

Horizon Europe - Applying for Funding

Every researcher will have a different approach to the application process and different experience of applying for European research grant funding. This factsheet gives pointers on things to bear in mind when applying for Horizon Europe funding. The list is not exhaustive but is intended as a helpful resource to assist in the application process.

The factsheet is mainly focusing on collaborative funding applications, but much will also be applicable to mono-beneficiary applications.

All documents referred to are available through the Horizon Europe [Reference Documents](#) section of the European Commission Funding and Tenders Portal.

Before starting the application

Context and relevance of the project

Applicants are advised to ensure that they are familiar with the aims and aspirations of Horizon Europe before beginning an application to understand the context of their call topic and therefore the relevance of their proposed project. Good sources of information are:

- [Introduction to the Horizon Europe Work Programme](#) outlines how Horizon Europe underpins EU policy priorities and refers to the policy priorities which the programme is intending to address. Not only will familiarity with the programme provide an understanding of the scientific context of a call, but it is also important to have awareness of cross-cutting issues to consider when writing an application: examples are the innovation agenda, the expected multi-disciplinary problem-solving approach, the importance of socio-economic and humanities disciplines, gender issues and responsible research and innovation (RRI).
- [Horizon Europe Strategic Plan \(2021-2024\)](#) and [Horizon Europe Strategic Plan \(2025-2027\)](#) give direction to the Work Programmes and ensures that the calls directly contribute to EU priorities, including a climate-neutral and green Europe, a Europe fit for the digital age, and an economy that works for people.

The Strategic Plan will be of relevance when addressing the 'Impact' section of your proposal as it includes descriptions of the expected impacts, cross-cluster issues, and intervention areas of Horizon Europe. The plan also outlines how each of the individual clusters will contribute to the overarching objectives of Horizon Europe and their individual expected impacts. It also lists the co-funded and co-programmed European Partnerships, Missions, as well as areas for international cooperation. The plan addresses several key specific issues including gender equality and inclusiveness, social sciences and humanities (SSH) integration, ethics and integrity, open science practices, dissemination and exploitation (D&E), etc.

- **Introduction to the particular part of the Work Programme** (e.g. 'Cluster 1: Health') in which the call topic features. This will refer to any more specific policies driving that area of the programme. There are also likely to be sub-headings and introductory texts for each grouping of topics, which can also provide direction. This is particularly important with the new design of the Funding and Tenders Portal, which makes it very easy to read topics in isolation. Going back to the full relevant part of the Work Programme, which can all be found in the 'Reference Documents' section of the Portal, can provide important contextual information.

- Destinations are a novel element of Horizon Europe that provide the policy narrative for the individual calls and other actions included in the Work Programmes. The text of each Destination will reflect the expected impacts set out in the Strategic Plan. The Destinations indicate both the specific direction and the ultimate point of arrival of the projects to be supported through Horizon Europe. The goal is to ensure that EU policy priorities are effectively met and translated into concrete action while giving applicants maximum flexibility on how to achieve these goals.
- **The call itself** may also refer to a particular strategic document which will help to determine where the topic came from (e.g., from a Joint Programming Initiative's Strategic Research Agenda, from a European Technology Platform, etc.). It may also indicate synergies and/or where links are expected to be formed with other related Horizon Europe calls, and/or other EU programmes. Call-specific elements, such as open science practices, eligibility criteria, the integration of social sciences and humanities, and the inclusion of international partners will be outlined in the call text.
- Finally, do not forget [UKRO's factsheets](#) on each thematic area, which point you towards some of the most important policy drivers behind the calls.

Understanding the call topic

Everything in the Destination and call description is important. Applicants are advised to consider:

- The nature of the challenge posed by the Destination
- The scope of the call – to ensure that their project approach (including the make-up of the project consortium) responds to any specific listed requirements. These may include:
 - Involvement of a particular type of stakeholder
 - An international (beyond Europe) component
 - The use of a specific data source
 - Requirement for specific open science practices
 - The need to address gender or Responsible Research and Innovation in the proposal
 - Addressing social sciences and humanities (SSH)
 - Citizen involvement
 - Links to other related calls, parts of Horizon Europe and/or other EU research and innovation funding programmes
 - The need to reach a specific technology readiness level (TRL)
 - Whether the project should be industry-led
 - The expected timeframe for the completion of all or parts of the project.
- Whether their proposed project will satisfy the impact requirements of the topic.
- The funding vehicle for the call. A description of what is expected from different funding schemes can be found in the [General Annexes](#) to the Work Programme.
- The budget window given for projects in the topic. Although it is not mandatory to stick within the estimated budget window for a topic, it does give a steer as to the appropriate duration/scale of the project and size of the consortium which might be expected.

Applications which ignore large elements of the call description are not likely to be successful, although it is possible that addressing most issues, but not all, can receive favourable evaluation. This is provided that the application justifies such an approach, which must be allowed in the topic text. It is unlikely that forcing a favourite project to fit a call topic will be successful.

Meeting the eligibility criteria

Standard eligibility criteria for call topics are listed in the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme. European Research Council (ERC) eligibility conditions are provided in the separate annual ERC Work Programme and eligibility for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) is given separately in the MSCA conditions section of the main Horizon Europe Work Programme.

Any additional eligibility criteria relevant to a specific call topic will be given in the “Conditions for the Call” part of the individual Work Programmes and the “Topic conditions and documents” section of each topic on the Funding and Tenders Portal.

A proposal will not be submitted for evaluation if it does not meet all eligibility requirements.

Who do you need in a consortium?

For collaborative bids, the general rule is that you need at least three independent legal entities, each established in a different Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country **and with at least one of them established in an EU Member State**. Once you have this ‘core’ group of consortium members you can add additional partners from the same countries, from other EU Member States/Associated Countries, or from ‘third countries’. Bear in mind that only third countries listed in the Horizon Europe [Programme Guide](#) are automatically eligible for funding. Even if a topic suggests, for example, that a partner from Brazil would be encouraged to participate, it does not necessarily mean that they will be eligible to receive EU funding.

Some calls such as Training and Mobility Actions (TMA), Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) and Programme co-fund actions, will allow for applications from a single applicant.

The things to consider when building a consortium are specifically addressed in UKRO’s [dedicated factsheet](#).

How to find partners

Generally, the first step is to think about **people with whom you already have direct or indirect connections** and those you would like to work with. The above-mentioned factsheet gives guidance on what to think about when choosing partners and on the different partner search options available.

The application

Process

All applications must be submitted through the Funding and Tenders Portal using the templates and forms provided for the particular topic. Applicants without an EU Login (formerly ECAS) account will need to first create one through the “Register” button in the top right corner of the Funding and Tenders Portal. To start an application and to access the relevant application templates the “Start submission” tab should be used against the specific topic on the Funding and Tenders Portal. It is the project coordinator’s responsibility to submit the application. The coordinator must therefore initiate the submission process and then give all project partners access to the online form.

Deadline

Call deadlines are absolute. Missed deadlines (for whatever reason) will mean that your project will not be evaluated. UK researchers should note that call deadlines are in Brussels time: UK time is one hour behind Brussels time, so a **5.00 p.m. Brussels deadline will mean 4.00 p.m. UK time**.

To avoid last-minute submission problems and a missed deadline, it is strongly recommended that:

- The administrative section of the application is completed well before the deadline.
- The main part of the proposal (the technical annex) is uploaded to the system and the application is submitted as soon as a workable draft is available.
- Any required attachments are uploaded to the application well before the deadline.

The application text can be refined (and administrative data changed) and the application resubmitted an unlimited number of times up to the call deadline. Submission may fail if any mandatory administrative data is incomplete or if mandatory attachments are missing. Submitting the draft proposal early will allow you to address and resolve any issues before the deadline.

The submission system can significantly slow down near the deadlines (PDF files can take longer to upload) and there is no appeal for missing a deadline in the event of local system failure or power cuts. If there are technical issues with the submission system, it is advisable to contact the [IT Helpdesk](#) as soon as possible and to include screenshots to highlight the technical difficulty. In the lead-up to a call deadline, it is useful to monitor the UKRO Portal and social media sites, as they will alert users to issues in the submission system, and any impact related to the call.

Structure and format

Templates are provided for the main part of the application. Page limits and format guidance is given. This guidance should always be followed, as material that exceeds the given page limits will be marked as such and evaluators are instructed not to consider it.

Applicants should ensure they are aware of the standard application admissibility criteria – contained in the General Annexes to the Work Programme – and any call-specific admissibility criteria (which will be given in the call conditions and documents).

Evaluation considerations

When drafting a proposal, researchers need to be aware of the criteria that will be applied at the evaluation stage. An explanation of the evaluation process and general evaluation criteria are given in the General Annexes to the Work Programme. Also included is an explanation of how projects will be differentiated in the event of the same score ranking after evaluation. Further information about the evaluation process in Horizon Europe can be found in UKRO's [dedicated factsheet](#).

In general, for collaborative projects, there are three assessment criteria: Excellence, Implementation, and Impact. These are normally given equal weighting, other than in Innovation Actions, where the Impact section is weighted at 1.5. For some topics, additional evaluation criteria apply. Where this is the case, these are explained in the 'Topic conditions and documents' section.

Applicants may want to note the following points:

- The number of pages allocated to a specific area in the application template does not necessarily correlate directly with the importance of that area in the evaluation process. All evaluation criteria should be addressed appropriately.
- Project budgets should be realistic for the work proposed; if budgets are deemed inappropriately high by evaluators this will be reflected in a reduced score under the *Implementation* criterion.

A set of project self-evaluation forms has been provided on the [Funding and Tenders Portal](#). It is highly recommended that applicants use these for in-house and/or peer group review of their projects before final submission.

Costing

Funding for collaborative projects under Horizon Europe (and ERC frontier research projects) for participants from the academic sector is 100% of direct costs plus a 25% flat rate for indirect costs (indirect costs are not paid on certain types of activities, including subcontracting). Best estimates of costs calculated through the partner institutions' usual costing tool are usually sufficient at the application stage. UKRO's [dedicated factsheet](#) on legal and financial basics in Horizon Europe provides a comprehensive overview of the funding rules and regulations governing the programme.

A different financial regime applies to MSC Actions and some elements of Horizon Europe such as prizes. The funding rules that apply to the individual calls will be outlined in the relevant Work Programme part, or the call text, as appropriate.

Open Science

Open Access is mandatory across Horizon Europe. Full information including implications for the content of applications is given in guidance accessible through the [Horizon Online Manual](#). Further information on the EU's Open Science policy and the implications for projects funded by Horizon Europe are outlined in UKRO's dedicated factsheet on the [open science obligations for beneficiaries](#).

Gender

Gender equality is a horizontal priority running through all parts of Horizon Europe – this refers to both gender balance in the research teams, as well as the gender and intersectionality dimension of project research content. Applicants will need to address this when drafting applications.

From 2022, certain types of pf organisations participating in Horizon Europe projects will be required to have a Gender Equality Plan that meets the minimum requirements set out in the general Annex to the Work Programme. Currently this requirement does not apply to private-for-profit organisations including SMEs, non-governmental or civil society organisations.

The UKRO dedicated factsheet on [Gender and Intersectionality in Research and Innovation](#) provides additional information for applicants to Horizon Europe, as well as beneficiaries.

Institutional approval of participation in a project proposal

It is strongly recommended that coordinators ensure they have approval at the correct institutional level for the participation of researchers from their partner institutions in the project. This will avoid potential difficulties at the award stage. In addition, the administrative part of the application now includes a declaration that the coordinator has the explicit consent of all applicants to their participation in the proposal.

Two-stage applications

Many Horizon Europe calls are operating a two-stage application process, the first stage of which is the submission of summary information on a short-form template. There may be little time between notification of success at the first stage and the deadline for second-stage submissions.

Note that proposals are not supposed to change substantially between stages one and two. Changes in the budget or the partnership do not normally constitute a substantial change, but the Commission may penalise second-stage proposals where the conceptual basis or methodology has completely changed, the objectives of the work have been significantly altered, or where advancement beyond the state of the art has been significantly reduced.

Support

The Commission does not provide pre-submission checks on proposals. Guides for applicants are provided only for MSCA, ERC and EIC calls. Furthermore, detailed information on how to apply and manage a grant can be found in the [Horizon Online Manual](#).

The Commission recommends that for advice on content-related issues applicants consult the relevant National Contact Points (NCP). A list of National Contact Points is provided on the [Funding and Tenders Portal](#). A glossary of terms and FAQs, many of which relate to specific calls and topics, are also available on the Portal.

While UKRO cannot read proposals and comment on them, we do have several resources available to

help with proposal writing. Your UKRO European Advisor is also available to signpost and advise on general questions you might have regarding your proposal.

More information

- [Horizon Europe website](#)
- [Reference Documents on the Funding and Tenders Portal](#)
- [Support section on the Funding and Tenders Portal](#)
- [Gender Equality in Research and Innovation](#)
- [IT Helpdesk](#)

Horizon Europe's legal basis:

- [Regulation establishing Horizon Europe](#)
- [Decision establishing the Specific Programme of Horizon Europe](#)
- [First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe \(2021-2024\)](#)
- [Second Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe \(2025-2027\)](#)

UKRO Portal

- [UKRO Portal](#) (subscriber access required)