CYBERSTAND.eu

Engaging & supporting EU experts in Cybersecurity Standardisation activities

Guidelines for Applicants to Service

CYBERSTAND.eu Specific Service Procedure

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Introduction

This document provides the main guidelines for applicants who are interested in applying for CYBERSTAND. eu Specific Service Procedures (SSPs).

In a series of six cycles, running until November 2026, CYBERSTAND.eu will assign a total of € 1.500,000 to acquire services to address Cyber Resilience Act (CRA) related standardisation priorities.

The objective is to enable the specialists to contribute to and help create a fully integrated European Standardisation Ecosystem, thereby strengthening Europe's position in global standardisation initiatives.

A. Guidance for the application phase

1. Process and timing of Specific Service Procedures (SSP)

CYBERSTAND.eu will run 6 SSP cycles. Each cycle will be open for 60 days for proposal submission.

At the end of the sixty-day period all proposals received through TRUST-GRANTS™ platform will be screened for eligibility, evaluated by CYBERSTAND.eu External Evaluators (EE)[1], scored, and ranked for contractualisation.

This process takes approximately 30 days, at the end of which all applicants shall be notified with the result of the evaluation process (e.g., successful or not successful application) and provided with access to a Consensus Report compiled by the EE.

To guarantee maximum fairness and transparency, each application will be independently evaluated by three EE members and will undergo quality control by a fourth EE member after consensus is reached.

As the EE are highly-skilled experts whose qualifications are assessed through an SSP process their decision is binding and any redress requests or complaints will be dealt with strictly in relation to the procedural aspects of the evaluation and not on the merits of scientific or technical judgement of the experts.

2. Criteria for access to services acquisition

Applicants to SSPs must be **individuals or natural persons** residing in the European Member States and Associate Countries from both public and private sectors, industry and service companies, including SMEs and start-ups, academia and research, and national and European associations, including NGOs representing consumer interests.

Potential applicants of CYBERSTAND.eu SSPs are European specialists who:

- Are individuals or natural persons residing in European Member States and Associate countries[2];

- Have experience regarding developments of standards, e.g., existing standards for development for CRA, SReq; existing CRA-related TC/WGs for development;

- Are not receiving support from other instruments (PPPs, EU or national R&I projects) for the proposed activities.

Applicants can apply to all CYBERSTAND.eu SSPs, and can be paid for a maximum of 60k€ over this current edition of CYBERSTAND.eu which will end on 31st May 2027. Applicants can also apply for a continuation of the previously acquired services, as long as they clearly demonstrate the progress made with respect to the previous application, the improvements that will be performed in the new activities and the different timeline of the new services- the latter criteria is very important in order to avoid the suspicion of double funding.

In case of not acquired services, applicants can re-apply to the next SSP and adjust the application according to the comments and suggestions made by the evaluators.

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1   https://cyberstand.eu/external-evaluators.
2   All eligible countries are listed in the SSP application form on the TRUST-GRANTS™ platform.

3. Type of contributions

Applicants can request 3 different typologies of funding under the CYBERSTAND.eu SSPs, as shown in the table below.

Typology	Description	Max duration	Max funding range
Long-term contribution (LT)	Contribution to ongoing standards development as a chair, convener, rapporteur or member of an SDO WG. E.g. comments on standards development and drafts, attending meetings also as an observer, paying membership fees. Contribution to standards documentation e.g. liaison to WG, comments on standards drafts, participation at meeting with membership fee paid.	12 months	20.000 €
Mid-term contribution (MT)	Contribution to ongoing standards development as a chair, convener, rapporteur or member of an SDO WG. E.g. comments on standards development and drafts, attending meetings also as an observer, paying membership fees. Contribution to standards documentation e.g. liaison to WG, comments on standards drafts, participation at meeting with membership fee paid.	6 months	10.000 €
Short-term contribution (ST)	Contribution to ongoing standards development as a chair, convener, rapporteur or member of an SDO WG. E.g. comments on standards development and drafts, attending meetings also as an observer, paying membership fees. Contribution to standards documentation e.g. liaison to WG, comments on standards drafts, participation at meeting with membership fee paid.	3 months	5.000 €

Both the maximum cost requested per proposal and the respective type of application (LT, ST, OS) cannot exceed that indicated.

3.1 Services timeline

It is important to note that the service timeline needs to be aligned with the service application; the earliest possible start date of the fellowship is the application creation date on the Trust-Grants™ platform. In this sense, it is possible to set a start date for the service that occurs before the announcement of the evaluation process results are announced to the applicant. All services have to respect the maximum duration of the contributions as defined in the table here above.

4. Eligible costs

Applicants shall provide a clear, well-justified and detailed description of the eligible costs in their applications. These can include:

- Personal Working Effort (this cannot exceed the EU maximum daily rate of 450 €)
- Travel costs
- Event registration fee(s)
- Membership fee(s) for SDO & SSO organisations

Successful applicants will receive an email from Trust-IT Services, responsible for the financial management of CYBERSTAND.eu, with instructions and the necessary paperwork. Further details about financial aspects can be found in *'Guidelines for the Funded Services'*, in this document.

5. Criteria for evaluation

The initial eligibility screening will be undertaken by the Consortium to assess compliance to the call. Services which are ineligible for any reason or which do not meet the call criteria will be identified as such and the applicant will receive an automatic notification from the system.

The consortium will consolidate all eligible proposals and submit them to the external evaluators (EE) to undertake the formal evaluation.

The service applications will have to clearly demonstrate:

- The standardisation request items to be addressed;
- Target TC/WG for output;
- Impact of work on the CRA SReq/CRA/European interests/SMEs;
- Expertise of the applicant in the relevant priority area(s);
- Service type and output.

Evaluations (for each application) will be performed using the following 4-criteria principle (score 1 to 10):

- Criterion 1: Soundness of the application and foreseen impact on SSP topic and relevance to CRA SReq (30%);
- Criterion 2: Technical excellence & relevance of the activities proposed (30%);
- Criterion 3: Experience and qualifications of the applicant (20%);
- Criterion 4: Economics of the application considering the principle of best value for money (20%).

The application's final score will be automatically determined by averaging scores from the various evaluators and then applying a weighting process among the 4 criteria as per the percentages indicated in the SSP. In case of a tie between 2 or more applications, the application received first will precede (the "time stamp" of submission will be the reference).

6. SSP topic priorities

The list of topics/themes that can be funded are listed and described in the SSP application form. These may differ between SSPs cycles.

Services that address topics closely correlated priority areas of the CRA

standardisation requests[3] (currently in preliminary draft) will be considered of equal validity and merit during the evaluation process.

More specifically, services should provide:

- Contribution / recommendation / proposal to develop a new standard / revise an existing standard;
- Contribution or delivery of a technical report / technical specification;
- Contribution to create a new TC or WG;
- Participation in a WG or TC meeting as chair, convenor, participant or moderator.

7. How to apply

The platform is available here: TRUST-GRANTS™. New applicants will have to first create a new account, and then once registered they can access the application form.

Applicants must then fill in the application form with the required information.

The application can also be saved into draft and modified anytime until the closing date of the open call.

It is strongly recommended **not to wait until the last minute for submitting the final version of the application**, in order to avoid eventual technical issues which may not submit the proposal on time.

Once the application has been successfully submitted, applicants will be notified with an email from web@cyberstand.eu.

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3   https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/58974.

B. Guidance for the Funded Services
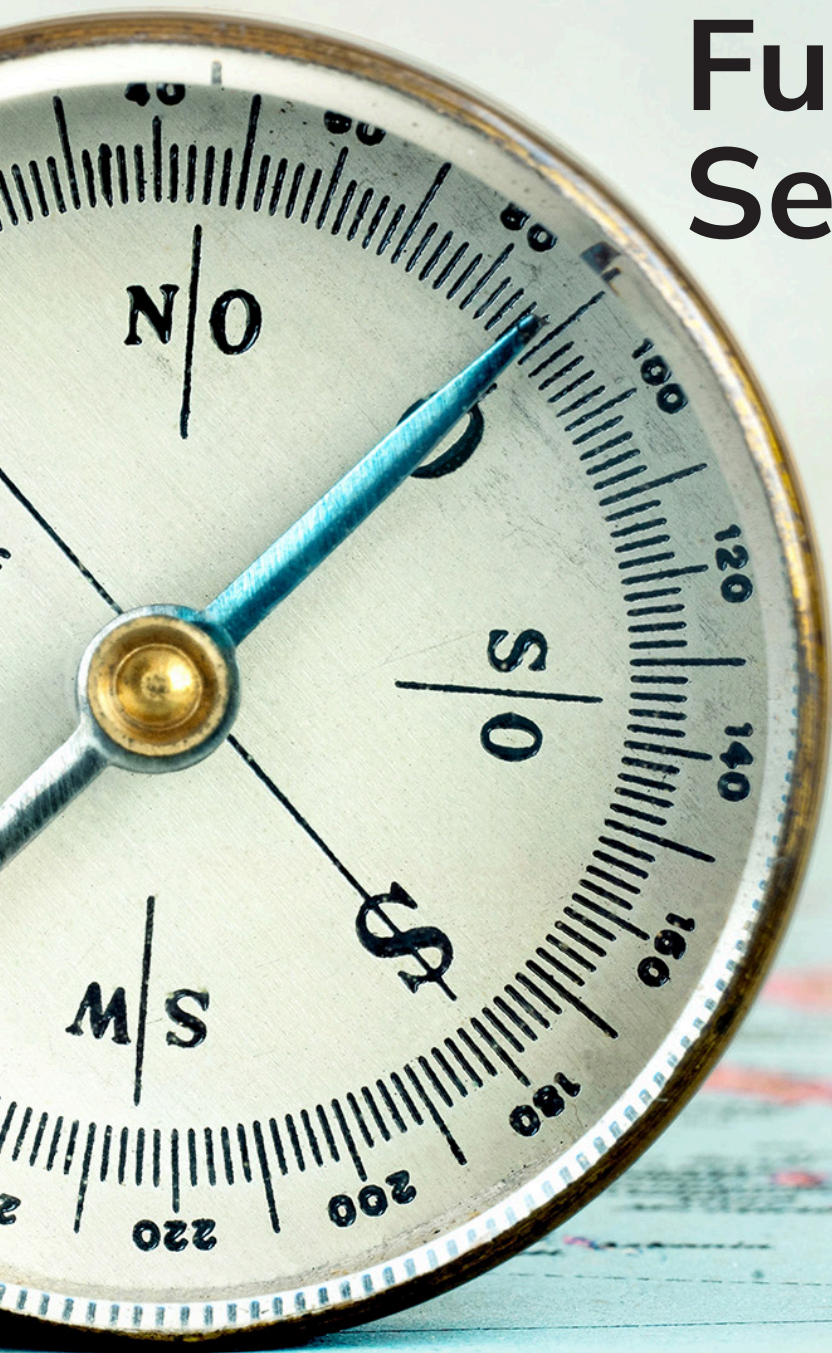
Financial aspects

Applicants will receive an automatic email with an update on their payment status from <u>TRUST-GRANTS</u>™ platform. This email is not to be considered an indicator of a deadline for payment Trust-IT Services srl will follow up and start processing payments at the end of the service provision based on the delivered and validated results as defined in the application form. For applicant who request a prepayment, a valid justification linked to a milestone (for instance, the submission of the interim report) in addition to evidence of their early request (for instance, proof of travel expenses) must be provided to receive this prepayment This payment process takes from 2 to 5 weeks to be completed. Subsequently, applicants will be informed that their payment will be transferred in the next 5 to 7 working days. Applicants who supply their paperwork as a company (rather than as individuals) will be required to provide extra paperwork to register the company. This will mean that the payment for their grant will take longer to be received.

Information about taxes related to the payment

The contribution is a gross amount provided without deduction of any taxes or other duties which may be liable for payment in accordance with national tax regulations in your country of fiscal residence, should this count as income. Therefore, you should consult your local tax authority or accountant as to whether any taxes or other duties apply to the funding received. Cyberstand.eu cannot assume any liability, charge, responsibility or lien for paying any taxes or duties on the third-party funding provided, which lies solely with the applicant. In addition, any travel budget, generally not considered as income, which is not utilised due to Covid restrictions and possibly devolved to effort or another cost category may also become subject to taxation as a consequence, and Cyberstand.eu cannot assume any liability, charge, responsibility or lien related to its payment.

Post Selection Support and Monitoring of Work Undertaken

The European DIGITAL SME Alliance will be responsible for managing the work of the funded experts, once they have passed the through evaluation process. DIGITAL SME will onboard each expert to the Cyberstand project and ensure that they are given sufficient support throughout the duration of the SSP, while simultaneously monitoring the work of the experts to ensure that the activities and objectives of the SSP are carried out. Part of this onboarding will be the signing of the SSP Contracts between the Cyberstand project and the expert, which will set out the obligations of the supported experts, including the payment schedules, reporting requirements and evaluation process, dispute mechanisms etc.

Once the SSP Contracts are signed, the onboarding process will begin with an introductory meeting amongst the experts and will be organised based upon the topics of the SSPs, so that relevant introductions and information can be given. This meeting will provide the experts with an overview of the latest CRA developments, introduce the experts to relevant contacts for their SSP (for example, SDO groups or contacts), share the administrative details such as outputs and timelines that are required and inform them of the different available support mechanisms.

Selected experts will be expected to produce two types of output: reports and deliverables.

Each activity that is procured through a SSP is expected to produce a deliverable, which is a dedicated

standalone document that is the result of the work carried out through the SSP and achieves that activities that the SSP is financing - for example, for an SSP that finances the creation of three standards relating to cybersecurity requirements, each standard would require a separate deliverable.

Alongside this, experts will submit an Expert Contribution Report, which details the process of creating the deliverables and any other work done: meetings or events attended, paper/publication contributions etc.

Both reports and deliverables will be used by CENELEC to perform the evaluation of the SSPs under Task 3.2.

Throughout the duration of the SSPs, support will be available through a HelpDesk set up by DIGITAL SME, and through regular workshops where progress will be discussed and the latest updates regarding the CRA and project activities will be shared with the experts.

Dissemination of the services provided and acknowledgement of funding

Dissemination

The European Union funds the CYBERSTAND.eu project and its beneficiaries, so it is crucial to disseminate all achieved activities and obtain results related to the programme.

This dissemination is done not only by the CYBERSTAND.eu project team but also by the applicants.

The service provides funded experts' work and results are shared through the following CYBERSTAND.eu channels:

- **CYBERSTAND.eu website**: the profile of all funded experts are published on a dedicated section of the project's website.
- Social Media: **Experts are asked to promote their funded contributions and activities on social media** (LinkedIn and X) by tagging CYBERSTAND.eu.
- **Success stories**: All funded experts can submit a success story presenting a standardisation activity that has been successfully finalised.

Acknowledgement of EU-funding

Even more importantly, the funded experts must acknowledge the European funding, especially in any scientific or academic publications directly related to the funded activity.

**Funded by
the European Union**