

## Partnering with the Graphene Flagship initiative

**Disclaimer:** This document represents work in progress. It is a living document that will be regularly updated as experience is acquired on the selection and integration of partnering projects in the Flagship.

### 1. An introduction to Partnering Projects and Associated Members

The Graphene Flagship (GF) was launched in October 2013 as a ten year-long initiative with a 1 billion Euro budget. During the first 10 years, the Flagship succeeded in taking graphene and related layered materials from the realm of fundamental science to industrial and societal applications, creating a new technology platform that is currently leveraging the advantages of these materials as compared to established materials such as silicon. From the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2023, the *Graphene Flagship initiative* (GF<sub>i</sub>) officially entered into the new Horizon Europe phase.

In this new framework, the continuity of the initiative will be guaranteed by the “Graphene: Europe in the Lead” Coordinating and Support Action (GrapheneEU CSA) project. GrapheneEU will provide key support to the selected RIAs/IAs projects that will form the continuation of the GF initiative and coordinate their common activities in a manner that strengthens the overall efficiency of the initiative, magnifying the impact of the separate actions. More information about the GrapheneEU CSA and the coordinated RIAs/IAs is available on the Graphene Flagship website.<sup>1</sup>

Amongst the tasks of the CSA, alignment with national and regional initiatives in Europe will play a crucial role. In this framework, a new association mechanism will be set up, based on the well-established system in place for the Graphene Flagship H2020 phase, which has attracted over 200 Associated Member organisations under the GF umbrella over the past ten years. Associated members have been crucial participants in the GF activities by bringing complementary technical expertise and supporting the creation of a scientific and technological research community that extends beyond the Graphene Flagship Core Project consortium, thus actively contributing to the overall impact of the GF on the European economy and society.

The new association mechanism will offer the possibility for organisations (industry, SMEs, higher education institutions or research institutes) or projects (funded nationally or through other EU programs) to join the GF<sub>i</sub> as Associated Members (AMs) or Partnering Projects (PPs) *via* the GrapheneEU. The aim of this mechanism is to promote broader exchanges and an inclusive environment within the 2DM community, as well as ensure the continuity of collaborations established during the H2020 phase. Its implementation will reflect the new set-up where RIAs/IAs will be carrying out strategic research activities defined by the EC calls; hence a focus is expected on promoting synergies and mutual benefits, some of which may include expanding the network and an openness to new collaboration opportunities and partnerships. Further research priorities and bottom-up research are expected to be supported *via* other funding mechanisms that will leverage additional national or private funding.

The concept of a Partnering Project (PP) was introduced in the Flagship model to define the principles by which research teams or organisations, which are not part of the CSA or any of the RIA/IA consortia, can be integrated into the Graphene Flagship initiative. The aim is to provide flexible and efficient mechanisms to perform research and innovation activities which are in line with the overall GF<sub>i</sub> objectives and be of mutual benefit to all parties.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://graphene-flagship.eu/>

PPs and their partners who become Associated Members (AMs) of the GFfi (through the CSA GrapheneEU) will bring new knowledge, new competencies, new ideas and new resources to the Graphene Flagship initiative. PPs and AMs are an integral part of the GFfi and, through the collaboration with RIAs/IAs, will contribute to its overall scientific and technological (S&T) agenda by performing research and innovation activities. By becoming part of the Flagship initiative, PP partners gain access to GFfi's information and networking platforms and engage in collaboration with the RIAs/IAs partners and in future planning and research road mapping activities.

The rest of this document provides information on:

- What are Partnering Projects and Associated Members (section 2)
- What are the eligibility requirements for applying to be associated (section 3)
- Which are the selection criteria for the association (section 4)
- What are the application and selection procedures for Partnering Projects and Associated Members (section 5)
- How will Partnering Projects and Associated Members be integrated in the GFfi (section 6)
- Benefits for the associated members of the GFfi (Annex)

## 2. What are Partnering Projects and Associated Members?

**A Partnering Project (PP)** is a research or innovation project whose objectives are relevant to the Graphene Flagship initiative. PPs contribute to roadmapping activities and/or bring in new and complementary research directions and expertise, by performing research, innovation and networking activities in cooperation with the RIAs/IAs coordinated by the CSA.

### Partnering Projects

- may involve one or more entities (e.g., public or private organisations, etc.), i.e., they may be multi-partner collaborative projects or single-partner / single-investigator projects;
- are funded by regional, national or European public research funding bodies or other sources (e.g., private industry, donors, etc.);
- are selected by the GrapheneEU CSA, RIAs and IAs, working in close coordination with national and regional funding agencies and other organisations supporting the PPs and their partner(s);
- can include partners that are already members of the CSA, RIA or IA consortia.

**Associated Members (AM):** Members of a Partnering Project that are not already partners of any of the CSA, RIA or IA projects can become Associated Members (AMs) of the Graphene Flagship initiative. This applies only to those members of a PP that wish to be associated with the GFfi. An organisation that is not part of a specific PP can also become AM (individual AM (iAM)) as far as it comes with an own, publicly or privately funded, research activity contributing to the overall objectives of the GFfi. Examples of such AMs include: a company having an own-funded internal R&D activity, a private or public research institute having a relevant own-funded or publicly-funded R&D activity, etc. Associated Members have to be legal entities based in EU or Associated Countries.

AMs enjoy the same benefits provided by the CSA toward the RIA/IAs, and some benefits of the RIA/IA partners, except for those that involve exchange or exploitation of confidential or proprietary information or results (e.g., intellectual property) or EC funding. An overview of such benefits is provided in the Annex.

PPs and AMs promote the alignment and information flow between the Graphene Flagship initiative and related national and regional activities. They help create synergies between the GFfi and activities receiving funding at regional, national or transnational level, as well as collaborate with the RIA/IA projects, of which they can facilitate the achievement of their S&T objectives.

**All the procedures described in this document apply to all kinds of PPs / AMs as far as they fulfil the conditions described herein.**

### 3. What are the eligibility requirements for applying to be associated?

For becoming **candidate PPs** there are two eligibility requirements:

- i. The projects and their partners have already their own funding or can demonstrate that they will soon have it.
- ii. The projects significantly contribute to the GFi's strategic agenda.

In many cases, PPs will be projects that have already been evaluated and have funding from national or regional funding agencies or other sources. Other natural candidates for PPs may arise from EU-funded projects or national and regional funding initiatives or bottom-up projects within the areas of interest for the Graphene Flagship initiative. See below for the specific case of projects funded under the framework of a Joint Transnational Call (JTC) by the FLAG-ERA ERANET<sup>2</sup> or its follow-up action under Horizon Europe.

For becoming **candidate iAMs**, the organisation has to be involved in an own, publicly or privately funded, research activity that can contribute to the GFi's objectives.

### 4. Which are the selection criteria for the association?

Candidate PPs / AMs are selected based on their level of complementarity and added expertise with respect to the existing competencies and future perspectives of the Graphene Flagship initiative.

**The specific selection criteria are:**

- Relevance of the scientific and technological objectives to the Graphene Flagship initiative;
- Complementarity and added value in terms of scientific, technological or innovation expertise and know-how;
- Potential for spreading excellence and widening participation across Europe.

### 5. What are the application and selection procedures for Partnering Projects and Associated Members?

Candidate PPs and AMs may be identified and invited to apply by:

- Graphene Flagship CSA and RIAs/IAs partners
- European Commission (EC)
- national and regional funding agencies

In addition, members of a science and technology community may also wish to candidate for becoming a PP or an AM on their own initiative. Spontaneous applications are also accepted from organisations that wish to become Associated Members without being part of a specific project (iAMs).

Candidates should apply as described below. For candidate PPs, the application submitted shall indicate all institutions involved in the project that wish to become Associated Members. A **Partnering Project (PP) Leader** (typically the PP's scientific coordinator) is responsible for the preparation and submission of the application.

Members of a candidate PP or AM may **contact the Graphene Flagship Alignment team** prior to the submission of the formal application. The Graphene Flagship Alignment team is the main contact point for obtaining information about the application and association process and can be contacted by email at [graphene-eu@esf.org](mailto:graphene-eu@esf.org).

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<sup>2</sup> Funding through a joint call linking several Member States and Associated Countries, see <http://www.flagera.eu/>

### **Application procedures**

Applications for becoming a PP and AM are submitted via an online form available [online](#) on the Graphene Flagship initiative website. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis and there is no submission deadline.

#### **Each application shall contain information on:**

- (i) The name and contact information of a representative that acts as main contact person on behalf of the candidate PP/AM (the Partnering Project Leaders, Coordinators, company directors, CEOs, ...).
- (ii) A statement on the origin of their application: own initiative / nomination by EC or national funding agency / other. In case of a nomination by an EU or national / regional funding agency, the name of the responsible project officer should be included.
- (iii) Title, source of funding (EC, national, regional, other), duration and total amount of funding of the existing project (in case of PP applications).
- (iv) The motivation for joining the Graphene Flagship initiative.
- (v) A list of the entities that wish to be associated with the GF<sub>i</sub>, with names of Principal Investigators (for PPs only).
- (vi) A description of how the research conducted by the applicants in their project aligns and complements the activities of the RIAs/IAs, and a description of how the applicants will facilitate alignment and information flow with the CSA, RIAs and IAs projects.
- (vii) The thematic focus area or specific RIA/IA where the applicants would like to see their activities integrated.

Applications shall be prepared following the dedicated application form and must contain all the information requested above, necessary for the Graphene Flagship Coordination Board (GFCB)<sup>3</sup> to take a decision.

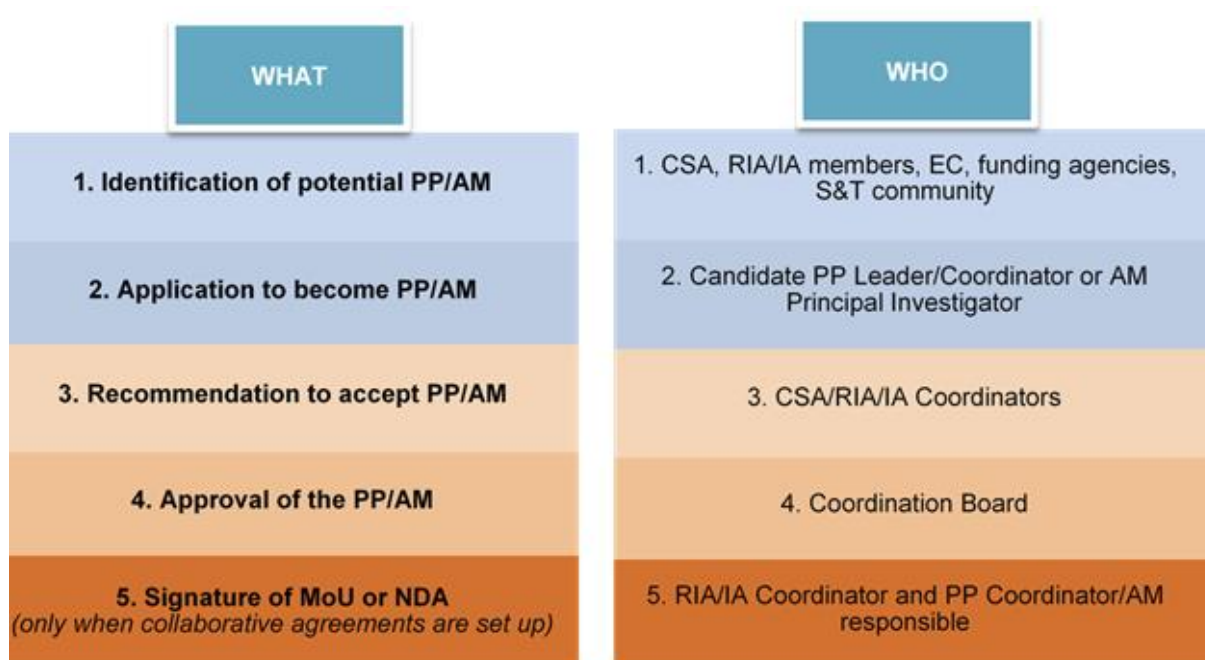
### **Selection Procedure**

The Alignment team is responsible for receiving the applications, coordinating the evaluation process and informing all the relevant parties in due course. Applications are reviewed, according to the specific thematic focus area indicated in the application form, by relevant CSA, RIA or IA representatives, who provide a recommendation to the GFCB on whether the candidate PP/AM should be accepted. In case of nominations by the EC or national funding agencies, the relevant programme manager may also be consulted. Based on the recommendations, the GFCB makes the final decision and approves the PP and the AMs.

Applicants will be informed of the decision by the Graphene Flagship Alignment team by electronic mail, within 60 days after submission.

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<sup>3</sup> The Coordination Board (GFCB) is an implementing governance body of the Graphene Flagship initiative. It is chaired by the GrapheneEU CSA coordinator and includes CSA partners representatives and the coordinators of RIAs/IAs.



If the application is not approved, the applicants will receive a note explaining such decision. Applicants who wish to appeal the decision may contact the GrapheneEU CSA coordinator [csa@graphene-flagship.eu] or the Alignment team [graphene-eu@esf.org] and motivate why they think the decision was erroneous.

### The specific case of Partnering Projects selected from FLAG-ERA Joint Transnational Call on Graphene

All projects that are successful from a FLAG-ERA Joint Transnational Calls (JTC)<sup>2</sup> on Graphene are natural candidates to become PPs of the Graphene Flagship initiative. These projects have provided the information for the association with Graphene Flagship when they submitted their proposal to the JTC. Their potential to become PPs was checked by the evaluators of the JTC through an explicit evaluation criterion. Therefore, successful JTC projects are expected to become PPs of Graphene Flagship. The information they submitted to the JTC for the association with Graphene Flagship is then sent to the Graphene Flagship Alignment team for final consideration by the Graphene Flagship Coordination Board. The feedback of the Graphene Flagship is communicated shortly. Graphene Flagship may raise objection to such association in few, very well justified cases.

## 6. How will Partnering Projects and Associated Members be integrated in the GFfi?

Since the Graphene Flagship initiative is not a legal entity in its own right, it cannot sign agreements on the project level. Therefore, the key association mechanism is through the *Associated Membership*.

Based on their interest and the relevance of their research activities, approved PPs and individual AMs are associated with a main RIA/IA/CSA project.<sup>4</sup> This will not prevent from collaborating with other RIA/IA/CSA projects if a common interest is identified by both parties.

<sup>4</sup> <https://graphene-flagship.eu/about/our-story/how-we-work/>

When a PP has been approved by the Coordination Board, the PP and the CSA Work Package Leader or the RIA/IA coordinator are expected to sign a non-binding *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)*, which by itself does not give any rights or responsibilities for the PP or the CSA, RIA or IA. The *Memorandum of Understanding* document states that the PP is joining the Graphene Flagship initiative and lists the organisations which have been granted the AM status. The MoU can be terminated by either side with written notice.

Once approved, the PPs and the organisations which have been granted the AMs status will gain access to the different information and networking platforms as specified in the Annex and are encouraged to actively engage in science and technology cooperation with the relevant partners of the CSA or RIAs/IAs consortia. This may include, but is not limited to:

- research collaborations in areas of mutual interest and in accordance with the specific grant agreements supporting the respective projects;
- exchange of information, data and material in accordance with the intellectual property agreements in place;
- engaging in networking, road mapping and planning activities;
- identification of future opportunities for collaboration (EU and international);

**Additional collaborative agreements**, such as non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), enabling a deeper collaboration may be established between AMs and some partners of the RIAs/IAs as seen appropriate by the agreeing parties. **The additional collaborative agreements are typically expected to be completed on the level of RIAs/IAs.** If agreed by the relevant partners in the CSA or RIAs/IAs consortia, AMs may be requested to sign a confidentiality undertaking before participating in a particular project activity.

The PPs and their AMs do not have reporting obligations towards the Graphene Flagship initiative, and they need to follow the regular reporting procedures of their relevant funding agencies. In the interest of assessing the overall impact of the GF<sub>i</sub>, the CSA and RIAs/IAs leaders should, however, monitor the progress of activities that involve PPs and AMs and include these in the regular reporting by specifying their contribution to the work plan. In agreement with the PP Coordinator or AMs, this information could be used by the Graphene Flagship Alignment team to provide feedback to the relevant EC or national funding bodies providing funding to the PPs with the purpose of assessing the alignment between the GF<sub>i</sub> and other activities.

Additionally, AMs and PPs may be represented in the GFCB. The PPs/AMs representatives shall be selected *via* a call for expression of interest, that would be set up in due time (i.e., once the association mechanism will be implemented and organisations will be officially affiliated to the GF<sub>i</sub>). Following up on this call, two representatives will be selected to represent the AMs and PPs in the GFCB as non-voting members.



## Annex: Benefits for the Associated Members of the Graphene Flagship

The benefits of an Associated Member are given in the table below.

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Non-Member</b>	<b>Associated Member</b>	<b>Associated Member with additional collaborative agreement</b>	<b>RIA/IA Partner</b>
<i>Participation in open activities</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Publications listed on web page</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Job listings published on web page</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Automatic subscription to newsletter</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Coverage of activities by Flagship Science Writer/Communications Officer</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Included in the Flagship mailing list</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Direct invitation to industrial workshops</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Direct invitation to Flagship conferences and schools (priority access)</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Inclusion of results in Deliverable Reports to the EU</i>	No	Yes <sup>5</sup>	Yes <sup>45</sup>	Yes
<i>Participation in confidential S&amp;T activities</i>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Attendance at RIAs/IAs meetings (upon invitation)</i>	No	No	Yes	Yes

<sup>5</sup> Inclusion of published results by permission only. Work not funded by the RIAs/IAs will be clearly identified.