



CONFIDENTIAL

Call Reference	ERC-2018-PoC_18-04-2018
Topic	ERC Proof of Concept Grant
Action Type	Proof of Concept Grant
Panel Name	POC
Proposal Number	825902
Acronym	RESET
Applicant Name	Jean-Julien AUCOUTURIER
Title	Redefining Communication with Real-time Speech Transformations

Status of the evaluation criteria

1. Excellence (Innovation potential) Does the proposed proof of concept activity greatly help move the output of research towards the initial steps of a process leading to a commercial or societal innovation?	PASS
2. Impact 2.1 Is the project to be taken to proof of concept expected to generate economic and/or societal benefits which are appropriately identified in the proposal? 2.2 Does the proposal indicate a suitable process that is designed to result in a concrete application, including outlining a process of commercialisation or a process of generating social	PASS
3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan) Does the proposal provide a reasonable and acceptable plan of activities against clearly identified objectives and towards establishing the feasibility of the project?	PASS
Has the proposal been awarded a pass mark by a majority of peer reviewers on each of the three evaluation criteria?	YES
Overall, the reviewers consider that the proposal is of good quality and fundable, however not at a sufficiently high position in the ranking order to be included in the main list. The panel would recommend the proposal to be retained for funding in the reserve list with a grant not exceeding 150,000.00 €, if additional budget becomes available.	

REVIEWER COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

1. Excellence (Innovation potential)

Explanation of innovation potential has been done in clear manner. The proof of concept can help move the output of research towards the initial steps of a process leading to a commercial and social innovation. The project proposal shows innovative and distinctive features compared to existing solutions. The new features such as **adding in spoken conversations with appropriate emotional expressivity** are qualified for excellence in innovation potential that could find interested segments on the market.

2. Impact

This project has potential to generate impact to the economy and society. So far, one can see effort in R&D of different companies and researchers with respect to speech technologies. **This industry is still in early stage of development** and there is great potential for improvement. With proposed technology, the work in call centres could be significantly improved as well as the social interaction in hospitals that rely on assistive speech devices. In that sense, economy and society can be affected by this technology. **The impact on economy could have been explained better** but still by emphasizing impact on service industry, it is acceptable for positive evaluation. The IPR and technology transfer plan is clarified. There is strong IPR protection in form of patent protection and plan for transfer of rights in future start-up company exists as well. Industry partners are identified but **letters of intent are missing** which would be a good way to prove existence of interest.

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan)

The project plan with risk and contingency plan has been done in acceptable manner. Activities will be conducted by persons who are well qualified for the purpose. The budget is reasonable as well and should be sufficient to support planned activities.

Reviewer 2

1. Excellence (Innovation potential)

The proposal arises from an ERC Frontier Research award. It moves forward the technical development of the technology from a demonstration model towards creation of a prototype but this is not accompanied by convincing evidence of plans for **a commercialisation strategy that would ensure the technology reached the necessary level of market awareness** to result in a commercial innovation.

2. Impact

As presented, the proposal is intended to result in societal benefits by improving interactions between people; these benefits are clearly and succinctly described in quite aspirational terms **without sufficient evidence to justify the aspirations**. For example; the expectation that calls to emergency services operators **will be handled more attentively**. A commercial route to market which would result in commercial benefits is also envisaged although there is a lack of detail on how this would be achieved. **The commercial benefits as presented are generic and relate to the size of the overall sectors and expected growth of those and there is a lack of detail on the expected impact of the specific technology on the identified sectors**. The commercialisation strategy would need to be further described as regards the plans to engage with the three sectors identified as potential end-users. The proposal lists possible end users and identifies those that have been approached but there is a **lack of detail on both the level of market interest following such approaches** and the routes and methods by which potential end users will be engaged. The plans to assess and validate the outcomes do not demonstrate well a plan to engage commercial end users - the market - in evaluating and validating the technology. The IPR strategy is to establish a new company and three different business models are presented but there is a lack of detail on how plans will be developed. For example how the decisions will be made about assessing the commercial models and implementing those as well as how the

company will be sustainable.

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan)

The plan of activities does not demonstrate sufficient engagement with the different target sectors identified to test and validate the technology and is therefore not convincing. The risks identified are significant - for example that the targeted companies do not wish to engage on a commercial basis - and the mitigation is not adequate to address the seriousness of the risks. **It is recommended that the applicant considers engaging as partners in the delivery of the proposal and the development of the technology in a commercial sphere at least one commercial company or major end user from each target sector.**

The core team has technical expertise but as presented, lacks evidence of the commercial or entrepreneurial expertise required to take a research outcome at present a demonstration model through to a level of technology, a prototype that would sustain a new company and introduce a new product to the markets identified. The budget reflects the expected technical costs but **does not identify well the costs of the engagement with the market and the establishment of a new company.**

Reviewer 3

1. Excellence (Innovation potential)

The project has the aim to refine/develop further the findings of the ERC project CREAM mainly for commercial applications. This is the logical next step to convert the gained knowledge to become an innovation. It shows a clear differentiation to other speech related applications but misses to state clearly the innovativeness to other solutions, which might be in a closer technical field.

2. Impact

The proposal shows the potential of the project to generate benefits. **The applicant has a clear vision of commercialization** yet and named plans to achieve this target. The applicant sufficiently described plans reporting, the IPR-activities and establishing partnerships with various companies. However a detailed competitor analyses is highly recommended!

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan)

The proposal includes a detailed overview of all activities with clear objectives, timeframe and risk assessment. The project staff seems to be qualified for carrying out the project. Also the budgeting appears to be adequate.

Reviewer 4

1. Excellence (Innovation potential)

The proposed project aims at bringing to market an innovative voice-transformation software technology, adding **emotional expressivity to conversations that could be applied to different service industries** such as call-centres, video games and speech-based medical devices. A preliminary analysis shows that the proposed technology is innovative compared to existing solutions. The PoC funding will help taking the technology to a higher TRL and building a business case that may lead to a commercial and social innovation.

2. Impact

The new voice-transformation software technology will address three specific markets for which quantitative estimations have been provided (although no source has been cited). However, considering the type of innovation proposed, **one of the project challenges will be to assess its exploitation potential in terms of market need.** The value creation process, based on valorising IP through creation of a start-up company, might be considered as an appropriate strategy, depending on the outcome of the market analysis and user testing. The plan for technical testing and validation of the technology is clear and detailed. The IPR position

and strategy are consistent with the innovation proposed and preliminary business models have been identified. Contacts are already in place with potential industrial partners in the target markets.

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan)

The work plan is very well detailed and balanced between technical and business development activities. It is useful that a task on societal and ethical acceptability is included in the plan in order to address one of the major project risks. A Gantt chart, deliverables and milestones are included in the plan, to allow for an effective project monitoring. A convincing risk and contingency plan is provided. The project team is multidisciplinary, including both scientists and business development professionals, and well qualified for the implementation of the project. The scientific team can rely on the support of technology transfer company with consolidated experience in innovation. The budget is very well detailed and adequate justification for all allocated costs is provided.

Reviewer 5

1. Excellence (Innovation potential)

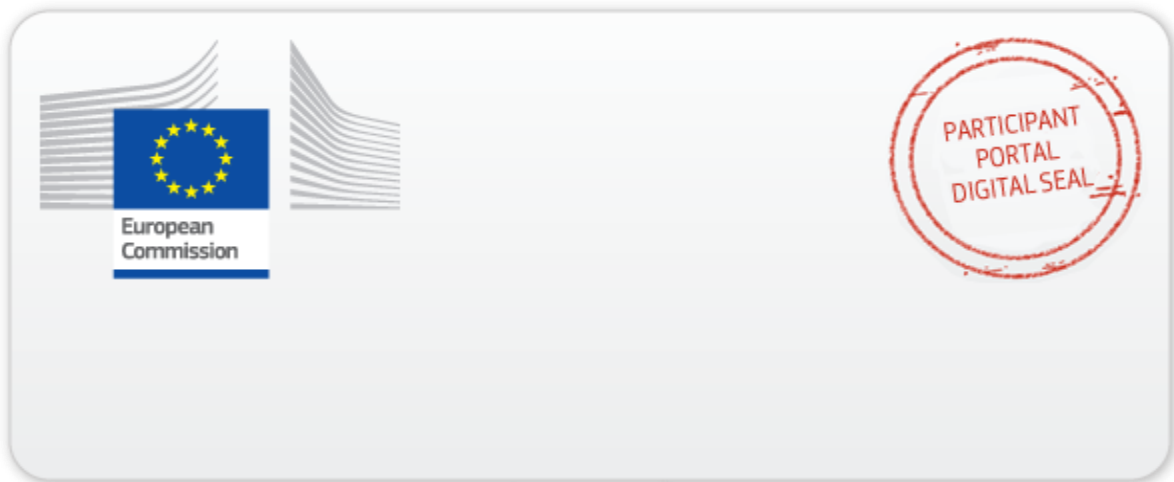
This proposal does not appear truly to add value to existing technology.

2. Impact

The impact does not seem to be realistic. It is hard to imagine serious human or scientific problems which it would address.

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan)

The plan of action is well laid out.



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