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Technical Assistance for Türkiye in Horizon Europe

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A1-2-2- Focused Group Trainings
“Project Writing Manual for Collaborative Projects”

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Abbreviation List

AC	Associated Countries
CA	Consortium Agreement
CINEA	Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
CORDIS	Community Research and Development Information Service
CR	Consensus Report
CSA	Coordination and Support Action
EC	European Commission
EoI	Expression of Interest
ERA	European Research Area
ER	Evaluation Report
EU	European Union
DESCA	Development of a Simplified Consortium Agreement
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
HaDEA	Health and Digital Executive Agency
HE	Horizon Europe
H2020	Horizon 2020
IA	Innovation Action
IMDA	Innovation and Market Deployment Actions
JRC	Joint Research Center
KSOs	Strategic Plan's Key Strategic Orientations
MAA	Multi-Actor Approach
MS	Member States
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCP	National Contact Points
NDA	Non-Disclosure Agreement
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ORCID	Open Researcher and Contributor ID
PIC	Participant Identification Code
PCP	Pre-Commercial Procurement
PPI	Public Procurement of Innovative Solutions
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
RIA	Research and Innovation Action
REA	Research Executive Agency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SOTA	State-Of-The-Art
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
TMA	Training and Mobility Actions
TRL	Technology Readiness Levels
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
WP	Work Package

1. Introduction

Collaboration is at the heart of Horizon Europe (HE), driving its mission to address complex global challenges that transcend national borders. By fostering international cooperation, HE promotes the integration of research efforts across Europe and beyond, strengthening the European Research Area (ERA) and maximizing the impact of Research and Innovation (R&I) investment. HE is built on three main pillars (See Figure 1) and Pillar II of HE plays a pivotal role in this framework. Positioned between fundamental research (Pillar I) and market-driven applications, it serves as a bridge, ensuring that scientific advancements translate into real-world solutions with industrial and societal impact. Through collaborative projects, Pillar II facilitates the transition from research to innovation, supporting the development of cutting-edge technologies and sustainable solutions in collaboration with all the key stakeholders relevant to their value chain.

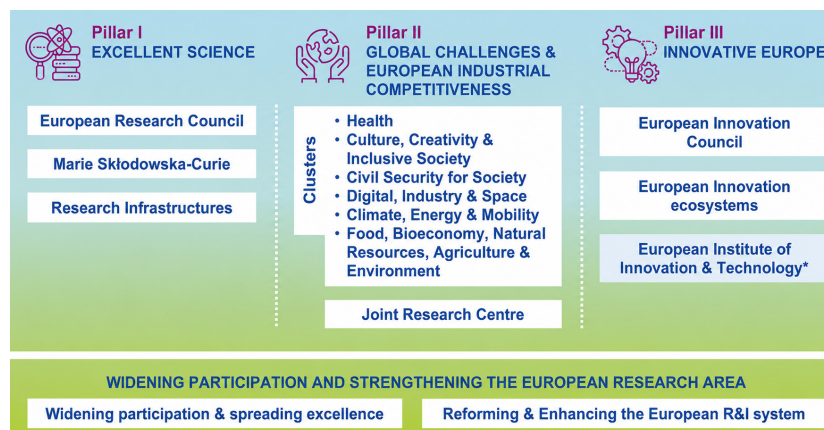


Figure 1 – HE Pillars of implementation (source: LEITAT)

Although not an EU Member State, Türkiye and 18 other Associated Countries of which the latest being Canada in 2024, can take part in Horizon Europe. Thanks to an association agreement signed on October 27th of 2021, Türkiye has been granted participation rights for 2021–2027, allowing its researchers and organizations to join projects under the same terms as EU Member States (MS¹).² For Turkish organizations, HE presents significant opportunities to engage in high-impact, cross-border collaborations. By participating in Pillar II projects, they can leverage their expertise, gain access to international networks, and enhance their competitiveness. Understanding the strategic value of collaboration within HE is essential for leveraging these opportunities and driving innovation at both national and international levels. This manual will guide participants through the process of developing and writing a competitive collaborative project proposal.

A successful collaborative project proposal requires a compelling concept, a well-defined consortium with complementary strengths, and a clear and persuasive narrative, resulting in tangible benefits for society, industry, and EU policy. Collaborative projects not only carry the inherent risks of Research and Development (R&D) activities but also introduce additional challenges for beneficiaries, including:

- **Consortium building:** constructing a highly competitive consortium can be challenging and time-consuming, as it requires finding the right partners with complementary expertise to

¹ Consult in the section **Resources and Support** the [List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe: Third countries associated to Horizon Europe](#).

² European Commission. (2021). Türkiye joins Horizon Europe, Erasmus+ and Solidarity Corps programmes. Research and Innovation. [Source link](#).

cover the entire targeted value chain while sharing a common vision. This process involves identifying organizations with the necessary technical, industrial, and market knowledge, ensuring a balance between research institutions, SMEs, large enterprises, and end-users, as well as relevant associated organizations, depending on the addressed societal aspect. Additionally, building a strong consortium requires aligning expectations, defining clear roles and responsibilities, and establishing trust among partners to foster a fluid collaboration.

- ▶ **Project coordinator selection:** the Project Coordinator's role is crucial for both the proposal preparation and the project execution's success. Firstly, the Project Coordinator must lead the proposal preparation process, ensuring that the consortium develops a competitive and compelling proposal, aligns project objectives with HE priorities, and meets all submission requirements (including having the financial capacity³ required to manage the whole funding effectively). Secondly, the Project Coordinator is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the project and ensuring that it stays on track.
- ▶ **Shifting perspective:** the submitted proposal must fully adhere to the Programme rules and the specificity of each topic (as well as the targeted *expected impact* on European policies) while integrating both the desired research achievement as well as the ones of the partners. Shifting from the “want to do” alone to what “should do” as a consortium according to the Programme with a set of partners.
- ▶ **Managing consortium dynamics:** coordinating a consortium requires overseeing diverse partners with different expertise, interests, and cultural beliefs. This can lead to communication challenges, conflicting priorities, and difficulties in reaching a consensus.
- ▶ **Administrative overhead:** collaborative projects require more administrative overhead, including compliance with EU financial and legal regulations, the management of consortium legal rules, and the distribution of funds among partners. Coordinators must also handle project reporting, periodic reviews, ethics compliance, risk management, amendments, and communication with the European Commission (EC). Additionally, ensuring proper documentation, tracking deliverables, and managing stakeholder relationships add to the complexity of project coordination.
- ▶ **Partner dependencies:** the success of a collaborative project depends on the performance of each partner individually and collectively. Delays or failures by a partner or more can impact the entire project, creating risks and uncertainties. Under this scenario, delicate and decisive decisions must be made.

This manual serves as a comprehensive guide to the entire application process for HE collaborative project proposals, covering every stage from identifying the right call to submitting a highly competitive application (See Figure 2). It outlines all the key processes involved, including a short introduction to financial and administrative considerations, that can be consulted with more details within the specific Financial and Administrative Manual⁴.

³ Consult in the section **Resources and Support** the [Funding & Tender Online Manual](#) (Sub-section of Financial capacity assessment).

⁴ Consult the section **Resources and Support** [Legal & Financial Guide for Horizon Europe Projects](#).

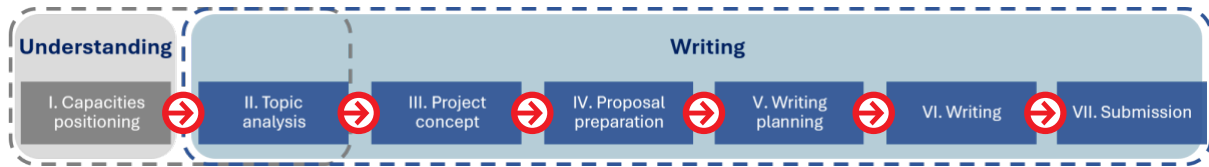


Figure 2 – HE collaborative projects proposals process (source: LEITAT)

Additionally, it provides practical insights on partner search, consortium building, and strategies for elaborating ambitious concepts based on targeted impact by EU policy while navigating the challenges and opportunities of international collaboration. The manual also includes expert tips and recommendations to enhance proposal quality and maximize success rates.

2. Collaborative Projects in Horizon Europe – Pillar II

2.1. What are collaborative projects and why are they important?

As mentioned above, many of today's global challenges are broad and complex so stakeholders need to work together, across borders, to find solutions. Within HE, collaborative projects can be found in Pillar I, such as ERC Synergy Grants and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) doctoral networks and Staff Exchanges as well as in Pillar III, such as European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE) + Pathfinder/Transition and in the cross-Pillar WIDERA. However, most of them won't be discussed within this manual as they are mainly focusing on bottom-up approaches aiming to promote excellence in science by support breakthrough ideas from any field (except EIE, aiming to promote innovation ecosystem). This manual will focus on top-down approaches aiming to solve technical and political priority challenges that will be found mainly in Pillar II (including Missions) as well as in the particular case of EIC pathfinder challenge programme but where the EIC is periodically defining specific predefined priorities (e.g., quantum tech, engineered living materials, AI for diagnostics) that work independently of the ecosystem of the Pillar II (but taking in consideration SoA from the whole HE).

Through collaborative projects in Pillar II of HE, the biggest R&I funding program in Europe, HE allows contributing towards these solutions by working jointly with organizations across Europe and the whole world. These collaborative projects are supported by Pillar II, which aims to foster collaboration between the R&I ecosystem, public sector and society representatives, addressing global challenges and promoting European industrial competitiveness. Under this Pillar, they represent a significant share of the overall funding allocated to R&I initiatives, being by far the largest programme area within HE, with a total budget of more than €52.7 billion in 2021-2027.

The Pillar II, Global Challenges & European Industrial Competitiveness, is organized into the six following clusters (See Figure 3).

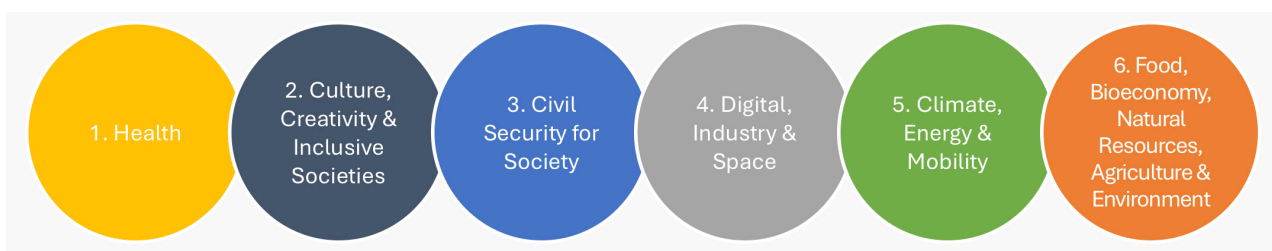


Figure 3 - Horizon Europe Pillar II Clusters (source: LEITAT)

- ▶ **Cluster 1. Health:** focus on enhancing the health and well-being of people of all ages by advancing knowledge, developing innovative healthcare solutions, and incorporating a gender perspective in disease prevention, diagnosis, monitoring, treatment, and cure. It also aims to create new health technologies, reduce health risks, protect populations, and promote overall well-being, including workplace health. Additionally, the cluster seeks to improve the efficiency, fairness, and sustainability of public health systems, address diseases linked to poverty and provide better support for patients.
- ▶ **Cluster 2. Culture, Creativity, and Inclusive Society:** aims to reinforce European democratic values by upholding the rule of law and fundamental rights. It focuses on preserving cultural heritage and fostering socio-economic changes that promote inclusivity and sustainable growth.

- ▶ **Cluster 3. Civil Security for Society:** address ongoing security challenges, including cybercrime, as well as threats posed by natural and human-made disasters. It aims to enhance resilience and preparedness to safeguard society.
- ▶ **Cluster 4. Digital, Industry, and Space:** focus on developing competitive and reliable technologies to strengthen Europe's global leadership in key industries. It promotes sustainable production and consumption while addressing social, economic, and territorial needs. The goal is to build a digital, low-carbon, and circular economy by ensuring a stable supply of raw materials, advancing material innovation, and tackling global challenges through cutting-edge research and investments.
- ▶ **Cluster 5. Climate, Energy and Mobility:** focus on developing competitive and reliable technologies to strengthen Europe's global leadership in key industries. It promotes sustainable production and consumption while addressing social, economic, and territorial needs. The goal is to build a digital, low-carbon, and circular economy by ensuring a stable supply of raw materials, advancing material innovation, and tackling global challenges through cutting-edge research and investments.
- ▶ **Cluster 6. Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment:** Focus on reducing environmental degradation and reversing the loss of biodiversity across land, inland waters, and seas. It aims to improve natural resource management, ensure food and nutrition security through innovation and digitalization, and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient circular economy. Additionally, it promotes a sustainable bioeconomy, including forestry.

Under Pillar II of HE, European Partnerships are key instruments to drive collaborative R&I efforts between the EU, MS, industry, and other stakeholders. While mobilizing public and private investments, these partnerships aim to address specific sectorial challenges under EU policy priorities. There are 3 different implementation modes for European Partnerships (See Figure 4).

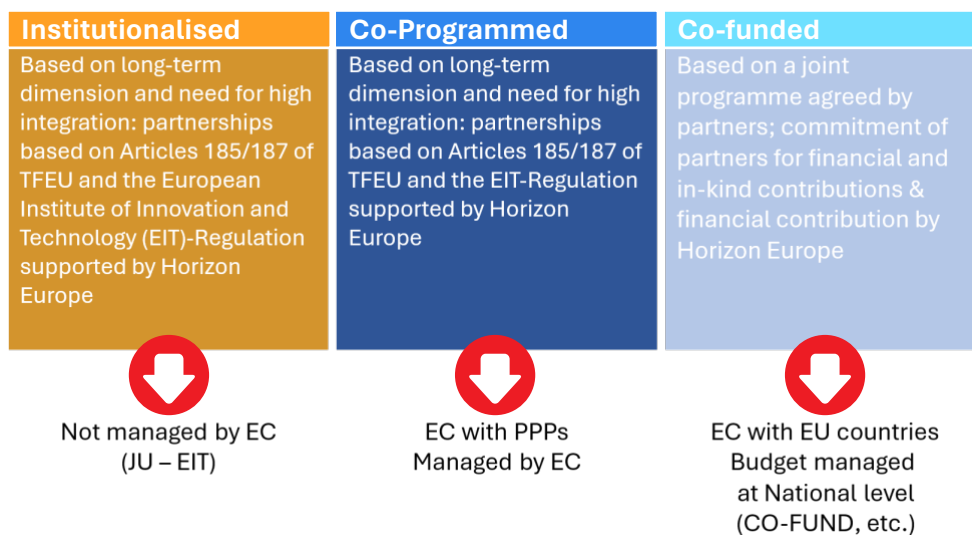


Figure 4 - Horizon Europe Modes Partnerships (source: European Commission)

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- ▶ **Institutionalised Partnerships:** established long-term collaborations with public/private partners, based on Article 185 and Article 187 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) that are implemented by dedicated structures created for that purpose.
- ▶ **Co-programmed Partnerships:** based on joint programming of R&I activities based on a Memorandum of Understanding, which the Commission signs with industry associations and manages within *HE Work Programme* calls.
- ▶ **Co-funded Partnerships:** joint programmes of R&I activities between R&I funders from different countries that are created through the implementation of a competitive HE Grant Agreement (CO-FUND) to be able to implement joint transnational calls, 30-50% co-funded by EC.

The HE *Strategic Plan 2025-2027* has included a list of additional partnerships, bringing the portfolio of EU partnerships to a total of 60 (See Figure 5).

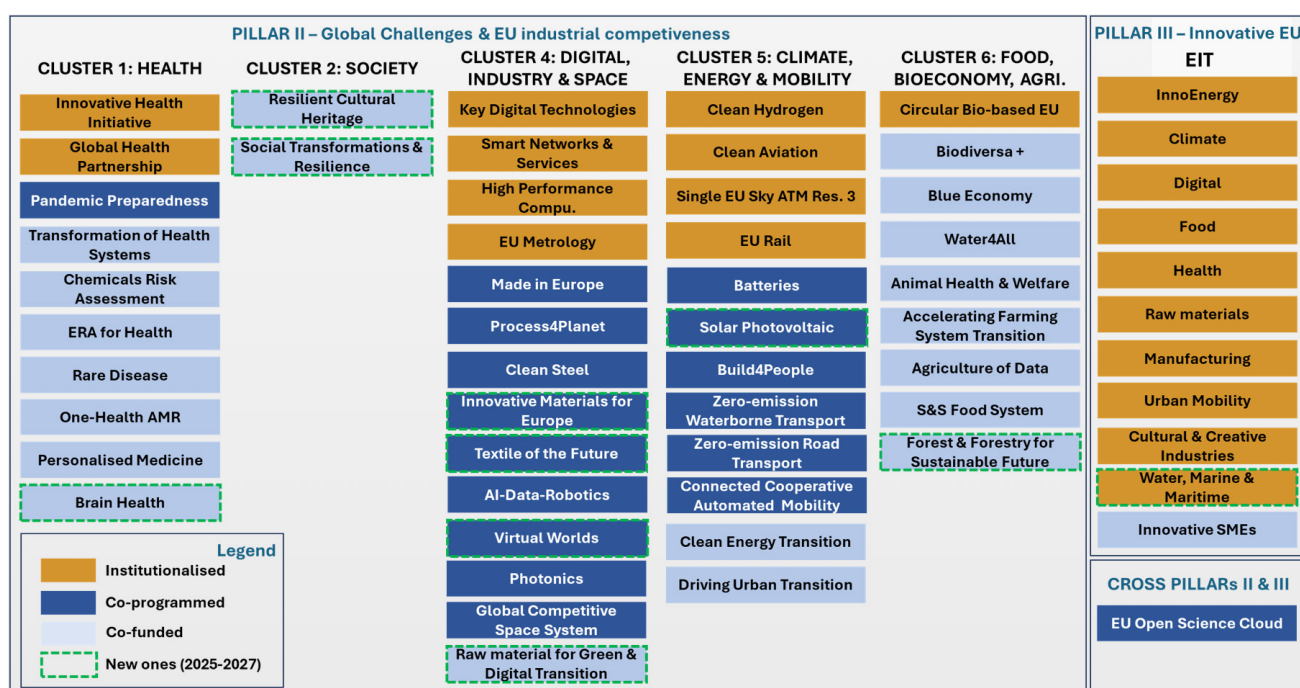


Figure 5 – Horizon Europe Partnerships (source: European Commission)

Based on the Mariana Mazzucato report on Missions, those clusters have been complemented by 5 HE missions (See Figure 6) that operate across multiple clusters to foster cross-sectoral collaboration and act as policy-driven instruments combining **multi-level governance** involving the EU, Member States, and regional/local actors.⁵ They introduce a transformative and goal-oriented approach to R&I, aiming to achieve ambitious but concrete objectives by 2030 by supporting EC priorities, such as the [European Green Deal](#), [Europe fit for the Digital Age](#), [Beating Cancer](#) and the [New European Bauhaus](#). For instance, Mission Climate is a concrete element of the new [Climate Adaptation Strategy](#), Mission Cancer of Europe's [Beating Cancer Plan](#) and Mission Soil is a flagship initiative of the [Long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas](#).

⁵ European Commission (n.d.). EU Missions in Horizon Europe. Research and Innovation. [Source link.](#)

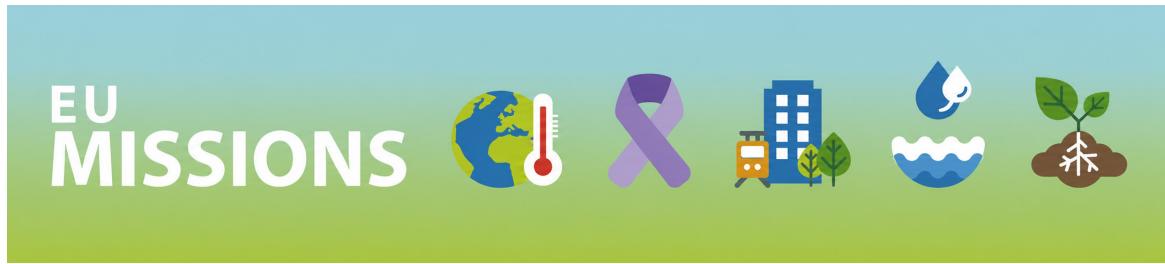


Figure 6 – Horizon Europe Missions (source: European Commission)

The five HE Missions are:

- ▶ **Adaptation to Climate Change:** support at least 150 regions and communities in their transformation to resilience by 2030.
- ▶ **Cancer:** Improve the lives of 3 million people by 2030 through prevention, treatment, and survivorship.
- ▶ **Restore Our Ocean & Waters:** restore marine and freshwater ecosystems, reduce pollution, and enable sustainable governance.
- ▶ **100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities:** support 100 European cities in becoming climate-neutral by 2030, paving the way for others.
- ▶ **A Soil Deal for Europe:** create 100 Living Labs and Lighthouses by 2030 to promote sustainable land and soil management in urban and rural areas.

In addition to those missions, a new funding tool will be implemented to revitalize neighbourhoods to become not only sustainable but also inclusive and beautiful - the [New European Bauhaus Facility](#) - that will be carried out from 2025 to 2027.

2.2. Different types of collaborative projects

Within the framework of each call, the type of project action category under which initiative proposals must be drafted is specified. These types of actions determine the activities to be carried out, as well as the funding rate that the EC will contribute:

Table 1 – Type of Actions in collaborative projects

TYPE OF ACTION	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING DETAILS
Research and Innovation Action (RIA)	Activities that aim primarily to establish new knowledge or to explore the feasibility of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution (TRL 2-6). <i>E.g. basic research, small-scale prototype.</i>	The EU funding covers up to 100% of the project costs.
Innovation Action (IA)	Activities that aim directly to produce plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services (TRL 6-8). <i>E.g. market replication and large-scale prototype.</i>	The EU funding covers up to 60-70% of the project costs (except for non-profit legal entities, where a rate of up to 100% applies).
Coordination and Support Action (CSA)	Activities that contribute to the objectives of HE. In general, no R+I activities.	The EU funding covers up to 100% of the project costs.



	<i>E.g. training, dissemination, exploitation, standardization, policy dialogues, etc.</i>	
Pre-Commercial Procurement (PCP)⁶	<i>Public procurement of R&D services to steer the development of innovative solutions to address specific public sector needs.</i>	<i>The EU funding covers up to 100% of the project costs.</i>
Public Procurement of Innovative Solutions (PPI)⁵	<i>Public procurement of innovative solutions that are already close to market but not widely available yet.</i>	<i>The EU funding covers up to 50% of the project costs.</i>
Programme co-fund action (COFUND)	<i>Co-funding for multi-annual joint programme for Co-funded Partnerships. Mainly reserved for national funding Organizations.</i>	<i>The EU funding covers between 30-70% of the project costs.</i>
Innovation and market deployment actions (IMDA)	<i>Activities that embed an innovation action and other activities necessary to deploy an innovation on the market. This includes the scaling-up of companies and Horizon Europe blended finance.</i>	<i>The EU funding covers up to 70% of the eligible project costs (except for non-profit legal entities, where a rate of up to 100% applies).</i>
Training and mobility actions (TMA)	<i>Activities that aim to improve the skills, knowledge and career prospects of researchers, based on mobility between countries and, if relevant, between sectors or disciplines.</i>	<i>The EU funding covers up to 100% of the eligible project costs supporting mobility and training.</i>

In the case of IA, the EU contribution is up to 70% for-profit organization; only in particular exceptions associated with co-programmed partnerships is this EU contribution up to 60%. In the case of COFUND, the co-funding rate depends on the nature of the action and the activities supported. As such, a co-fund programme supporting IA or a mix with RIA will have a 30% EU contribution. If the co-fund programme primarily focuses on RIA, the EU contribution will be 50%. The 70% contribution only applies to programme funding research-oriented activities with strong EU added value (e.g. training network, fellowship and fundamental research).

Lastly, and regarding the RIA and IA projects, it is important to mention that the main distinction between the two lies primarily by a specific indication of the Technology Readiness Level (TRL). An RIA is expected to have an outcome within TRL 2 to 6, while IA is intended for higher TRLs, averaging between 6 and 8.

This TRL scale was introduced into the EU-funded projects context in 2014 as part of the H2020. The TRL scale was originally defined by NASA in the 1990s as a means for measuring or indicating the maturity of a given technology, from a paper sketch to its entry into the market. For HE this scale is defined⁷ and set that: “Where the specific call/topic conditions require a Technology Readiness Level (TRL), the following definitions apply, unless otherwise specified:

- 👉 TRL 1: Basic principles observed
- 👉 TRL 2: Technology concept formulated
- 👉 TRL 3: Experimental proof of concept
- 👉 TRL 4: Technology validated in a lab

⁶ European Commission. (n.d.). Horizon Europe funding for PCP and PPI. Research and Innovation. [Source link](#).

⁷ Consult the section **Resources and Support** [General Work Programme 2023-2024](#) (Sub-section of Eligibility).

- 👉 **TRL 5: Technology validated in a relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)**
- 👉 **TRL 6: Technology demonstrated in a relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)**
- 👉 **TRL 7: System prototype demonstration in an operational environment**
- 👉 **TRL 8: System complete and qualified**
- 👉 **TRL 9: Actual system proven in an operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies, or in space)”**

2.3. Beneficiaries and participation requirements for this collaborative project

To participate in a HE Framework Programme project, it is essential to consider the intended beneficiaries, which include:

- ▶ Public organizations such as universities, public research organizations, regional and local authorities, government agencies, public hospitals & utilities and similar bodies.
- ▶ Private companies such as start-up, SMEs, mid-caps, large enterprises.
- ▶ Private Non-Profit Organizations such as private research organizations, foundations, associations, charitable organizations, advocacy groups and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

In general, any of those types of beneficiaries that meet one of the following requirements is allowed to participate if they have the operational and financial capacity to carry out the tasks that they propose:

- I. Legal entity established in an MS or an AC
- II. International organization of European interest
- III. Legal entity established in a Third Country identified within the *Work Programme*

Regarding the participation in collaborative projects, as mentioned, they receive this name as requiring the involvement of at least 3 entities from 3 different EU MS and/or AC with at least 1 organisation established in an MS (except CSA with a minimum of 1 MS/AC). Third Countries (non-MS/AC) can also participate depending on the topic requirement.

Finally, beneficiaries must not be subject to any exclusion grounds under the EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046⁸, in particular, related to Article 136 which states that individuals or entities are excluded from Union funds, including bankruptcy, grave professional misconduct, fraud, corruption, and other serious offences.

2.4. Benefits of participating in collaborative projects

Collaborative projects bring together diverse expertise and resources from across Europe and beyond to tackle complex challenges and generate impactful solutions. By participating in these projects, beneficiaries reach:

1. **Access to cutting-edge expertise and resources:** organizations can tap into a vast network of partners with multidisciplinary teams from different countries, mainly Europe. This access to specialized knowledge and state-of-the-art technologies accelerates innovation and fosters breakthroughs that might not be achievable independently, allowing to gain knowledge.

⁸ Consult the section **Resources and Support** [EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046](#).

2. **Accelerates innovation and development:** allows universities and research centres to develop and refine new solutions and technologies, progressing from proof of concept to real-world demonstration. These funding opportunities help research institutions speed up their projects, conduct in-depth impact assessments, and tackle global challenges more efficiently.
3. **Commercial opportunities:** enable companies to co-develop new solutions, technologies, and services with European partners.
4. **International networks and partnerships:** facilitate connections with top industry knowledge networks, driving innovation, economic growth, and industrial competitiveness, allowing to publicly position oneself in a specific field or create future commercial alliances.

Overall, engaging in HE collaborative projects not only accelerates R&I but also strengthens the global competitiveness and strategic positioning of participating organizations.

2.5. Proposal preparation process overview for collaborative projects

As HE calls are becoming increasingly more sophisticated with tougher evaluation procedures and more competitors, effective proposal methodologies need to be implemented to increase the success rate.

Therefore, the preparation of proposals for collaborative projects is crucial for participants in securing funding for R&I initiatives within HE. For this reason, the present section on the manuals aims to bring the proposal preparation process overview. This process consists of two main stages: (i) Understanding and (ii) Writing; each of these stages, with their respective steps to be followed (See Figure 7).

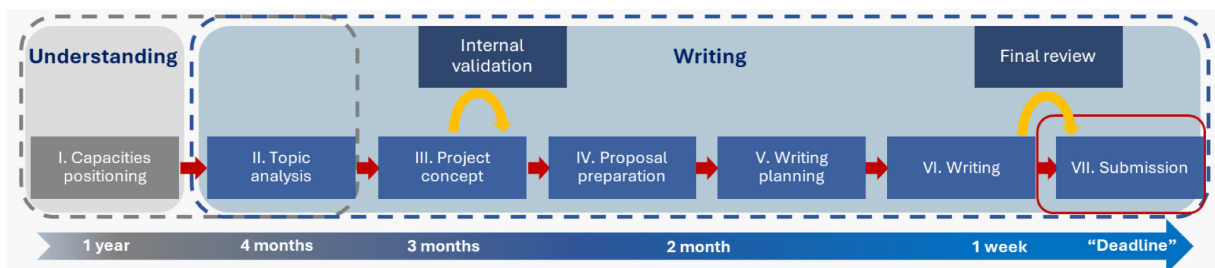


Figure 7 – Proposal preparation process (source: LEITAT)

The first stage involves a thorough understanding of the collaborative project opportunity, where potential participants assess the alignment of the funding call with their R&I expertise and objectives.

The second stage focuses on the writing of the proposal, which requires careful attention to detail, a clear articulation of the project's objectives, the building of a strong consortium and compliance with the program's specific evaluation criteria.

The following sections explore both stages in depth, with their corresponding steps to be followed, providing insights into how to navigate the complexities of HE collaborative project proposals to enhance the rate of success.

3. Understanding the collaborative project's opportunities

The following section is important both while acting as coordinator or as a partner looking for joining a winning consortium. Understanding the reasons and the source of a topic is essential for positioning a concept for a specific topic as well as defining the value you could bring to such winning proposal.

3.1. From EU policy priorities to a single topic

This section starts with the first stage of understanding the project opportunity, whereas shown on Figure 7, the first two steps are:

- I. **Capacities positioning:** consists of the organization's assessment of their internal expertise, resources and strategic goals to determine their potential role within an HE project. This step helps to identify the strengths and areas where partnerships may be needed.

The following step is part of both stages, playing a key role at different moments in the proposal preparation process. For now, the focus will be on the understanding stage:

- II. **Topic analysis:** at this point in the process, the analysis focuses on determining whether the collaborative project opportunity (a specific topic) is suitable for the organisation by assessing its scope, *expected impact*, and alignment with organisational capacities.

The *Topic analysis* will be explored in greater depth, as this step enables a comprehensive understanding of the opportunity by gathering all the information that a simple topic can provide. This not only ensures that the opportunity aligns with the organisation's capacities but also allows for a pre-planning phase before starting with the writing stage.

The starting point of this analysis is understanding how HE and each of the collaborative projects' opportunities (topics within the *calls for proposal*), deliver on EU policy priorities and how the *HE Strategic Plan* and the *Work Programme*⁹ are the key documents to understand this link:



Figure 8 – From EU Policy Priorities to Work Programmes (source: European Commission)

By departing from the *HE Strategic Plan* level to the *Work Programme* level is possible to identify:

- The *HE Strategic Plan* sets out Key Strategic Orientations (KSO) and impact areas for R&I investments under HE¹⁰. The KSO and impact areas are formulated based on *expected impacts*. Each expected impact is targeted via dedicated packages of action in the *Work Programme*. These are termed *destinations* because they indicate both the specific direction and the ultimate point of arrival of the collaborative projects to be funded.

⁹ Consult the section **Resources and Support** the current [Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027](#) and [General Work Programme 2023-2024](#).

¹⁰ HE Strategic Plan covers the periods: (i) 2021-2024 and (ii) 2025-2027.

- The *Work Programmes* include the R&I activities to be funded under HE for specific periods¹¹. HE is implemented through these *Work Programmes*, which set out opportunities mainly through *calls for proposals*.

The *Work Programme* for Pillar II defines the implementation conditions of thematic priority (each one of the six clusters¹² as well as missions/facility) and the corresponding *destinations*, which groups a series of calls for proposal that normally contain one or more topics with a common deadline (See Figure 9). 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.

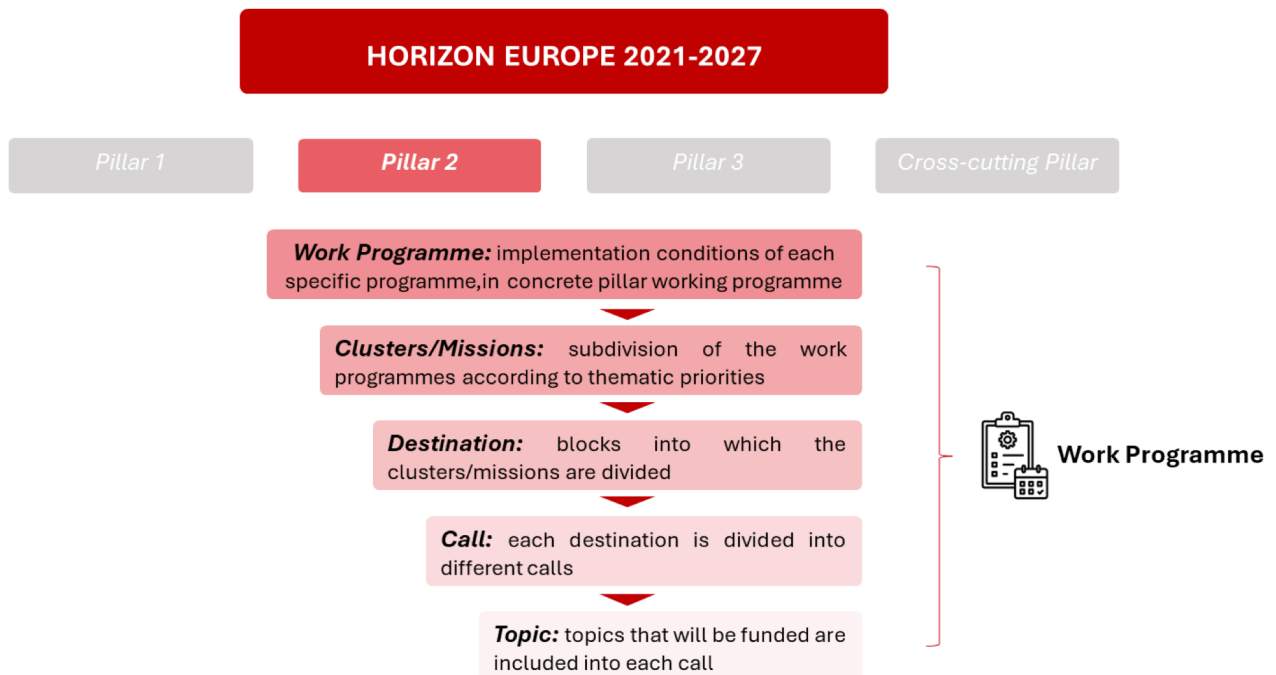


Figure 9 – From Work Programmes to a single topic (source: Barcelona Provincial Council)

Therefore, participants apply to a specific call and topic, which includes:

- Type of action
- Budget
- Topic scope
- Expected outcome

There is an example of how a topic looks like and how its nomenclature works and the information (See Figure 10) on it, before starting to identify the ones of interest.

¹¹ HE Work Programmes covers the following periods: (i) 2021-2023, (ii) 2023-2024, (iii) 2025 and (iv) 2026-2027

¹² Currently, the 2025 final Cluster's Work Programmes will be published during the first semester of 2025.

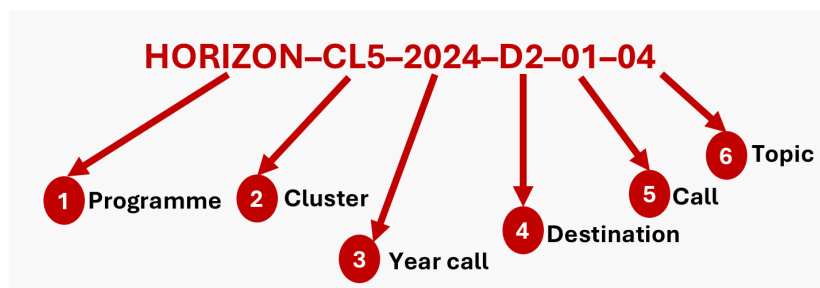


Figure 10 – Topic nomenclature (source: LEITAT)

3.2. Identifying the topic of interest

Once the structure and the information that is possible to obtain from a single topic are understood, it is time to get familiar with a useful tool for this search, the [Funding & Tenders Portal](#). It serves as a platform for searching the calls for proposals and topics of interest¹³. Once on the *calls for proposals*

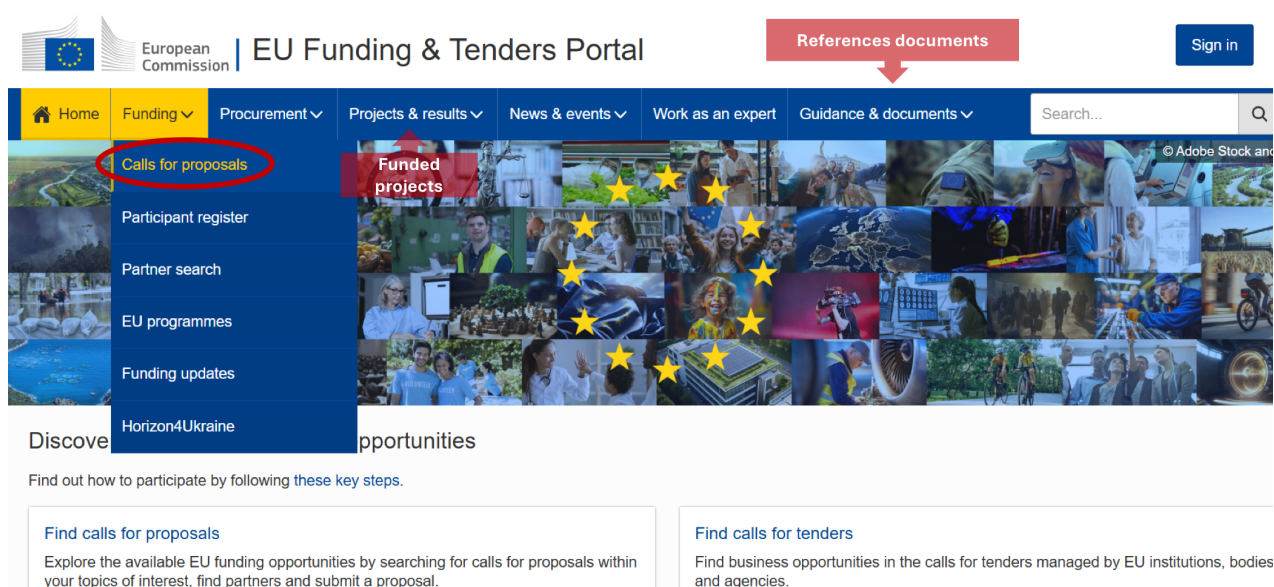


Figure 11 – Funding & Tenders Portal-Home (source: European Commission)

section of the portal, it is possible to personalize the search by applying these basic filters:

1. **Programming period:** refers to the official timeframe during which R&I EU funding programmes in the EU are designed, implemented, and evaluated. For HE, the current programming period is 2021-2027.
2. **Programme:** refers to the EU funding framework programme, which for the purpose of this manual refers to *Horizon Europe*.
3. **Submission status:** allows categorisation of *calls for proposals* based on their stage in the proposal submission process.
 - ✓ **Forthcoming:** has been announced but is not yet open for proposal submission.
 - ✓ **Open for submission** is active and accepting proposals
 - ✓ **Closed:** the deadline for proposal submission has passed

¹³ In addition, the portal centralizes the HE documentation mentioned before (HE General Regulations, HE Strategic Plans, Work Programmes) and information of EU-funded previous projects, what it can be useful at the moment to start to prepare the proposal of the call for proposals of interest.

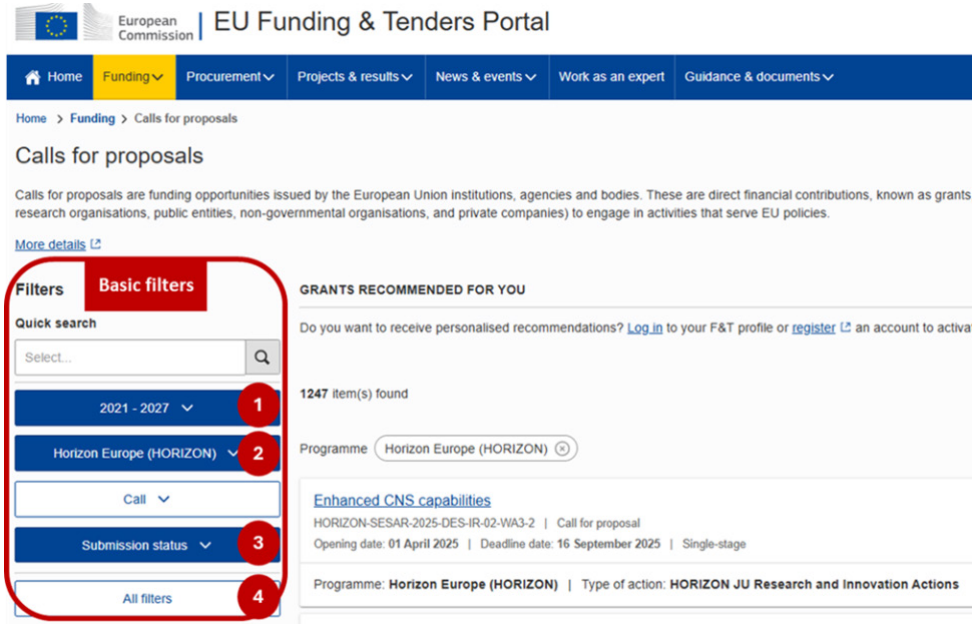


Figure 12 – Funding & Tenders Portal-Calls for proposals (source: European Commission)

4. **All filters¹⁴**: the additional filters allow selecting only those collaborative projects (which, for the purposes of this manual, are the ones of interest) and establishing a time range for the *calls for proposals*, starting with the opening date and ending with the deadline date.

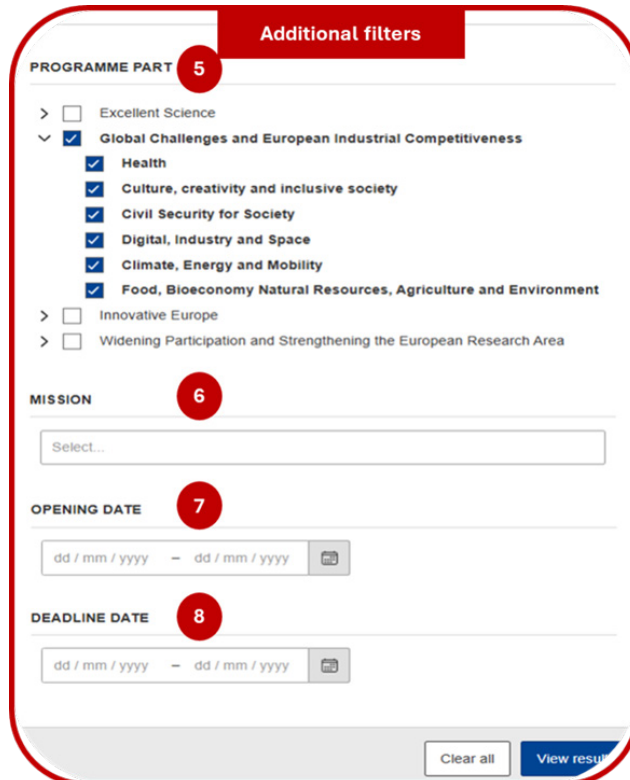


Figure 13 – Funding & Tenders Portal-Calls for proposals (source: European Commission)

The specific additional filters to consider are:

¹⁴ Other general filters to apply includes opening date and deadline date. There are more specific ones.

5. **Programme part:** refers to the pillars of implementation mentioned before, and in the case of collaborative projects, the focus will be on the Pillar 2 *Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness*. And there is the option to select the specific cluster's *calls for proposals*
6. **Mission:** used to identify *calls for proposals* that contribute to the achievement of HE mission-oriented goals mentioned before
7. **Opening date:** is the date when the call for proposals officially opens, allowing participants to start submitting their proposals. Before this date, the call may be announced, but proposal submission is not permitted.
8. **Deadline date:** is the final date for submitting proposals. After this date and the exact deadline time (usually expressed in CET/CEST), the submission system closes, and no further applications are accepted.

Once these filters have been applied, all the topics of interest will be displayed:

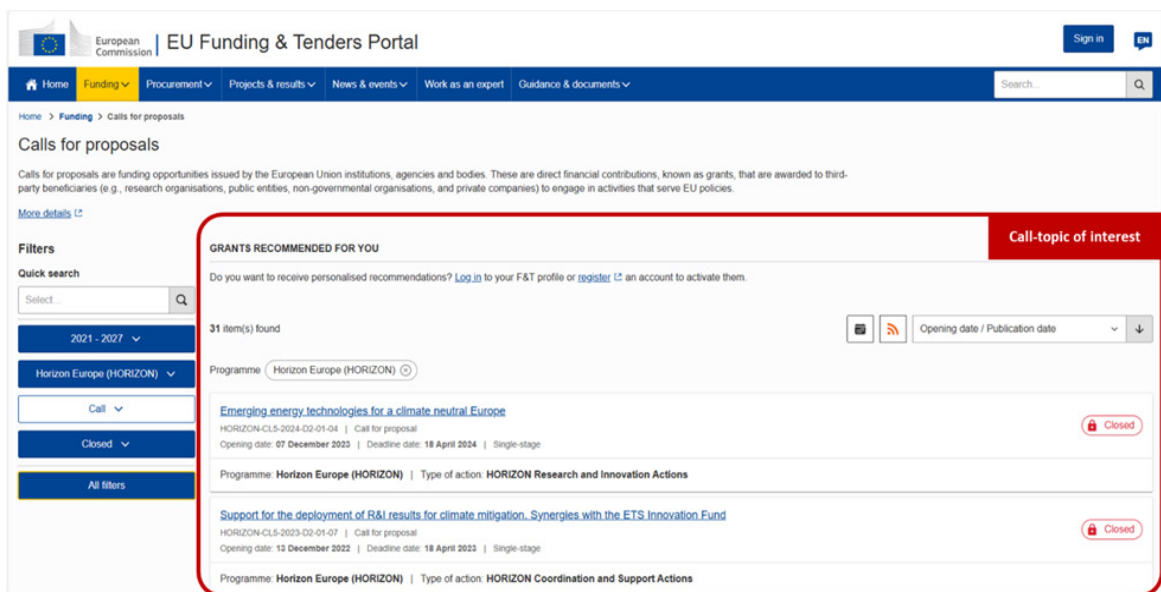


Figure 14 – Funding & Tenders Portal-Calls for proposals of interest (source: European Commission)

3.3. Understanding a topic of interest

When it is time to choose and analyse a specific topic of interest, as mentioned before, its nomenclature brings some important information. An example will be illustrative to understand the process once the topic is identified fully. Bringing back the topic reviewed.

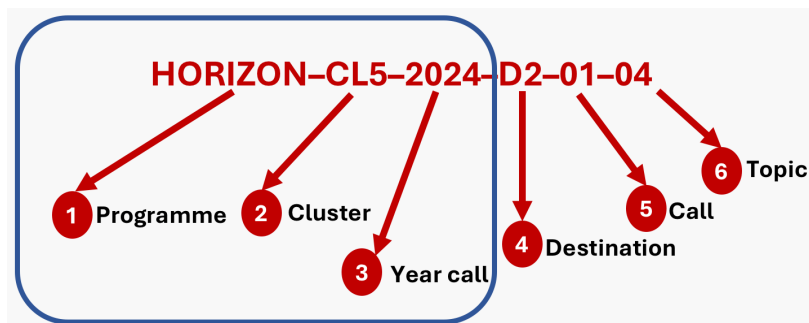


Figure 15 – Example: topic of interest nomenclature understanding (source: LEITAT)

From the single nomenclature is possible to identify the following information:

1. **Programme:** Horizon Europe
2. **Cluster:** Cluster 5 (Climate, Energy & Mobility)
3. **Year call:** 2024

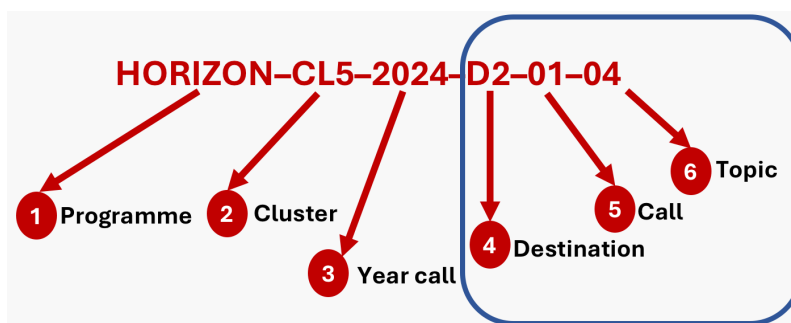


Figure 16 – Example: topic of interest nomenclature understanding (source: LEITAT)

Regarding the remaining elements, it is necessary to access the topic overview on the Funding & Tenders Portal to obtain detailed information of this topic.

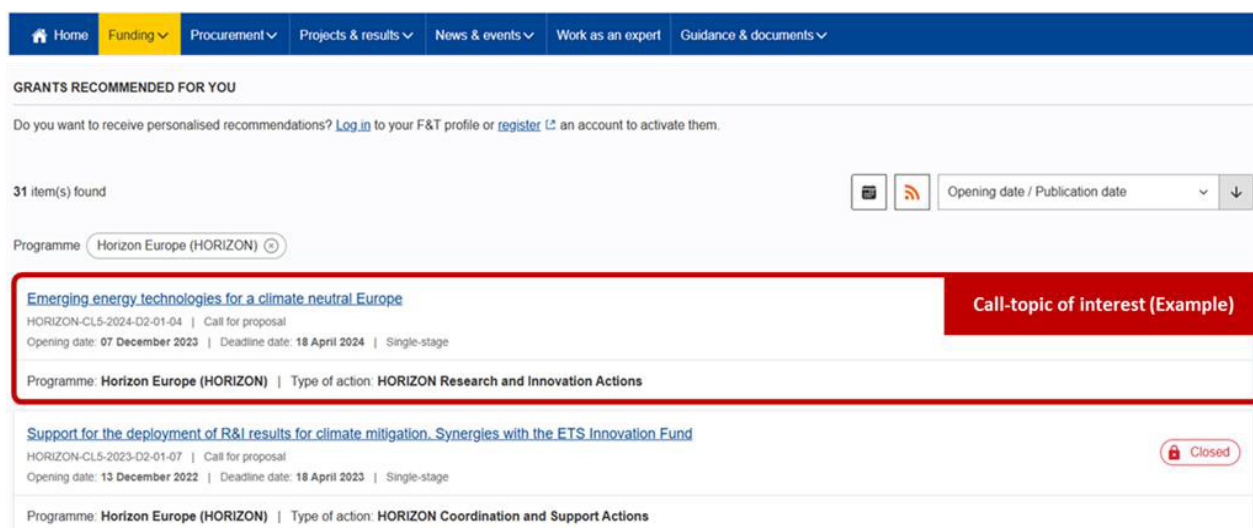
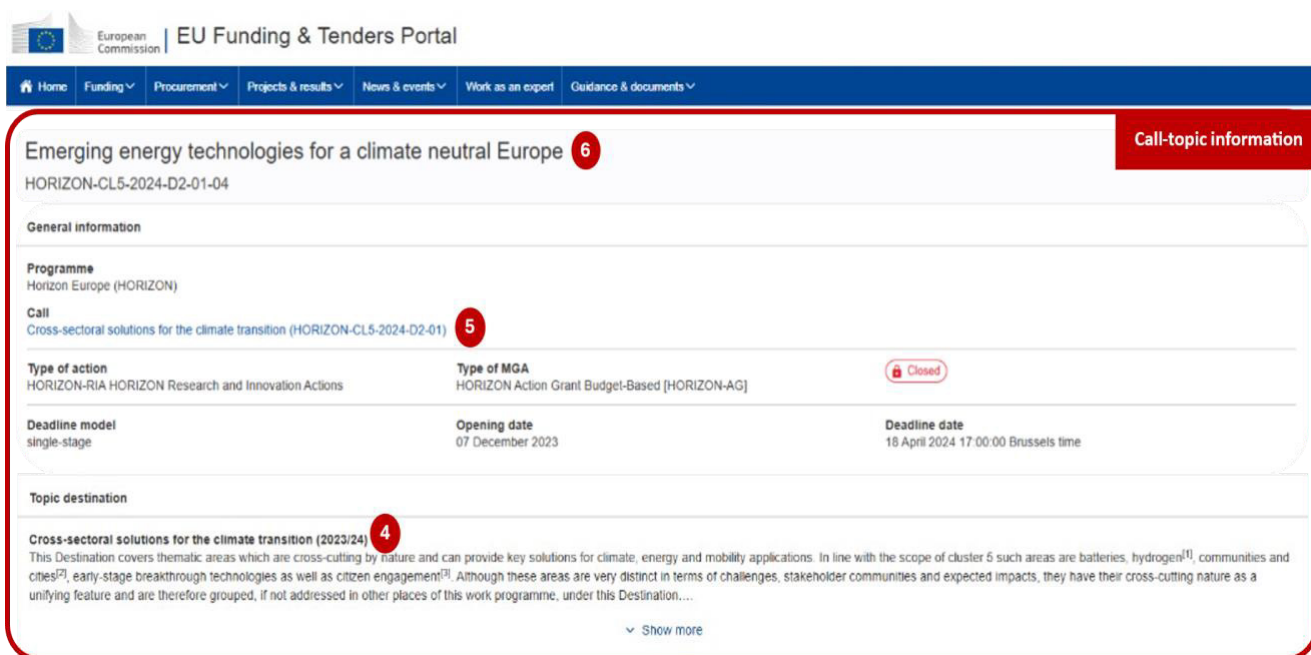


Figure 17 – Example: topic of interest in the portal (source: European Commission)

Once selected, the portal gathers the information for a general overview of it the following link: [topic \(example\)](#) and it contains this general information.



The screenshot shows the 'EU Funding & Tenders Portal' interface. The main heading is 'Emerging energy technologies for a climate neutral Europe' with a red circle '6' next to it. Below this is the call identifier 'HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01-04'. A red box highlights the 'Call-topic information' section. The 'General information' section includes:

- Programme:** Horizon Europe (HORIZON)
- Call:** Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition (HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01) with a red circle '5' next to it.
- Type of action:** HORIZON-RIA HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions
- Type of MGA:** HORIZON Action Grant Budget-Based [HORIZON-AG] with a red circle '5' next to it.
- Deadline model:** single-stage
- Opening date:** 07 December 2023
- Deadline date:** 18 April 2024 17:00:00 Brussels time
- Topic destination:** Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition (2023/24) with a red circle '4' next to it.

The 'Topic destination' section provides a detailed description of the thematic areas covered by the call, including batteries, hydrogen, communities and cities, early-stage breakthrough technologies, and citizen engagement. A 'Show more' link is visible at the bottom of the section.

Figure 18 – Example: topic of interest information overview in the portal (source: European Commission)

The remaining information can be found here:

- 4. **Destination:** Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition
- 5. **Call:** Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition (HORIZON–CL5–2024–D2–01)
- 6. **Topic:** Emerging energy technologies for a climate neutral Europe

These are the information required to fully understand the opportunity of interest and it is necessary to check the *Cluster Work Programme* where this information is detailed.

Additional to the general information of the topic, it is possible to find a section regarding the documents associated to the specific topic, for this example the [Cluster 5. Climate, Energy and Mobility Work Programme \(2023-2024\)](#) document.

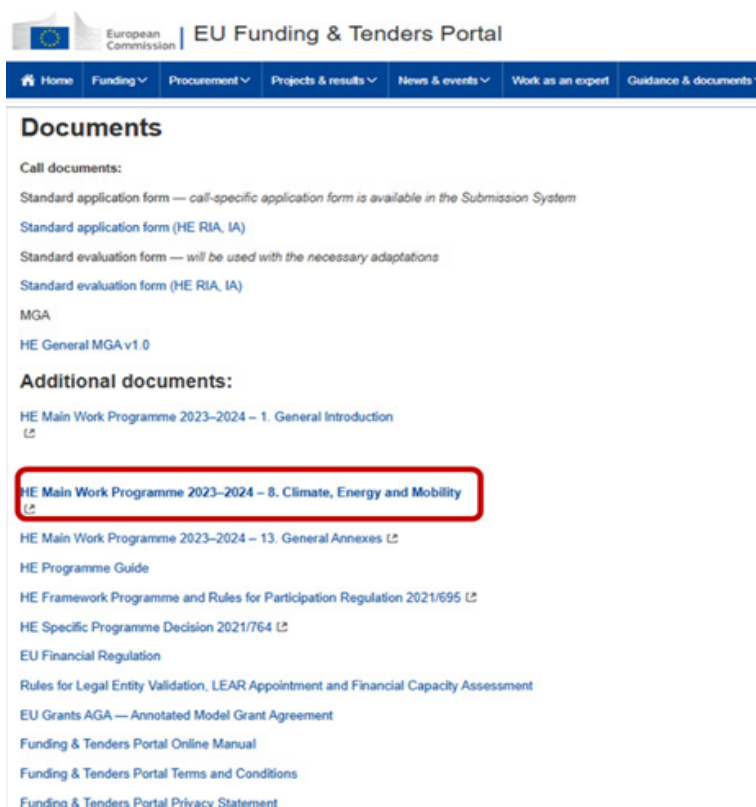


Figure 19 – Example: topic of interest documentation (source: European Commission)

Through the *Cluster Work Programme*, it is possible to navigate from the specific topic to the strategic and general objectives that are intended to be achieved. This essential document contains the complete information regarding the topic and call, as well as the specific destination addressed through them.

The information on the *Cluster Work Programme* can be found on three main levels.

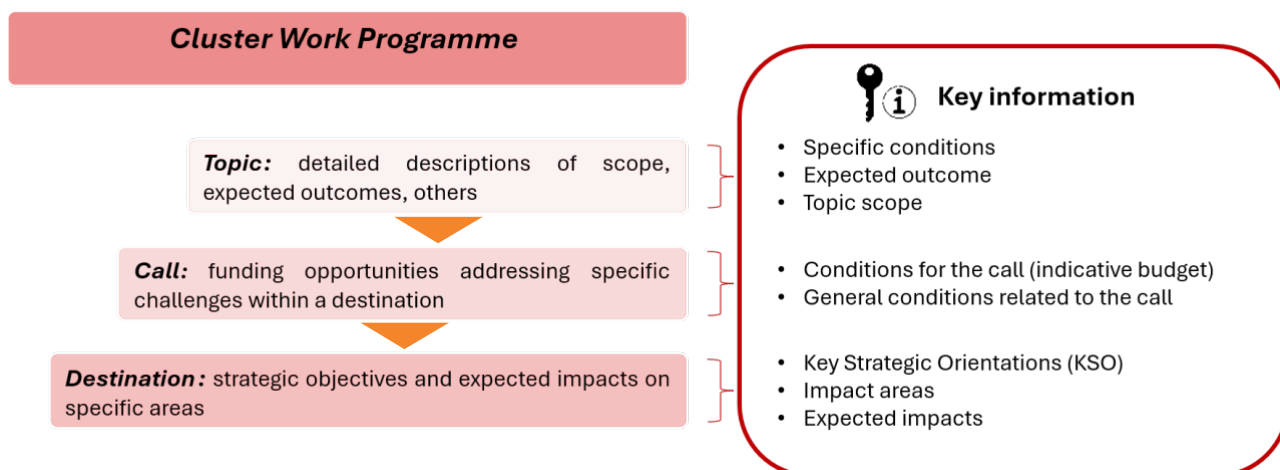


Figure 20 – Levels of information within the Cluster Work Programme (source: LEITAT)

- **Topic information:** as a starting point, the topic of interest contains specific information related to it.

Topic information

*Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2023-2025
Climate, Energy and Mobility*

HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01-04: Emerging energy technologies for a climate neutral Europe

Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.50 and 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 4 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to **all** of the following expected outcomes:

1. Demonstration of knowledge and scientific proofs of the technological feasibility of concepts on high risk/high return (i.e. high technological and economic risks) technologies for transition to climate neutral economy by 2050 and beyond.
2. Assessment of environmental, social, and economic benefits to contribute to R&I strategy, as well as the EU climate and energy targets.
3. Contribution to establishing a solid long-term dependable innovation in Europe.

Scope: This topic focusses on the development of novel bottom-up technological solutions with breakthrough potential across all parts of the **energy sector value chain**, as well as all energy-related aspects in the **transport sector**.

*Figure 21 –Example: topic information within Cluster Work Programme
(source: European Commission)*

At the topic level of information is possible to find:

- Specific conditions: including EU expected contributions per project, indicative budget, type of action, applicable eligibility conditions and TRL.
- Expected outcome: medium-term effects or impacts expected to be achieved through the project funded under this specific topic.
- Scope: it describes the approach, boundaries, and context in which the project should be developed.

- **Call information** contains the information of the call where the interest topic is part of.

Call information

Call - Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition

HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01

Conditions for the Call

Indicative budget(s)¹²⁷

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ¹²⁸	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2024		
Opening: 07 Dec 2023 Deadline(s): 18 Apr 2024				
HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01-01	RIA	16.00	Around 8.00	2
HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01-02	IA	21.00	Around 7.00	3
HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01-03	RIA	5.00	Around 5.00	1
HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01-04	RIA	30.00	1.50 to 2.50	12
HORIZON-CL5-2024-D2-01-05	RIA	20.00	Around 20.00	1
Overall indicative budget		92.00		

General conditions relating to this call

<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B.
<i>Financial and operational capacity and exclusion</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
<i>Award criteria</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Figure 22 – Example: call information of the topic of interest within Cluster Work Programme (source: European Commission)

At the call level of information is possible to find:

- Conditions for the call: including the indicative budget of the whole group of calls. And the total number of projects expected to fund.
- General conditions: refers to the specific documentation applicable to this specific call regarding admissibility, eligibility, awards criteria and others.

- **Destination information:** contains the information of the thematic areas within clusters that outline the expected long-term impact of R&I funding. The most important elements to identify and understand are: *KSO, impact areas and expected impacts*.

Destination information

Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2023-2025
Climate, Energy and Mobility

Destination – Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition

This Destination covers thematic areas which are cross-cutting by nature and can provide key solutions for climate, energy and mobility applications. In line with the scope of cluster 5 such areas are batteries, hydrogen⁸⁸, communities and cities⁸⁹, early-stage breakthrough technologies as well as citizen engagement⁹⁰. Although these areas are very distinct in terms of challenges, stakeholder communities and expected impacts, they have their cross-cutting nature as a unifying feature and are therefore grouped, if not addressed in other places of this work programme, under this Destination.

This Destination contributes to the following Strategic Plan's **Key Strategic Orientations (KSO)**:

- *C: Making Europe the first digitally enabled circular, climate-neutral and sustainable economy through the transformation of its mobility, energy, construction and production systems;*
- *A: Promoting an open strategic autonomy⁹¹ by leading the development of key digital, enabling and emerging technologies, sectors and value chains to accelerate and steer the digital and green transitions through human-centred technologies and innovations;*
- *D: Creating a more resilient, inclusive and democratic European society, prepared and responsive to threats and disasters, addressing inequalities and providing high-quality health care, and empowering all citizens to act in the green and digital transitions.*

It covers the following **impact areas**:

- Industrial leadership in key and emerging technologies that work for people
- Affordable and clean energy
- Smart and sustainable transport

The **expected impact**, in line with the Strategic Plan, is to contribute to the “*Clean and sustainable transition of the energy and transport sectors towards climate neutrality facilitated by innovative cross-cutting solutions*”, notably through:

Figure 23 – Example: destination information of the call-topic of interest within Cluster Work Programme (source: European Commission)

At the *destination* level of information is possible to find:

- KSO: set of strategic objectives within the EC policy priorities where R&I investments are expected to make a difference
- Impact areas: group of *expected impacts* highlighting the most important transformation to be fostered through R&I
- Expected impact: long-term societal, environmental, economic, and scientific effects enabled by R&I investments. It highlights the project's contribution to *expected impacts* and typically materializes after project completion.

3.4. Behind the scene: Where are the topics coming from?

As mentioned before, the objectives and goals of each Work Programme are based on some documents (e.g. HE Strategic Plan). Those documents come from lobbying groups, expert panels and EU officials. To elaborate priorities and later on topics. The EC is influenced by numerous key stakeholders that could be classified in 5 main sources (See Figure 24).

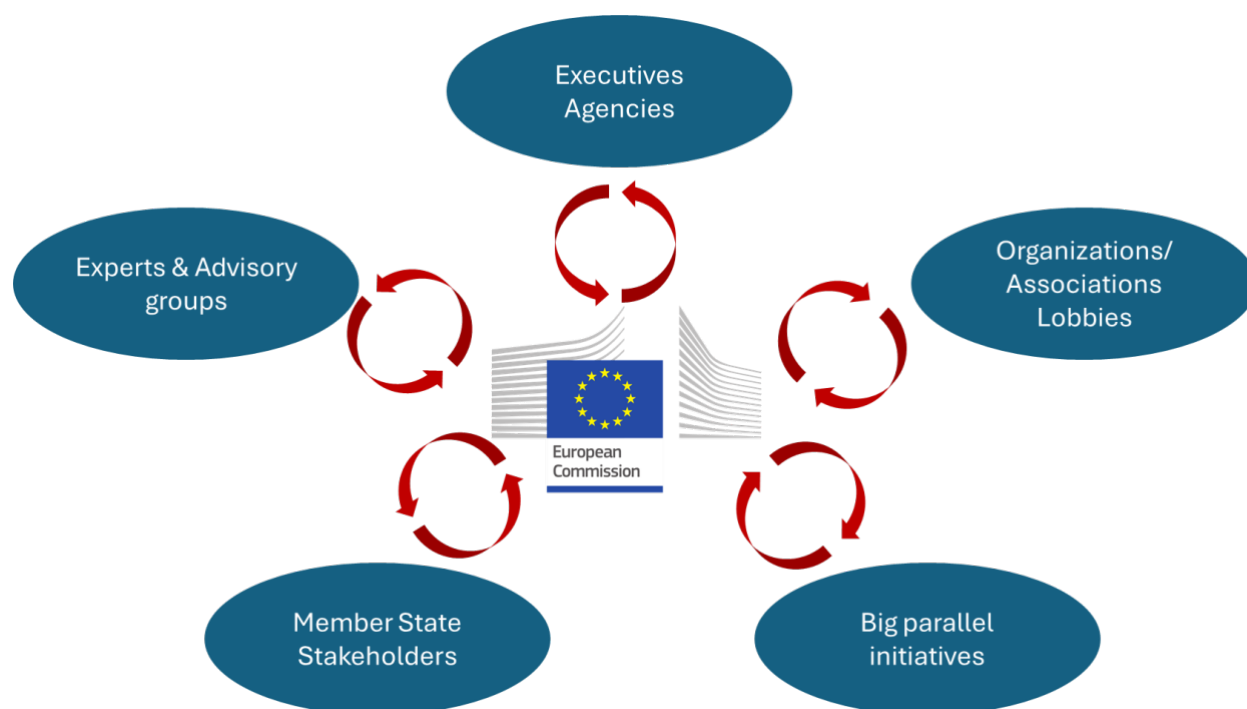


Figure 24 – Key Stakeholders with influence over the Commission (source: European Commission)

► Executive Agencies

EC defines policy, strategy, and funding priorities, while Executive Agencies translate these policies into action by managing project lifecycles, organizing calls for proposals, and overseeing implementation. One of their key objectives is to provide feedback to policy makers (EC) based on previous and ongoing funded projects (See Figure 25).

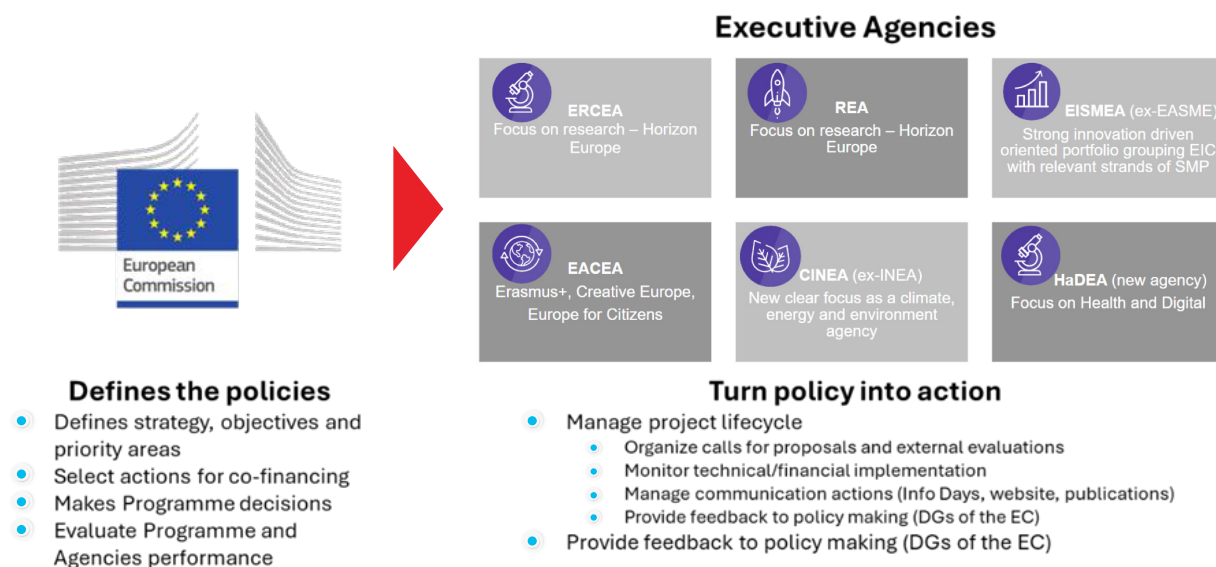


Figure 25 – European Commission and Executive Agencies (source: European Commission)

Among those 6 executive agencies, Pillar II mostly relates to the following ones:

- **European Research Executive Agency (REA):** managing projects from Clusters 2, 3 and 6, including the Mission Soil from HE and similar thematic from H2020.
- **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA):** managing projects from Cluster 5.
- **European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA):** managing projects from Clusters 1 and 4.

► Expert and Advisory Group

Expert and Advisory Groups of the European Commission are like think tanks of specialists, bringing together academics, industry leaders, NGOs, and national representatives to shape EU policies. Once the EC identifies a need; whether it's crafting new legislation, tackling emerging challenges, or ensuring smooth policy implementation, a formal expert group (through legal mandates or official decisions) or an informal advisory group (for more flexible, short-term consultation) is established. Members are then selected through an open call for applications or direct invitations. These can include national government representatives, scientists, business professionals, and civil society actors (each chosen for their expertise in a specific field). Once formed, the group meets regularly, providing insights, drafting reports, and helping shape EU decisions.

Beyond offering advice, they act as a link between policymakers and the public, ensuring transparency and accountability. From setting AI ethics guidelines to advising on financial regulations, their work influences the very fabric of European policies, making them more informed, inclusive, and future-proof. Moreover, new topics sometimes are based on previous topics for further development of solutions and needs. These documents contain information on new emerging technologies that may be viewed by the Commission as a priority for further development to bring to the market and maintain Europe's global competitiveness, leading to specific KSO or topics.

► Big Parallel Initiatives (e.g. EU Partnerships, Missions, etc.)

EU partnerships have been addressed within the section 2, in this respect. It is important to identify the organizations responsible for managing institutionalised and co-programmed partnerships, whether through single entities or multi-actor groupings to be able to understand the underlying context of each partnership, including its focus sectors, Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), and other relevant strategic orientations:

Table 2 – Managing Organisations of EU Partnership

CLUSTER	EU PARTNERSHIP	ORGANIZATION(S)
Institutionalised Partnerships		
Cluster 1: Health	Innovative Health Initiative	Innovative Health Initiative (iHi)
	Global Health Partnership	European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP)
Cluster 4: Digital, Industry & Space	Key Digital Technologies	Key Digital Technologies Joint Undertaking (KDT JU)
	Smart Networks & Services	Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking (SNS JU)
	High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking	European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC JU)
	EU Metrology	European Association of National Metrology Institutes (EURAMET)
Cluster 5: Climate, Energy & Mobility	Clean Hydrogen	Hydrogen Europe
	Clean Aviation	Clean Aviation Joint Undertaking (Clean Aviation JU)
	Single EU Sky ATM Research 3	Single European Sky ATM Research Joint Undertaking (SESAR JU)
	EU Rail	Europe's Rail (EU Rail)
Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy, Agriculture, And Environment	Circular Bio-based EU	Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU)
Co-Programmed Partnerships		
Cluster 1: Health	Pandemic Preparedness	Instituto de Salud Carlos III (ISCIII)
Cluster 4: Digital, Industry & Space¹⁵	Made in Europe	European Factories of the Future Research Association (EFFRA)
	Processes4Planet	A.SPIRE
	Clean Steel	European Steel Technology Platform (ESTEP)
	AI-Data-Robotics	The AI Data Robotics Association (Adra)
	Photonics	Photonics21
	Global Competitive Space Systems	European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO)

¹⁵ The following EU co-programmed partnerships were not included as they are on process of creation: Innovative Materials for Europe (IM4EU), Textile for the Future and Virtual Worlds (Cluster 4) and Solar Photovoltaic (Cluster 5).

		<i>Small and medium-sized enterprises working in space (SME4SPACE)</i>
		<i>European Aerospace Science Network (EASN)</i>
		<i>Aerospace, Security and Defense Industries (ASD-EUROSPACE)</i>
		<i>Association of European Space Research Establishment</i>
Cluster 5: Climate, Energy & Mobility	Batteries	<i>Batteries European Partnership Association (BEDA)</i>
	Built4People	<i>World Green Building Council (WorldGBC)</i>
		<i>European Construction Technology Platform (ECTP)</i>
	Zero-emission Waterborne Transport (ZEWT)	<i>Waterborne Technology Platform (WATERBORNE)</i>
	Zero-emission Road Transport (2Zero)	<i>European Road Transport Research Advisory Council (ERTRAC)</i>
		<i>European Technology Platform on Smart Systems Integration (EPoSS)</i>
		<i>ETIP Smart Networks for Energy Transition (SNET)</i>
		<i>Alliance for Logistics Innovation through Collaboration in Europe (alice)</i>
		<i>Batteries Europe</i>
	Connected Cooperative Automated Mobility (CCAM)	<i>Connected, Cooperative & Automated Mobility (CCAM)</i>

Regarding the EU Missions, each one has a dedicated **Mission Board**, composed of independent experts from academia, industry, civil society, and public policy. These boards provide strategic advice, define priorities, and help shape the roadmap for implementation. The EU Missions emphasise public engagement, meaning that researchers, innovators, industry leaders, and citizens contribute ideas, participate in consultations, and help shape mission goals, providing a large number of publications.

Other large initiatives that might impact on Pillar II are mostly European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) and Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs). While the documentation from EIPs remains partially relevant today, most of them have transitioned into other EU programs or have been integrated into HE. On the contrary, the IPCEIs that were created as a policy tool to enable EU MS to jointly support large-scale, strategic projects that contribute to European competitiveness and sovereignty may be proven relevant as a scheme to allow upscaling results from high TRL projects from HE (in theory):

- Microelectronics: Cluster 4 - Digital, Industry & Space
- Hydrogen & Batteries: Cluster 5 - Climate, Energy & Mobility
- Raw Materials: Cluster 6 - Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources and Cluster 4
- Fehmarn Belt Rail-Road Link: Cluster 5 - Climate, Energy & Mobility (Shift2Rail)

► Organization/Association Lobbies

- **European Technology Platforms (ETPs)** were established by the EC in the early 2000s as industry-led stakeholder forums aimed at driving innovation, research, and development in strategic sectors. In 2015, some ETPs evolved into **European Technology and Innovation Platforms (ETIPs)** to better align with EU energy and climate policies. These platforms were specifically focused on the energy sector and aimed at supporting the Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan. While ETPs continue to exist, their influence has been partly absorbed into HE Missions, European Partnerships, and Digital Innovation Hubs, ETIPs remain crucial in shaping EU energy policy, particularly in achieving the Green Deal and Net-Zero targets. While ETIPs are industry-driven stakeholder forums, they are supported by 11 of the 18 working groups from the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA), more focused on R&D priorities.
- **EU sectorial industry associations and federations** such as but not limited to Plastics Europe, CEFIC, EURATEX, CLEPA, EUCAR, MedTech Europe, etc. play a crucial role in shaping the research priorities of HE. By representing the interests of key industrial sectors, they help ensure that EU research funding aligns with real-world market needs and technological advancements. They may be complemented with parallel associations with a stronger focus on R&D policy, such as European Automotive Research Partners Association (EARPA), the formerly Energy Materials Industrial Research Initiative (EMIRI). Their influence begins at the policy level, where they engage in consultations, submit position papers, and advocate for strategic funding priorities. Many of these associations actively participate in EU advisory bodies, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and European Technology Platforms (ETPs/ETIPs), helping to define the topics for R&I calls. Through these channels, they contribute to developing roadmaps in areas such as sustainable materials, clean mobility, digital health, and advanced manufacturing.
- Finally, other general research (EARTO, League of European Research Universities etc.), society/community representatives (EuroCities, AGE, Friends of the Earth Europe, etc.) as well as European representations of grouped national associations (European Aluminium, European Construction Industry Federation) may somehow influence general EU policies but are less likely going to influence specific topics.

► National Contact Points (NCPs)¹⁶

Despite most likely not being at the starting point of the topic creation, NCPs play a vital role in re-shaping the research topics of HE by acting as a bridge between national stakeholders, researchers, industry players, and the EC. Their primary mission is to ensure that EU funding priorities reflect national research needs by gathering insights from universities, research institutions, and industry representatives. Those inputs are relayed to the EC through consultations and advisory processes. By aligning national priorities with EU strategic goals, they help adapt funding calls that support regional strengths.

■ 3.5. Strategies for finding international partners and accessing relevant networks

Not every organisation aims to coordinate a HE proposal and many instead seek to join strong, well-positioned consortia as a partner. For such organisations, accessing the right networks and staying

¹⁶ Consult the section **Resources and Support** the [Türkiye - NCPs | European Commission](#)

visible to potential coordinators is key. To identify relevant opportunities and international collaborators, several channels can be used effectively:

- The [Funding & Tenders Portal \(Partner Search tool\)](#): The official tool from the EC where organisations can post their profiles and browse partner searches.
- The [NCP for HE](#) and [Enterprise Europe Network \(EEN\)](#): These intermediaries collect and disseminate partner searches, often directly from coordinators, and provide tailored matchmaking support.
- [CORDIS](#): Useful to analyse previous projects, identify active consortia, and understand partnership patterns.

However, one of the most efficient and strategic ways to become visible to coordinators is by participating in brokerage events. These are often organised around major calls and clusters and serve as dynamic matchmaking platforms. While the European Commission occasionally hosts such events, it is especially beneficial to engage in brokerage events organised by the strategic actors described in the section 4.2 “*Behind the scene: Where are the topics coming from?*” (e.g., projects clustering dissemination event (promoted by executive agency), EU Partnership, Technology Platforms, Industry alliances, and cluster associations). These organisations often shape consortia early and serve as informal gatekeepers to project formation.

4. Developing a Competitive Project Concept

4.1. Project concept and objectives

As mentioned before, *Topic analysis* steps allow to understand and regard the information related to the opportunities of interest but at the same time give the information to start to work on a *Project concept* for the topic(s) of interest.

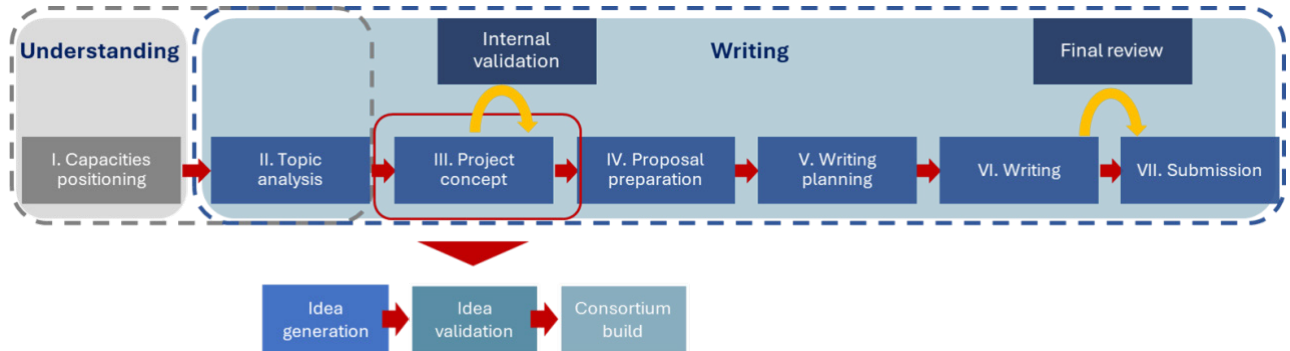


Figure 26 – Writing stage: Project concept (source: LEITAT)

- III. **Project concept:** as first step in the proposal writing stage is crucial ensuring that the project has a solid foundation, a well-defined approach, and a strong consortium before progressing to the formal preparation and writing proposal steps.

4.1.1. Idea generation and structuring puzzle behind the topic

Developing the idea for the topic of interest is the first step to winning a proposal and, as seen in the previous section, it is not enough to demonstrate that the participant's research agenda matches with the topic(s). More than this is needed to ensure that the idea is fundable.



Figure 27 – Project Concept Generation: Idea Generation (source: LEITAT)

The key to a successful proposal is originality and impact, the idea may fit perfectly with the topic scope, expected outcome and impacts detected through the *Topic analyses*. However, if the proposed solution is not original, innovative and ambitious enough, chances are low to have a high mark.

A brainstorming meeting between the participant's team may help refine the idea and conceptualize it. By visually mapping out the concept, the team can develop a clear and concise common message, ensuring effective communication of the proposal.

By identifying key stakeholders in the previous section and potential contributors early on, it is possible to refine the concept, establish a strong consortium, and utilize their resources (alongside the *HE Strategic Plan*) to thoroughly assess the idea's viability and alignment with the scope and objectives of HE calls. As mentioned before, some of the sources that may have influenced the scope and goals of HE calls are:

- ▶ HE *Strategic Plan*
- ▶ Directives
- ▶ Policies
- ▶ Roadmaps
- ▶ Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas (SRIA)
- ▶ Position papers
- ▶ Public consultation
- ▶ Expert group reports

Together, they will allow participants to clearly identify the targeted impact in the long term and how it should benefit Europe. By systematically collecting all relevant documents on a specific topic, the following table will facilitate the identification of the key challenges addressed in each document, as well as the approaches and solutions proposed, if any. This structured compilation will provide a clearer understanding of recurring themes, gaps in existing research, and different methodologies applied, ultimately making it easier to analyse and compare various perspectives on the subject.

RELEVANT DOCUMENT(S) POLICIES/DIRECTIVES/SRIA	CHALLENGE TO BE SOLVED	PROPOSED APPROACH (TECHNOLOGY, OTHER ASPECTS)

After completing this first cross-check, it is essential to proceed with identifying the State-Of-The-Art (SOTA) technology that may be used. This step will help assess the novelty and innovation of the idea by benchmarking it against existing advancements, methodologies, and solutions in the field. A thorough SOTA analysis will not only highlight what has already been achieved but also reveal gaps, limitations, and opportunities for further development. To support this process, sources for previous work done can be found in:

- ▶ Previous projects
- ▶ Publications
- ▶ Conference presentations
- ▶ Patents
- ▶ Scouting of innovative SME/Startups

The table below will compile all the inputs, providing a structured overview of the identified technologies along with their respective advantages and disadvantages. Additionally, it will include references to the source documents from which the information was gathered, ensuring traceability and facilitating a comprehensive analysis of existing solutions. This compilation will help in comparing different technological approaches, understanding their limitations, and identifying potential areas for innovation.

CURRENT TECHNOLOGY	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	SOURCE

Market analysis is also crucial to determine if the technology has a European dimension, ensuring its relevance and alignment with regional priorities. In addition, it will help identify the value chain, key stakeholders, end-users, and geographical diversity of the market. A thorough market analysis will also provide insights into which countries will benefit the most from the proposed solutions and assess the potential economic impact on the EU economy, including job creation, competitiveness, and industrial

growth. Once again, summarize the information gathered in the table to present a clear and structured overview of these key aspects.

TECHNOLOGY	TARGET MARKET	MARKET SIZE	VALUE CHAIN	KEY-END USERS

Once it is checked that the idea to develop the proposal is aligned with the topic, it is time to double-check the basic evaluation criteria¹⁷.

4.1.2. Idea validation by peers – setting up a short selling pitch



Figure 28– Project concept generation: the idea validation (source: LEITAT)

At this stage, information gathered related to the idea is enough to have a more complete picture. So, the next step will be to:

- ▶ Revisit and examine the idea and assess if it is original and innovative enough to have a high chance of success.
- ▶ Repeat this exercise until there is complete satisfaction with the idea.
- ▶ Focus on the originality and impact of the idea.
- ▶ Check if the idea complies with future regulations.

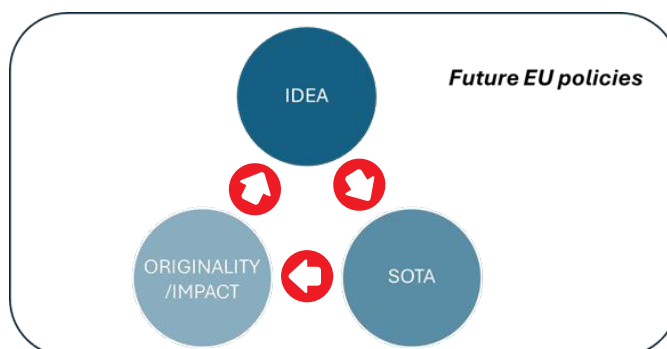


Figure 29 – Innovative, impactful and EU policies alignment of the idea (source: LEITAT)

Done the previous evaluation, is time to develop a comprehensive abstract with the principal elements. Abstract should be restricted to 2 pages maximum, and shall cover:

- ▶ Title, acronym and contact
- ▶ Topic
- ▶ Objectives
- ▶ Expected results
- ▶ Approach/work plan
- ▶ Potential impact

¹⁷ Consult in the section **Resources and Support** the [Funding & Tender Online Manual](#) (Evaluation and evaluation results section).

► Possible consortium or partners

4.1.3. Consortium building

Now, everything will be ready to start building the consortium. Bringing onboard the “dream team” consortium requires well-prepared selling documentation (previously prepared) to effectively communicate the project's vision and value, including expected contributions from each partner. Use a partner matrix or a work plan draft to clearly define the roles and responsibilities that need to be covered.

Additionally, it is essential to be prepared with alternative partners. Even after carefully crafting the “dream team”, some partners may face alignment challenges, have participation conditions that do not fully fit the consortium’s overall ambition, or may even have committed to another competing consortium. Having a backup plan with well-vetted alternative partners will help ensure continuity and stability, allowing us to adapt quickly and maintain a strong, well-balanced consortium capable of successfully delivering on the project's objectives.



Figure 30 – Project Concept Generation: Consortium Build (source: LEITAT)

Beyond just presenting a compelling case, it is crucial to build trust among partners, especially key and high-impact stakeholders who may provide essential technology components. These strategic partners can be critical to the success of the project, and as a coordinator, it must lead the entire consortium with confidence, ensuring alignment, fostering collaboration, and guiding the team toward a strong and competitive proposal submission. From a previous exercise, the consortium should be built around the core group (allowing them to contribute and reshape the concept together), adding basic missing expertise and finally including complementary activities with less critical impact and a broader possibility of partner inclusion.

This will be followed by an interview with key partners, where it will be necessary to ensure that they have the required knowledge and the experience in HE and/or resources to be active during the proposal writing. It is important to remember that a Scientific Coordinator and a Proposal Manager, both roles from the core partners, shall be selected to lead the proposal writing process.

4.1.4. Be an attractive partner

Organisations that aim to join, rather than coordinate a proposal, must still approach the process strategically. Success does not rely solely on offering relevant expertise, it depends mainly on demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the topic and clearly articulating how their contribution complements the consortium’s needs.

To begin with, it is essential that potential partners read the full topic text carefully following up the previously described methodology (to prepare partial concept or key contributive expertise). A superficial match on keywords is not enough. Coordinators, and later on evaluators, expect all partners to understand the expected outcomes, the policy context, and how the topic contributes to broader EU priorities. This understanding should be reflected in the way your organisation positions itself to a

specific topic to potential consortium and coordinators. Rather than circulating generic partner profiles, organisations should invest in drafting a short, focused concept note, ideally no longer than two pages. This note should do three things: first, confirm that you understand the core of the topic; second, describe the specific value your organisation offers (such as a unique methodology, specialised testing infrastructure, access to stakeholders or users, or regulatory expertise); and third, explain how your contribution is complementary to what a coordinator would already have in mind for a balanced consortium. This requires thinking not only about your strengths, but also how your role can strengthen the overall proposal narrative and complement the potential targeted consortium.

Credibility is reinforced through experience. Coordinators will often look for partners that have participated in similar collaborative projects, particularly under EU funding schemes. Occasionally, coordinators that may be challenger of the usual suspects (long standing consortium partners leading a specific area in the past few years) may also look for partners that provide groundbreaking approach/understanding of the topics. In the case of various projects may be funded within the same topics, differentiation from others would be a key advantage for been selected (while complying with all the topic criteria) for funding. Sharing relevant project references with clear roles you've played, links to project websites can significantly increase your chances of being considered.

As previously described the previous section, visibility is equally critical. Participating in brokerage events, especially those hosted by the key stakeholder organisations described in the “Behind the Scenes” section can be more effective than waiting for opportunities to appear online. These events allow you to connect directly with potential coordinators and consortia at a formative stage. Register early, prepare your pitch, and actively follow up with the people you meet. Also consider sharing your tailored partner offer with National Contact Points or the Enterprise Europe Network, who may circulate it among coordinators working on related calls.

Finally, being selected as a partner often hinges on your attitude during the proposal development phase. Showing that you understand the structure of a HE proposal, and that you're ready to take ownership of tasks, such as writing specific work package sections, coordinating pilots, or leading dissemination activities signals that you are a reliable, added-value partner. In short, successful participation begins with clarity of purpose, a strong thematic and strategic fit, and proactive engagement with the networks that shape consortia long before the submission deadline.

4.2. Proposal preparation

In theory, once all the groundwork has been laid (defining the idea in detail, aligning partners, and establishing a clear shared vision), the process of writing the proposal should be more straightforward, as the key elements are already well-structured and agreed upon.

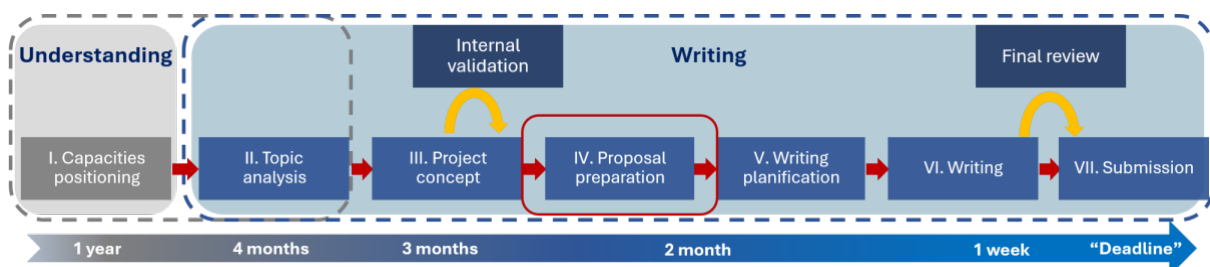


Figure 31 – Writing stage: Proposal preparation (source: LEITAT)

- IV. **Proposal preparation:** focuses on drafting a clear, coherent, and compelling proposal aligned with HE objectives. It ensures a strong narrative highlighting excellence, impact, and implementation while addressing key cross-cutting issues like ethics, gender equality, and open science. This stage is crucial for maximizing the proposal's success.

4.2.1. *Key issues consideration: writing a clear, concise, and compelling proposal narrative*

The proposal is essentially a sales document aimed at convincing reviewers that the project's results and impact will be successfully achieved. A successful proposal grabs the reviewer's attention, encourages them to read further, and demonstrates the project's value. Beyond presenting a compelling vision, it must also convince reviewers that the consortium has the necessary expertise, capacity, and infrastructure to deliver the proposed results effectively. Additionally, it should highlight the consortium's ability to engage with key stakeholders, ensuring that the project's impact extends beyond the consortium itself and reaches the broader community, industry, or policy landscape for meaningful and lasting change. When writing a proposal, it is important to:

- ▶ Create a common narrative built around the core idea
- ▶ Make sure the proposal is clear, logically structured, and flows smoothly toward the core idea
- ▶ Use simple language to make it easier for the reviewers to follow
- ▶ Keep in mind for all sections WHAT, WHY, WHO, WHEN and HOW
- ▶ Keep it Short and Simple (KISS)

4.2.2. *Addressing cross-cutting issues (e.g., ethics, gender equality, open science)*

Some cross-cutting elements should be considered on the proposal that require an inter-disciplinary approach:

- 👉 **Social sciences and humanities (SSH):** need for “human-centric” focus across all research areas¹⁸. Some disciplines included: education, business and law; as well as humanities and arts.
- 👉 **Gender dimension:** There are 3 main levels at which gender equality is addressed in HE:
 - Having a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place is now an eligibility [DESCA Model Consortium Agreement - DESCA 2020 Model Consortium Agreement](#) criterion (applicable for public bodies, research organizations or higher education institutions).
 - Integration of a gender dimension into R&I content is a requirement by default and evaluated under the excellence criteria unless the topic description explicitly specifies otherwise.
 - Increasing gender balance throughout the Programme is another objective. On the evaluation, gender balance among research teams was set as a ranking criterion for proposals with the same score.
- 👉 **Ethics/AI:** according to HE regulations, “Actions carried out under the Programme shall comply with ethical principles and relevant Union, national and international law, including the Charter and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Supplementary Protocols.” There is a self-assessment to complete for all participants.

¹⁸ Their Integration could be understood as the “contributions of SSH which are part of an interdisciplinary approach, involving collaboration between SSH disciplines and non-SSH disciplines, such as natural sciences, physical and biosciences, medicine, engineering sciences and technology.”

 **Open science:** 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 in society:

- Work Programme may promote adherence to open science practices such as the involvement of citizens, or to use the European Open Science Cloud.
- Assessment of open science practices through the excellence award criteria for proposal evaluation. The quality of participants' previous experience on open sciences practices will be evaluated positively.
- Dedicated support to open science policy actions.

 **Other specific issues to determined topics:** For example:

- **Multi-actor approach (MAA):** involves all relevant actors with complementary backgrounds and expertise to co-create and share knowledge, best practices and innovative solutions responding to the needs of the users, farmers, foresters and advisors, in a bottom-up approach.
- Over the whole course of the project.
- Support dissemination & communication

As the main takeaways from the HE cross-cutting issues:

- ▶ Cross-cutting issues carry weight in the evaluation. Do not use 'generic' descriptions.
- ▶ Ethical aspects can lead to changes in the project or even block a grant. It is important to give them the attention they deserve, and if necessary, include advisors or even partners in the proposal to address these issues.
- ▶ There are increasingly more area-specific policies that gradually spread and become generalized across the entire Program as horizontal aspects.

5. From concept to writing

5.1. Writing planning

The HE proposal template is divided in two parts: the Part A, completed in the Funding & Tenders Portal and it includes administrative details, consortium data, budget, and specific forms. The Part B: main technical document, detailing excellence, impact, and implementation, along with cross-cutting issues such as ethics and open science.

As mentioned before, *Topic analysis* steps allows to understand and regard the information related to the opportunities of interest but at the same time gives the information to start to work on a *Project concept* for the topic(s) of interest.

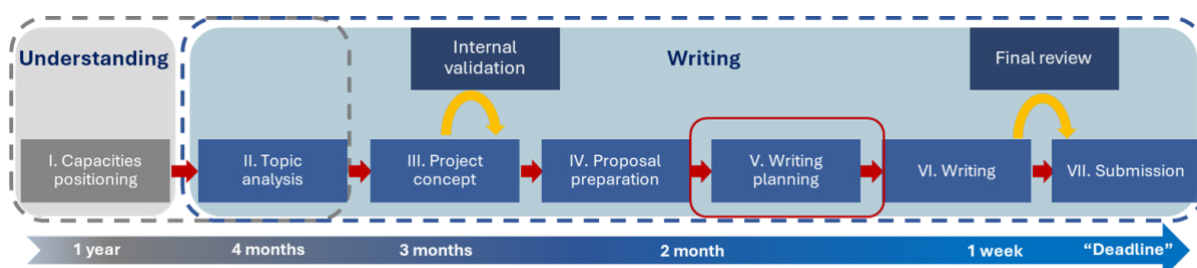


Figure 32 – Writing stage: Writing planification (source: LEITAT)

- V. **Writing planification:** involves strategically organizing the proposal drafting to ensure efficiency, coherence, and quality. It includes setting internal deadlines, assigning responsibilities, structuring iterative writing, aligning with evaluation criteria, and deciding whether to start with Part A (administrative) or Part B (technical)¹⁹.

5.2. Writing the proposal

Once the *Writing planification* is done and the starting date arrives, is time to work on the proposal writing.

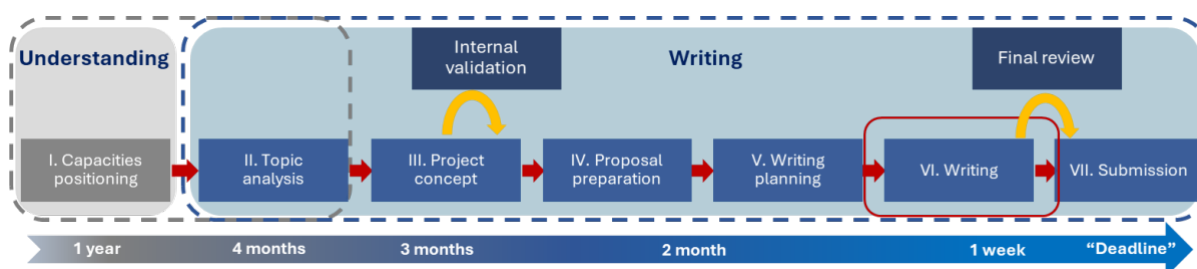


Figure 33 – Writing stage: Writing (source: LEITAT)

- VI. **Writing:** completion of the proposal, which involves filling out both Part A, with administrative and budgetary information, and Part B, where the project's technical narrative is developed in detail, addressing the key criteria of HE.

¹⁹ In the specific opportunities under Lump Sum funding model, additionally it is necessary to present a detail Lump Sum budget. There is a tool for budgeting purposes, which ensures that costs are accurately estimated and justified according to the project's scope, the Excel table for detailed estimation of Lump Sum costs, which has to be uploaded as part of the whole proposal as well.

5.2.1. Step-by-step guidance on completing the application form (Part B)

Starting with the technical Part, this writing process is something to be taken by the coordinator and the core consortium and shared with the rest of the consortium. While the template based on the proposal has the following sections, it is not the optimum order to follow while writing the proposal.

1 - Excellence

1.1 Objectives and objectives

1.2 Methodology

- Overall methodology
- Outputs feeding the project (previous projects)
- Interdisciplinary approach, SSH aspect, Gender dimension, Open science and DMP

2 – Impact

2.1 Project's pathways towards impact

- Outcomes specified in this topic (Scientific / Economic/technological / Societal)
- Wider impacts (Scientific / Economic/technological / Societal)
- Scale and significance
- Potential barriers

2.2 Measures to maximize impact

- Dissemination & exploitation plan
- Communication

2.3 Summary

3 – Quality and efficiency of the implementation

3.1 Work Plan & resources.

- Brief presentation (Pert chart)
- WP timing (Gantt chart)
- Detailed work description (WPs, Deliverables & Milestones)
- Risk Management & Contingency Plans
- Budget & Resources

3.2 Capacity of participants and consortium as a whole

When preparing a Horizon Europe proposal, it is crucial to recognize whether the call follows a single-stage or two-stage submission procedure, as this significantly impacts the depth and scope of the writing process.

5.2.1.1. Single-stage calls

In a single-stage call, the full proposal is submitted in one step, with all the previously mentioned sections. Bearing in mind that the first draft of the concept has been previously based on *expected outcomes* and wider impact, the three sections could be prepared in parallel, prioritizing the finalization of Section 1 before Section 3 and concluding with Section 2. Throughout the writing process, continuous iteration between the sections will be necessary to ensure coherence and alignment between them.

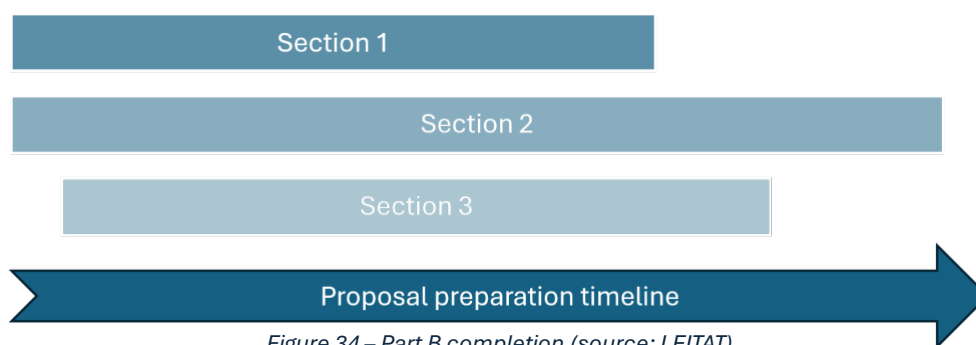


Figure 34 – Part B completion (source: LEITAT)

5.2.1.2. Two-stage calls

In a two-stage call, proposals are first evaluated based only on a shortened version of the application (10 pages), and if selected, applicants are invited to submit a full proposal in stage two, similarly as single-stage call. The first stage proposal only contains the following sections:

1– Excellence

1.1 Objectives and objectives

1.2 Methodology

- Overall methodology
- Outputs feeding the project (previous projects)
- Interdisciplinary approach, SSH aspect, Gender dimension and Open science

2– Impact

2.1 Project's pathways towards impact

- Outcomes specified in this topic (Scientific / Economic/technological / Societal)
- Wider impacts (Scientific / Economic/technological / Societal)
- Scale and significance
- Potential barriers

In some cases, first stage proposal may be subject to a **blind evaluation process** (also known as anonymous evaluation). This approach is designed to ensure that proposals are assessed solely on the strength of their ideas, free from any influence related to the identity, reputation, or affiliations of the applicants. To achieve this, the submitted proposal must be completely anonymized, meaning that no information is allowed that could reveal who the applicants or consortium members are.

Applicants must take great care not to include any names of institutions, individual researchers, companies, or partners. Even indirect references, such as mentioning previous projects or publications, must be carefully written in a neutral, third-person style. For example, instead of saying “our team recently developed...” the text should state “a recent project demonstrated...”, ensuring that nothing points back to the proposing team. Additionally, logos, acronyms linked to specific entities, or institutional references in visuals or text must be omitted.

Importantly, breaching anonymity rules can lead to disqualification of the proposal, making it essential to check that all narrative elements are free from identifiable content.

5.2.1.3. Divide to conquer: share the workload

As a collaborative proposal not all the proposal will be written by the core team or coordinator solely and contribution will be required from every partner included within the consortium and specific section must be assigned to the most appropriate partner (in particular SSH aspect, gender, ethics, dissemination, exploitation, and communication aspects should be assigned to partners with expertise in these fields). Additionally, technical and scientific sections should be led by the partners with the most relevant domain knowledge, ensuring that each section is written by those best qualified to contribute. Clear guidelines, deadlines, and a structured approach to integrating these contributions are essential to maintaining coherence and consistency throughout the proposal.

Each section needs to have a clearly defined leader (that could be the same in numerous cases) driving the collection of required information from partners while ensuring alignment with the overall proposal objectives and coherence in writing style. This leader will be responsible for structuring the section, consolidating inputs, addressing gaps, and refining the content to meet the evaluators' expectations. While specific sections may have different leads, coordination and communication among all contributors are crucial to maintaining consistency across the proposal.

► Section 1: Excellence

Led by the **excellence leader** (most of the time the coordinator), this section will start with the creation of the concept and a draft of the objectives based on section of Developing a Competitive Concept that would be receiving feedback from the core group and basic group if relevant to their specific expertise. SOTA and Beyond SOTA of each key technology components will be collected from specific partners in charge of those components. If sub-systems, including several other components, are involved this collection may be coordinated by the partner in charge to propose a partial methodology of connecting each component. Once recollected, a general methodology should be established by the “excellence leader” to recuperate feedback from partners that will be required to further detailed their section within.

Other sections as Outputs feeding the project (previous projects) are collected from each partner separately while specific sections such as Interdisciplinary approach, SSH aspect, Gender dimension, Open science and DMP should be led by most appropriate partner.

► Section 2: Impact

This section, typically guided by the **impact leader**, plays a crucial role in demonstrating the value the project will bring beyond its technical achievements and its writing structure is somehow linear with inter-step reiteration. Impact leader should be in theory led by one of the key final users of the solution, but they may lack of experience on proposal writing and may be replaced by one partner of the core group, the closest to the market exploitation possible. It sets out a clear draft vision of how the proposed work will contribute to wider impact based on “Chapter 4 - Developing a Competitive Concept”. Based upon it, the impact leader will collect from each partner their contribution to the *expected outcomes* (which results they will deliver, how they are contributing and who will benefit from them).

For example:

- A **technology provider** may highlight how their innovation will improve a specific industry.

- **A research institution** could showcase how their work advances the state-of-the-art and fosters scientific progress.
- **An SME** might outline how they plan to commercialize a project result.
- **A policymaker or NGO** could explain how they will use project findings to influence regulations or societal change.

Secondly, once all the outcomes are mapped, the next step is to link them (individually or collectively) to the broader scientific, economic, and societal impacts expected from the project. First by collecting input from partners for the impact leader to consolidate them, ensuring that all contributions align with the targeted ones by the topic. Through a first draft, the impact leader be able to estimate the scale and significance of the project while establishing the pathways to impact from each outcome to each wider impact that will require specific input for each partner associated with, allow to map specific targeted market, relevant stakeholders and societal relevance.

By quantifying the scale and detailing the significance from partner feedback along the pathway to impact, impact leader will be able to draft a compiling exploitation, dissemination, and communication strategy that will be fed by specific and clear activities to be performed by each partner.

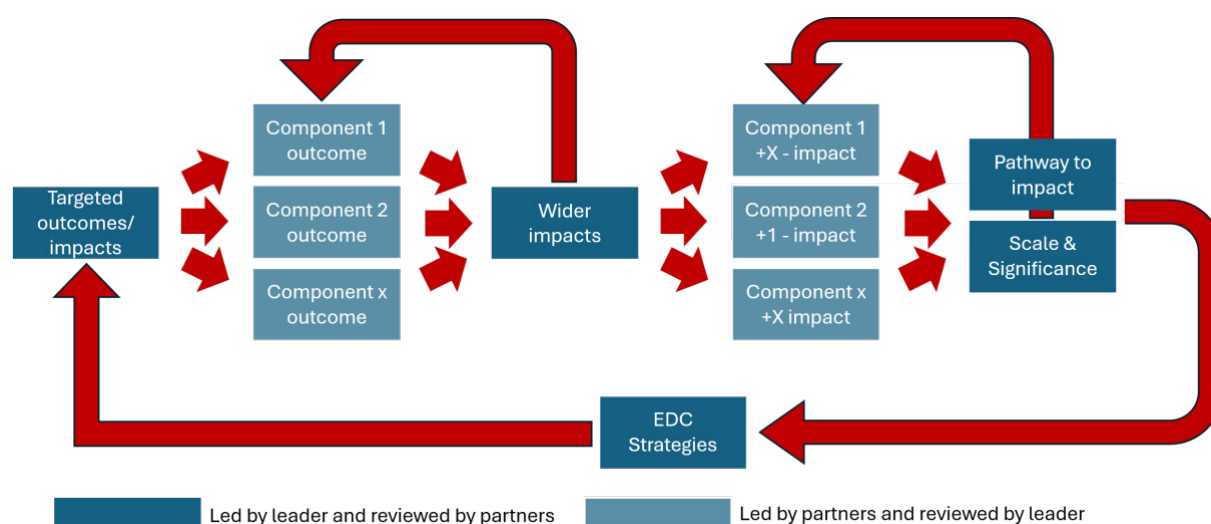


Figure 35 – Part B completion: Impact section (source: LEITAT)

Section 3: Implementation

The Implementation section outlines how the project will be executed, ensuring that the proposed concept and objectives can be achieved efficiently and effectively, focusing on translating the conceptual framework into tangible actions. This section will be led by the implementation leader (most of the time the coordinator or a core partner with HEU experience).

The implementation strategy will be divided into WP by the implementation leader with a draft of potential tasks to be included within them (including a draft of Gantt and PERT graphs). A first revised draft of all the WPs, will be established to ensure a relatively even workload between WPs, while covering all the required activities to support the objectives of the excellence and targeted outcomes/impact of the impact section. Each WP will have a “voluntary” designated leader who will define specific WP objectives and coordinate with the partners contributing to each task. Each WP may designed task leaders if necessary to delegate the writing of those tasks.

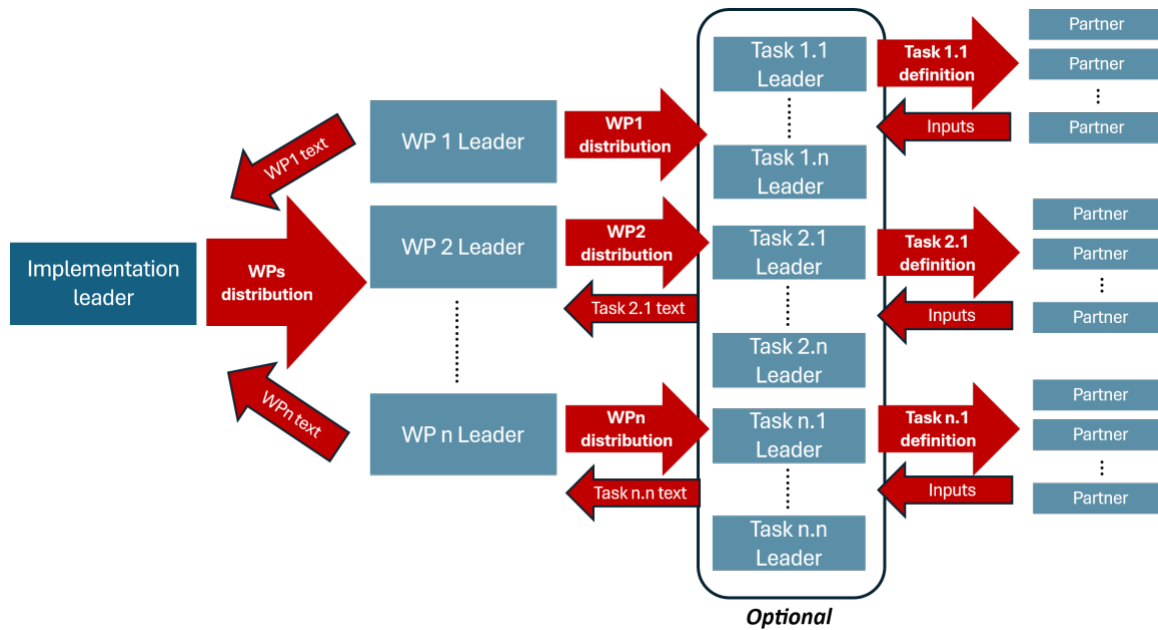


Figure 36 – Part B completion: Implementation section (source: LEITAT)

Once most of the tasks are well identified and described, deliverables will be determined (ensure the least possible but as necessary as required to control project progress and meet the objectives), and establishment/negotiation of budgets can be launched on more details (see Chapter 10). The deliverables will be aligned with the key milestones, ensuring that each stage of the project is measurable and achievable. Additionally, the selection of deliverables will be made with an emphasis on providing tangible outputs that are meaningful to both the project and its stakeholders. This approach will help maintain a balance between comprehensive documentation and efficiency, avoiding unnecessary complexity while ensuring that all required outcomes are met.

This will be followed by the elaboration of the Risk Management & Contingency Plans following a similar work distribution or directly led by the implementation leader and in parallel the compilation of key capacity from each partner and sum up in the consortium as a whole sub-section by the implementation leader (or in some case by the excellence leader). By collecting budget (that should include the required budget and resources), the coordinator or implementation leader will be able to finalize this section with the compilation of all partners' budget information.

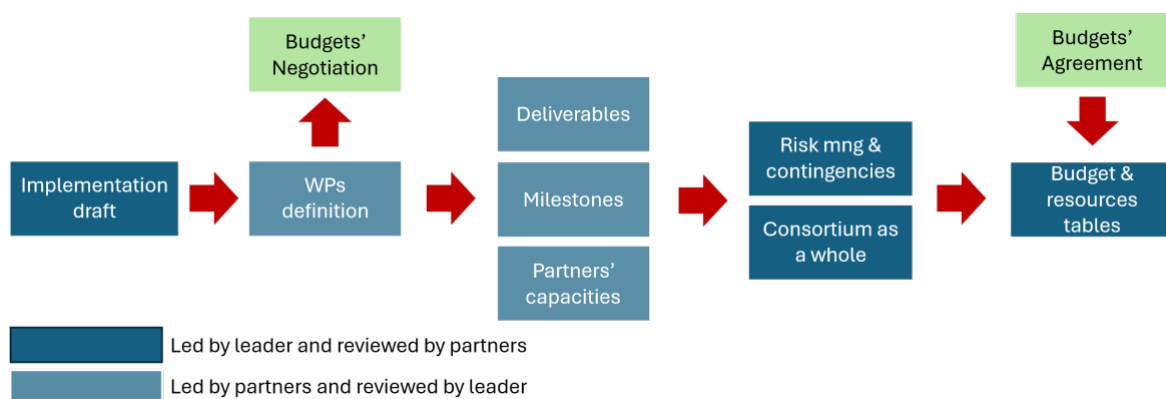


Figure 37 – Part B completion: Implementation section (source: LEITAT)

5.2.2. Part B tips

Regarding the content of Part B, is important to consider these tips to consider on the Excellence section (core of the technical proposal):

► Objectives and ambition

- Objectives must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).
- Scientific background in 1 paragraph is supported by most relevant references and publications. Do not write a scientific paper.
- Few sentences to explain that the current limitations are.
- To include how the project goes beyond the SOTA
- Correctly establish of TRL

► Methodology:

- Here is the place to describe the value proposition, the solution to the problem identified in the topic. It is important to be specific and show the project will be feasible.
- How objectives will be achieved? Include all calculations, assumptions, proposed solutions, all claims must be addressed.
- When describing the concept, be specific and logical and focus on the flow of the approach (use graphic illustrations on this point).
- Describe how the WPs interact and which objective and KPIs will be addressed where.

5.2.3. Step-by-step guidance on completing the application form (Part A)

Part A is an entirely online section on the Funding & Tenders Portal. Even though these sections are not part of the evaluation, the reviewers will refer to them (except at the 1st stage of the two-stage calls). In the case of 1st stage proposal, only the sections highlighted in grey will be required.

1 General information

1.1 Basic data

- Acronym
- Proposal title
- Duration in months
- Fixed keyword
- Free keyword

1.2 Abstract

- Public part of the proposal with a sum up of proposal idea in 2000 words

1.3 Declarations

2 Participants

2.1 List of participating organisations and information from each one

- Administrative information
- Researchers involved in the proposal
- Role of participating organisations in the project

- Up to 5 most relevant publications, databases, software or services or any other achievement related to the proposal
- Up to 5 most relevant projects or activities in relation with the proposal
- Description of any significant infrastructure or equipment relevant for the work to be carried out in the proposal

2.2 Gender equality plan

- Gender balance in the consortium.
- gender equality in research and project activities
- Gender dimension integrated into the research content
- Gender-sensitive communication and prevent any form of gender-based violence or discrimination

3 Budget for the proposal (general information)

- Total budget requested from HE
- Total project cost (including participants' co-funding)
- Indirect costs

4 Ethics and security

- Ethic:
 - ✓ Ethical issues involved (human participants, sensitive data, animal testing, etc.)
 - ✓ Ethics approval status and confirmation of compliance with ethical guidelines
 - ✓ Ethics self-assessment checklist (based on the project's nature)
- Security:
 - ✓ Sensitive information or materials involved.
 - ✓ Security risk assessment and measures to mitigate risks
 - ✓ Access control to secure infrastructure (if applicable)

5 Other questions

The most important tips for completing Part A are to ensure accuracy and consistency throughout the document, especially with consortium details and the budget, making sure they align with the information presented in Part B. The budget²⁰ should be realistic and directly reflect the project activities, with costs logically distributed according to the project needs. Additionally, any ethical considerations, such as data protection or research involving humans or animals, should be clearly addressed. Finally, it's essential to thoroughly review and validate the information to ensure that all required fields are completed, and no crucial details are missing, as omissions can lead to delays in the process.

5.2.4. Part A tips

This part will be addressed first as it contains a key element that is used to represent the cover letter and determines the first impression that evaluator(s) will have:

²⁰ The next section contains an overview of HE funding rules as well as some guidelines and tips to prepare a realistic and well-justified budget.

- ▶ **Abstract:** these first two pages of the proposal matter and should give a clear message of the whole value proposition and highly recommended an abstract with an eye-catching narrative that covers all these necessary points:
 - There is a need/a problem/an opportunity (...)
 - Why does nobody have a solution yet?
 - Why is this solution to the problem the best?
 - Why is the proposed team the best on to achieve this?
 - What will be the impact/benefits if the proposal is successful?
- ▶ **Participants:** provide details of the researchers involved in the proposal for each participant.
 - List of all researchers/engineers that will participate in the Project execution, no administrative personnel
 - It is used by the EC for statistics and follow-up on researcher's career. Their Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) is necessary.
 - Remember that that gender balance in the case that two proposals receive the same score

Finally, some tips to ensure coherence between content Part A and B, through the following components:

- ▶ **Objectives:** ensure that the project objectives in Part A align with the detailed description in Part B.
- ▶ **Budget:** the total budget in Part A should match the detailed breakdown by participant and activity in Part B.
- ▶ **Participants:** roles of the participants should be consistent between both parts, reflecting their responsibilities in the WP.
- ▶ **Ethics and Security:** if ethical or security issues in Part A, explain them in detail in Part B.
- ▶ **Impact:** impact strategy mentioned in Part A should be further developed in Part B.
- ▶ **Final review:** review both parts to ensure there are no discrepancies in information, numbers, or details.

6. Budgeting and Financial Management

6.1. Understanding Horizon Europe funding rules and eligible costs.

6.1.1. Actual costs (or standard) model

As seen in the previous section, additionally to the technical aspect, the project's financial proposal must also be worked on, within Part A (See Figure 38 and Figure 39), ensuring a budget that aligns with the project's requirements, is balanced, and well-structured.

3 –Budget for the proposal

			Estimated expenditure							Estimated income						
			Estimated eligible							Requested EU contributions			Revenues	Other sources of financing		Total estimated income
										EU Contributions to eligible costs			Income generated by action	Income generated by action	Income generated by action	
			A. Personnel costs/€ (a1)	B. Sub-contracting costs/€ (b)	C.1 Travel and subsistence /€ (c1)	C.2 Equipment /€ (c2)	C.3 Other, goods works and services /€ (c3)	D. Other cost categories D. X (specific cost category)/ € (dx)	E. Indirect costs/€ (e)=25% * [(a1)+(c1)+(c2)+(c3)+(d7)]	Total eligible costs (h)=(a1) + (b)+(c1)+(c2)+(c3)+(d7)+€	Funding rate (U)	Maximum EU contribution to eligible costs (i) = (U) * (h)				Requested EU contribution to eligible costs/€ (Requested grant amount) (m) (n)
No.	Participant name	Country										(o)	(o)	(o)	(s)=(n)+(o)+(p)+(q)+(r)	
1	Participant 1	NL														
2	Participant 2	LB														
	Affiliated Entity	LB														
3	Participant 3	DE														
	Associated Partne	AR														

Figure 38 – Budget section, Part A (source: LEITAT)

No.	Participant name	Country	Estimated project expenditure							
			Estimated eligible costs							
			D. Other cost categories							
			D.1 Financial support to third parties	D.2 Internally invoiced goods and services	D.3 Transnational access to research infrastructures	D.4 Virtual access to research infrastructures	D.5 PCP/PPI procurement cost	D.6 Euratom Cofund staff mobility costs	D.7 ERC additional funding	D.8 ERC additional funding (sub-contracting FSTP and internally invoiced goods and services)
			(Actual costs) (d1)	(Unit costs-usual accounting practices) (d2)	(Unit costs) (d3)	(Unit costs) (d4)	(Actual costs) (d5)	(Unitl costs) (d6)	(Actual costs) (d7)	(Actual costs) (d8)
1	Participant 1	NL								
2	Participant 2	LB								
	Affiliated Entity	LB								
3	Participant 3	DE								
	Associated Partner	AR								

Figure 39 – Subsection D. Other cost categories, limited to specific calls less likely to concern Turkish organizations (source: LEITAT)

For the preparation of the budget, eligible costs must be considered. The EC through its regulations and grant agreement, determines that an expense is eligible²¹ if it is:

- ▶ Incurred by the beneficiary
- ▶ Carried out during the project's duration
- ▶ Associated with one of the 'eligible costs' categories and specified in the budget
- ▶ Related to the project's objective and actions described in Annex 1
- ▶ Identifiable and verifiable
- ▶ Reasonable and justified
- ▶ Must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security

There are five eligible cost categories in HE: personnel, subcontracting, purchase, other direct costs, and indirect costs:

- ▶ **Direct personnel costs:** include salary remuneration and allowances for:
 - Personnel from the beneficiary entity assigned to the project
 - Individuals hired for the development of the project
 - Seconded person from third parties involved in the project
 - Owners of SMEs/natural personnel who do not receive a salary; in the case of Turkish companies, the PM rate will be 5.640,78€, based on unit cost reference since July 2024 (8.745,40€)²² x Türkiye country correction coefficients (64,5%)²³
- ▶ **Purchase costs** refer to purchase costs for the action and are eligible if they fulfill the general eligibility conditions and are bought using the beneficiary's usual purchasing practices (best value for money and no conflict of interest). These purchases include:
 - Travel and subsistence
 - Equipment, infrastructure and assets
 - Other goods, works and services (consumables, promotion, dissemination, translations, publications, and required guarantees)
- ▶ **Subcontracting costs:** refers to the subcontracting of third parties to carry out specific work. It is important to note that only activities that are planned and properly described in the proposal may be subcontracted. It is essential to ensure that the best possible price is achieved (best value for money and no conflict of interest).
- ▶ **Other Directs costs:** include financial support for third parties, internally invoiced good and services, access to research infrastructure unit costs, others.
- ▶ **Indirect costs:** these eligible costs will be determined by applying a flat rate of 25% of the total eligible direct costs, excluding subcontracting costs.

²¹ Consult in the section **Resources and Support** the [Annotated Grant Agreement: EU Funding Programmes 2021-2027](#) (General eligibility conditions).

²² European Commission (2024) amending Decision C(2020)7115 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme. [Source link](#).

²³ Comisión Europea. (2023). Horizon Europe: Work Programme 2023-2025 – 2. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (Decisión C(2025) 2779 del 14 de mayo de 2025. [Source link](#).

6.1.2. Lump sum model

As stated by the EC, Lump sum grants are grants where the grant amount is fixed and will be paid out if the project is implemented as set out in the description of the action (DoA, Annex 1 of the grant agreement). These types of grants are simpler to manage than actual cost grants that are typically used in EU programmes because they require less administration and involve no cost reporting.

Within the Part A the previously mentioned tables are simplified (See Figure 40). However, an additional document with more detailed information is required, the [Detailed budget Excel file for Lump Sum](#).

No	NAME OF BENEFICIARY	COUNTRY	ROLE	REQUEST GRANT AMOUNT
1	Participant 1	CH	Coordinator	
2	Participant 2	DE	Partner	
	Affiliated Entity	DE	Partner	
Total				

Figure 40 – Budget section (source: Standard Application Form HE RIA, IA, Part A)

To ensure the proper use of the detailed budget excel and unlock the linked included in the excel document, it will be required to unblock the security property (See Figure 41).

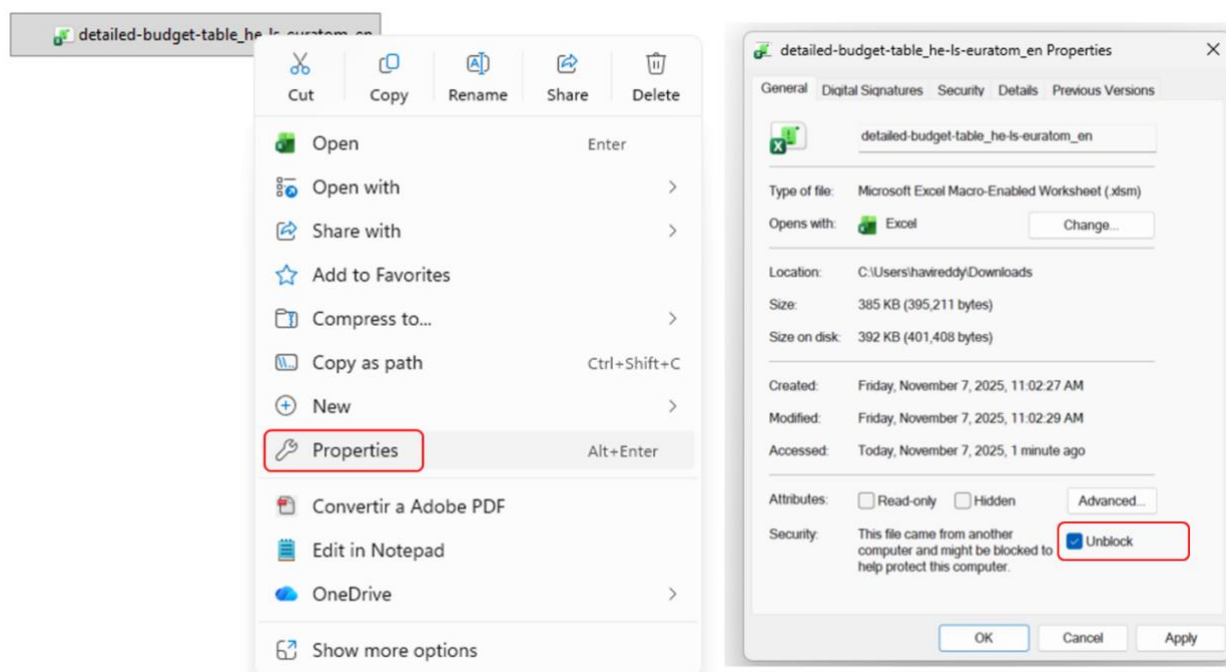


Figure 41 – Unlocking step to be properly execute the detailed budget Excel (source: LEITAT)

Within this excel, the five eligible cost categories in HE previously cited (personnel, subcontracting, purchase, other direct costs, and indirect costs) will have to be detailed for each WP and beneficiary according to the categories (See Figure 42).

COST CATEGORY	BE1 name		
	ITEMS	COST PER ITEM	BE TOTAL COSTS
COSTS WORK PACKAGE 1: WP1 name			
A. DIRECT PERSONNEL COSTS			
A.1 Employees (or equivalent)			
SENIOR SCIENTISTS (or equivalent in the private sector)			0,00
JUNIOR SCIENTISTS (or equivalent in the private sector)			0,00
TECHNICAL PERSONNEL (or equivalent in the private sector)			0,00
ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL (or equivalent in the private sector)			0,00
OTHERS			0,00
A.2 Natural Persons under direct contract			0,00
A.3 Seconded Persons			0,00
A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries		8745,40	0,00
B. DIRECT SUBCONTRACTING COSTS			0,00
C. DIRECT PURCHASE COSTS			
C.1 Travel and subsistence			0,00
C.2 Equipment (complete 'Depreciation costs' sheet)			
Equipment			0,00
Infrastructure			0,00
Other assets			0,00
C.3 Other goods, works and services			
Consumables			0,00
Services for meetings, seminars			0,00
Services for dissemination activities (including website)			0,00
Publication fees			0,00
Other (shipment, insurance, translation, etc.)			0,00
D. OTHER COST CATEGORIES			
D.1 Financial support to third parties (if applicable in the topic specific conditions)			0,00
D.2 Internally invoiced goods and services			0,00
D.3 Transnational access to research infrastructure unit costs (if mentioned as eligible in the topic specific conditions)			0,00
D.4 Virtual access to research infrastructure unit costs (if mentioned as eligible in the topic specific conditions)			0,00
D.5 PCP/PPI procurement costs (if mentioned as eligible in the topic specific conditions)			0,00
TOTAL DIRECT PERSONNEL COSTS AND PURCHASE COSTS (A+C)			0,00
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (A+B+C+D)			0,00
E. INDIRECT COSTS (25% * (A+C))			0,00
F. TOTAL COSTS (A+B+C+D+E)			0,00

Figure 42 – WP section per beneficiary to be completed (Source: Detailed budget Excel file for Lump Sum)

Some of those categories have been sub-divided in subcategories such as:

- ▶ **A1. Employees (or equivalent):** it has been divided into 5 subcategories (senior scientists, junior scientist, technical personnel, administrative personnel and others (or their equivalent in the private sector). As a reference for evaluators, the EC has established a line base of that cost depending on the organization type and country, the [Horizon dashboard for Lump Sum evaluations](#).
- ▶ **C2. Equipment:** it has been divided into 3 subcategories: equipment, infrastructure and other assets of which further detailed information needs to be provided in the Depreciation costs sheet of this excel, compiling all the depreciation costs of the consortium (See Figure 43). Important details are the date of purchase, purchase cost, % used for the project, % of used life of the equipment in the project (according to internal/national accounting procedures) and justification of its use in the project. All this information allows to automatically calculated the charged depreciation costs per investment that should be identic to the number.

TOOL: DEPRECIATION COSTS LIST											
BE nr	Beneficiary name	WP nr	WP name	Resource type	Short name of the investments	Date of purchase (real or planned date of purchase)	Purchase cost	% used for the project	% of useful life of the equipment in the project	Charged depreciation costs per investment	Justification: Needed info for depreciation

Figure 43 – Depreciation costs list sheet (source: Detailed budget Excel file for Lump Sum)

C3. Other goods, works and services: it has been divided in 5 subcategories: consumables (more likely to be for technical WPs), services for meetings, seminars (more likely to be for the coordination WP), services for dissemination activities (including website), publication fees and other (shipment, insurance, translation, etc).

6.2. Developing a realistic and well-justified budget

Ensuring a realistic budget in a HE proposal means making sure that costs are justified, proportional, and aligned with the program's rules. Here are key steps and tips to achieve it

I. Define a realistic project scope

- ✓ Avoid overestimating or underestimating resources. Carefully analyze the effort required for each task (staff hours, travel, equipment, etc.)
- ✓ Use references from previous projects or benchmarking from similar calls.
- ✓ Ensure the budget is aligned with the project's ambition and objectives.

II. Accurate direct costs calculation:

▶ Direct Personnel Costs: the largest part of the budget

- ✓ Calculate the required hours per task and multiply by the actual hourly rate of each entity.
- ✓ Use the European Commission's personnel cost calculation method, based on working days.
 - Justify each person's workload based on their role in the project. The average PM of implicated personnel can be calculated by dividing by 12 (number of months per year) the average yearly cost of such personnel for the entity. The average yearly cost must be limited to salaries (including net payments during parental leave), social security contributions, taxes and other costs linked to the remuneration, if they arise from national law or the employment contract (or equivalent appointing act). Supplementary payment may be included if it reflects the usual practice of the beneficiary to pay consistently bonuses or supplementary payments for work in projects funded by national schemes.

▶ Purchase costs:

- ✓ Travel, accommodation and subsistence costs:
 - Based on market prices and each's entity's internal policies.
 - Include transport, accommodation, and per diems according to usual practices; also visa and international travel taxes are included.
 - Travel limited to project meetings, one or two persons per entity.
 - Avoid rounded figures (e.g., €10,000 without breakdown).
- ✓ Equipment, infrastructure and assets:

- Only the depreciation for the duration of the project is eligible (unless specifically mentioned in the call).
- Justify the need for the equipment and its usage time.
- Assess whether renting/leasing is more cost-effective than purchasing (they must not exceed the related depreciation costs and can't include any financing fees).
- ✓ Other goods, works and services:
 - Includes translations, publications, software licenses, consumables, etc.
 - Must be strictly necessary for the project.
- ▶ **Subcontracting costs:**
 - ✓ Only for well-justified activities not covered by project partner.
 - ✓ Must be explicitly mentioned in the proposal.
 - ✓ Avoid excessive subcontracting to maintain control over implementation.
- III. **Correct application of indirect costs:**
 - ✓ Automatically calculated as 25% of eligible direct costs (excluding subcontracting and other cost categories, at the exception of ERC additional funding (actual costs) - D7).
 - ✓ No detailed justification required, but they should be coherent with direct costs.
- IV. **Budget validation and coherence:**
 - ✓ As general validation, review previous projects or consult with colleagues who have experience with HE to ensure that budget aligns with common practices in the field.
 - ✓ Once the budget is received, ensure it aligns with the written proposal, numbers in the budget must match the planned activities and outcomes stated in the proposal.
 - ✓ Allocate person-month (PM) by task, calculate the time each person will dedicate to each task, taking into account task duration and the proportion of full-time effort.
 - ✓ For materials, understand the quantities and prices (per kilo, meter, etc.), make sure that the quantities listed in the budget are realistic and that the unit prices make sense for the project scope and market standards.
 - ✓ Double-check eligibility, making sure that all costs are eligible according to the HE guidelines, particularly in relation to indirect costs, subcontracts, and any additional funding restrictions in the specific call.
- V. **Adjustment and final review:**
 - ✓ Ensure the balanced distribution of the direct costs.
 - ✓ Clearly justify all costs to avoid cuts during evaluation.
 - ✓ Avoid inflating costs, which could raise doubts among evaluators.

A realistic budget is aligned with the project's actual needs, well-justified, and compliant with HE's rules. Careful planning, cost validation, and control tools are key to avoiding mistakes and improving the proposal's evaluation score.

6.3. How to prepare a template for budget preparation

To efficiently prepare a comprehensive HE budget, it is essential to first develop an internal Excel-based budget template. This template should align with your organization's standard cost structures while also being sufficiently flexible to accommodate the requirements of most partner organizations. By doing so, you will streamline the process of populating the various budget tables required in Part B of

the proposal (e.g. Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5), ensuring both accuracy and coherence across the consortium.

Table 3 – Summary of staff effort

	WPn	WPn+1	WPn+2	...	Total Person-Months per Participant
Participant Number/Short Name					
Participant Number/Short Name					
...					
Total Person Months					

Table 4 – ‘Subcontracting costs’ items

Participant Number/Short Name	Cost (€)	Description of tasks and justifications
Subcontracting		

Table 5 – ‘Purchase costs’ items

Participant Number/Short Name	Cost (€)	Justification
Travel and subsistence		
Equipment		
Other goods, works and services		
Remaining purchase cost (<15% of pers. costs)		
Total		

This above table shouldn't be included for partner in the case the total of other direct costs is lower than 15% of the personal costs. In the case of been above, the items with larger expenses should be included in the above table until reaching a amount lower than 15% of the personal costs.

A recommended structure for an Excel-based Horizon Europe budget template will be based on the following detailed information that could be setup within a single sheet of an excel or in various sheets. Be aware that as a partner, you may be required to follow the coordinator template, that may require more information that you may be used to be, it is therefore recommended to establish a template with as much as easily it is to provide any further information. The first one would require some clever formatting to be easily readable but will ensure that partner do not miss any sections. It should contain:

I. General information

This will include:

- Project acronym (and title as an option): to avoid confusion between proposal if you or partner are preparing various proposals at the same time.
- Project duration (in months): for a general overview of the whole project timing, in this case timing of the different WPs could be added too to clearly identified overestimated PM attribution per WPs.
- Currency exchange rate (if applicable)
- Name of the beneficiaries and number within the proposal Part A filling out the excel (if one Excel is provided for each partner)

II. Personnel Costs

Some variation may be used for this section where the following could be detailed with personnel categories that will have different monthly rate and/or be sub-structured in tasks within each WPs. The simplest option is the following (if the monthly rate has been calculated as an average for the whole project):

	<i>Person-Months</i>	<i>Total per WP</i>
<i>WP_n</i>		
<i>WP_{n+1}</i>		
<i>WP_{n+2}</i>		
<i>...</i>		
<i>Total</i>		

III. Subcontracting (if any)

The most straightforward option is to follow directly the table of the Part B (detailing each subcontracting items to ensure clarity) by optionally adding the associated WP for the coordinator to be able to easily correlate it with the implementation section and validate if should be considered as subcontracting (action task) or as a service:

	<i>Cost (€)</i>	<i>Justification</i>	<i>Associated WP</i>
<i>Sub-contracting</i>			

IV. Purchase costs

For each participant, a compiled information table is required to be included in the Part B if the total of other costs exceeds 15% of the personnel costs. While this table must list cost items in order of costs and starting with the largest cost item, up to the level that the remaining costs are below 15% of personnel costs, it is recommended to give sufficient details (in case further information is required once the project is funded by some project officer – after 6 months of evaluation and negotiation, it may be difficult to remind all the details). It will support you and the coordinator to understand the need for each item included within this section.



	<i>Associated WP</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Cost (€)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Travel & Subsistence				

	<i>Associated WP</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Cost (€)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Equipment				

	<i>Associated WP</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Cost (€)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Other goods, works and services				

Finally, to facilitate the correlation between those table and the final table form Part A, those table should be linked to a table summarizing the whole information as required for Part A (See Figure 38).

7. Negotiating for the Proposal with Partners

7.1. Importance of Negotiation

As a collaborative project used to involve partners with diverse interests and priorities, consensus needs to be reached on key aspects from the project objectives to budget distribution, governance and others.

To reach consensus among the members of a consortium, the negotiation process is essential to establish the foundation for successful collaboration before submitting the proposal. During this phase, key areas are addressed to ensure that the interests, resources, and expectations of each partner are properly aligned.

7.2. Key areas of Negotiation with partners

The negotiations prior to submitting the proposal are crucial for achieving a consensus that will allow the project to move forward effectively during its execution. The key areas of negotiation are outlined below.

► Project objectives and WP:

The project objectives define the purpose and *expected outcomes*, while the WP are the specific tasks and activities required to achieve those objectives. Each WP should be well-defined, assigned to an appropriate partner, and linked to a clear deliverable.

Is recommended to:

- ✓ Clearly define the objectives, ensuring that all partners are aligned on the project objectives, establishing what is expected to be achieved and how success will be measured.

► Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) ownership and management²⁴:

The IPR ownership and management is crucial, as partners must agree on how the rights to patents, innovations, and other research results will be distributed. Clarifying how IPRs will be managed from the outset helps to avoid disputes later on.

Is recommended to:

- ✓ Negotiate IPR terms at the beginning: ensure that all partners agree on the distribution of intellectual property generated during the project before submitting the proposal.
- ✓ Establish clear rules for licensing and exploitation: define how the results will be exploited, who has the right to license and commercialize, and how the benefits will be shared.
- ✓ Maintain fairness: distribution of rights should be proportional to each partner's contribution. Ensure there are no disputes over ownership of the results.

²⁴ Consult in the section **Resources and Support** the [Intellectual Property Rights: Learn about IP Rights in Horizon 2020 Manual](#).

Is important to take into account this negotiation and its results will not be part of the proposal but will be reflected once the project is approved. The Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)²⁵ with each partner and the negotiation will be part of the Consortium Agreement (CA)²⁶.

The Development of a Simplified Consortium Agreement (DESCA)²⁷, the most widespread model Consortium Agreement in H2020, has been updated for use in HE projects.

Budget allocation and distribution:

The budget must be negotiated and agreed upon by the partners to ensure that each party receives the necessary funds to carry out their tasks, and that the total budget aligns with the requirements of HE. The budget distribution should be based on the activities that each partner will undertake.

Is recommended to:

- ✓ Align the budget with tasks, ensuring that the budget is distributed according to the tasks and responsibilities of each partner. Each partner should justify their portion of the budget based on their activities and needs (with some margin of error, to be jointly defined as part of the consensus).
- ✓ Flexibility in redistribution, establishing mechanisms to redistribute the budget if any partner cannot meet their commitments or if unforeseen circumstances arise, always ensuring fairness.

▶ Roles and responsibilities of each partner:

Defining each partner's roles and responsibilities is crucial for the efficiency and successful development of the project. On one hand, for the implementation, each partner must know what is expected of them (tasks, deliverables, and milestones with a technical responsible). On the other hand, the management of exploitation, dissemination, and IPRs should be defined as well.

Is recommend to:

- ✓ Distribute WP fairly, assigning tasks based on the strengths and capabilities of each partner to ensure responsibilities are balanced and achievable.
- ✓ Establish clear deliverables, defining specific and measurable deliverables for each WP, so all partners know what is expected and can monitor progress, to avoid confusion and overlapping during execution.

▶ Decision-making process within the consortium:

Establishing a clear and efficient decision-making process within the consortium is essential to avoid blockages and delays. This process should detail who will make the decisions, how they will be made, and what procedures will be followed in case of disagreement.

²⁵ The CA is the binding contract between project partners that defines their roles, rights, obligations, IP rights, financial contributions, and governance. It ensures smooth collaboration throughout the project

²⁶ The NDA is a legal contract to protect sensitive information shared between parties, ensuring confidentiality and outlining the terms for handling proprietary data. Both agreements are essential for managing partnerships, safeguarding data, and protecting intellectual property in collaborative projects.

²⁷ Consult the section **Resources and Support** for the [Development of a Simplified Consortium Agreement](#).

The standard governance model is structured with the coordinator leading it, and each consortium partner having one vote in the strategic management aspect. Regarding the technical side, it is typically managed by the coordinator and the leaders of the WPs.

Is recommend to:

- ✓ Establish a consensus mechanism, ensuring that the decision-making process favors consensus among the partners, but also define decision-making mechanisms for urgent or critical situations.
- ✓ Define leadership roles, making sure clear leadership roles are established within the consortium for making key decisions, especially in critical areas like budget management or intellectual property.
- ✓ Resolve conflicts quickly, defining a conflict resolution process to address any disagreements promptly and prevent project delays.

However, the whole project Governance will be part of the CA, once the project is approved.

8. Submission and Evaluation

8.1. Understanding the evaluation process and criteria.

It is important to know how the evaluation process works and which criteria are taken into consideration before the proposal is submitted.

Once the proposals are received, they will first undergo an admissibility and eligibility check by EU staff before being assigned to experts. Criteria of admissibility and eligibility are described below:

- ▶ **Admissibility:** the applications must:
 - Be complete and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents.
 - Be readable, accessible and printable.
 - Include a plan for exploitation and dissemination of results including communication activities (not applicable for application at the first stage of two-stages procedures or unless otherwise provided in the specific call conditions).
 - Specific page limits per type of action normally apply (the is specified in the topic conditions and controlled by IT tools).
- ▶ **Eligibility:** for this checking:
 - 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 in a MS or AC.
 - The GEP in place is now an eligibility criterion (applicable for public bodies, research organizations or higher education institutions)
 - 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 the criteria.

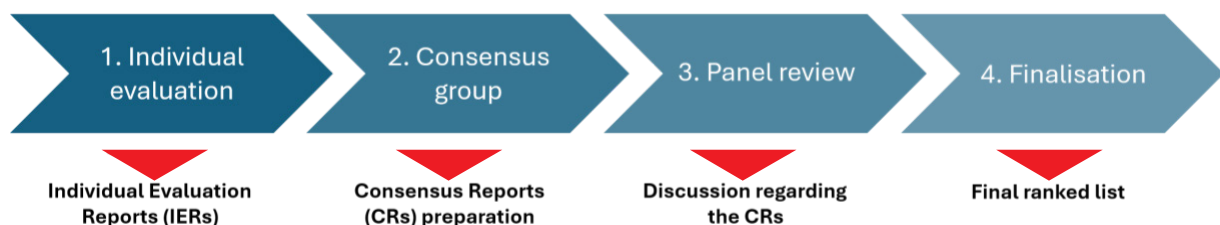


Figure 44 – Proposal evaluation process (source: LEITAT)

The ones that meet these first admissibility/eligibility checking, are assigned to evaluators to follow the standard process detailed below.

1. **Individual evaluation:** each proposal is individually evaluated by at least 3 experts (but often more than 3). Those experts assign scores and provide specific comments on the IERs.
2. **Consensus group:** all individual experts discuss together to agree a common position, including comments and scores for each proposal; reflected on the CRs.
3. **Panel review:** the panel of experts, based on CRs, reach an agreement on the scores and comments for all the proposals within a call, checking consistency across all the evaluations. If is necessary, resolve the cases where evaluators could not agree during the consensus group stage and rank the proposals that obtain the same scores.

4. **Finalisation:** the Commission reviews the results of the experts' evaluation and puts together the final ranking list.

The full-stage proposals are assessed based on three fundamental criteria of *Excellence*, *Impact* and *Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation*. In the case of two-stage proposals, in the first stage only a limited part of the *Excellence* and *Impact* are evaluated prior been selected to pass to the 2nd stage and been evaluated according to the same criteria as full-stage proposals. However, depending on if it the type of action corresponds to an IA/RIA or CSA, the Excellence criteria components differ as shown:

Table 6 – Evaluation criteria of proposals

CRITERIA	RIAs/IAs	CSAs
Excellence	✓ Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the SOTA ✓ The robustness of the proposed methodology includes the underlying concepts, models, and assumptions; interdisciplinary approaches; consideration of the gender dimension in R&I; quality of open science practices; and engagement with citizens, civil society, and end users, where relevant.	✓ Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives. ✓ Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures, including robustness of methodology.
Impact	✓ Credibility of the pathways to achieve expected outcomes and impacts outlined in the Work Programme, as well as the potential scale and significance of the project's contributions. ✓ Suitability and quality of the measures designed to maximize the expected outcomes and impacts, as set in the dissemination and exploitation, including communication activities.	
Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation	✓ Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, risk assessment and management, as well as the suitability of the effort assigned to WPs, and the resources overall. ✓ Capacity and role of each member, and extent to the consortium brings the necessary expertise.	

The scores to obtain per criteria are within a scale from 0 to 5, with a maximum overall score of 15 and a threshold of 3/5 in each criteria. The following corresponds to the scores interpretations:

- ▶ **(0):** the proposal fails to address the criteria or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information
- ▶ **Poor (1):** the criteria is inadequately addressed, or these are serious inherent weaknesses
- ▶ **Fair (2):** the proposal broadly addresses the criteria, but there are *significant weaknesses*²⁸

²⁸ Significant weakness: proposal addresses the criterion in a limited or ineffective way, potentially lowering the score below the threshold. This can also occur if there are multiple shortcomings, each not making the proposal unsuitable for funding individually, but collectively failing to meet the criterion effectively.

- ▶ **Good (3):** the proposal addresses the criteria well, but a number of *shortcomings*²⁹ are present
- ▶ **Very good (4):** the proposal addresses the criteria very well, but a small number of *shortcomings* are present
- ▶ **Excellent (5):** the proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criteria; any *shortcomings are minor*³⁰

In case of groups of proposals with the tie score after evaluation, starting with the group with the highest score and continuing in descending order:

1. **Proposals covering uncovered aspects:** if by higher-ranked proposals relevant aspects of the call are not addressed, those that cover it will have the highest priority.
2. **Higher Excellent scores (or Impact for IA):** among these proposals, priority will be determined based on their *Excellence* scores. If these are equal, Impact scores will be considered. For the IA, *Impact* takes precedence, followed by *Excellence*.
3. **Gender balance:** if further prioritization is needed, gender balance among key personnel responsible for R&I activities, as listed in the proposal's research table, will be considered.
4. **Geographical diversity:** if necessary, geographical diversity will be used as a criteria, defined by the variety of MS or AC represented in the proposal that are not receiving funding from higher-ranked projects. If equal, budget size will be the deciding factor.
5. **Other strategic factors:** if a distinction still cannot be made, the panel may prioritize based on additional factors aligned with the call's objectives or HE goals—such as enhancing project portfolio quality through synergies or involving SMEs where relevant and feasible.

8.2. Proposal submission

Once the evaluation process and criteria are clear is relevant to highlight and check some key elements of the proposal before it submission:

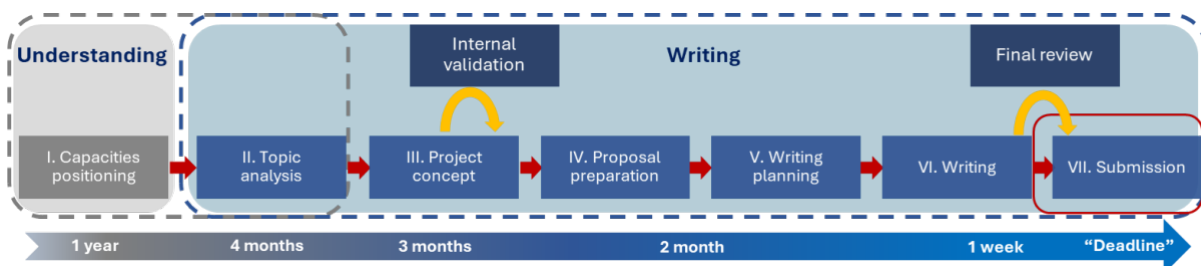


Figure 45 – Writing stage: Writing (source: LEITAT)

- VII. **Submission:** the final stage of the proposal process involves a thorough final review of both Part A and Part B, ensuring alignment with HE evaluation criteria. This review checks for consistency, clarity, quality of writing, and compliance with ethical and legal requirements. Any necessary corrections are made to enhance the proposal's effectiveness. Once complete, the proposal is ready for submission through the Funding & Tenders Portal.

Finally, as seen along this manual, submitting a project proposal for HE is a demanding process that calls for strategic planning, accurate budgeting, and strong collaboration with partners. The following section presents a series of considerations to keep in mind throughout this overall preparation process, outlining some key best practices and common mistakes to avoid.

²⁹ *Shortcoming:* is a problem that relates to an important aspect of the proposal. It impacts the scoring but does not render the proposal inappropriate for funding, i.e. the proposal is still expected to lead to useful results with positive impact.

³⁰ *Minor shortcoming:* is an issue that relates only to a marginal aspect of the proposal with respect to the criteria and/or can easily be rectified (it will not impact the scoring).

9. Common mistakes to avoid on the whole proposal preparation process

9.1. Preparation to be ready for applying.

To do:

- **Review the Work Programme:** applicants should read the relevant Horizon Europe Work Programme to understand the call's objectives and requirements.
- **Align with EU Policy:** proposals should reflect broader EU strategic priorities.
- **Understand evaluation criteria:** knowing what *Excellence*, *Impact*, and *Implementation* mean helps improve proposal quality.
- **Identify call type:** applicants must check whether the call uses lump sum or actual cost funding, and the action type (CSA, RIA, IA, etc.).
- **Build a strong consortium:** a diverse, multidisciplinary team with complementary expertise is essential. Include public and civil society actors if relevant.
- **Plan resources in advance:** define necessary skills and roles early, and prepare to avoid delays.
- **Research previous projects:** CORDIS offers valuable insights into funded projects and partnership models.
- **Attend info days:** these events provide crucial information and networking opportunities. Recordings are often available.
- **Consult NCPs:** which offer personalised support and training.

Not to do:

- **Do not rush the reading:** to take the time to carefully read and understand the call's requirements, including all eligibility conditions.
- **Do not develop the project idea too hastily:** developing a strong concept takes time. Partner identification should begin well in advance of the call opening.
- **Do not delay submission:** waiting until the last minute increases the risk of errors or technical issues. Applicants should plan and stick to a timeline.
- **Do not forget flexibility:** draft proposals can be revised multiple times before the deadline, use this to refine and improve the application.

9.2. Correct formulation and planning of the proposal.

To do:

- **Ensure logical structure and cohesion:** the proposal should follow a clear structure, outlining the overall methodology and logically organising all components to align with the call's objectives and evaluation criteria.
- **Address cross-cutting requirements:** applicants should consider policy elements evaluated in proposals, such as interdisciplinarity, inclusion of Social Sciences and Humanities, Open Science practices, and others.
- **Align budget with workload:** the proposed budget must correspond to the effort required in each work package, ensuring feasibility in both time and cost.
- **Set a clear timeline:** a detailed writing schedule with defined tasks, responsibilities, deliverables, and deadlines will help keep the proposal on track.
- **Use official guidance and templates:** applicants must use the correct templates provided in the Funding and Tenders Portal. Using the wrong one may render the proposal inadmissible.

► **Not to do:**

- **Do not oversell with ambitious objectives:** proposals should set clear, realistic goals—too many or too broad objectives can weaken credibility.
- **Do not make it complex:** applicants should aim for clarity and avoid unnecessary complexity or excessive wording.
- **Do not use buzzwords:** projects should be described in realistic, concrete terms rather than vague or trendy language.
- **Do not forget to address ethics and security:** all proposals must include an ethics self-assessment, even if no ethical issues are anticipated.
- **Do not forget gender dimensions:** where applicable, proposals must explain how gender aspects are considered in the research content.
- **Do not forget to prepare a GEP:** required for public bodies, research organisations, and higher education institutions in EU MS or AC. A GEP must be in place by GA signature.
- **Do not exceed page limits:** RIA/IA: max 45 pages; CSA: max 30 pages; First-stage: max 10 pages; Lump sum calls: RIA/IA max 50 pages, CSA max 33 pages. Exceeding limits may lead to rejection.

■ 9.3. Address the project's pathway towards impact.

► **To do:**

- **Clarify the relevance and urgency of the challenge:** clearly explain the problem the project addresses, why it matters now, and who is affected. The rationale must show the societal, technological, or market relevance.
- **Show long-term impact potential:** the proposal must demonstrate how the project's outcomes could generate lasting effects in fields such as industry, technology, the environment, or society at large.
- **Integrate novel and interdisciplinary approaches:** projects are encouraged to propose innovative research with interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, or transdisciplinary methods.
- **Align with expected outcomes and impacts:** the proposal should explicitly describe how it contributes to the outcomes and long-term impacts outlined in the Horizon Europe Work Programme.
- **Ensure legal compliance:** applicants must demonstrate awareness of legal obligations, referencing the HE Model Grant Agreement. Legal compliance is a key component of project implementation.
- **Demonstrate consortium capacity:** a well-balanced consortium must be presented, showcasing the expertise of involved organisations and individuals, along with a solid management structure, clear task allocation, robust communication and dissemination strategies, and a risk management plan.
- **Plan for impact:** the proposal should define activities that enhance the project's impact, distinguishing clearly between communication, dissemination, and exploitation of results.

► **Not to do:**

- **Do not copy the Work Programme:** instead of paraphrasing, applicants should demonstrate how their project concretely addresses the objectives of the call within their own context and approach.

- **Do not overlook logical flow:** the proposal must clearly link objectives, activities, and expected outcomes to show coherence and strategic alignment.
- **Do not misuse key terms:** applicants must understand and correctly use the terminology related to project achievements:
 - a. **Results:** outputs created during the project (e.g. algorithms, policy recommendations, prototypes).
 - b. **Research output:** specific results made publicly accessible (e.g. publications, datasets, software).
 - c. **Outcomes:** medium-term effects of the project, such as adoption or use of results by stakeholders.
 - d. **Impact:** long-term, broader changes in society, science, or the economy resulting from the project.

10. Resources and Support

10.1. Links to relevant EU and national websites, portals, and databases

- ▶ **Horizon Europe website:** Horizon Europe Framework Programme Official European Commission website. [Horizon Europe - European Commission](#)
- ▶ **European Parliament News:** Official news portal regarding Horizon Europe. [Press room | News | European Parliament](#)
- ▶ **Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS):** actions, results and services delivered by the European Commission. [CORDIS | European Commission](#)
- ▶ **Horizon Europe country profile-Türkiye:** key metrics, participation data, and an overview of the country's R&D landscape. [Türkiye - Horizon Europe Country Profiles | European Commission](#)

10.2. Contact information for NCPs and other support services

- **Horizon Europe National Contact Points:** network of NCPs to provide guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in HE. [Türkiye - NCPs | European Commission](#)

NCPs are entities designated by countries to provide advice and support to those interested in participating in EU funding programs, such as HE. NCPs are also established in many non-EU and third countries. The Funding & Tenders Portal contains a specific section dedicated to Türkiye NCPs, which includes:

- **List of NCPs in Türkiye:** detailed list of National Contact Points in Türkiye, including contact information and the specific thematic areas they cover.
- **Thematic Areas:** each NCP specializes in specific areas of the Horizon Europe program, such as health, climate, energy, and more.
- **Contact Information:** details such as names, email addresses, and phone numbers of NCP representatives are provided, facilitating direct communication.

10.3. List of relevant EU and national policy documents and guidance materials

- ▶ **Horizon Europe Legal documents:**
 - **Horizon Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/695:** Regulation of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme. [Horizon Europe Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695](#)
 - **Horizon Europe Council Decision (EU) 2021/764:** EC decision regarding the Specific Programme Horizon Europe: [Council Decision \(EU\) 2021/764](#)
 - **Third Countries in Horizon Europe:** List of third country participation under Horizon Europe: [List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe](#)
 - **EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046:** Regulation for managing and controlling the EU budget: [EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046](#)
- ▶ **Horizon Europe Strategic Plan and General Work Programme:**
 - **Horizon Europe Strategic Plan:** second HE strategic plan will steer R&I funding within and beyond Europe to tackle key global challenges. [Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027](#)
 - **Horizon Europe Work Programme:** contains information of what work programmes are, what they cover, and available Horizon Europe work programmes. [General Work Programme 2023-2024](#)

► **Proposal preparation documents:**

- **Standard Application Form:** template guides participants in preparing proposals for Horizon Europe funding. [Application form \(Part A\) and Project Proposal-Technical description \(Part B\)](#)
- **Lump Sum Cost Estimation Form:** workbook to present the detailed estimation of costs of lump sum project and to calculate the lump sum breakdown per beneficiary. [Detailed Lump Sum Budget](#)

► **Agreements and Contracts:**

- **Annotated Grant Agreement:** standard contract outlining the terms and conditions between the EC and beneficiaries of HE funding. [Annotated Grant Agreement](#)
- **Consortium Agreement Model:** the DESCA model provides a standard template to establish internal relationships between project partners, covering aspects such as project management, intellectual property, and fund distribution. [DESCA Horizon Europe Model](#)

► **Guides:**

- **Horizon Europe Guide:** detailed guidance on the structure, budget and political priorities of Horizon Europe, it also includes details on how to prepare proposals. [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#)
- **Eligible countries:** HE eligible countries list. [List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe](#)
- **EU Funding & Tenders manual:** user guide to explain to participants and beneficiaries how EU grants, procurements and prizes work and how to manage them electronically in the Portal. [Funding & Tender Online Manual](#)
- **Legal & Financial Guide for Horizon Europe Projects:** guide with the explanation of the Legal and Financial aspects potential participants in Horizon Europe projects may face. The guide is neither exhaustive nor conclusive. [Legal & Financial Guide for Horizon Europe Projects](#)
- **Intellectual Property Rights: Learn about IP Rights in Horizon 2020 Manual:** introductory document for IP aspects in general and about H2020 projects. This brochure is by no means exhaustive or conclusive. It is not an official document of the European Commission. It is provided as a service of the “Türkiye in Horizon 2020” project. [Intellectual Property Rights: Learn about IP Rights in Horizon 2020 Manual](#).

10.4. Glossary of key terms

Associated Country (AC)	These are non-EU countries that are part of the ERA and contribute to the programme's budget, gaining the opportunity to participate under conditions similar to those of EU Member States.
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 sometime after the end of the project.
Member State (MS)	A candidate country that meets the accession criteria as defined by the Copenhagen European Council of 1993 and signs the accession Treaty with the individual EU Member States becomes a Member State of the European Union.
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 IP, which may, if appropriate, be protected by formal IPR.
State-of-the-Art (SOTA)	refers to the highest level of general development, as of a device, technique, or scientific field achieved at a particular time.
Technology Readiness Level	A method for defining the maturity of a product and its relation to the market. This type of measurement system was established by NASA, and the European Commission decided to introduce it in its research and innovation projects since H2020.

Technical Assistance for Türkiye in Horizon Europe

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A1-2-2- Focused Group Trainings

“Project Writing Manual for Collaborative Projects”