



2.4 Process to request funding for a pre-doc / post-doc

Access to funding for a pre-doc or post-doc position will require additional applications: for PhD, it will follow the template provided by UPV/EHU; for Post-docs, it will follow the template provided by UB. Each new application will be evaluated according to the internal rules of each university. In the case of PhDs, once the LTC is recognized, it will be the LTC PIs who will make the decision on candidates following the UPV/EHU’s template and rules.

3. Follow-up of LTC activities

The PIs submit a yearly activity and financial report (see proposed model in appendix). The steering committee meets yearly for all LTCs during the “Bordeaux Euskampus Eguna” and discusses the activity report as well as future planning (including budgetary issues). Potential requests for pre-doc and/or post-doc positions can be submitted there.

4. Agreement

The agreement to establish the LTC is based on the model used for the previous LTC projects. The agreement is for 4 years (Jan 1st- Dec 31st). The signing ceremony takes place during the yearly “Bordeaux-Euskampus Eguna”.

¹ NB: Internal examination procedures, specific to each partner, may also apply and would run concurrently.

The agreement foresees a steering committee with representatives from all signing parties.