

RDI Reforms Component:

Support for Technology Transfer and Commercialization in Artificial Intelligence

1. Introduction and rationale

Collaboration and Technology Transfer in Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiatives are designed to strengthen innovation and technology transfer, reinforcing the role of the **Institute for Artificial Intelligence Research and Development of Serbia (IVI)** as a regional leader in AI research and innovation. To further strengthen IVI's cooperation and technology transfer with other RDIs, private and public sectors, a **total budget of EURO 600,000 has been allocated from the SAIGE Additional Financing**.

The following support mechanisms have been established:

1.1. Collaborative AI Proof-of-Concept Plus (cPoC+) Projects (total budget: EUR 150,000)

This instrument supports collaborative innovations led by IVI with commercial potential and a defined commercialization strategy, which requires financing support to perform collaborative AI Proof of Concept plus project (cPoC+). Up to six Collaborative PoC Plus projects (cPoC+) are expected to be supported, with a maximum funding of EUR 30,000 per project, focusing on translating research into commercially viable solutions and encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration among local, regional, and international partners.

Expected TRL improvement is at least a 2-level upgrade, from TRL 3 or TRL 4 to at least TRL 5 or TRL 6. It is expected that at least two cPoC+ projects involve collaboration with the private sector, and at least three lead to IP with strong commercialization potential.

1.2. Collaborative AI UTRL Plus (cAI-UTRL+) Projects (total budget: 450,000 EUR)

This instrument supports innovative Collaborative AI UTRL Plus (cAI-UTRL+) projects led by IVI that elevate technology readiness levels and strengthen partnerships between academia and the private sector (e.g., industry) to accelerate innovation that has Spin-out/Spin-off or licensing potential or other high-value commercial outcomes. These projects are required to have a well-defined commercialization strategy and to request financial support aimed at advancing the technology readiness level (TRL) from TRL 4-5 by at least two or more levels, with a clear commercialization plan. The proposals with higher end TRL will be scored higher according to evaluation criteria.

Up to six Collaborative AI UTRL Plus projects (cAI-UTRL+) are expected to be supported, with a maximum funding of EUR **100,000** per project. The projects should be led by IVI, or other SAIGE RDI, and involve private sector participation.

1.3. Roles and Responsibilities of Institutional Support Offices

For both above support program mechanisms, the involvement of the respective RDI management, the Technology Transfer Office (TTO), and the Project Management Office (PMO) is critical to success. A strong commitment and active role from the TTOs and PMOs are expected throughout all stages of project design, implementation, and administration as well as commercialization, ensuring effectiveness of the entire technology transfer process.

In that sense, the process has to be coordinated by the IVI TT Officer and the PM Officer to ensure consistent support, alignment with institutional priorities, and active commitment of RDI management throughout all stages of project development and implementation. This coordination helps ensure that the most promising proposals are identified and supported, while also guaranteeing that all project teams receive adequate administrative and management assistance. All official communication with the SAIGE PIU is to be conducted exclusively through the respective TTOs.

1.4. Rules and Procedures

Both program mechanisms build on the established approaches, rules, and procedures on collaborative PoC and collaborative UTRL projects, defined in the RDI Transformation Operations Manual Version 3.2, while specific conditions and requirements are listed below.

In addition, all project proposals will go through an AI risk assessment based on the Risk Assessment Framework (RAF). This assessment encompasses a range of criteria, including checks on transparency, accountability, trustworthy and ethical AI practices. Project proposals must demonstrate effective data protection measures, transparent decision-making processes, and strategies to prevent bias within their AI applications.

2. Collaborative AI Proof-of-Concept Plus (cPoC+) Projects

2.1. Collaboration requirements

Under this instrument, SAIGE supports collaborative projects, where IVI takes major role. The collaboration may be established between IVI and any of the SAIGE RDIs actively participating in the project Sub-component 1.2 RDI reform, since the funding will be provided as a part of the RDIs' Transformation Plan budget. Either IVI or partner SAIGE RDI may take a lead role in the project.

While collaboration with a broader range of stakeholders, including national and international RDIs as well as private sector partners, is strongly encouraged, SAIGE cannot provide funding for their activities. SAIGE funding is exclusively reserved for the RDIs formally participating in the project Sub-component 1.2 RDI reform and cannot be allocated to external entities. Participation of any other national or international RDI, private sector partner, or other relevant entity is permitted only if they can secure independent funding for their part of the planned activities.

2.2. Application process

- The Collaborative AI PoC Plus (cPoC+) project can request SAIGE support of up to EUR **30,000**. A total budget of EUR **150,000** is allocated to support this type of collaborative effort.
- The planned duration of the cPoC+ project implementation is up to 8 months. Project duration extension will normally not be allowed.
- A competitive portfolio approach is applied to selecting the best cPoC+ projects. PIU will announce an open call and invite RDIs to develop joint proposals.
- RDIs are encouraged to consult International Technology Transfer Experts, SAIGE PIU Senior Advisors, National and International Institutional Consultants, and Technology Transfer Officers from the early stages of project design.
- A project proposal is presented in the Collaborative AI PoC Plus (cPoC+) Proposal Template (**Annex 1**) and submitted to the SAIGE PIU by the IVI TT Office.
- The proposal should include all relevant details on:
 - Development plan, milestones, and financial budget, with costs shared between the two RDIs. This should also include all procurement activities, steps, and timelines.
 - Clear IP position, including disposition between the two organizations (TT Offices engaged).
 - Initial IP, technology, and market assessment (TT Offices engaged).
 - Clearly defined resources and time needed to develop and finalize innovation with the joint efforts of both RDIs. at least 2 levels upgrade, from TRL 3 or TRL 4 to at least TRL 5 or TRL 6.
- Equipment necessary for innovation development should not exceed 50% of the total project cost, regardless of cost distribution among the two RDIs.
- Each joint project has to be reviewed and cleared by the SAIGE Technology Transfer Expert(s) supporting the two RDIs, prior to its submission to the PIU.

2.3. Financing Decision

- After an administrative check performed by PIU, the decision on the request for SAIGE financing support will be made by a 3-member independent International

Selection Panel. The PIU Project Manager will be an Observer on this Panel (ensuring that these projects meet all the requirements of the PoC guidelines). The Panel will evaluate (and rank) project proposals using agreed evaluation criteria involving scoring each specific criterion. This ranking will be used by the SAIGE PIU / Ministry to make final financing decisions, subject to prior approval by the World Bank.

- SAIGE financing support for the selected PoC projects will be provided as a part of the RDIs' Transformation Plan budget.

Other elements of a conceptual framework, eligibility for financing, criteria for evaluation, use of funding, and non-eligible costs, remain the same as for single RDI PoCs. Any one RDI, except IVI, cannot be involved as a partner in more than 2 AI cPoC+ project applications.

2.4. Monthly online review meetings

- Monthly online review meetings will be held during the implementation phase of the project with the participation of project teams, TT Officers, PM Officers, PIU assigned experts, and World Bank Experts.
- For each meeting, the project team prepares a short update presentation (5-8 minutes) of up to 5 slides that will include:
 - PI, RDI name, project start and ending, budget approved and spent, and activities and milestones achieved from the total;
 - Brief overview of the relevant market and comparison with existing products and services on the market,
 - Technical and technological results achieved so far (including IP),
 - Next steps,
 - Any problems that the project is facing/or need for any modification
- These meetings are advisory, designed as a valuable opportunity for ongoing support to help project teams identify and address challenges early, receive constructive feedback, and ensure steady progress. By fostering open dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, the meetings aim to remove bottlenecks in real time and contribute to the overall success of the projects and the strengthening of RDIs' capacities.

2.5. Changes to ongoing projects

- In case some changes are required during the AI cPoC+ project implementation, including changes of certain budget items or amounts allocated to the activities, the AI cPoC+ project leader submits, well in advance, in writing, the proposal to both RDIs' TT Offices.
- TT Offices evaluate the proposal and consult with the PIU and SAIGE Technology Transfer Experts. A well-elaborated proposal is submitted by lead RDI TTO to the PIU in writing with all relevant supporting documents.
- This request will be reviewed by PIU in consultation with the World Bank Experts (and

other relevant experts, as necessary); any change is subject to World Bank approval. The decision can be made via e-mail correspondence.

- Changes of up to 10% among budget items/categories are not subject to the above-mentioned procedure (these are considered expected fluctuations due to changes in market prices of services and goods), but a note about the change (and reasons) of up to 10% should be sent to PIU for information purposes only.
- No increase in the original AI cPoC+ budget is allowed, and any unused funds are returned to the PIU's RDIs budget pool.

3. Collaborative AI UTRL Plus (cAI-UTRL+) Projects

3.1. Collaboration requirements

Under this instrument, SAIGE supports collaborative AI-UTRL+ projects, where IVI takes the lead role. Engagement of private sector expertise is critical to the success of these projects, as their involvement is essential to ensure market relevance and to support the commercialization pathway. Private sector expertise engagement can range from accessing business expertise and experience in the design and implementation of the business strategy to engaging a commercial private sector organization as a partner in the business endeavour (including possibly cash or high-value in-kind contributions from the private sector partner). Possible outcomes from the AI-UTRL+ projects include the following:

- License with potential contributions to further develop and commercialize the product technology or service
- Joint venture (e.g., with a potential private sector equity partner in establishing a spinoff or spinout)
- Contract research for co-IP development.

The collaboration with RDIs may be established with any of the SAIGE RDIs actively participating in the project Sub-component 1.2 RDI reform, since the funding will be provided as a part of the RDIs' Transformation Plan budget.

Participation of other national or international entities, as formal collaborative partners, in the project is permitted only if they can secure independent funding for their planned activities. SAIGE funding is exclusively reserved for the RDIs formally participating in the project Sub-component 1.2 RDI reform and cannot be allocated to external entities.

3.2. Application process

- Collaborative AI UTRL Plus (cAI-UTRL+) Project can request SAIGE support of up to EUR **100,000**. A total budget of EUR **450,000** is allocated to support this type of

collaborative effort

- The planned duration of the cAI-UTRL+ project implementation is 12 months.
- A competitive portfolio approach is applied to selecting the best cAI-UTRL+ projects. PIU announces an open call and invites RDIs to develop joint proposals.
- Project teams, together with their TT Offices and PM Offices (PMOs), are strongly encouraged to engage with assigned experts (International Technology Transfer Experts, SAIGE PIU Senior Advisors, Technology Transfer Officers, IP legal consultant, National and International Institutional Consultants), and other relevant experts from the earliest stages of idea development and proposal design. Early and continuous consultation is key to ensuring the quality of project proposals and contributes to the ongoing capacity development of all involved stakeholders throughout the process.
- A project proposal is presented in the Collaborative AI UTRL Plus (cAI-UTRL+) Proposal Template (**Annex 2**) and submitted to the SAIGE PIU by the IVI TT Office.
- The proposal should include all relevant details on:
 - Clear IP position, including potential for license from RDIs to Spin-out (TT Offices engaged). An agreement should be signed by both participating RDIs, clearly stating the IP rights of both parties.
 - Initial IP, technology, and market assessment (TT Offices engaged),
 - Market analysis and commercialization strategy developed (TT Offices engaged),
 - Agreement and understanding of founders/inventors/scientists related to the formation and strategy of Spin-out, license agreement, or contract research strategy.
 - Developed a Business plan, with milestones related to financing tranches, clearly shared between participating RDIs,
 - Clearly defined resources and time needed to develop and finalize innovation within two RDIs. This should also include all procurement activities/steps and timelines.
 - Fulfilled the environment, social, and ethics-related checklists,
 - Evaluation of the request for SAIGE financing made by TT Offices, supported by SAIGE project experts,
 - Each project has to be cleared by the SAIGE Technology Transfer Expert(s), as well as both IICs, before its submission to PIU.
 - The first phase should not require more than 6 months and/or €60,000 in total for both RDIs.
 - Equipment necessary for innovation development should not exceed 35% of the total project cost, regardless of cost distribution among the two RDIs.
- Each joint project has to be cleared by the SAIGE Technology Transfer Expert(s) supporting the two or more RDIs, as well as approved by the involved RDI's leadership, prior to its submission to the PIU.

3.3. Financing Decision

- Administrative and eligibility checks will be performed by PIU (within 7 days) to verify if all necessary documents are submitted, as well as if the proposals contain all required information. Proposals that do not pass the eligibility test will be informed, and **such Applicants will have up to 5 days to submit to PIU any evidence in support of their eligibility.**
- Evaluation of the proposals will be done by a 3-member independent International Selection Panel (within 30 days after the deadline for submissions). The PIU Project Manager will be an Observer on this Panel (ensuring that these projects meet all the requirements of the UTRL guidelines). The Panel will evaluate (and rank) project proposals using agreed evaluation criteria involving scoring each specific criterion. All projects will also be subject to a technical review to be performed by relevant experts. Their report will be provided to the Panel to facilitate their evaluation.

Applications will be evaluated based on a scoring system, with a minimum threshold of **65 points** (out of a maximum of 100).

- Projects scoring **65 points** or more will be considered for funding, i.e., enter into the budget review process.
- Projects scoring between **60 and up to 65 points** may still be taken into consideration for funding at the discretion of the Evaluation Panel and NITRA (subject to World Bank approval), if deemed strategically relevant and particularly promising.
- Following the Panel's evaluation and ranking of project proposals, the top-ranked applications will proceed to a budget review phase. This step involves a free and frank discussion aimed at justifying the proposed costs, ensuring alignment with project objectives and available resources. Final decisions on funding support will be made based on the outcome of these reviews.
- The ranking and outcome of the budget review will be used by the SAIGE PIU / Ministry to make the final financing decision, subject to prior approval by the World Bank.
- SAIGE financing support for the selected cAI-UTRL+ projects will be provided as a part of the RDIs' Transformation Plan budget. Any one RDI cannot be involved as a partner in more than 2 such AI-UTRL+ project applications.

Other elements of a conceptual framework, eligibility for financing, criteria for evaluation, use of findings, and non-eligible costs, remain the same as for single RDI UTRLs.

3.4. Monthly online review meetings

- Monthly online review meetings are held during the implementation phase of the project with the participation of project teams, TT Officers, PM Officers, and assigned experts, including SAIGE International Technology Transfer Experts, PIU Senior

Advisors, PIU Technology Transfer Officers, and the World Bank Experts.

- For each meeting, the project team prepares a short update presentation (15 minutes) of up to 8 slides that will include:
 - PI, RDI name, project start and ending, budget approved and spent, and activities and milestones achieved from the total.
 - Brief overview of the market and comparison with existing products and services on the market.
 - Technical and technological results achieved so far (including IP),
 - Next steps,
 - Any problems that the project is facing/or any need for modification
- These meetings are advisory, designed as a valuable opportunity for ongoing support to help project teams identify and address challenges early, receive constructive feedback, and ensure steady progress. By fostering open dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, the meetings aim to remove bottlenecks in real time and contribute to the overall success of the projects and the strengthening of RDIs' capacities.

3.5. Changes to ongoing projects

- In case some changes are required during the cAI-UTRL+ project implementation, including changes of certain budget items or amounts allocated to the activities, the cAI-UTRL+ project leader submits, well in advance, in writing, the proposal to both RDIs' TT Offices.
- TT Offices evaluate the proposal and consult with the PIU and SAIGE Technology Transfer Experts. A well-elaborated proposal is submitted by IVI TTO to the PIU in writing with all relevant supporting documents.
- This request will be reviewed by PIU in consultation with the World Bank Experts (and other relevant experts, as necessary); any change is subject to World Bank approval. The decision can be made via e-mail correspondence.
- Changes of up to 10% among budget items/categories are not subject to the above-mentioned procedure (these are considered expected fluctuations due to changes in market prices of services and goods), but a note about the change (and reasons) of up to 10% should be sent to PIU for information purposes only.
- No increase in the original cAI-UTRL+ budget is allowed, and any unused funds are returned to the PIU's RDIs budget pool.

Annex 1. Collaborative PoC Plus Proposal Template

cPoC+ Project Proposal

Delivery date: xx.xx.xxxx

Proposed SAIGE funding period: from xx.xx.xxxx to zz.zz.zzzz

The total proposal should not exceed 15 pages (Word file only, NO PDF, 11 font size, single space). Please use the relevant templates provided.

Project name:	
Lead RDI:	
Partner RDI:	
Other partners, if any:	
Start and End TRL:	
Project budget:	
Project duration:	
Principal Investigator (PI):	
Contact Email & Mobile of PI:	

1. Project Overview (200 words max) – Summary of the project, outlining the problem or opportunity the proposed PoC project is addressing and the expected result of this project.
2. Description of Invention / Novel Idea to Create Social / Economic Value (600 words max) – Short description of invention / novel idea including assessment and early review of IP position (e.g., ownership structure). The uniqueness of the idea and value proposition should be clearly stated. Current development status of the invention / novel idea, including TRL level. Short description of both RDI positions and roles.
3. Field / Application of the Invention / Novel Idea (200 words max) - Short description of how the invention / novel idea can be applied and the current state of the art/methodology.
4. Market Analysis (400 words max) - Describe market focus for an invention / novel idea, including to the extent possible, market size and potential competitors. Describe comparative advantage(s) of invention / novel idea relative to current products/services offered. Identify possible routes to market and business models, including potential partners. Identify any early commercialization activities and their results to date.
5. Description of Project Plan (600 words max and table below) - Describe planned project activities (budget, tasks, timeline) and roles of each RDI. Identify key planned expenditures

(e.g., consultants, equipment, consumables) for each RDI. Describe expected project results (when possible/relevant, with expected improvement in TRL levels). Describe IP position of both RDIs regarding future exploitation of the invention.

	Activity name	Description of the tasks and activities	Responsible RDI	Proposed budget breakdown	Timeline and milestones	Expected result and TRL increase (from - to)
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
TOTAL						

Total budget for IVI:

Total budget for other RDI:

6. Final Remarks (200 words max) - outline the final results and explain why this would increase the commercial potential of the Invention / Novel Idea. Please list future development plans after the SAIGE funding.

Principal Investigator (PI):

Signature & Date

IVI Director:

Signature & Date

cAI-UTRL+ Project Proposal

Delivery date: xx.xx.xxxx

Proposed SAIGE funding period: from xx.xx.xxxx to zz.zz.zzzz

The total proposal should not exceed 30 pages (Word file only, NO PDF, 11 font size, single space).
Please use the relevant templates provided.

Project name:	
Private sector partner:	
Other partners, if any:	
Start and End TRL:	
Project budget:	
Project duration:	
Principal investigator (PI):	
Email & Mobile contact of PI:	

1. Executive summary (max 3 pages) – Summary of the whole business plan, most important topics from each chapter. Include total SAIGE funds requested and a summary of how funds will be allocated (e.g., X € for market assessment, Y € for IP protection), key deliverables/milestones by phase of funding clearly shared between participating RDIs, and overviews of IP position and RDIs' shares, market assessment and business strategy. Keep in mind that SAIGE funds cannot be allocated to support Institute staff members, nor to an existing spinout from the Institute.
2. Business description (2-5 pages) – Description of the product or/and service or/and technology. Pay attention to IPR and roles of each RDI. Describe a concrete problem that is existing and solution which is proposed. Please mention all the challenges and how product-market fit should be found. Who is end user/client?
3. Company if applicable (2-5 pages) – Company details if established (e.g., plan is to license to an existing company) or plan how will be established (e.g., developing a startup company). Please describe all relevant backgrounds, legal framework, team, organization, resources, roles and responsibilities of each RDI.
4. Management/Development Team (1-3 pages) – How will the development team be organized? Partners (RDIs), whole team, business leaders, advisory board, supervisory board and their competencies, roles and responsibilities? Keep in mind the time component.

5. Market (2-5 pages) – detailed market analysis, market trends and future, potential and forecasted clients, segmentation, market positioning etc. What is your market – local, regional, international, global? Who is target market – gender, race, age, specifics, groups? Please define TAM-SAM-SOM, who is your end user/client and who is paying? What will be business model - B2B, B2C, B2B2C, resellers, distributors? Please pay attention to existing or upcoming competition.
6. Strategy (2-4 pages) – please combine all relevant segments for previous chapters in order to explain strategy, growth plan, go-to market strategy, 4P (product, price, promotion, and place) including steps to be taken following the completion of the UTRL project. Please make marketing plan (PR, advertising, online, network, social etc.). Explain business development strategy– what you will do, how will you do it (product, services, marketing etc.), when (phases), with whom (team, organization, which RDI is responsible for what activity) and with which resources (financial, technological). Special attention to competitive advantage – is it technology/IPR or market (distribution costs, specifics) or business model or customer service or branding or price (cost structure?) or quality or people-team?
7. Financials (1-3 pages) – realistic forecast for next 3-5 years (and previous data if existing) on profit and loss statement (P&L) and cash flow statement (CF). Please indicate NPV (Net Present Value) and IRR (Internal rate of return). Include actions to date to access external private sector financial support as well as ongoing plans for gaining future financial support.
8. Risks (1-2 pages) – please mention possible risks like barriers to entry, regulatory/legal, technology, IPR, market, competitors? Also include planned mitigation (measures and plans).
9. Value proposition (1-2 pages) - Why is this project interesting for the potential investor? Because you have/can do – technology or reach market or develop business model or pricing, or have people-team? What do you need (funding requirements)?
10. Project plan (1-2 pages)– Describe planned project activities by phases (budget, tasks, procurement, timeline, key deliverables/milestones) with a clear share of each between two partner RDIs. Identify key planned expenditures (e.g., consultants, equipment, consumables). Describe expected project results.

Principal investigator (PI):

Signature & Date

IVI Director:

Signature & Date