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FAQ on widening measures within WIDERA Work Programme 2023-2025 (update)

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MVZI (SI), Task 4.3. Support to National Info Days Co-Leader

AND OTHER WIDERA NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS

VSEBINA

INTRODUCTION

The document entitled "FAQs on widening measures within WIDERA Work Programme 2023-2025 (update) is focused on widening measures within the WIDERA part of Horizon Europe programme (especially Destination 1 and 2 of the WIDERA Work Programme 2023- 2025) and on issues, relevant for the preparation of project proposals under Widening calls for proposals.

The FAQ are not an official document of the European Commission, as they stem out of the discussions within the WIDERA NCP network, sent FAQs from some NCPs "personal compilations", next to the FAQs officially published by the European Commission and the Research Executive Agency within specific calls for proposals. They are mainly not duplicated, but in some cases, some of the questions are listed in both sources.

Nevertheless, they represent an important tool not only to the Widening National Contact Points (especially those, who are not experienced), but also to the European Commission when preparing or upgrading call for proposals and updating their FAQs on the EC's Funding & tender opportunities portal and within the Research Enquiry Service (RES) for the next Work Programme within Horizon Europe.

The FAQs are part of the Task 4.3 Support to National Info Days & seminars on Widening instruments and issues (Task Leader NARD (MD) and Task Co-leader MIZS, (SI) within the NCP_WIDERA.NET project.

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1. DESTINATION: IMPROVED ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE

1.1. TEAMING

1.1.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

1.1.1.1. HOW TO DEFINE THE AUTONOMY OF THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE?

It is not necessary to establish a new separate legal entity, but it has to be well explained and elaborated. The autonomy will be evaluated from different angles, such as academic/scientific autonomy, autonomy in defining research and innovation agenda, when preparing project proposals for call for proposals, recruiting and human resource management (hiring new employees), decisions taking (public procurement decisions, contract signing etc). The basis is the same as in Horizon 2020, where the definition can be find in the FAQ (questions 27,28).

1.1.1.2 SHOULD REFERENCES BE USED IN STAGE 1 OF TEAMING?

The proposal is a self-contained document. Experts will be instructed to ignore hyperlinks to information that is specifically designed to expand the proposal, thus circumventing the page limit.

1.1.1.3. ARE THERE ANY GUIDELINES PUBLICLY AVAILABLE THAT ARE USED BY EVALUATORS WHEN EVALUATING PROPOSALS OF TEAMING?

Among the reference documents (within templates and forms) there are evaluation forms that are used by evaluators and you can find them on:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/reference-documents;programCode=HORIZON.

On this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/work-as-an-expert, there is a standard briefing for evaluators that gives more detailed information on what the evaluators will be looking for in the project proposals.

1.1.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

1.1.2.1. WHICH ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES CAN PARTICIPATE AS COORDINATORS IN TEAMING ACTION?

For the purpose of the eligibility conditions to the call, the list of Associated Countries eligible for hosting a Widening coordinator are listed in the WP. The list is updated according to signatures of associating agreements. More information is available on topic conditions and documents.

1.1.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

1.1.3.1 IS AN SME ELIGIBLE TO BE A PARTNER IN THIS CALL? CAN THEY QUALIFY AS A RESEARCH ORGANIZATION?

No, as GBER (General Block exemption Regulation) is explicitly differing the two. SME can be the additional partner if the minimum requirement is kept and as long it is argumented why inclusion is necessary for the implementation of the project. An SME can be part of a consortium as long as the minimum eligibility conditions are met. Of course, the SME should be providing expertise to the Center and not receiving expertise by the advanced/strategic partner(s).

1.1.3.2. DOES THE SIZE OF THE COMPANY MATTER (SME, LARGE COMPANY) AS LONG AS THE MINIMUM CRITERIUM IS MET AND, OF COURSE, THEIR INCLUSION IN THE CONSORTIUM WELL ELABORATED?

No. The definition of SME by the EC can be found here:
https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en

1.1.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

1.1.4.1 WILL THE COSTS OF INVESTMENT PLANS AND OTHER PREPARATION COSTS BE COVERED FROM HORIZON EUROPE?

No.

1.1.4.2. THE SALARIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC STAFF ARE ELIGIBLE WITHIN TEAMING. CAN ON TOP OF THAT BENEFICIARY ALLOCATE UP TO 10% OF THE TOTAL COST ON THE SO-CALLED PREPARATORY RESEARCH PROJECT? THOSE COSTS WOULD NORMALLY FALL UNDER THE OTHER COST CATEGORY? ARE RESEARCHERS' SALARIES FOR PREPARATORY RESEARCH PROJECT COUNTED IN THE 10%?

As mentioned in the Work Program, 'the grant awarded from the Horizon Europe budget should provide substantial support for the start-up and implementation phase of the future Centre of Excellence including the recruitment of the managerial, technical and scientific personnel. It should also cover expenses related to team members of the future Centre of Excellence (e.g. their salaries, recruitment costs (his can be considered under the category of 'other direct costs), management costs, travel and subsistence costs).

Recruitment costs (i.e. salaries) are eligible as follows:

- for personnel of all beneficiaries (from Widening or non-Widening countries),
- regardless of their function (researchers, administration, management),
- regardless of their status at the organizations (permanent or temporary or newly recruited).

These recruitment costs can be directly attributed to the category of 'other direct costs'[1] in relation to activities (non-research) indicated in the Work Program text and subject to the cost eligibility conditions in the HE Annotated grant agreement.

If recruitment costs, as noted in the WP text, are related to the preparatory research project within the Teaming action ('*and/or the integration of new scientific personnel*'), that is not exceeding 10% of the total Horizon Europe grant, these costs can then be claimed under that research component.

1.1.4.3. IS IT TRUE THAT ONLY IF A UNIVERSITY OR RESEARCH ORGANIZATION PROVIDES ‘FRESH MONEY’ FROM SOURCE ‘X’ TO SPECIFIED PROJECT ACTIVITY, THESE CAN BE CONSIDERED COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING?

In so far as “own funding” is undefined, this cannot be considered as complementary funding. Also to be noted, neither *private sources nor national/regional/European funding* mentioned in the Call does not correspond and are not equivalent to “own funding”. In-kind contributions are excluded, which means only net transfer of “fresh money” from a source ‘x’ to a specific project activity is considered. This excludes the possibility of “reallocation” of resources within the funds of participating institution.’

Any funding that the applicant entity already has, that was given to this entity for a *different* or a *general* purpose, does not count as complementary funding – only funding that will be allocated to the entity with the *specific* purpose of establishing/upgrading the Teaming Center of excellence will be counted. I believe that in that way the EC wants to guarantee real, new investments to the Center of excellence, not just a clever re-grouping of existing budget.

1.1.4.4. WHY SHOULD THE COSTS FOR STAFF OF THE NEW ESTABLISHED CENTER OF EXCELLENVE SHOULD BE PLANNED UNDER CATEGORY OF OTHER DIRECT COSTS AND NOT PERSONNEL COSTS? IF THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE BECOMES CONSORTIA PARTNER (AT THE PHASE OF SUBMISSION OF THE PROJECT OR LATER AFTER GRANT AGREEMENT), SHOULD NOT BE THESE COSTS FORESEEN UNDER CATEGORY OF PERSONNEL COSTS?

As mentioned in the Work Program, "the grant awarded from the Horizon Europe budget should provide substantial support for the start-up and implementation phase of the future Centre of Excellence including the recruitment of the managerial, technical and scientific personnel. It should also cover expenses related to team members of the future Centre of Excellence (e.g. their salaries, recruitment costs, management costs, travel and subsistence costs) ".

Recruitment costs (i.e. salaries) are eligible as follows:

- for personnel of all beneficiaries (from both Widening and non-Widening countries);
- regardless of their function (researchers, administration, management);
- regardless of their status at the organizations (permanent, or temporary, or newly recruited).

Considering that recruitment/staffing is a core activity of the Teaming Action, recruitment costs are considered as eligible direct costs if they are directly relevant and necessary for the proper implementation of the Action. They must be incurred to roll out the Centre’s of Excellence (Center of excellence) HR strategy. Moreover, these costs should only be considered for the Center of excellence and not for other beneficiaries. For other beneficiaries’ recruitment costs are to be considered as indirect costs. Only the Center of excellence can claim recruitment costs under “direct costs”, and whether such costs are to be claimed under direct personnel costs, or under other direct costs depends on the usual accounting practices of the Center of excellence.

Staff costs (e.g. salaries) do indeed fall under the personnel costs for each beneficiary in accordance with Article 6 of the Annotated model grant agreement. It is important to note that, for the Centre of Excellence, recruitment costs are now eligible under 'other direct costs' as stated in the HE Work program. The beneficiaries (i.e. the advanced/strategic partners in TEAMING) should have the appropriate resources to implement the action as stated under Article 7 of the Annotated model grant agreement.

1.1.4.5. ARE RECRUITMENT COSTS ONLY ELIGIBLE FOR CENTER OF EXCELLENCE OR ALSO FOR ADVANCED/STRATEGIC PARTNERS?

Recruitment costs are eligible as 'other direct costs' for Center of excellences only.

The key role of the 'advanced'/strategic partner organization will be to contribute to the nurturing and development of the research and innovation potential of the widening partner through sharing its <u>own</u> accumulated expertise, reputation, access to international networks, and its experience in management and administration in a specific area of research and innovation. Therefore, it is expected that the 'advanced'/strategic partners already have the necessary resources to carry out the activities foreseen for them in the proposal. It is not expected that they would need to recruit new staff in order to work on a TEAMING project since their participation relies on their existing expertise, experience, reputation etc… However, recruitment costs, if absolutely necessary, are eligible under 'indirect costs' for 'advanced'/strategic partners.

1.1.4.6. IS IT POSSIBLE TO USE PART OF THE ALLOCATED FUNDS FOR THE TEAMING PROJECT TO THE EXTENT ALLOWED TO CO-FINANCE ITS OWN SHARE OF FUNDING FOR CERTAIN SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS SUCH AS INTERREG PROJECTS AND THE LIKE?

No, this is not possible. The grant for Teaming is dedicated exclusively for funding the implementation of the Teaming project.

1.1.4.7. IS IT POSSIBLE TO CO-FINANCE THE PROJECT THROUGH EXISTING EQUIPMENT?

No, this is in-kind contribution.

1.1.4.8. IS THE PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT ELIGIBLE WITHIN TEAMING?

Only depreciation costs are eligible in line with national legislation within the timeframe of the projects. At the end of the project, the costs could be actually fully covered.

1.1.5. FINANCIAL ISSUES, COST- BENEFIT ANALYSIS, LETTERS OF COMMITMENT

1.1.5.1. IS IT MANDATORY FOR THE REGIONAL AUTHORITY (WHICH CAN COORDINATE THE CONSORTIA OR ACT AS COMMITING FUNDING AGENCY) TO TRANSFER FUNDS TO THE LEGAL ENTITY IMPLEMENTING THE NEW CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE TO COUNT AS COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING, OR CAN THE REGIONAL AUTHORITY INVEST FUNDS ITSELF AND COUNT AS COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING?

Example: if a new building is to be constructed, does the Regional Authority have to transfer the funds to the Academic Institution to count as complementary funding OR can the Regional Authority construct the new building from the start and from cash committed and assume the investment? This investment would be then outlined also in the support Letter.

Such approach is possible under the condition that the commitment letter ensures that the ownership of any assets created by the complementary funding (e.g. buildings, infrastructure) will be transferred to the Centre of excellence during the project's life time.

1.1.5.2. DOES IT COUNT FOR COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING IF THE REGIONAL AUTHORITY PROVIDES A BUILDING WHICH IS ALLOWED TO BE USED BY THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE ON A RENT-FREE BASIS?

This is in kind contribution that according to the Work program do not count anymore as complementary funding.

1.1.5.3. IS IT POSSIBLE TO TRANSFER THE OWNERSHIP OF A LAND OR BUILDING FROM THE REGIONAL OR LOCAL AUTHORITY TO THE NEW CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AND COULD THIS BE CONSIDERED AS COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING (THE VALUE OF THE LAND AND/OR THE BUILDING)?

This is in kind contributions that according to the Work program do not count anymore as complementary funding.

1.1.5.4. APPLICANTS ARE ASKING ABOUT THE TRANSFER OF FUNDS FROM THE EC TO THE PROJECT PARTNERS (PERIODIC INSTALLMENTS AND TIMELINE), AS THEY ARE DESIGNING THEIR BUSINESS PLANS. COULD YOU PROVIDE A SKETCH ON HOW IT WORKS, SO THAT EC TRANSFER OF FUNDS COULD BE ALIGNED OR SYNERGICALLY LINKED TO THE COMPLEMENTARY FUNDS?

This is up to the decision of the consortium and no general guidance can be given from our side.

1.1.5.5. CAN THE NATIONAL/REGIONAL FUNDING AUTHORITIES PROVIDE CONDITIONAL LETTER OF COMMITMENTS (AS OF FISCAL SPACE)? WILL EVALUATORS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NEW CIRCUMSTANCES OR WILL THEY LOOK AT SPECIFICATIONS OF THE ANNEX?

The evaluators will be strictly instructed according to the specifications of the annex.

1.1.5.6. WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING FEEDBACK FROM SEVERAL NCP COLLEAGUES THAT COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING IS BEING DRAFTED MORE ON A CONDITIONAL NOTE OR AT LEAST IN LINE WITH STATING THE WILLINGNESS TO FUND, IN CASE OF BEING SUCCESSFUL, THROUGH A DEDICATED CALL. IS THIS ALSO BEING TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY THE EVALUATORS, PARTICULARLY AT THE DG REGIO?

It is up to the evaluators to assess the credibility and quality of the commitments made for the complementary funding as confirmed by the letter(s) of commitment (e.g. terms, conditions, timeframe; etc.). This will be one of the aspects to traded off versus the other criteria and credentials of the proposal.

1.1.5.7. IN CASE THERE IS A NEW LEGAL ENTITY (NON PROFIT) ESTABLISHED BY A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY, NATIONAL LEGISLATION MIGHT NOT ALLOW THE NEW ENTITY TO RECEIVE UPFRONT THE AMOUNT AND MAY REQUIRE THE MONEY TO BE RECEIVED BY THE UNIVERSITY FOR THE SOLE USE OF THE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE, HOSTED BY THAT LEGAL ENTITY. WOULD SUCH A STIPULATION IN A LETTER OF COMMITMENT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE?

The arrangement seems possible, if it is properly explained in the proposal and if money then reaches its goal.

1.1.5.8. IF THERE IS A SINGLE GRANTING AUTHORITY FOR EXAMPLE GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION (GSRI), WHICH CAN PROVIDE THE BINDING COMMITMENT COMING FROM COHESION FUNDS AND NATIONAL FUNDS. ONE LETTER IS OK, OR TWO LETTERS ARE REQUIRED (FOR THE TWO SOURCES) DESPITE THE FACT THAT ONE WILL BE THE RESPONSIBLE GRANTING AUTHORITY.

For each funding source a separate letter of commitment is needed, as explained in the Work Program (if there are different funding authorities). If there are two possible sources for one project, one letter of commitment is enough.

1.1.5.9. THE COORDINATOR WILL ESTABLISH A NEW LEGAL ENTITY, WHICH WILL BE A NEW CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE. THE INFRASTRUCTURE IS NEEDED FOR THE NEW CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE, BUT ALSO FOR THE COORDINATOR (SOME EQUIPMENT). THE COORDINATOR WANTS TO BUILD THE PREMISES AND TO TRANSFER THE ASSETS TO NEWLY ESTABLISHED CENTRE (EXCEPT FOR SOME EQUIPMENT FOR THE COORDINATOR). IS IT ENOUGH TO STATE WITHIN THE LETTER OF COMMITMENT FOR THE COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING THAT THE FUNDING WILL BE PROVIDED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE “NAME OF THE CENTRE” FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF TEAMING PROJECT OR DO WE HAVE TO STATE EXPLICITLY, THAT THE COORDINATOR AND NEWLY ESTABLISHED LEGAL ENTITY WILL BE FINAL RECIPIENTS.

You need to provide all relevant details in the Annex. Then experts will assess the information provided.

1.1.5.10. WHICH SOURCES HAVE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE FINANCING TABLE? ONLY HORIZON EUROPE PART OF FINANCING OR ALSO COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING?

The financial table of the Teaming 2 proposal the applicants are asked to put a requested funding from the Horizon Europe program. However, the information on complementary funding is asked to be put in the annex 2 on complementary funding.

1.1.5.11. DOES CBA ANALYSIS WITHIN ANNEX 2 HAS TO BE MADE ONLY FOR COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING?

The CBA requested for Annex 2 is only about the complementary funding.

1.1.5.12. WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE INVESTMENT PLAN AND IN THE COST / BENEFIT ANALYSIS (CBA). WOULD BE IDEAL TO RECEIVE (A) EXAMPLES AND (B) IF THERE ARE ANY SPECIFIC METHODOLOGIES REQUIRED/SUGGESTED TO BE FOLLOWED.?

See answer under 1.1.5.13.

1.1.5.13. TO WHAT EXTENT THE INVESTMENT PLAN AND THE COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS SHOULD BE ANALYSED? WHAT EXACTLY IS EXPECTED TO BE ADDRESSED WITHIN COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS? BOTH THE ONGOING RUNNING COSTS OF THE PROJECT AS WELL AS THE FUTURE PROFITABILITY OF THE PROPOSED CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE?

The European Commission cannot give any examples, and the methodologies are not prescribed since every proposal is very specific and might require different approaches. The applicants need to present the information requested in the most suitable way for their proposals, convincing experts of the relevance of this information to the proposal.

All requested elements are clearly mentioned and described in the template of the Annex, also on cost/benefit analysis and an investment plan. It is up to the proposal to come up with a convincing plan. The information in the Annex should mainly concern the running time of the project'.

Additional clarifications to the abovementioned, as provided by EC:

'The investment plan (in the Annex) should briefly describe the amounts, source, nature, categories, purpose, security, and timelines for investments undertaken with the complementary funding. The CBA should balance the expected revenues (e.g. future competitive funding, IPR, commercialization) versus the planned expenditures. Immaterial benefits such as employment effects may also be considered. There is no specific methodology prescribed neither any example to be provided. In general, the CBA can be presented in a simple and concise manner. CBA and investment plan should focus on the lifetime of the project, but an outlook e.g. on the future profitability and sustainability will be welcome'.

1.1.5.14. HOW IS THE 100% COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING LEVEL OF "TEAMING", WHICH SHOULD COME FROM OTHER SOURCES THAN HORIZON, DETERMINED BETWEEN "ADVANCED COUNTRY" AND "WIDENING COUNTRY"?

Since the Centre of excellence applying is located in a widening country, also the complementary funding must come exclusively from there. As indicated in the call text, the sources of complementary funding can be of different nature (private or national or regional), to be decided and secured by the applicant.

1.1.6. OTHER

1.1.6.1 WILL EC EVALUATE AND TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALSO THE ASSESSMENT IF THE PROJECT FALLS WITHIN THE STATE AID RULES?

No.

1.1.6.2. ARE INTERVIEWS WITH APPLICANTS FORESEEN WITH THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE OF TEAMING ACTIONS?

No.

1.1.6.3. WHAT ARE THE PAGE LIMITS FOR CSA TEMPLATES AND OTHER ANNEXES FOR TEAMING ACTIONS?

There is a 30-page limit for the CSA Template, 12-page for the Technical Annex. The Letters of Commitment from the entities committing the complementary funding do not count towards the 30-page limit of the CSA template nor the 12-page Technical Annex.

Other letters of support should be included in the 30 page CSA template limit for the main proposal.

1.1.6.4. WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF THE FINANCIAL REPORTING FOR COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING FOR TEAMING?

With regard to the implementation, like in previous calls, we expect participants to report on the use of the CF, for what tasks, if this is aligned with what was laid down in the Description of Actions, if not what are the potential deviations, what are the causes and how the consortium intends to put in place contingency measures. REA would also like to know how the CF was distributed (if in different instalments, which is normally the case, what is the repartition and for what activities) and if this is aligned with the initial expectations. Again, if not, why and what are the new measures in place. To this end at the end of each reporting period there is a **deliverable called Implementation Report** covering all these aspects that is assessed by the relevant PO and the two external experts during the Review.

1.1.6.5. COULD COMPLEMENTARY FUNDING FOR TEAMING COVER INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS?

Yes, but you have to consider the rules and programme documents (for example for ESIF), which provide the basis for the eligibility of costs.

1.1.6.6. IS THERE ANY BUDGET FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE INVESTMENT PLAN AND PROPOSAL FOR THE PHASE 2 OF THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE?

No, not within the Teaming call for proposals. The application process is similar to other 2-stage calls in Pillar II.

1.1.6.7. HOW LONG IS THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE FOR TEAMING?

The two-stage call rules aplly (see page 28, https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf).

For two-stage calls, the timing is different (for the evaluation result: around 3 months from the deadline for submission for the first stage.

1.2. TWINNING

1.2.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

1.2.1.1. IS THERE ANY SPECIFIC EXPLANATION ABOUT THE EXPECTED TECHNOLOGY READINESS LEVEL WITHIN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS?

All TRL levels are ok, also basic research.

1.2.1.2. WHAT IS EXPECTED DURATION OF SHORT-TERM STAFF EXCHANGES AND/OR EXPERT VISITS?

There is no pre-defined duration for short-term staff exchanges or expert visits. They should however add value to the project and they should last for a reasonable timeframe of a few weeks or a few months; more than 9 months would probably be considered as too long.

1.2.1.3. CAN A PROPOSAL OUTLINE SEVERAL AREAS OF RESEARCH OR IS IT NECESSARY TO OUTLINE ONE AREA OF RESEARCH IN ONE PROPOSAL?

The Work Program specifies that "Twinning proposals should have to clearly outline the scientific strategy for stepping up and stimulating scientific excellence and innovation capacity in a defined area of research as well as the scientific quality of the partners involved in the twinning exercise." Thus, a Twinning proposal must outline one defined area of research. However, there is no restriction on the choice of the area of research.

1.2.1.4. RESEARCH ORGANIZATION WOULD LIKE TO HIRE POST DOCS AND REIMBURSE THEIR SALARIES WITHIN TWININNG ACTION. IS THAT POSSIBLE AND ELIGIBLE?

Post-docs like other staff members can participate in Twinning projects and be remunerated for their effort. However, it is not foreseen that the full salary (and thus the full personal research project) would fall under the Twinning project as "expressing to hire" people because of the twinning project is not a right approach to the preparation of project proposals.

1.2.1.5. ARE ALL TOPICS RELATED TO THE GREEN DEAL ELIGIBLE ? OR THE PROJECTS HAVE TO BE PERFECTLY ALIGNED WITH THE GD OBJECTIVES, AND THEREFORE PART OF THE ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED TO ACHIEVE THE GD OBJECTIVES ?

Not a perfect match is necessary. All proposals in the topics mentioned in the WP can submit to this call, and potentially also others, taking care that they clearly show their 'direct link' as instructed by the WP text.

1.2.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

1.2.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

1.2.3.1. WHAT TO DO IF THE MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY CONDITION FOR TWINNING IS FULLFILLED WITH UK PARTNERS, WHICH ARE STILL NOT ASSOCIATED PARTNERS?

To address this issue, the consortium may add a new independent applicant established in a Member State or an Associated Country does not present in the original proposal to make sure that the proposal complies with the minimum eligibility conditions. The new applicant must take over some of the tasks.

1.2.3.2. CAN THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE, WHICH IS STILL RECEIVING FUNDS FROM HORIZON 2020 (TEAMING) BE AN ADVANCED/STRATEGIC PARTNER?

In principle, advanced/strategic and established partners are scientific institutions that have developed an outstanding reputation in research and innovation excellence in the chosen scientific domain and established in another than a coordinator Member State or Associated Country. However, as long as the minimum eligibility requirements are respected (i.e. one coordinator or Coordinating Legal Entity from a Widening country and two advanced/strategic institutions from two different Member States (MS) or Associated Countries (AC)). Applicants need to bear in mind that as described in the Work Program text, "Twinning aims to enhance networking activities between the research institutions of the Widening countries and top-class leading counterparts at EU level by linking it with at least two research institutions from two different Member States or Associated Countries."

Therefore, nothing prevents legally a widening country (in this case the advanced partner would be a Centre of excellence under Horizon 2020 teaming) to be an advanced partner in a twinning call. Institutions that are still in the process of development or modernization, e.g. those that are still receiving support as coordinators from widening actions under Horizon 2020, are normally not considered leading institutions, unless a proper justification is provided for in the proposal. Evaluators will have to assess if the Centre of excellence is a top-class leading organization at EU level and can be a valid advanced partner.

1.2.3.3. CAN THE SAME WIDENING COUNTRY ORGANIZATION SUBMIT MULTIPLE PROPOSALS TO THE 2023 TWINNING CALL?

Yes, one organisation can submit several proposals. The restriction is aimed at *individual proposal*: the same proposal must not be submitted simultaneously to the Bottom-up and Green deal calls.

1.2.3.4. COULD TWO PARTNERS BE ENGAGED FROM THE WIDENING COUNTRY AND IN CASE, ONE OF THESE TWO WIDENING COUNTRIES IS ALSO A MEMBER STATE (GZECH REPUBLIC OR CYPRUS), IS IT SUFFICIENT TO HAVE ONLY ONE MORE PARTNER FROM THE MS? WILL SUCH COMPOSITION BE POSITIVELY ASSESSED BY EVALUATORS?

If the partner from CZ or CY acts as an advanced partner, the consortium is eligible with just one more advanced partner from a MS/AC. But the answer is more complicated in case the beneficiary from CZ or CY would benefit from the project similarly as the Georgian beneficiary. Then you would need another advanced partner (from any MS/AC) to complete the setup.

1.2.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

1.2.4.1. TWINNING ACTION FORESEES 30% OF FUNDING FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES. CAN THIS AMOUNT INCLUDE PERSONNEL COSTS FOR RESEARCH, RESEARCH CONSUMABLES, OR ANY ONE CATEGORY SEPARATELY?

For Widening actions under Horizon Europe, a minor research component (R&I activities) can be accepted not exceeding 30% of the total Horizon Europe grant. This may include a preparatory research project and covers all eligible costs allowed for R&I activities under Horizon Europe.

Depreciation costs for small equipment used for the action may be eligible as research costs if they constitute only a minor part of the EU funding requested for R&I activities and are necessary to fulfil the action's specific scope and objective.

1.2.4.2. WHICH COSTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE UNDER TWINNING CALLS?

As stated in the Work Program for grants awarded under these calls, the following cost categories will be ineligible costs: infrastructure costs; large equipment.

A difference from Horizon 2020 is to be noted; although this action is a Coordination and Support Action (CSA) as defined in the General Annexes of the Horizon Europe Work Program 2023-2024 research, consumables and small equipment costs are eligible and could constitute up to 30% of the requested funding. The WP states that "a research component not exceeding 30% of the total Horizon Europe grant may include an exploratory research project." This applies to all beneficiaries, i.e. both to costs of beneficiaries which are an internationally-leading (advanced) institution and to costs of the coordinating entity established in the Widening Country. Therefore, consumables and small equipment are eligible for this action under the limits established in the Work Program but there should be evidence that they were directly linked to the research project(s) established for the execution of the Twinning exercise. The Annotated Grant Agreement of Horizon Europe (article 6) should be consulted for more detailed information on their eligibility and how to report such costs.

The research part of the project must be presented by a dedicated work package and plan including the scientific objectives, tasks and roles of the partner. At least 50% of the research budget must be allocated to the coordinator. The applicants should provide detailed information on how their proposal addresses the specific requirement of the Work Program with respect to the R&I activities, the corresponding costs and the allocation of such costs to each beneficiary. The Work Program states: "A research component not exceeding 30% of the total Horizon Europe grant may include an exploratory research project". For example, if we are referring to a total grant amount of EUR 1 500 000, the research component should not exceed EUR 450 000. In addition, at the Eligibility Conditions it is mentioned: "at least 50% of the budget for research activities must be allocated to the coordinator from the above stated eligible countries.".

In case the proposal contains a research component, applicants should explain in detail those requirements in the work package dedicated to the research part of the proposal: Technical description (Part B), Table 3.1b “Work package description”.

Eligible activities are the ones described in the call conditions. Activities must focus exclusively on civil applications and must comply with ethical requirements under Horizon Europe.

1.2.4.3. SHOULD THE OPEN ACCESS FEES BE INCLUDED IN THE "RESEARCH PART" OF TWINNING, OR IN THE REST OF THE 70% FINANCIAL PLAN?

In the rest of the 70%. Publication of research articles is not a research activity, but part of research management. The budget line was eligible even in H2020 in Twinning.

1.2.4.4. ARE ONLY DEPRECIATION COSTS ELIGIBLE WITHIN TWINNING CALLS?

There are two ineligible budget positions in Twinning: infrastructure and big equipment. Purchase costs for consumables are eligible, but they should be necessary for the small research project inside a Twinning, the budget for them should be inside those 30% for the research / innovation project, and they should be duly justified. Also some types of small equipment could be eligible, in case they are not depreciated under the organisation’s rules/national legislation. For anything that is depreciated under the organisation’s usual practice, only depreciation costs are eligible in the project, taking into account the normal accounting lifetime of the equipment. And the usual applies, i.e. you also need to take into account the percentage of time that the equipment is used for the project, etc.

1.2.4.5. IS IT IN LINE WITH A CALL TO ALLOCATE ONLY 53.33% (€800,000) OF THE TOTAL BUDGET (€1.5 MILLION) TO COORDINATOR OR DOES THIS HAVE TO BE HIGHER (THE REASON IS THAT THE ADVANCED PARTNERS WILL PROVIDE TRAINING AND THEIR BUDGETS ARE QUITE HIGH)?

Yes.

12. IS IT FEASIBLE/ACCEPTABLE TO FULLY FUND 2-3 MASTER BY RESEARCH STUDENTS WITHIN TWINNING?

No. See also faq: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/30209.

1.2.5. OTHER

1.2.5.1. WHAT IS THE PREFINANCING RATE FOR TWINNING CALLS?

In case of projects with 1 or 2 reporting periods, pre-financing rate is 80%. With 3 reporting periods pre-financing is around 50% of the total budget. Within twinning actions 2023 according to official EC FAQ, there is only one reporting period (lump sums).

1.2.5.2. IF THERE IS ONLY ONE REPORTING PERIOD (LUMP SUMS FINANCING), IS IT NECESSARY TO DIVIDE LONGER WP SUCH AS PROJECT MANAGEMENT OR DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION INTO TWO PERIODS?

No, it is not necessary to divide.

1.2.5.3. IS IT FORESEEN THAT BENEFICARIES WOULD REPORT TO EC DURING THE PROJECT DURATION?

Yes, projects will need to prepare some mid term reporting which will be communicated during Grant Agreement Preparation phase for the successful proposals.

1.2.5.4. ARE THERE ANY COMMITMENT LETTERS NEEDED FOR A TWINNING PROJECT?

No, letters of commitmente are not necessary or needed.

1.3. EUROPEAN EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE (EEI)

1.2.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

1.2.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

1.2.2.1. CAN PARTICIPANTS FROM FRENCH OUTERMOST REGIONS JOIN A CONSORTIUM IF FRANCE IS ALREADY PART OF THE INITIAL CONSORTIUM?

Yes. More information on video recording:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHR0_MjKOyg from 48:45 min.

1.2.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

1.2.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

1.2.5. OTHER

1.4. HOP ON SCHEME

1.4.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

1.4.1.1. WHICH PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE TO HOP ON AND WHERE TO FIND A LIST?

The Hop On Facility integrates one additional participant from a Widening country to an ongoing project under Pillar 2 (clusters and missions) or the EIC pathfinder scheme while topping up a relevant task or work package and the cost incurred by the additional participant. This will happen on a voluntary basis without affecting the freedom of choice for the consortium and the principle of excellence. The Hop On Facility is open to all topics under

Pillar 2 and the EIC pathfinder. Applications with activities that contribute to the policy objective of the transition towards a green and digital economy are especially encouraged.

For more information, please see the call page: [Funding & tenders (europa.eu)](https://ec.europa.eu).

The Commission has published a link on the Hop On Facility call page with the list of eligible running projects already funded under Pillar 2 and the EIC Pathfinder which will be updated regularly as new GAs are signed. This list is purely indicative and does not give a legally binding information on the eligibility for participation in the 'Hop On' call. NCPs in Horizon Europe will also be involved in matchmaking and will contribute to identify relevant consortia and potential partners.

1.4.1.2. HOW TO DESIGN ACTIONS WITHIN HOP ON ACTIVITIES AS THE PROJECT TO RECEIVE THE HOP-ON PARTNER HAS DURATION FROM 1.12.2022 – 30.11.2026, WHILE THE HOP ON PROJECT SHOULD BEGIN IN SPRING 2024? SHOULD THE APPLICANT DESIGN ACTIONS FOR A TIME-SPAN COUNTING FROM THE DEADLINE OF SUBMISSION TO THE CLOSURE OF THE PROJECT, OR BASED ON OTHER RATIONALE?

The work programme up to now has not yet imposed any restrictions since the vast majority of projects were not launched earlier than mid 2022. However, we will expect a reasonable timing for the phasing in of the hop-on partner that should ensure a minimum duration of the hop-on participation of 18 months in order to achieve the intended impacts". (FAQ ID 21835. Published on 22/02/2023). Formally the application is eligible and the Hop On part will last for more than 18 months. And the applicant just should design actions for a time-span counting from the estimated Hop On start to the closure of the project. <u>It is foreseen that in the next WP 2025, time limitation (regarding the beginning of the project) will be foreseen.</u>

1.4.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

1.4.2.1. CAN A WIDENING PARTNER FROM EE JOIN ALREADY ESTABLISHED CONSORTIA, WHICH ALREADY HAS A WIDENING PARTNER FROM EL?

No, if there is already one widening partner within existing consortia, it is not possible to add a new one.

1.4.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

1.4.2.1. ARE ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS ONLY RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS OR ALSO SME-S?

Also SMEs are eligible.

1.4.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

1.4.4.1. WHICH ACTIONS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR CO-FINANCING, RIA OR IA ACTIONS?

Only RIA actions are eligible.

1.4.4.2. WHICH COSTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

All the costs that were eligible also within RIA project and are also in line with WP.

1.4..4.3. IN THE DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW PARTNER'S ACTIVITIES, ARE "DISSEMINATION & COMMUNICATION" ACTIVITIES AUTHORISED? IF SO, CAN PART OF THE BUDGET BE DEVOTED TO ORGANISING A WORKSHOP AT THE WIDENING PARTNER'S PREMISES?

Workshop is not only a dissemination and communication activity. It could be a research activity too. Anyway, if workshops are eligible for the main project, they are eligible for the new partner. (2) Yes, "Dissemination & Communication" activities are authorised for a new partner, as well as all the other activities eligible in the project. But they should not be the only activities of this new partner.

1.4.4.4. THE HOP-ON PROPOSAL INCLUDES TWO PARTNERS (1. THE COORDINATOR/ 2. THE WIDENING PARTNER (WP)). THEREFORE IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS, 2 BUDGET LINES ARE CREATED. IN CASE THE 10% FEE FOR THE COORDINATOR IS CLAIMED, THE COORDINATOR SHOULD COMPLETE THE RELEVANT BUDGET LINES ON ITS BUDGET, CORRECT?

Yes.

1.4.4.5. THE 10% THRESHOLD (REGARDING THE FEE FOR COORDINATOR) SHOULD BE CHECKED MANUALLY BY THE APPLICANTS OR DOES THE SYSTEM DOES CHECK THE LIMIT.

Yes.

1.4.4.6. SHOULD THE **INDIRECT COSTS BE** INCLUDED WITHIN THE €600,000 BUDGET?

Yes.

1.4.4.7. IS IT NECESARRY TO ENTER IN PROPOSAL PART A (IN THE FIELDS FOR TITLE, ACRONYM, AND ABSTRACT), THE DETAILS OF THE EXISTING PROJECT WITH A NEW WIDENING PARTNER OR SHOULD WE PROVIDE THE HOP-ON PROPOSAL'S TITLE, ACRONYM, AND ABSTRACT?

In the fields for Title, Acronym, and Abstract it should be provided the Hop-On proposal's title, acronym, and abstract. The info concerning the basic RIA project should be presented in Part B, table „Title, acronym and project ID (#grant number) of the ongoing Horizon Europe project“. And, of course, should be present in the Annex to the application.

1.4.4.8. WHAT DOES THE 'START DATE' IN PART B OF THE PROPOSAL REFER TO? IS IT THE START DATE OF THE INITIAL PROJECT (WHICH WILL BE AMENDED ONCE THE NEW PARTNER FROM A WIDENING COUNTRY IS ADDED), OR SHOULD THIS BE CONSIDERED A START DATE OF THE "NEW AMENDED" PROJECT AFTER THE PARTNER IS ADDED.

The start that of the original project.

1.4.5. OTHER

1.4.5.1. IS THERE A SPECIAL TEMPLATE PART B FOR HOP ON ?

Yes. The page limit is 8 pages.

1.5. EXCELLENCE HUBS

1.5.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

1.5.1.1. THE COHESION POLICY PROGRAMMES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED TILL 2027. ASSUMING THAT THE PROJECTS START EARLY ON 2023, THE INVESTMENT PLAN TO BE DRAFTED, CANNOT EXTEND BEYOND 2027. DOES THE CALL IMPLY THAT PROPOSALS TRY TO IDENTIFY FINANCIAL MEANS BEYOND THAT PERIOD? OR THE INVESTMENT PLAN SHOULD BE A DELIVERABLE THAT WILL LEAD THE CROSS-BORDER R&I WITHIN THE TERM OF THE PROJECT?

Indeed, the investment plan should develop a perspective beyond 2027 for the sake of sustainability. This investment plan should be presented as a deliverable during the life time of the project.

1.5.1.2. CAN PART OF THE RESEARCH BUDGET BE DEVOTED TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THIRD PARTIES IN TERMS OF FUNDING SMALL RESEARCH PROJECTS (RESEARCH COUPONS)?

Yes, under the call within WP 2023-2024.

1.5.1.3. IN THE BIOMEDICAL SECTOR IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT TYPE OF PROJECTS ARE EXPECTED FOR INVOLVEMENT OF THE INDUSTRY. ON ONE SIDE TRL 3 TO 7 IS STATED BUT ON THE OTHER, FUNDING OF PILOTS AND DEMONSTRATORS CANNOT BE FUNDED. WOULD THAT MEAN THAT RESEARCH FUNDING BY THE CALL WOULD BE AROUND THE TRL LEVELS OF 3-4 TO PRODUCE NEW INNOVATIVE RESULTS THAT COULD MOVE UP THE TRL SCALE IN A DEFINED PLAN DESCRIBED APPROPRIATELY IN THE PROPOSAL?

Yes.

1.5.1.4. WOULD MORE MATURE PROJECTS LIKE PILOTS BE FUNDED BY INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT?

Yes, but preparatory work for pilots (e.g. feasibility studies, specification, conceptualization) can be funded under the project.

1.5.1.5. WHAT DOES CROSS- BORDER JOINT R&I STRATEGY ALIGNED WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES HAVE TO INCLUDE?

Analyzing the research gaps, defining research opportunities in the sector, figure out where the (technology) is also mentioned in the Smart specialization strategy or give a reference to the European green deal and other relevant documents (green shipping)

Note: strategic working and planning work are resource intensive – do not only write 3 papers – if you write a strategy you really can benefit from that later.

1.5.1.6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF JOINT R&I PROJECT CONSOLIDATING ACADEMIA BUSINESS LINKAGES?

The role is to create a Long side strategy (e.g. Malta - Hydrogen vessel) and to grow a research strategy with all countries involved - it's important here that you have the business link also available – like companies which are already in the business sector involved.

1.5.1.7. HOW TO PLAN RESEARCH PROJECT WITHIN THE OVERALL PROJECT?

The research project is a support project within the project (you have to describe it as a work package) – personal salaries, small consumables / no large equipment. The Research should not be the dominant – you can invest 25-30% for research (no fix) as it is a CSA Action. The research project is not the main project here.

Not all members of the consortium have to be active in research project – describe the work package in the proposal than you can break down it to tasks.

1.5.1.7. WHAT IS THE ACTION AND INVESTMENT PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY AND ITS ROLE?

The role is to search together for a long-term investment plan and discuss the management, planning additional funds, including private investors, companies to leverage funds.

The action and investment plan should be prepared not only for the relevant call for proposals and to gain money for funding in the scope of this call, it should be a long-term business plan in the (e.g. maritime sector).

The sustainability of the investment plan is important (not binding in the sense that complementary funding is obligatory), partners should come together and try to plan a systematic approach how to access these funds.

1.5.1.8. IS IT NECESSARY TO ALIGN THE PROJECT TO THE PRIORITIES OF THE AREAS MENTIONED (SYNERGIES WITH THE PROGRAMME PARTS ON EUROPEAN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS AND THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY (EIT) AS WELL AS THE INITIATIVE 'PARTNERSHIPS FOR REGIONAL INNOVATION' RUN BY THE JRC?

There is no obligation to have these instruments integrated in the investment plan nor to strictly align the Excellence Hubs project to their priorities. It is rather expected that the beneficiaries liaise with these other initiatives during the conduct of the project in order to explore possible collaboration. It is recommended to mention this intention in the work plan of the proposal.

1.5.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

1.5.3.1. CAN ONLY WIDENING ECOSYSTEMS PARTICIPATE IN CONSORTIA OR ALSO ECOSYSTEMS FROM NON-WIDENING COUNTRIES?

Yes. The applicants need to present at least two ecosystems (ideal 3-4) and in all of the ecosystems there should be components of the quadruple helix, such as government, academic player, business entity and society actor (citizens, media, or an end-user, associations). The idea by setting up the actors is: Who will promise the best impact of such a project (sustainability).

A whole ecosystem from a non-widening country can participate if there are at least two ecosystems from widening countries (if specific knowledge transfer is taken place (e. g. Netherlands – Maritime leading university or company can participate as long as the minimum condition of two complete ecosystems of widening countries is fulfilled).

1.5.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

1.5.3.1. ARE REGIONAL ACTORS RELEVANT PARTNERS?

Within the call for proposals regional actors are important players, while national players can be a borderline case (example: foundation for funding research –NO, national funding agency under the agent of international economy).

1.5.3.2. IS IT POSSIBLE TO INCLUDE SOCIAL COMPANY?

It depends – business association has social impact – e-g. association of medical doctors of public health would be ok, but if it’s purely lobby work for certain business sector than probably no.

1.5.3.3. DO UNIVERSITIES ALSO COUNT AS RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS?

Yes.

1.5.3.4. WHAT KIND OF COMPANIES WE WANT?

A real commercial business, existing at least three years as it should create some turnovers. Start-ups can be associate partners to the project.

1.5.3.5. DO ALL PARTNERS HAVE TO BE FULL PARTNERS?

Small partners do not have to be full partners (SMEs) and do not have to draw the contract > there could be service contact/experts.

1.5.3.6. THE PARTNERS FROM THE INDUSTRY MUST BE ESTABLISHED FIRMS (NOT START-UPS) WITH PROVEN AND SIGNIFICANT OPERATIONAL INCOME VERIFIABLE FOR AT LEAST 2 YEARS. WHICH PARAMETERS ARE USED TO DEFINE A “SIGNIFICANT” OPERATIONAL INCOME?

Unless you have an umbrella organisation, you need one “anchor company”, a real commercial business, at least existing three years, which should create some turnovers. We don’t not want start-ups and consulting services, but start-ups can be associate partners to the project (Protocol S. Weiers).

For ensuring an impactful economic rationale of the eco-system it is instrumental that companies from the ‘real economy’ actively participate and the consortium is not overly dominated by start-ups and consultants. Therefore, at least one of the business entities per ecosystem needs to prove that it is existing at least three years before the call publication and generates a significant annual turnover by commercial activity (not public funding). Balance sheets or extracts from annual business reports will be accepted as evidence and should be annexed to the proposals.

1.5.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

1.5.4.1. HOW MUCH FUNDING SHOULD GO TO WIDENING COUNTRIES?

70% of funding should remain in the widening country (Center of gravity), but 70 % is only a range, as it depends on the context.

The implementation is in a co- operated manner, no ecosystem is dominant to another, but there is one coordinator needed.

1.5.4.2. WHAT EXACTLY CAN BE FINANCED WITH THE FUNDS? E.G. PERSONNEL, EVENTS, INVESTMENTS, TRAVEL COSTS, ADVISORY/CONSULTANCY, ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS, ETC?

The "eligible costs" are the costs as for all other CSA’s (Coordination and Support Actions) as well. Described in the General Annexes B (from p. 5 on) and in the Annual Grant Agreement (from p. 24 on).

1.5.5. FINANCING

1.5.5.1. IS A COMPLEMENTARY CO-FINANCING OBLIGATORY IN EXCELLENCE HUBS?

Co-financing is not a must, but the project should open the gate to that.

1.5.5.2. DOES THE PROJECT NEED TO REPRESENT A “POTENTIAL INCOME”?

Not directly, but an Action and Investment plan must be set up during the course of the project. Look at the key core components of the project.

1.5.5.3. WHAT IS THE RATE FOR THE ALLOCATION OF COSTS TO RESEARCH?

30% would be a good reference. You can use that reference in the same line as Twinning is implemented. As for small equipment and consumables, there is no indication on how the budget should be distributed.

1.5.6. OTHER

1.5.6.1. SHOULD LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT BE INCLUDED IN PART B FOR CALL?

No.

1.5.6.2. ON WHICH CRITERIA SHOULD APPLICANTS FOCUS TO INCREASE THE CHANCE OF BEING SELECTED?

The key word is coherent: each step/component should fit into the others – use the knowledge of the partners to set a nice work plan. The core actions should be balanced.

2. DESTINATION ATTRACTING AND MOBILIZING THE BEST TALENTS

2.1.ERA CHAIRS

2.1.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

2.1.1.1. CAN RECRUITMENT PANELS INCLUDE STAFF FROM THE HOST INSTITUTION? IS THERE A % SPLIT (HOST INSTITUTION AND INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS), THAT NEEDS TO BE KEPT IN MIND, WHEN SELECTING THE PANEL?

Yes, recruitment panels can (and should) include staff from the host institution. There is no given split not recommended size.

2.1.1.2. DO THE CANDIDATES, WHO ARE ALREADY EMPLOYED IN THE COORDINATOR'S INSTITUTION AND ARE STILL INTERESTED IN JOINING THE TEAM MUST TAKE PART IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE? OR THEY DO NOT HAVE TO BE RECRUITED BUT RATHER BE IDENTIFIED BY THEIR NAMES IN THE PROPOSAL?

If candidates, that are employed in the institution, are interested in joining the team, they must take part in the recruitment procedure. The "previous contractual links" also have to be taken into account.

2.1.1.3. IS THE PROSPECTIVE ERA CHAIR HOLDER ALLOWED TO HAVE A PRIOR CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP / AFFILIATION WITH THE HOST INSTITUTION?

Internal candidates, though not excluded a priori, are not in line with the objective of the action to attract external talent. Thus, except in duly justified cases, proposals where the future ERA Chair holder already has contractual links with the coordinator institution in the Widening country, fail one of the main aims of the action.

2.1.1.4. IS IT IT ALLOWED TO ADD SOME SUPPORT LETTERS TO THE TWO EXPECTED LETTERS MENTIONED IN THE CALL?

It is not forbiden, but there is no place in the template and no possibility to add annexes. It would be better to mention the support in the text of the proposal. For example, if they speak about industry cooperation, they can say that they already have signed commitment letters from X companies or Y clusters to support this.

2.1.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

2.1.2.1. CAN AN ERA CHAIR PARTNER INSTITUTION BECOME AN INSTITUTION FROM WIDENING COUNTRY?

In WP 2023-2024 the mono beneficiary system is in place, therefore no partner institution is foreseen.

2. 1.2.2. THE SUBMISSION SERVICE ALLOWS FOR THE ANNEXATION OF DOCUMENTS. IS THIS POSSIBILITY AIMED FOR THE ERA CHAIR LETTER, THE HOST'S COMMITMENT LETTER, THE ERA CHAIR CV?

Yes ,for some. Please note that the CV in Euro pass form of the future ERA chair holder, should be uploaded as an additional document to the proposal. However, the 2 letters of commitment (i.e. from the institute management and the proposed ERA chair holder) should be included in Part B of the proposal under Section 3.2 Capacity of participants and consortium as a whole.

2.1.2.3. DO THE TEAM LEADER AND THE ERA CHAIR CAN BE TWO DISTINCT PERSONS?

Yes. Work Program mentions: This should be clearly demonstrated in the proposal and include the appointment of the leader of the newly created research group on a permanent basis within the coordinator organization (to which the ERA Chair holder might apply) during the initial 3 years of the duration of the grant. This is to be conducted through an open recruitment procedure to be monitored by the European Commission.

To ensure the sustainability of the action, the ERA Chair research team should have conditions to thrive after the end of the Horizon Europe funding. This should be clearly demonstrated in the proposal and include the appointment of the leader of the newly created research group on a permanent basis within the coordinator organization (to which the ERA Chair holder might apply) during the initial 3 years of the duration of the grant.

2.1.2.4. WHAT DOES PART-TIME MEAN? 50% OF THE FTE OR ANY OTHER ARRANGEMENT THAT IS NOT FULL TIME?

No obstacles to be other arrangement.

2.1.2.5. ARE MULTIPLE STAYS ANOTHER OPTION FOR THE ERA CHAIR?

Yes.

2.1.2.6. DO MULTIPLE STAYS MEAN THAT THE ERA CHAIR CAN STAY LESS (COME AND GO BASIS) THAN THE PART-TIME (IF PART TIME IS 50% OF FULL TIME)?

It should be in the interest of the project and its objectives. Teleworking is also a possibility.

2.1.2.7. WHAT IS THE MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRESENCE OF AN ERA CHAIR?

The minimum would be what will make the project achieve its objectives and therefore would be awarded a grant. It has to be well justified in the proposal.

2.1.2.8. IS TELEWORKING ALLOWED TO COMPLEMENT PHYSICAL STAYS?

Yes.

2.1.2.9. SHOULD THE ERA CHAIR HOLDER BE MENTIONED IN THE TABLE "RESEARCHERS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT", EVEN IF THIS PERSON ISN'T EMPLOYED YET AT THE TIME OF SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION?

Yes, you may include the ERA Chair.

2.1.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

2.1.3.1 CAN A FRENCH RESEARCHER FROM METROPOLITAN FRANCE HOLD AN ERA CHAIR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GUADELOUPE?

Yes, the nationality is not an important aspect.

2.1.3.2. HOW MANY ERA CHAIR HOLDERS ARE ALLOWED PER INSTITUTION?

There are no limits.

2.1.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

2.1.4.1 RESEARCH COSTS ARE ELIGIBLE UP TO 10 % OF THE MAXIMUM EU CONTRIBUTION. ACQUISITION OF EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE LINKED WITH THE WORK OF THE ERA CHAIR RESEARCH TEAM AND EVALUATORS SHOULD FIND IN THE PROPOSAL ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ESTABLISH THIS CONNECTION." CAN THE RESEARCH COSTS BE PLANNED UP TO 10% OF THE MAXIMUM EU CONTRIBUTION?

While not an eligibility condition as such (i.e. not mentioned in topic conditions table), this part of the topic description will be assessed by the expert evaluators for each proposal. We cannot prejudge the outcome of such assessment for an individual proposal with research costs (e.g. related to equipment costs) above 10% of the total EU contribution. However, experts will strictly scrutinize whether the ceiling of 10% of the total budget for research cost is respected and whether for instance the procurement of a specific component of the microscope by the ERA chair project – although eligible - would be justifiable and pertinent to the objectives of the project. We would also like to raise to your attention that for the purchase of equipment hence only the depreciation costs of the item(s) (and only the portion used on the action) could be charged.

2.1.4.2. HOW TO DEAL WITH A SITUATION WHEN A PROFESSOR WOULD VISIT THE HOST ORGANISATION ONE WEEK EACH MONTH AND WOULD LIKE TO STAY EMPLOYED WITHIN THE PARTNER INSTITUTION?

A secondment contract could be prepared, but it is important that:

AMGA, 42 p. 'Seconded' means the temporary transfer of an employee from a third party (the employer) to the beneficiary. Seconded persons are still paid and employed by the third party, but work for the beneficiary. (…)

These costs should be declared by BEN under category A.3 (…) seconded persons by a third party against payment, which has specific eligibility conditions, and one related to the personnel cost is:

They must be calculated on the basis of a rate which corresponds to the costs actually incurred for the direct contract or secondment and must not be significantly different from those for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

But there is an exception too in AMGA, 44 p.:

Persons seconded against payment from a third party located in a different country than the beneficiary — As salary levels are not homogeneous across different countries, the remuneration of the person paid by the third party, and so the actual costs paid for the secondment, might be higher than those paid by the beneficiary for employees performing similar tasks. In that case, the actual costs paid for the secondment can still be considered eligible, if the beneficiary can demonstrate that its usual practice is to pay for secondments at the level of the actual remuneration of the seconded person.

Meanwhile Additional remuneration is an option that could only be applied by Beneficiary for cost category A.1 Costs for employees (or equivalent).Travel costs could be declared by beneficiary, if estimated in proposal and secondment contract.

2.1.5. OTHER

2.2. ERA FELLOWSHIPS

2.2.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

2.2.1.1. CAN THE APPLICANT WITHIN MSCA ACTION OPT FOR A POSSIBILITY NOT TO FINANCED FROM WIDENING BUDGET IF THERE WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH MONEY FOR FUNDING THE PROJECT WITHIN MSCA ACTION?

Yes, by clicking in a relevant box in the project application.

2.2.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

2.2.2.1. CAN A FRENCH POSTDOCTORAL STUDENT (METROPOLITAN) APPLY TO A UNIVERSITY IN A FRENCH OUTERMOST REGION (E.G. GUADELOUPE)?

As Guadeloupe is part of France, the French postdoctoral student is not eligible to apply for a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship (+ opt for ERA Fellowship) with a host university in Guadeloupe because he/she does not comply with the so called 'mobility rule'.

The mobility rule: *The researcher cannot have resided or carried out his/her main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the beneficiary for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the call deadline.*

2.2.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

2.2.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

2.2.5. OTHER

2.3. ERA TALENTS

2.3.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

2.3.1.1. ARE THERE ANY AGE LIMITATIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN ERA TALENTS?

No.

2.3.1.2. CAN ONLY CURRENT STAFF OF THE CONSORTIUM PARTNERS BE SECONDED, OR ALSO NEW STAFF?

Also new staff.

2.3.1.3. ARE PHD STUDENTS ELIGIBLE TO BENEFIT FROM ERA TALENTS?

Yes.

2.3.1.4. HOW MANY SECONDMENTS PER PROJECT? IS IT FOR ONE EMPLOYEE OR MULTIPLE EMPLOYEES?

It is not limited, multiple employees, depending on the training and mobility methodology.

2.3.1.5. I AM WORKING AT THE UNIVERSITY AS GRANT OFFICER. COULD I APPLY FOR SECONDMENT AT ANOTHER UNIVERSITY OR MUST IT BE OUTSIDE OF ACADEMIA?

Within the call for proposal only inter-sectoral mobility is foreseen.

2.31.6. WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS OR NATIONAL/REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS?

Examples are provided within EXCELLENCE HUBS CALL (chambers of commerce, regional development agencies). The key in ERA TALENTS is to complement the traditional Academic networks with the non-academic sector.

2.3.1.7. IN THE PROPOSAL DO WE HAVE TO OUTLINE A RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE FOR THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE SECONDMENTS OR DO WE PROPOSE CONCRETE CANDIDATES FOR SECONDMENTS?

Outline a recruitment procedure not individuals.

2.3.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

2.3.2.1. IN THE CASE OF THE OUTERMOST REGIONS: CAN THE CONTINENTAL COUNTRY, E.G. FRANCE, BE PART OF THE CONSORTIUM AS ONE OF THE THREE MEMBER STATES?

The answer was already provided by the EC. La Reunion and Strasbourg are not 2 entities from 2 countries.

2.3.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

2.3.3.1. DOES THE COORDINATOR OF ERA TALENTS MUST COME FROM A WIDENING COUNTRY?

Yes.

2.3.3.2. IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE TWO COORDINATORS?

Only one coordinator, established in widening country.

2.3.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

2.3.1.8. CAN COSTS OF E.G. MATERIALS FOR WORKSHOPS / TRAININGS ETC DURING SECONDMENTS BE FUNDED (E.G. LABORATORY CONSUMABLES USED DURING TRAINING)?

The grant covers expenses related to the ERA Talents participating organizations and individual talents hosted/seconded (administrative costs, training costs, travel and subsistence costs and salaries for seconded staff, and costs associated with dissemination & communication and knowledge transfer).

2.3.5. OTHER

2.4. PATHWAY TO SYNERGIES

2.4.1. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON TOPICS

2.4.1.1. ARE ERC AND PROOF OF CONCEPT PROJECTS ELIGIBLE, DESPITE NOT BEING CODIFIED AS RIA TYPE OF ACTION?

The Work programme refers to RIA, therefore CSA, ERC grants, or any other type of grants do not qualify for downstream synergies.

2.4.1.2. ARE SECTION 1 PROJECTS OF PRIMA (FUNDED BY HORIZON BUDGET)?

The Work programme refers to RIA, therefore CSA, ERC grants, or any other type of grants do not qualify for downstream synergies.

2.4.1.3. ARE (FOR UPSTREAM SYNERGIES) PROJECTS ELIGIBLE FUNDED UNDER NATIONAL FUNDS SUCH AS THE PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAMME THAT ALL MEMBER STATES HAVE?

The criteria are more flexible, so as long as the national funding programmes can be qualified as 'similar' to ERDF/RRF, they could base their proposal also on those. The previous ERDF or Interreg funding is a more 'safe' way to go.

2.4.1.4. ARE PRIMA, SECTION 1 PROJECTS, ELIGIBLE FOR APPLYING FOR DOWNSTREAM SYNERGIES?

If the proposal can convincingly present results that were related to the H2020 part of the funding, this can be accepted. If however, the partial funding of Horizon is minor and did not clearly materialize in concrete results, the provisions of the call for downstream synergies would not be fulfilled.

2.4.2. COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY

2.4.3. ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

2.4.4. COST ELIGIBILITY

2.4.5. OTHER

2.4.5.1. THE WP DOES NOT SPECIFY A DURATION FOR THE PATHWAYS TO SYNERGIES (HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-04-01) CALL. WHAT IS A SUITABLE TIMELINE?

24 months (regarding the reply from the EC).

3. OTHER QUESTIONS

3.1. GENERAL ISSUES TO ALL WIDENING MEASURES

3.1.1. UK PARTICIPATION

3.1.1.1. CAN UK INSTITUTIONS PARTICIPATE IN HORIZON EUROPE PROJECTS?

Yes.

3.1.2. SWISS PARTICIPATION

3.2.1.1. CAN SWISS ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATE IN HORIZON EUROPE 2023 CALLS?

Yes, but Switzerland is currently not associated to Horizon Europe and is considered a "Third Country" to the programme. The start of negotiations between Switzerland and the EU in March 2024 activated the transitional arrangement 2024, which allows researchers in Switzerland to participate in the ERC Advanced Grants 2024 call as 'Beneficiary'. Due to progress in the negotiations the EU has decided in July 2024 to extend the participation of Swiss entities as 'Beneficiaries' in the ERC Starting Grant 2025, Synergy Grant 2025 and Consolidator Grant 2025 calls. The Swiss Federal Council is committed to obtain full association to Horizon Europe before the end of the programme (2027).

The current association status and development are provided from The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), which provides regularly updated information on Switzerland's status on its webpage: www.horizon-europe.ch

Contact SERI for further questions:
europrogram@sbfi.admin.ch
Hotline +41 58 463 50 50

3.1.3. JRC PARTICIPATION

3.1.3.1. CAN JRC PARTICIPATE IN WIDENING MEASURES?

Yes, but if some conditions are met.

More information on JRC participation can be found on: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/15740;type=0,1;categories=;tenders=;programme=null;keyword=;freeTextSearchKeyword=involvement%20of%20the%20JRC;matchWholeText=true;period=null;status=0;sortQuery=relevance;faqListKey=faqSearchTablePageState.

3.1.4. REBUTAL MECHANISM

3.4.1.1. WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ON REBUTAL MECHANISM?

Information on rebuttal mechanism are included in the topic details of the call for proposals which include this possibility. See one example:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-widera-2022-talents-01-01;callCode=null;freeTextSearchKeyword=ERA%20Chairs;matchWholeText=true;typeCodes=1,2,8;statusCodes=31094503;programmePeriod=null;programCcm2Id=43108390;programDivisionCode=null;focusAreaCode=null;destination=null;mission=null;geographicalZonesCode=null;programmeDivisionProspect=null;startDateLte=null;startDateGte=null;crossCuttingPriorit yCode=null;cpvCode=null;performanceOfDelivery=null;sortQuery=sortStatus;orderBy=asc;onlyTenders=false;topicListKey=topicSearchTablePageState

3.1.5. VISIBILITY RULES

3.5.1.1. WHAT ARE VISIBILITY RULES APPLICABLE TO HORIZON EUROPE PROJECTS?

The visibility rules applicable to Horizon Europe projects have changed compared to H2020.

According to Article 17(2) of the HE Model Grant Agreement (MGA), unless otherwise agreed with the granting authority, only the emblem (i.e. the European flag) and the funding statement (translated into local languages, where needed) must be displayed in order to acknowledge the EU support to the project.

This is due to the fact that HE visibility rules are now based on the so-called 'corporate MGA', i.e. the grant agreement that will be used across different EU programs and must be applied consistently.

In this regard, it is not necessary anymore to display the grant agreement number/ project acronym, nor the specific program under which the action has been funded, in order to cover and streamline the visibility rules for grants awarded under all centrally managed programs by the EU.

3.1.6. GENDER ACTION PLANS

3.1.6.1. WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION AND FAQ ON GENDER ACTION PLANS IN HORIZON EUROPE?

You can get more information on: https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en#:~:text=As%20detailed%20in%20the%20last,research%20organisations%20from%20EU%20Member.

3.1.7. EU INFO DAYS

3.1.7.1. WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON EC INFO DAYS?

You can get more information on: https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/events/upcoming-events/horizon-europe-info-days_en.

3.1.8. PROBLEMS WITH IT SYSTEM AND SAVING DATA

3.1.8.1. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO SAVE THE FORM BECAUSE OF THE DISAPPEARING PARTNER DATA? DO THE APPLICANTS NEED TO KEEP

INSERTING THE DATA OVER AND OVER AGAIN UNTIL IT WILL (MAGICALLY) BE SAVED?

If you think that submission of your proposal failed and this was due to a technical error on the Portal side, you may lodge a complaint through the IT Helpdesk. The complaint must be filed **within 4 calendar days** after call closure. You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt the same or next working day. **What else to do?** You should secure a PDF version of the part B and annexes of your application holding a time stamp before the call deadline *(file attributes listing the date and time of creation and last modification)*, as well as proof of the alleged failure *(screenshots)*. You may be requested by the IT Helpdesk to provide these items.

EC services will check the IT logs (application log files and access log files of the Commission IT systems involved) and see if they show a technical problem on the Portal side which prevented you from submitting (or resubmitting) the proposal. You will be notified about the outcome as soon as possible. If your complaint is justified, the files you provided to the IT Helpdesk will be used as your proposal and sent for evaluation. If you didn't provide any files, the last version recorded in the IT system will be used. So advise applicants to make screenshots (print screens).

3.1.6. LUMS SUMS AND PRE-FINANCING IN HORIZON EUROPE

3.1.6.1. HOW WILL THE PRE-FINANCING BE FIXED FOR LUMP SUM GRANTS IN HORIZON EUROPE?

The pre-financing for lump sum grants is calculated in the same way as for all Horizon Europe grants. It is a percentage of the lump sum that depends on the number of reporting periods. **For projects with one reporting period, the pre-financing is normally 80% of the lump sum.** For projects with two or more reporting periods, the pre-financing is normally 160% of the average EU funding per reporting period (i.e. lump sum/number of periods). As in other grants, a small percentage of the lump sum is retained as contribution to the Mutual Insurance Mechanism. The pre-financing is fixed in the grant agreement. The coordinator should distribute it in accordance with the consortium agreement.

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