



Horizon 2020 – concise information for National Contact Points

April 2014

Signing Horizon 2020 grant agreements electronically – what's involved?

From now on, parties to Horizon 2020 grant agreements are to sign **electronically** at the Participant Portal. This requires

- a **chain of trust** with beneficiaries – to guarantee signatories' identity
- a **system of digital signatures** protected by sophisticated security features - to guarantee documents' reliability and authenticity



The chain of trust

1. Before signing the first Horizon 2020 grant, each beneficiary's legal representative appoints a **Legal Entity Appointed Representative (LEAR)**. The legal representative signs a paper document in blue ink for this purpose.
2. The LEAR provides reliable information on behalf of the beneficiary to the Commission or the agency concerned. He or she appoints on the Participant Portal individuals authorised to sign
 - grant agreements and amendments (**Legal Signatories**, known as **LSIGNs**)
 - financial statements (**Financial Signatories**, known as **FSIGNs**).

The LEAR updates these lists constantly.

Participant Contacts (PaCo) or Coordinator Contacts (CoCos) have to select **Legal Signatories (LSIGNs)** and **Financial Signatories (FSIGNs)** from the lists established by the LEAR for a given project. They are then known as **Project Legal Signatories (PLSIGNs)** and **Project Financial Signatories (PFSIGNs)**, respectively.

Each individual must have a personal European Commission Authentication Service ([ECAS](#)) account.

Signing the grant agreement

- 1) Before the grant agreement can be signed, the PLSIGN of each beneficiary must sign a **declaration of honour** ("Grant declaration" in the system) following the same procedure as that outlined below in points 5) to 12).
- 2) The Commission prepares the **grant agreement** for signing. A pdf document, digitally sealed to guarantee its security, reliability and authenticity, is made available through the Participant Portal's electronic exchange system (My Area).
- 3) The **coordinator's PLSIGN** is **notified** that s/he can sign the grant agreement.
- 4) The coordinator's PLSIGN logs into the Participant Portal, using his/her ECAS account.
- 5) He or she selects the **My projects** menu from the drop-down menu of My Area, selects the relevant project in the list and clicks on the **MP** action button (MP = Manage Project).
- 6) He or she finds the grant agreement ready for signing. It can be downloaded and printed if desired.
- 7) The PLSIGN clicks on the **grant agreement** link to review the document and, if he is ready to sign, clicks on the button SIGN.
- 8) A pop-up explains that this means the signatory is preparing to sign. It then asks the PLSIGN to confirm that he or she wishes to sign.
- 9) Another prompt asks the PLSIGN to enter his/her ECAS password.
- 10) The PLSIGN enters his/her ECAS password and clicks on SIGN.
- 11) The system creates a new version of the pdf document. It adds a **digital seal** issued by an external authority, including a **time stamp**, and the **signatory's ECAS credentials**. It replaces the placeholder for the coordinator's signature. The new pdf document is made available.
- 12) To check whether the document is valid, open it in a compatible pdf reader and click on the image of the digital signature.
- 13) The Legal Entity Appointed Representative (LEAR) of the coordinator and other project participants are informed that the coordinating organisation has signed a grant agreement.
- 14) The Commission's or agency's authorising officer is informed that the coordinator has signed the grant agreement.
- 15) Following a procedure similar to that described in 4) to 11), the **Commission's or agency's authorising officer** signs the grant agreement.
- 16) All other beneficiaries' PLSIGNs are notified that the grant agreement has been signed by the coordinator and the Commission or agency, and that it is ready for them to sign.
- 17) Following the same procedure as that outlined in 4) to 11), **each beneficiary's PLSIGN** signs an **accession form** to the grant agreement.
- 18) The relevant contact persons of the coordinating organisation (CoCo, LEAR) and of the concerned participant (PaCo, LEAR) are notified when an accession form has been signed.

PLSIGNs sign amendments to grant agreements and PFSIGNs sign financial statements, following the same process.

Important links

[Participant Portal](#)

[Documents about appointing a Legal Entity Appointed Representative \(LEAR\)](#)

[H2020 Online Manual: section on roles & access rights](#)

[H2020 annotated model grant agreement](#)

[Guiding video about electronic signature of grant agreements](#)

[Guiding video about H2020 LEAR appointment](#)