



HORIZON EUROPE

THE EU
RESEARCH & INNOVATION
PROGRAMME

2021 – 2027

HORIZON EUROPE
PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Standard Briefing

| HISTORY OF CHANGES | | |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| VERSION | PUBLICATION DATE | CHANGE |
| 1.0 | 06.05.2021 | Original version |
| 2.0 | 25.06.2021 | Adaptation to the approach on the 'Do no significant harm principle'. Some minor formatting changes. |
| | | |

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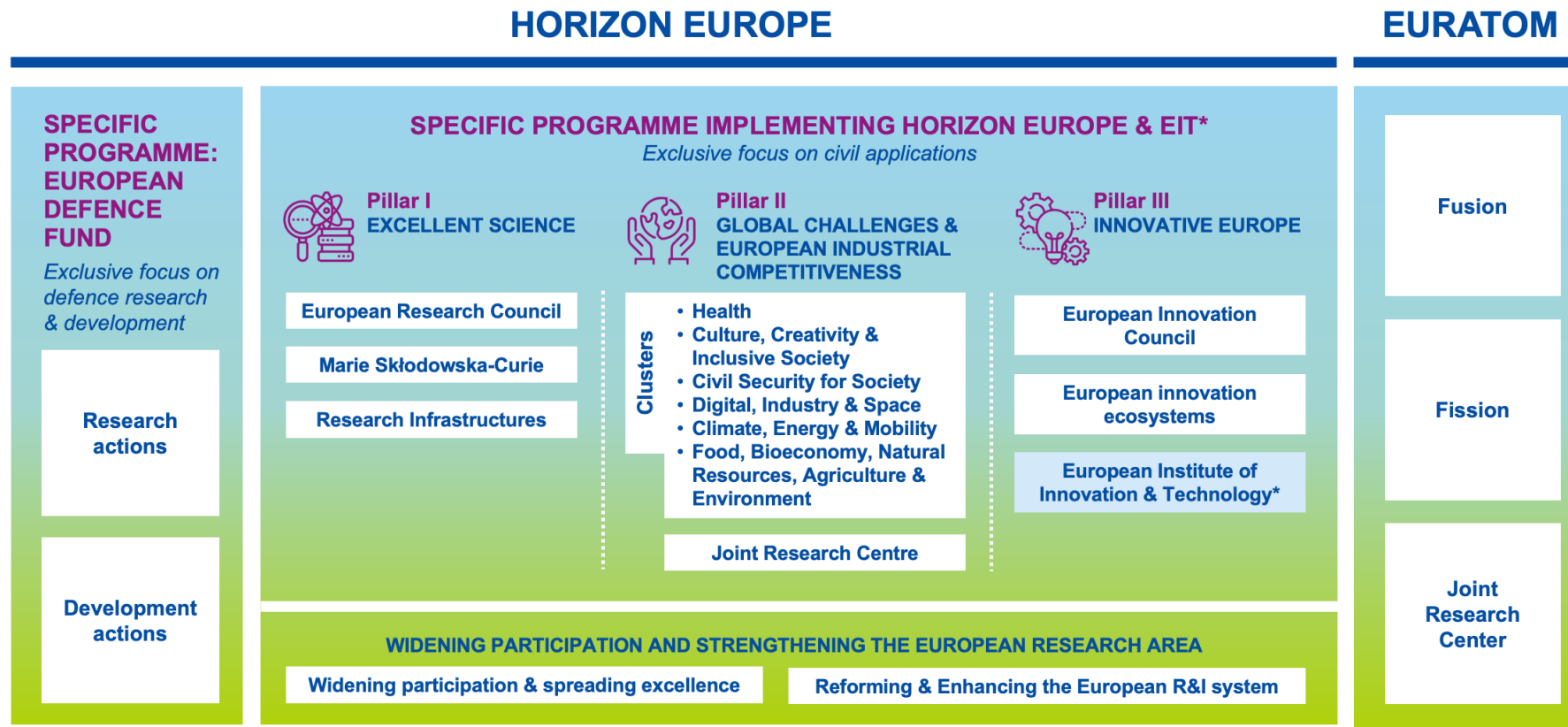
HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

HORIZON EUROPE: AN EU R&I PROGRAMME



About Horizon Europe

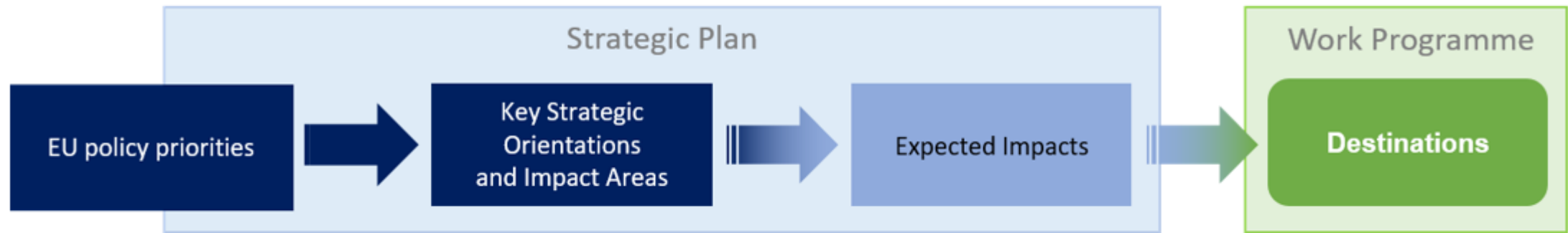
Horizon Europe supports research and innovation through Work Programmes, which set out funding opportunities for research and innovation activities.



* The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is not part of the Specific Programme

Horizon Europe delivers on EU policy priorities

From EU priorities to Work Programme Destinations



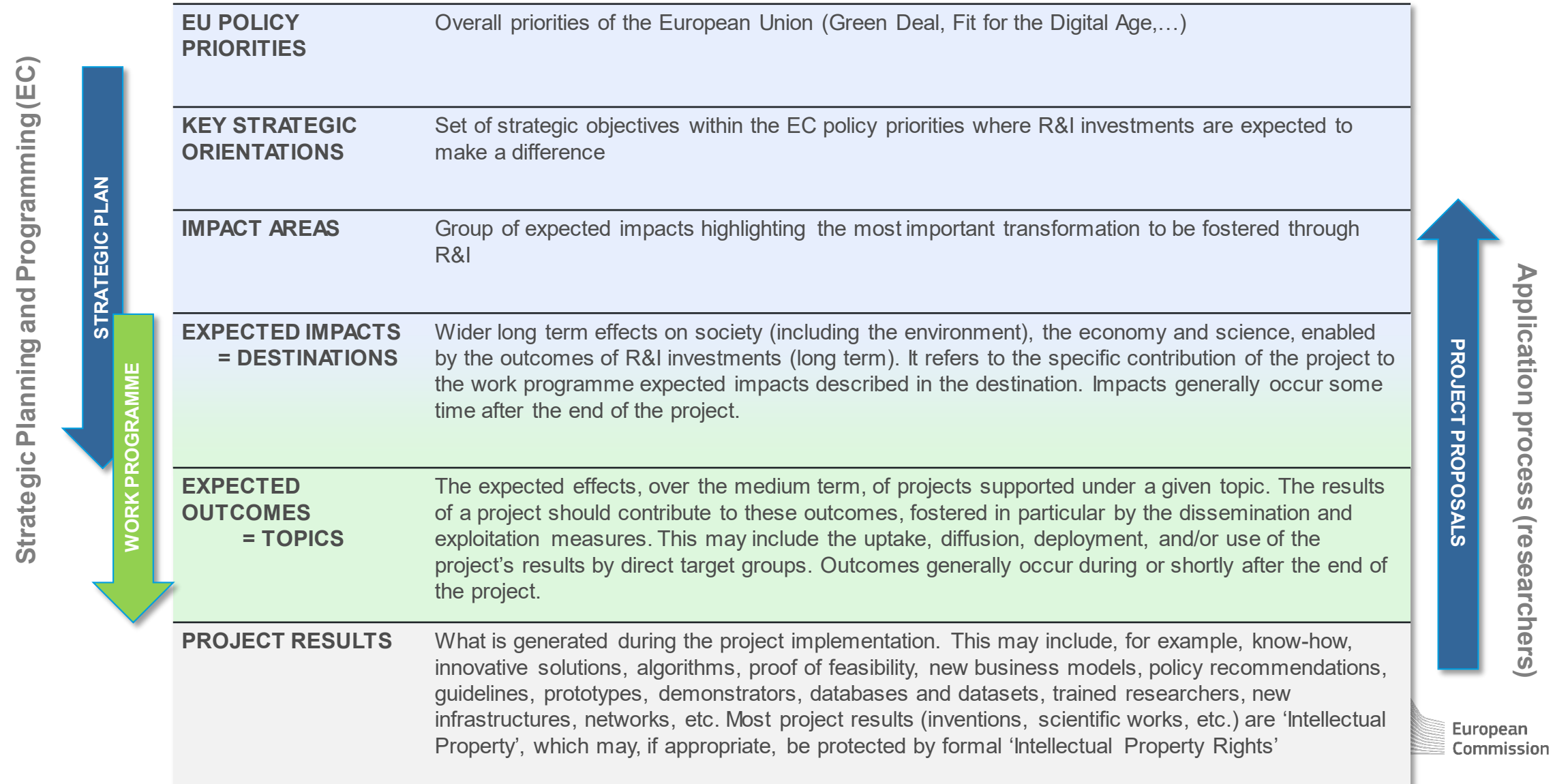
- The **strategic plan** sets out strategic orientations and impacts areas for research and innovation investments under Horizon Europe for **four years** (first HE strategic plan covers the period 2021-2024). The **key strategic orientations** and **impact areas** are formulated on the basis of **expected impacts**.
- Each expected impact is targeted via dedicated packages of actions in the work programme. These are termed **destinations**, because they indicate both the specific direction and the ultimate point of arrival of the projects to be supported through Horizon Europe.
- The **work programmes** (WPs) include the research and innovation activities to be funded under Horizon Europe for **two years** (first HE WP covers the period 2021-2022). ERC and EIC WPs will be annual.

N.B. This graphic applies primarily to the Clusters under Pillar II. The expected impacts and Destinations in other work programme parts are not derived directly from the Strategic Plan.

Horizon Europe Work Programme

- Horizon Europe is implemented through **work programmes** which set out funding opportunities mainly through **calls for proposals**.
- A call for proposal will normally contain one or more **topics** with a common deadline. The budget of the call is distributed among topics. Where topics share a budget envelope, proposals for these topics will be competing against each other and will result in a single ranking list.
- Applicants **apply to a specific call and topic**.
- Each topic to which applicants can apply will include:
 - The topic **scope**
 - The topic **expected outcome**
 - The **expected impact** of the destination to which the topic belongs
 - The **type of action**
 - The topic **budget** (or budget shared by group of topics)

Link between policy priorities and project results





Glossary of terms

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impacts | Wider long term effects on society (including the environment), the economy and science, enabled by the outcomes of R&I investments (long term). It refers to the specific contribution of the project to the work programme expected impacts described in the destination. Impacts generally occur some time after the end of the project. |
| Objectives | The goals of the work performed within the project, in terms of its research and innovation content. This will be translated into the project's results. These may range from tackling specific research questions, demonstrating the feasibility of an innovation, sharing knowledge among stakeholders on specific issues. The nature of the objectives will depend on the type of action, and the scope of the topic. |
| Outcomes | The expected effects, over the medium term, of projects supported under a given topic. The results of a project should contribute to these outcomes, fostered in particular by the dissemination and exploitation measures. This may include the uptake, diffusion, deployment, and/or use of the project's results by direct target groups. Outcomes generally occur during or shortly after the end of the project. |
| Pathway to impact | Logical steps towards the achievement of the expected impacts of the project over time, in particular beyond the duration of a project. A pathway begins with the projects' results, to their dissemination, exploitation and communication, contributing to the expected outcomes in the work programme topic, and ultimately to the wider scientific, economic and societal impacts of the work programme destination. |
| Research output | Results generated by the action to which access can be given in the form of scientific publications, data or other engineered outcomes and processes such as software, algorithms, protocols and electronic notebooks. |
| Results | What is generated during the project implementation. This may include, for example, know-how, innovative solutions, algorithms, proof of feasibility, new business models, policy recommendations, guidelines, prototypes, demonstrators, databases and datasets, trained researchers, new infrastructures, networks, etc. Most project results (inventions, scientific works, etc.) are 'Intellectual Property', which may, if appropriate, be protected by formal 'Intellectual Property Rights'. |

HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE





Who is eligible for funding?



EU COUNTRIES

- Member States (MS) including their outermost regions.
- The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the MS.



NON-EU COUNTRIES

- Countries associated to Horizon Europe (AC).
- Low and middle income countries: See [HE Programme Guide](#).
- Other countries when announced in the call or exceptionally if their participation is essential.



SPECIFIC CASES

- Affiliated entities established in countries eligible for funding.
- EU bodies
- International organisations (IO):
 - International European research organisations are eligible for funding.
 - Other IO are not eligible (only exceptionally if participation is essential)
 - IO in a MS or AC are eligible for funding for Training and mobility actions and when announced in the call conditions.



Activities eligible for funding

Eligible activities are the ones described in the call and topic conditions. The types of action include different activities eligible for funding.

Activities must **focus exclusively on civil applications** and **must not**:

- aim at human cloning for reproductive purposes;
- intend to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (except for research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed);
- intend to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research, or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer;
- lead to the destruction of human embryos.



Standard evaluation process

Receipt of proposals

Admissibility/eligibility check

Allocation of proposals to evaluators

Individual evaluation

Experts assess proposals **individually**.

Minimum of three experts per proposal (but often more than three).

Consensus group

All individual experts discuss together to agree on a **common position**, including comments and scores for each proposal.

Panel review

The panel of experts reach an **agreement** on the scores and comments for all proposals within a call, checking **consistency across the evaluations**.

if necessary, resolve cases where evaluators were unable to agree.

Rank the proposals with the same score

Finalisation

The Commission/Agency reviews the results of the experts' evaluation and puts together the **final ranking list**.



Admissibility, eligibility checks and additional requirements

Admissibility is checked by EU staff.

- Applications must be **complete** and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents.
- Applications must be **readable, accessible and printable**.
- Applications must include a **plan for the exploitation and dissemination of results including communication activities** (n/a for applications at the first stage of two-stage procedures or unless otherwise provided in the specific call conditions).
- Specific **page limits** per type of action normally apply (specified in the topic conditions and controlled by IT tool).

Eligibility is checked by EU staff. If you spot an issue, please inform the EU staff.

- Eligible activities are the ones described in the call conditions.
- Minimum number of partners as set out in the call conditions (at least one independent legal entity established in a MS, and, at least two other independent legal entities established either in a MS or AC).
- For calls with deadlines in 2022 and onwards participants that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments from Members States and Associated countries must have a gender equality plan in place.
- Other criteria may apply on a call-by-call basis as set out in the call conditions. In few cases, the call conditions in the topic can modify the interpretation of criteria.



Evaluation (award) criteria

Three evaluation criteria

‘**Excellence**’, ‘**Impact**’ and ‘**Quality and efficiency of the implementation**’.

(Only one evaluation criterion for ERC - Excellence)

- Evaluation criteria are **adapted** to each **type of action**, as specified in the WP
- Each criterion includes the ‘**aspects to be taken into account**’. The same aspect is not included in different criteria, so it is not assessed twice.
- **Open Science** practices are assessed as part of the scientific methodology in the excellence criterion.

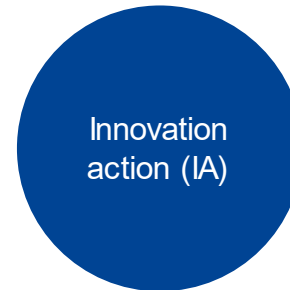


Evaluation criteria (RIAs and IAs)



Activities to establish new knowledge or to explore the feasibility of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution.

This may include basic and applied research, technology development and integration, testing, demonstration and validation of a small-scale prototype in a laboratory or simulated environment.



Activities to produce plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services.

These activities may include prototyping, testing, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication.

EXCELLENCE

- ✓ Clarity and pertinence of the **project's objectives**, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state-of-the-art.
- ✓ Soundness of the proposed **methodology**, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, interdisciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the **gender dimension** in research and innovation content, and the quality of **open science practices** including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.

IMPACT

- ✓ Credibility of the **pathways** to achieve the expected **outcomes and impacts** specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project.
- ✓ Suitability and quality of the **measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts**, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

- ✓ Quality and effectiveness of the **work plan**, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.
- ✓ Capacity and role of each **participant**, and extent to which the **consortium** as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

Proposals aspects are assessed to the extent that the proposed work is within the scope of the work programme topic



Evaluation criteria (CSAs)

Coordination and support actions (CSA)

Activities that contribute to the objectives of Horizon Europe. This excludes R&I activities, except those carried out under the 'Widening participation and spreading excellence' component of the programme (part of 'Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area').

Also eligible are bottom-up coordination actions which promote cooperation between legal entities from Member States and Associated Countries to strengthen the European Research Area, and which receive no EU co-funding for research activities.

EXCELLENCE

- ✓ Clarity and pertinence of the **project's objectives**.
- ✓ Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures, including soundness of methodology.

IMPACT

- ✓ Credibility of the **pathways** to achieve the expected **outcomes and impacts** specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project.
- ✓ Suitability and quality of the **measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts**, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

- ✓ Quality and effectiveness of the **work plan**, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.
- ✓ Capacity and role of each **participant**, and extent to which the **consortium** as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

Proposals aspects are assessed to the extent that the proposed work is within the scope of the work programme topic



Evaluation criteria (CoFund)

Programme
co-fund
actions
(CoFund)

A programme of activities established or implemented by legal entities managing or funding R&I programmes, other than EU funding bodies. Such a programme of activities may support: networking and coordination; research; innovation; pilot actions; innovation and market deployment; training and mobility; awareness raising and communication; and dissemination and exploitation.

It may also provide any relevant financial support, such as grants, prizes and procurement, as well as Horizon Europe blended finance¹³ or a combination thereof. The actions may be implemented by the beneficiaries directly or by providing financial support to third parties.

EXCELLENCE

- ✓ Clarity and pertinence of the **project's objectives**, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state-of-the-art.
- ✓ Soundness of the proposed **methodology**, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, interdisciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the **gender dimension** in research and innovation content, and the quality of **open science practices** including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.

IMPACT

- ✓ Credibility of the **pathways** to achieve the expected **outcomes and impacts** specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project.
- ✓ Suitability and quality of the **measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts**, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

- ✓ Quality and effectiveness of the **work plan**, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.
- ✓ Capacity and role of each **participant**, and extent to which the **consortium** as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

Proposals aspects are assessed to the extent that the proposed work is within the scope of the work programme topic



Evaluation criteria (PCPs and PPIs)

Pre-commercial procurement actions/ (PCP)

Activities that aim to help a transnational buyers' group to strengthen the public procurement of research, development, validation and, possibly, the first deployment of new solutions that can significantly improve quality and efficiency in areas of public interest, while opening market opportunities for industry and researchers active in Europe.

Eligible activities include the preparation, management and follow-up, under the coordination of a lead procurer, of one joint PCP and additional activities to embed the PCP into a wider set of demand-side activities.

Public procurement of innovative solutions actions (PPI)

Activities that aim to strengthen the ability of a transnational buyers' group to deploy innovative solutions early by overcoming the fragmentation of demand for such solutions and sharing the risks and costs of acting as early adopters, while opening market opportunities for industry.

Eligible activities include preparing and implementing, under the coordination of a lead procurer, one joint or several coordinated PPI by the buyers' group and additional activities to embed the PPI into a wider set of demand-side activities.

EXCELLENCE

- ✓ Clarity and pertinence of the **objectives**, and the extent to which they are ambitious, and go beyond the state-of-the-art in terms of the degree of innovation that is needed to satisfy the procurement need.
- ✓ Soundness of the proposed **methodology**, taking into account the underlying concepts and assumptions.

IMPACT

- ✓ Credibility of the **pathways** to achieve the expected **outcomes and impacts** specified in the work programme.
- ✓ Suitability and quality of the **measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts**, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation (*) plan, including communication activities.

(*) For PCP actions and PPI actions, the exploitation of results by the beneficiaries means primarily the use that is made of the innovative solutions by the procurers/end-users. The manufacturing and sale of the innovative solutions are performed by the suppliers of the solutions, which are not beneficiaries but subcontractors.

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

- ✓ Quality and effectiveness of the **work plan**, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.
- ✓ Capacity and role of each **participant**, and extent to which the **consortium** as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

Proposals aspects are assessed to the extent that the proposed work is within the scope of the work programme topic

HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS





The role of independent experts

As an independent expert:

- You are **responsible for carrying out the evaluation of the proposals yourself** and you are **not allowed to delegate the work** to another person!
- You must close reports in the electronic system **within a given deadline**.
 - This is part of your contractual obligations!
 - The allowance/expenses you claim may be reduced or rejected otherwise.
- Significant funding decisions will be made on the basis of your assessment.
- If you suspect any form of **misconduct** (e.g. plagiarism, double funding), **please report** this to EU staff.
- You do not need to comment on **ethics**, as proposals that are **successful** in this scientific evaluation will undergo an ethics **review**.



Guiding principles

Independence

- You are evaluating in a personal capacity.
- You represent neither your employer, nor your country!

Impartiality

- You must treat all proposals equally and evaluate them impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants.

Objectivity

- You evaluate each proposal as submitted, meaning on its own merit, not its potential if certain changes were to be made.

Accuracy

- You make your judgment against the official evaluation criteria and the call or topic the proposal addresses and nothing else.

Consistency

- You apply the same standard of judgment to all proposals



Confidentiality

You must:

- **Not discuss evaluation matters** (e.g. content of proposals, evaluation results or opinions of fellow experts) with anyone, including:
 - Other experts or EU staff or any other person (e.g. colleagues, students...) not directly involved in the evaluation of the proposal.
 - **The sole exception:** Your fellow experts who are evaluating the same proposal in a consensus group or Panel review.
- **Not contact partners** in the consortium, sub-contractors or any third parties.
- **Not disclose names** of your fellow experts.
- **Maintain confidentiality of documents, paper or electronic**, at all times and wherever you do your evaluation work (on-site or remotely).
 - Please take nothing away from the evaluation building (be it paper or electronic).
 - Return, destroy or delete all confidential documents, paper or electronic, upon completing your work, as instructed.



Conflicts of interest

You have a COI if you:

Were involved in the preparation of the proposal.

Stand to benefit directly/indirectly, if the proposal is successful or fails.

Have a close family/personal relationship with any person representing an applicant legal entity.

Are a director/trustee/partner of an applicant or involved in the management of an applicant's organisation.

Are employed or contracted by an applicant or a named subcontractor.

Are a member of an Advisory Group or Programme Committee in an area related to the call in question.

Are a National Contact Point or are directly working for the Enterprise Europe Network.

Are involved in a competing proposal.



Conflicts of interest



You must inform the Commission/Agency/JU as soon as you become aware of a COI before the signature of the contract, upon receipt of proposals, or during the course of your work.

If there is a COI for a certain proposal you cannot evaluate it **neither individually, nor in the consensus group, nor in the panel review.**

- The EU services will determine if there is a COI on a case-by-case basis and decide the course of action to follow.
- **If you knowingly hide a COI**, you will be excluded from the evaluation and your work declared **null and void**.
 - The allowance/expenses you claimed may be reduced, rejected or recovered.
 - Your contract may be **terminated**.

COI rules are listed in the **Code of Conduct** annexed to the expert contract

HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

HOW TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS





Individual evaluation

- Read the proposal and evaluate it against the evaluation criteria, without discussing it with anybody else and as submitted and not on its potential if certain changes were to be made.
- Complete an Individual Evaluation Report (IER).
 - Evaluate each proposal as submitted and not on its potential if certain changes were to be made.
 - If you identify shortcomings (other than minor ones and obvious clerical errors), reflect those in a lower score for the relevant criterion. Proposals with significant weaknesses that prevent the project from achieving its objectives or with resources being seriously over-estimated must not receive above-threshold scores.
 - Provide comments and scores for all evaluation criteria (scores must match comments).
 - Explain shortcomings, but do not make recommendations (e.g. no additional partners, work packages, resource cuts).
 - Sign and submit the form in the electronic system.



Proposal scoring, thresholds and weighting

- Evaluation scores are awarded for the criteria, and not for the different aspects in each criterion.
- You provide a score in the range from 0-5 to each criterion based on your comments. Maximum score for a proposal is 15.
 - The whole range of scores should be used. Use steps of 0.5.
 - Scores must pass the **individual threshold AND the overall threshold** if a proposal is to be considered for funding within the limits of the available call budget.
- Thresholds apply to individual criteria and to the total score. The default threshold for individual criteria is 3 and the default overall threshold is 10 (unless specified otherwise in the WP).

For the **first stage of a two-stage procedure**, you only **evaluate the criteria Excellence and Impact**. The **threshold for both individual criteria is 4**.

The level of **overall threshold** will be set at a level that ensures the total requested budget of proposals admitted to stage 2 is as close as possible to **three times the available budget**, and not less than two and a half times the available budget.

- **Weighting:** scores are normally NOT weighted. Weighting is used for some types of actions — and only for the ranking (not to determine if the proposal passed the thresholds).
- Specific calls or topics may have different rules regarding thresholds and weighting.
- For **Innovation actions**, the criterion **Impact** is given a **weight of 1.5** to determine the ranking.



Interpretation of scores

0

The proposal **fails to address the criterion** or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1

Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2

Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3

Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4

Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5

Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.



Evaluating the excellence criterion (1/2)

Assess the project's objectives:

- Are they clear and pertinent to the topic?
- Are they measurable and verifiable?
- Are they realistically achievable?
- Is the proposed work ambitious and goes beyond the state-of-the-art?
- Does the proposal include ground-breaking R&I, novel concepts and approaches, new products, services or business and organisational models?
- Is the R&I maturity of the proposed work in line with the topic description?

Please bear in mind that advances beyond the state of the art must be interpreted in the light of the positioning of the project. For example, expectations will not be the same for RIAs at lower TRL, compared with Innovation Actions at high TRLs.

Following questions are adapted to RIA and IA type of actions (ToA). Similar questions will be asked for other ToAs, in line with the instructions in the specific applications forms.



Evaluating the excellence criterion (2/2)

Following questions are adapted to RIA and IA type of actions (ToA). Similar questions will be asked for other ToAs, in line with the instructions in the specific applications forms.

Assess the scientific methodology:

- Is the scientific methodology (i.e. the concepts, models and assumptions that underpin the work) clear and sound?
- Is it clear how expertise and methods from different disciplines will be brought together and integrated in pursuit of the objectives? if applicants justify that an inter-disciplinary approach is unnecessary, is it credible?
- Has the gender dimension in research and innovation content been properly taken into account?
- Are open science practices implemented as an integral part of the proposed methodology?
- Is the research data management properly addressed?
- For topics indicating the need for the integration of social sciences and humanities, is the role of these disciplines properly addressed?



Open Science

Open Science

Open science is an approach based on open cooperative work and systematic sharing of knowledge and tools as early and widely as possible in the process, including active engagement of society.

Open science practices include:

- Early and open sharing of research (for example through preregistration, registered reports, pre-prints, or crowd-sourcing).
- Research output management including research data management (RDM).
- Measures to ensure reproducibility of research outputs.
- Providing open access to research outputs (e.g. publications, data, software, models, algorithms, and workflows) through deposition in trusted repositories.
- Participation in open peer review.
- Involving all relevant knowledge actors including citizens, civil society and end users in the co-creation of R&I agendas and contents (such as citizen science).

Mandatory OS practices

- **Mandatory in all calls:** Open access to publications; RDM in line with the FAIR principles including data management plans; open access to research data unless exceptions apply ('as open as possible as closed as necessary'); access and/or information to research outputs and tools/instruments for validating conclusions of scientific publications and validating/re-using data.
- Additional obligations specific to certain work programme topics.

Reflect both in lower score when not sufficiently addressed

Recommended OS practices

- All open science practices beyond mandatory

Evaluate positively when sufficiently addressed

When OS practices (mandatory and recommended) are duly justified as not appropriate for the project, do not lower score for not addressing those practices

Detailed guidance for proposers and evaluators in the HE Programme Guide



Gender dimension in R&I content

Gender dimension

Addressing the gender dimension in research and innovation entails taking into account sex and gender in the whole research & innovation process.

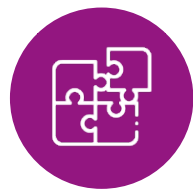
Under Horizon Europe the **integration of the gender dimension** into R&I content is **mandatory**, unless it is explicitly mentioned in the topic description as for example:

“In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.”

Why is gender dimension important? It brings added value of research in terms of excellence, rigor, reproducibility, creativity and business opportunities It enhances the societal relevance of research and innovation

- Why do we observe differences between women and men in infection levels and mortality rates in the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Does it make sense to study cardiovascular diseases only on male animals and on men, or osteoporosis only on women?
- Does it make sense to design car safety equipment only on the basis of male body standards?
- Is it responsible to develop AI products that spread gender and racial biases due to a lack of diversity in the data used in training AI applications?
- Is it normal that household travel surveys, and thus mobility analysis and transport planning, underrate trips performed as part of caring work?
- Did you know that pheromones given off by men experimenters, but not women, induce a stress response in laboratory mice sufficient to trigger pain relief?
- Did you know that climate change is affecting sex determination in a number of marine species and that certain populations are now at risk of extinction?

Detailed guidance for evaluators and proposers is provided in the Horizon Europe Programme Guide



Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)

Social Sciences and Humanities

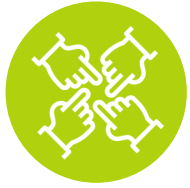
Assessing the effective contribution of social science and humanities disciplines and expertise as part of the scientific methodology of the project.

When the **integration of SSH is required**, applicants have to show the roles of these disciplines or provide a justification if they consider that it is not relevant for their project. A proposal without a sufficient contribution/integration of SSH research and competences will receive a lower evaluation score.

Why integrating social sciences and humanity matters?

Many societal challenges that need to be addressed through research and innovation are too complex to be overcome by a single scientific discipline. Technical solutions are often preconditions for new policy outcomes, but in themselves insufficient to have a meaningful impact. The lasting societal impacts that policy-makers seek are often equally reliant on insights from social sciences and the humanities. A few examples:

- **Social sciences** (law, ethics, psychology, political sciences...) are an essential component of the research responses to public health emergencies.
- **Economics and political science** are major components of projects focusing on socio-economic evaluation of climate-change impact.
- **Psychology, cultural considerations, ethics and religion** are essential to improve the support to palliative care patients.
- **Linguistics, cultural studies and ethics** are an important part of projects aiming to develop AI enhanced robotic system and improve human/robot interaction.
- **Economics and social sciences** are essential to devise effective measures of recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic.



Do no significant harm principle (DNSH)

European Green Deal

In line with the European Green Deal objectives, economic activities should not make a significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives (EU Taxonomy Regulation)

- Applicants **can refer to the DNSH principle** when presenting their research methodology and the expected impacts of the project, to show that their project will not carry out activities that make a significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives of the EU Taxonomy Regulation.
- However, evaluators **will not score applications in relation to their compliance with the DNSH principle** unless explicitly stated in the work programme (currently, this is the case only for actions in the European Innovation Council Work Programme 2021).

The six environmental objectives :



Climate change mitigation



Sustainable use & protection of water & marine resources



Pollution prevention & control



Climate change adaptation



Transition to a circular economy



Protection and restoration of biodiversity & ecosystems



Evaluating the impact criterion (1/2)

Following questions are adapted to RIA and IA type of actions (ToA). Similar questions will be asked for other ToAs, in line with the instructions in the specific applications forms.

Assess the proposed pathways towards impact:

- Is the contribution of the project towards the 1) expected outcomes of the topic and 2) the wider impacts, in the longer term, as specified in the respective destinations of the WP, credible?
- Are potential barriers to the expected outcomes and impacts identified (i.e. other R&I work within and beyond Horizon Europe; regulatory environment; targeted markets; user behavior), and mitigation measures proposed? Is any potential negative environmental outcome or impact (including when expected results are brought at scale, such as at commercial level) identified? Is the management of the potential negative impacts properly described?
- Are the scale and significance of the project's contribution to the expected outcomes and impacts estimated and quantified (including baselines, benchmarks and assumptions used for those estimates)?
 - Scale' refers to how widespread the outcomes and impacts are likely to be. For example, in terms of the size of the target group, or the proportion of that group, that should benefit over time;
 - 'Significance' refers to the importance, or value, of those benefits. For example, number of additional healthy life years; efficiency savings in energy supply.



Evaluating the impact criterion (2/2)

Following questions are adapted to RIA and IA type of actions (ToA). Similar questions will be asked for other ToAs, in line with the instructions in the specific applications forms.

Assess the measures to maximise impact –
Dissemination, exploitation and communication :

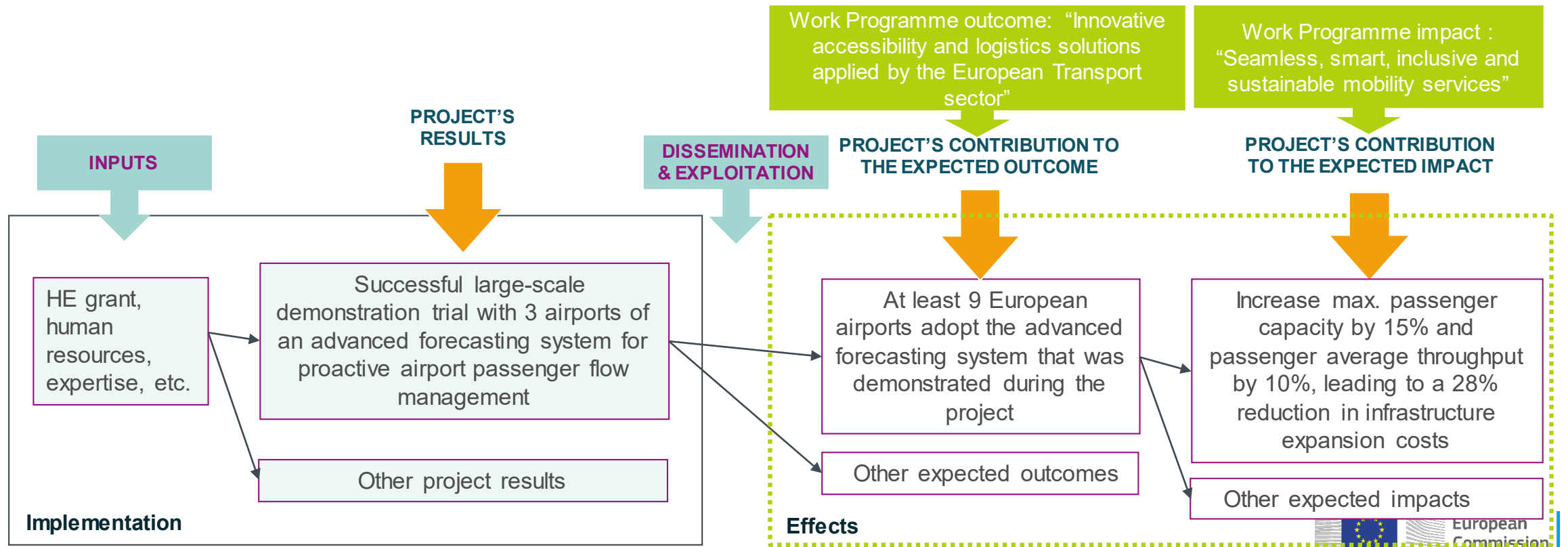
- Are the proposed dissemination, exploitation and communication measures suitable for the project and of good quality? All measures should be proportionate to the scale of the project, and should contain concrete actions to be implemented both during and after the end of the project.
- Are the target groups (e.g. scientific community, end users, financial actors, public at large) for these measures identified?
- Is the strategy for the management of intellectual property properly outlined and suitable to support exploitation of results?
 - If exploitation is expected primarily in non-associated third countries, is it properly justified how that exploitation is still in the Union's interest?

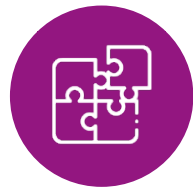


How applicants describe the impact

Project's pathway towards impact

...by thinking about the specific contribution the project can make to the expected outcomes and impacts set out in the Work Programme.





Management of intellectual property (IP)

*Each Horizon Europe beneficiary shall use its best efforts to **exploit the results it owns**, or to have them exploited by another legal entity, in particular through the transfer and licensing of results. In this respect beneficiaries are required to **adequately protect their results – if possible and justified** – taking account of possible prospects for commercial exploitation and any other legitimate interest.*

The provision of a **results ownership list** is mandatory at the end of a project.

The strategy for IP management in a proposal

- Should be comprehensive and feasible and should include protection measures whenever relevant.
- Should be commensurate with the described pathways to outcomes and impacts and therefore underpins the ‘credibility’ of these pathways.
- Should consider ‘freedom to operate’ regarding the background owned by consortium members and/or third parties outside the consortium.
- Should give due thought to balancing between publication of results and plans to protect IP, e.g. in terms of timing the respective activities, involvement of IP experts.
- If exploitation is expected primarily in non-associated third countries, it must include justifications on how that exploitation is still in the Union’s interest.
- if required in the call conditions, it must consider additional exploitation obligations in relation to IP.



Evaluating the Quality of implementation (1/2)

Following questions are adapted to RIA and IA type of actions (ToA). Similar questions will be asked for other ToAs, in line with the instructions in the specific applications forms.

Assess the proposed work plan, and the effort and resources:

- Is the work plan of good quality and effective?
- Does it include quantified information so that progress can be monitored?
- Does it follow a logic structure (for example regarding the timing of work packages)?
- Are the resources allocated to the work packages in line with their objectives and deliverables?
- Are critical risks, relating to project implementation, identified and proper risk mitigation measures proposed?

Do not penalize applicants that did not provide detailed breakdown of costs as they are not required.

Exception: In the case of lumps sums, there is a requirement of a detailed budget table.



Evaluating the Quality of implementation (2/2)

Assess the quality of participants and the consortium as a whole:
(Note that important information on role of individual participants and previous experience is included in part A of proposal)

- Does the consortium match the project's objectives, and bring together the necessary disciplinary and inter-disciplinary knowledge.
- Does the consortium include expertise in open science practices, and gender aspects of R&I, as appropriate?
- For topics flagged as SSH relevant, does the consortium include expertise in social sciences and humanities?
- Do the partners have access to critical infrastructure needed to carry out the project activities?
- Are the participants complementing one another (and cover the value chain, where appropriate)
- In what way does each of them contribute to the project? Does each of them have a valid role, and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role (so they have sufficient operational capacity)?
- Is there industrial/commercial involvement in the project to ensure exploitation of the results?

Following questions are adapted to RIA and IA type of actions (ToA). Similar questions will be asked for other ToAs, in line with the instructions in the specific applications forms.

Participants' previous publications, in particular journal articles, are expected to be open access and existing datasets FAIR and 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary'. Evaluate positively if this is sufficiently addressed.



Additional questions in the evaluation form

Evaluation form includes:

- Main part with the three **evaluation criteria** where you give comments and scores
- **Additional questions:** The evaluators are asked to take a position on additional questions linked to the selection procedure or policy considerations.

Additional questions in Horizon Europe evaluations

- Scope of the application
- Additional funding
- Use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC)
- Use of human embryos (hE)
- Activities not eligible for funding
- Exclusive focus on civil applications
- Do not significant harm principle
- Artificial Intelligence



Exceptional funding

- Third country participants
- International organisations

Who is eligible for funding?



EU COUNTRIES

- Member States (MS) including their outermost regions
- The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the MS.



NON-EU COUNTRIES

- Countries associated to Horizon Europe (AC)
- Low and middle income countries: See [HE Programme Guide](#).
- Other countries when announced in the call or exceptionally if their participation is essential



SPECIFIC CASES

- Affiliated entities established in countries eligible for funding.
- EU bodies
- International organisations (IO):
 - International European research organisations are eligible for funding.
 - Other IO are not eligible (only exceptionally if participation is essential)
 - IO in a MS or AC are eligible for funding for Training and mobility actions and when announced in the call conditions

During the **evaluation** experts give their opinion on the exceptional funding to participants from non-EU countries not eligible for funding and international organisations. Participation is considered essential for the action if there are clear benefits for the consortium, such as:

- outstanding competence/expertise
- access to research infrastructure
- access to particular geographical environments
- access to data.

Your assessment will help the EU services to take a decision on the exceptional funding for these participants.



Use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC) and human embryos (hE)

- In two separate questions, experts give their opinion on whether the proposal involves the use of **hESC** and **hE**. This is independent of, and serves to verify, the applicants' answers in the ethics issues table.
- If you consider that the proposal involves hESC, you must state whether the use of hESC is, or is not, **necessary to achieve the scientific objectives** of the proposal and the reasons why.

Your answers to these questions and the comments provided will be used by the ethics experts in charge of the **ethics assessment**. Proposals involving hESC can be funded only if the use of hESC is necessary to achieve its objectives.



Activities not eligible for funding

- Participants have declared **in proposal part A** that the proposal does not include any activity excluded from funding.
- Evaluators are asked to **confirm** that this is the case.
- In the consensus phase, if you agree that the proposal includes one or more activities excluded from funding, you must provide the **reasons** for this conclusion and explain why the beneficiaries' declaration is wrong.
- Evaluators must reflect the **removal of the activities excluded from funding** in the final score (e.g., if the excluded activities were important for reaching the objectives, their removal would lead to a lower score).
- The proposals are not rejected as ineligible during the evaluation phase. Instead, they are **processed according to their score**, including the possibility to go on the main list and be invited for grant preparation.
- Your opinion will help the EU services to decide whether to reject the proposal as ineligible or to fund it in a modified form without the ineligible activities.

The **activities excluded from funding** are activities that:

- aim at **human cloning** for reproductive purposes, or
- intend to **modify the genetic heritage of human beings** which could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed), or
- intend to **create human embryos** solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer, or
- lead to the **destruction of human embryos** (for example, for obtaining stem cells)



Exclusive focus on civil applications

- Participants confirm, as part of the **declarations in proposal part A** that the proposal has an exclusive focus on civil applications. Activities intended to be used in military application or aiming to serve military purposes cannot be funded.
- Evaluators are asked to **confirm** that this is the case.
- In the consensus phase, if you agree that the proposal does not have an exclusive focus on civil applications, you must provide the **reasons** for this conclusion and explain why the beneficiaries' declaration is wrong.
- Evaluators must reflect the **removal of the activities excluded from funding** in the final score (e.g., if the excluded activities were important for reaching the objectives, their removal would lead to a lower score).
- The proposals are not rejected as ineligible during the evaluation phase. Instead, they are **processed according to their score**, including the possibility to go on the main list and be invited for grant preparation.
- Your opinion will help the EU services to decide whether to reject the proposal as ineligible or to fund it in a modified form without the ineligible activities.



Do no significant harm principle (DNSH)

- Aspects related to the '**Do no significant harm**' (DNSH) principle can be part of the proposal but evaluators should not score applications in relation to their compliance with the DNSH principle unless explicitly stated in the work programme (currently, this is the case only for actions in the European Innovation Council Work Programme 2021).
- Evaluators are asked in one **additional question** whether the proposal is compliant with the DNSH principle and provide comments in the case the answer to the question is 'Partially', 'No' or 'Cannot be assessed'. The answer to this question will be **used for monitoring purposes** and for a proper **follow up in the case the project is funded**.



Artificial intelligence

- Experts must answer an additional question as part of their individual evaluations on whether the activities proposed involve the **use and/or development of AI-based systems and/or techniques**.
- If you answer 'yes' to this question, you must **assess the technical robustness** of the proposed AI-system as part of the excellence criterion (if applicable).
- In addition, your answer to this question will help us to with the **proper follow-up** of any aspects related to **Artificial Intelligence** in projects funded under Horizon Europe.

(*) Technical robustness refers to technical aspects of AI systems and development, including resilience to attack and security, fallback plan and general safety, accuracy, reliability and reproducibility.

AI-based systems or techniques should be, or be developed to become:

- **Technically robust, accurate and reproducible**, and able to deal with and inform about possible failures, inaccuracies and errors, proportionate to the assessed risk posed by the AI-based system or technique.
- **Socially robust**, in that they duly consider the context and environment in which they operate.
- **Reliable and function as intended**, minimizing unintentional and unexpected harm, preventing unacceptable harm and safeguarding the physical and mental integrity of humans.
- Able to provide a suitable explanation of its **decision-making process**, whenever an AI-based system can have a significant impact on people's lives.



Consensus

- It usually **involves a discussion on the basis of the individual evaluations**.
 - For full proposals, don't immediately converge on the average score.
 - For first stage proposals, the average is a starting point.
- The aim is to **find agreement on comments and scores**. Agree comments before scores!
- **'Outlying' opinions need to be explored**.
 - They might be as valid as others. Be open-minded.
 - It is normal for individual views to change.
- **Moderated by EU staff (or an expert in some cases)**.
 - Neutral and manages the evaluation, protects confidentiality and ensures fairness.
 - Ensures objectivity and accuracy, all voices heard and points discussed.
 - Helps the group keep to time and reach consensus.



Consensus report

- **The rapporteur is responsible for drafting the consensus report (CR).** The rapporteur includes consensus comments and scores and in some cases does not take part in the discussion.
- **The quality of the CR is of utmost importance.** It will be the basis for the **evaluation summary report (ESR)** sent to applicants together with the evaluation result letters. It often remains unchanged at the panel stage, so in most of the cases ESRs are identical to CRs.
- The aim of the CR is to give:
 - A **clear assessment** of the proposal based on its merit, with justification.
 - Clear feedback on the proposal's **weaknesses and strengths**, of an adequate length, and in an appropriate tone.
 - **Explain shortcomings**, but not to make recommendations.

Avoid:

1. Comments not related to the criterion in question.
2. Comments too long, or too short and inappropriate language.
3. Categorical statements that have not been properly verified.
4. Scores that don't match the comments.
5. Marking down a proposal for the same critical aspect under two different criteria.

Remember: Applicants will read your comments and, based on them, can challenge the evaluation through the evaluation review procedures.





Quality standard for CRs and ESRs

The basic quality principle:

Put yourself in place of the applicant. 'If this was my proposal, would I find this report fair, accurate, clear and complete, even if it brings bad news?'

- The comments should reflect the strengths and the weaknesses of the proposal in a fair way and give reasons for the scores.
 - In the individual and consensus group phase, the objective is not to decide about the selection of the proposal by comparison with other projects, but to evaluate the proposal on its own merit. The ESRs should therefore **NOT** contain comparative statements.
 - **Evaluation of second-stage proposals:** Inconsistencies between the stage 1 ESR and the stage 2 ESR should be avoided. Any difference in opinion should be specifically justified in the comments of the stage 2 ESR.
 - **Re-submissions:** For re-applications submitted within 2 years and declared in the proposal forms, comments and scores that differ significantly from those awarded in the previous ESR should be specifically justified if the resubmitted proposal was produced under comparable conditions (e.g. same type of funding programme and broadly similar topic/call and conditions).
- The report should be **complete** but **avoid additional elements**. This means comments address all aspects (sub-criteria) referred to in the criteria, and, equally importantly, these criteria and sub-criteria only.
- The evaluation of one criterion should NOT influence the evaluation of another criterion. In particular, the same weakness/shortcoming should not be referred to under different criteria (no double penalisation).



Quality standard for CRs and ESRs

Comments must reflect the assessment of **the criteria in the frame of what is requested in the call.**

Comments should be **precise and definite.**

Avoid **factual mistakes**. Whenever factual statements are made, they should be **explicitly verified.**

Comments should consist of **clear, concise and complete sentences.**

Comments must not be **discriminatory, offending or inappropriate**

Comments must **not be based on assumptions and should not suggest ignorance or doubt.**

Comments must **not contain recommendations or suggestions to improve the project.**

The comment for a criterion, taken as a whole, must be **consistent with the meaning of the score that is awarded for that criterion.**



HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION



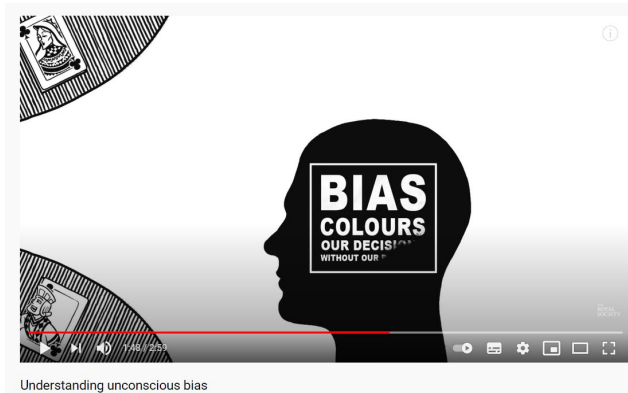
Observers

- Are appointed by the EU services and may attend any meetings or monitor remote evaluation, to ensure a high quality evaluation.
- They check the functioning and running of the overall process.
- They advise, in their report, on the conduct and fairness of the evaluation sessions (including 1st stage of 2 stage processes) and, if necessary, suggest possible improvements.
- They do not evaluate proposals and, therefore, do not express any opinion on their quality.
- They may raise any questions. Please provide them your full support.



Implicit gender biases may exist

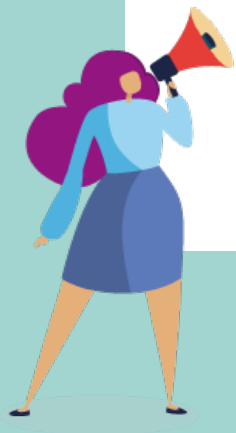
- Implicit (or unconscious) gender biases refer to a cognitive phenomenon that takes place automatically and without our knowledge when assessing people and situations, influenced by our background and socio-cultural environment.
- Implicit gender biases based on gender stereotypes can affect both men and women and influence behaviour and decision making, and should be taken into account when carrying out evaluations.
- Please watch the following videos for a better understanding of issues at stake:





Logistics

- The electronic system for the evaluation of proposals is accessible via your 'EU Login'. Please make sure you know your 'EU Login'.
- Please bring your own device in case of non-remote evaluations.
 - You are invited to bring your own laptop/tablet/notebook (including chargers, adapters [VGA, HDMI cables], etc.) for the on-site evaluation in Brussels, if this is the case.
 - There are no fixed computers available in the open space/reading rooms of the evaluation building in Brussels.
 - Laptops are available upon request.
 - Fixed computers are available in the meeting rooms.
- **Paperless evaluations:** Copies of proposals will be exclusively in electronic form.



For more information:

[HE Programme Guide](#)
[General Annexes of the WP](#)
[Standard application form \(RIAs/IAs\)](#)



Thank you!

HorizonEU

<http://ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe>



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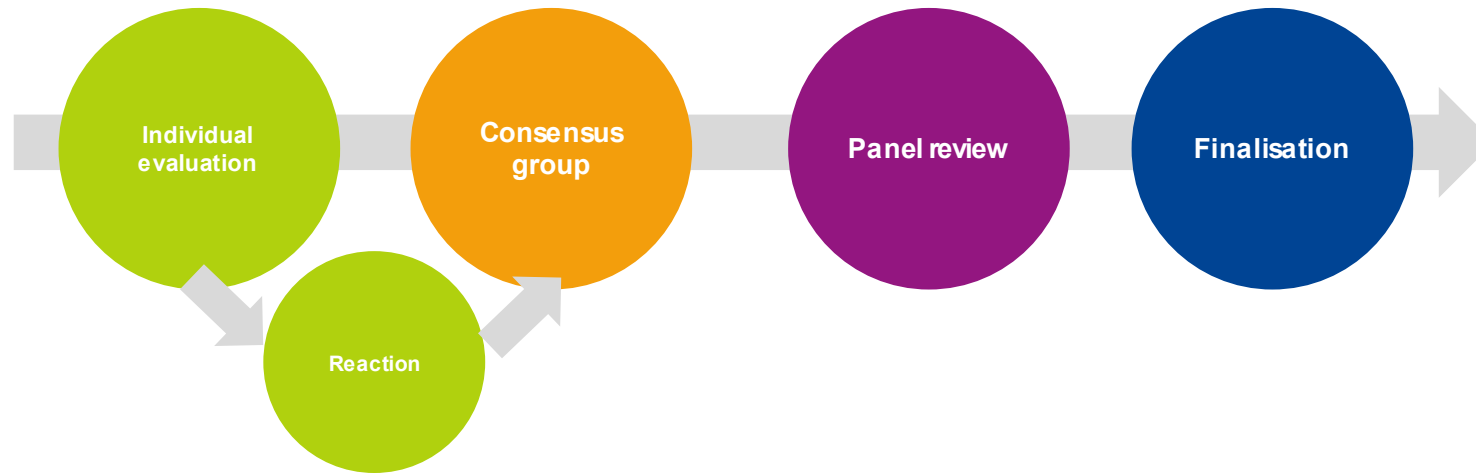
HORIZON EUROPE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

ANNEXES





Right-to-react (Rebuttal)



If the topic is taking part of the pilot on 'right-to-react', note that:

- After your individual evaluation, we will send to applicants your comments (without scores and anonymously).
- Applicants may send their reactions to your comments.
- During the consensus phase, take into consideration your individual comments and also the reaction from participants.