Communication Strategies

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Key Clue Words in Horizon Europe Calls

1. Expected Actions & Methodology

Look for verbs that indicate what the EU expects projects to do:

- Must / Shall / Should → These are mandatory actions
- Encouraged / Recommended → These actions are optional but valued
- Not be limited to → Leaves room for additional innovative ideas
- Interdisciplinary / Cross-sectoral → Important for collaboration

2. Impact & Expected Outcomes

These words indicate what the project must deliver:

- Transform / Disrupt / Accelerate → Strong impact expected
- Enhance / Improve / Strengthen → Incremental improvements are acceptable
- Demonstrate / Validate / Showcase → Calls for practical results, pilots, case studies
- Long-term sustainability / Scalability / Uptake → A project's lasting effect matters

CLUSTER 5: CALLS

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1. Transform / Disrupt / Accelerate → Strong Impact Expected

These words indicate that the EU is looking for high-risk, high-reward innovation that significantly changes the status quo.

- Transform: Your project must create a fundamental shift in the field, policy, or industry.
  - Example: "The project will transform current energy storage methods by introducing a novel, AI-powered optimization framework."

- Disrupt: The EU wants something radically different that challenges existing solutions.
  - Example: "Our approach disrupts traditional supply chains by leveraging decentralized blockchain technology."

- Accelerate: There's an expectation that your project reduces time-to-market or speeds up adoption.
  - Example: "By streamlining regulatory compliance with AI-driven tools, the project will accelerate the adoption of sustainable packaging across the EU."

◆ **What to do? If a call uses these terms, show how your project leads to major advancements, not just minor improvements.**

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2. Enhance / Improve / Strengthen → Incremental Improvements Are Acceptable

These words suggest that the call values refinement over radical change. Your project should optimize existing solutions rather than replace them.

- Enhance: Make something better, more efficient, or more accessible.
  - Example: "The project enhances digital literacy among older adults by integrating adaptive learning techniques."
- Improve: Focuses on measurable gains in performance, usability, or efficiency.
  - Example: "Our novel bioplastic improves biodegradability by 40% compared to current alternatives."
- Strengthen: Suggests building on an existing framework to make it more effective.
  - Example: "By integrating citizen science approaches, the project strengthens public engagement in environmental monitoring."

◆ What to do? Highlight the specific areas of improvement with quantifiable metrics.

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3. Demonstrate / Validate / Showcase → Calls for Practical Results, Pilots, Case Studies

These terms indicate that the EU expects real-world application and proof of concept.

- Demonstrate: Show that your solution works in a relevant environment (e.g., pilot project, prototype).
  - Example: "The project will demonstrate the feasibility of AI-based traffic management in three European cities."
- Validate: Prove that your concept meets technical, economic, or social criteria through testing.
  - Example: "Our approach validates the effectiveness of digital twins in reducing hospital waiting times by 20%."
- Showcase: Emphasizes visibility and the potential for wider adoption.
  - Example: "The project will showcase best practices in circular economy solutions through an interactive knowledge hub."

◆ What to do? If a call includes these words, plan for pilots, case studies, demonstrators, or real-world testing.

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4. Long-term sustainability / Scalability / Uptake → A Project's Lasting Effect Matters

These terms indicate that the EU expects real-world application and proof of concept.

- Demonstrate: Show that your solution works in a relevant environment (e.g., pilot project, prototype).
  - Example: "The project will demonstrate the feasibility of AI-based traffic management in three European cities."
- Validate: Prove that your concept meets technical, economic, or social criteria through testing.
  - Example: "Our approach validates the effectiveness of digital twins in reducing hospital waiting times by 20%."
- Showcase: Emphasizes visibility and the potential for wider adoption.
  - Example: "The project will showcase best practices in circular economy solutions through an interactive knowledge hub."

- What to do? If a call includes these words, plan for pilots, case studies, demonstrators, or real-world testing.

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These words indicate that the EU wants projects that have lasting value beyond the funding period.

- Long-term sustainability: Your solution should continue to operate and generate impact after EU funding ends.
  - Example: "The project's training modules will ensure long-term sustainability by integrating into university curricula."
- Scalability: Your solution should be expandable beyond the initial test environment.
  - Example: "Our cloud-based AI tool is designed for scalability, allowing SMEs across Europe to adopt it with minimal infrastructure investment."
- Uptake: The EU is looking for broad adoption and deployment by industry, policymakers, or citizens.
  - Example: "The project's policy recommendations will facilitate the uptake of sustainable farming practices across the EU."

◆ What to do? Address how your project will be maintained, expanded, and adopted after funding ends. Mention plans for commercialization, policy integration, or knowledge transfer.

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Key Clue Words in Horizon Europe Calls

3. EU Policy Alignment & Priorities

If a call mentions these words, they should appear in your proposal:

- European Green Deal / Digital Transition / Open Science
- Resilience / Inclusivity / Sustainability
- Ethical / FAIR Data / Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI)

4. Target Groups & Stakeholders

Your proposal should reflect engagement with:

- Industry / SMEs / Policymakers / Citizens → If listed, they must be involved
- Co-creation / Stakeholder engagement / Citizen Science → Stronger involvement needed

5. TRL (Technology Readiness Level) & Innovation

If a call mentions TRL 5-7, ensure your proposal matches this level

- Terms like prototype, proof-of-concept, pilot, deployment are important

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When analyzing a Horizon Europe call, check which of these impact-related words appear most frequently. That will give you clues about the level of innovation, demonstration, and sustainability expected.

Example: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-WIDERA-2025-ACCESS-01-01-two-stage

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How to write your proposal

Proposal Language & Wording

- Use Strong, Active Verbs:
  - Reduce, improve, enhance, ensure, demonstrate, achieve, deliver, enable, foster, accelerate, contribute to, establish, provide, develop
- Avoid Weak or Vague Terms:
  - Might, could, possibly, intend to → Instead, be assertive (will, shall, ensure)

- Use the Call Language: Incorporate key terms from the call text.
- Clear Contribution to Policy Goals: Ensure alignment with EU priorities (e.g., Green Deal, Digital Transition).

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Excellence, Impact & Implementation Sections

Common Phrases in EU Proposals:

- “The project will significantly contribute to...”
- “This approach ensures a robust and scalable solution.”
- “The methodology is designed to be interdisciplinary and inclusive.”
- “The results are expected to have a long-term impact on...”
- “The activities are not limited to but include...”
- “The consortium is well-positioned to achieve the expected outcomes.”

- Use the Call Language: Incorporate key terms from the call text.

- Excellence: Focus on the innovation, methodology, and objectives.
- Impact: Be specific on who benefits, how, and in what timeframe.
- Implementation: Show a realistic and efficient work plan.

CLUSTER 5: CALLS

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1. Transform / Disrupt / Accelerate → Strong Impact Expected

- Meaning: The EU wants a game-changing solution that goes beyond small improvements.
- What Evaluators Expect:

✅ A breakthrough innovation, not an incremental step
✅ Evidence that your approach is radically different
✅ A clear pathway from current challenges to transformation

How to write

- "This project will transform climate monitoring by integrating AI-powered real-time data analytics, replacing outdated manual reporting systems."
- "The proposed technology disrupts the conventional battery industry by introducing a recyclable, metal-free energy storage solution."
- "By integrating automation with predictive maintenance, the project will accelerate the transition to energy-efficient manufacturing."

What to Avoid

❌ Saying "This project improves existing methods..." → This sounds too incremental.
❌ Providing weak claims like "Our approach is innovative because it is new."

→ You must show how it changes the field.

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2. Enhance / Improve / Strengthen → Incremental Improvements Are Acceptable

How to write

- "Our AI-driven platform will enhance disaster response coordination, reducing decision-making time by 35%."
- "The project aims to improve cybersecurity protocols by introducing post-quantum encryption techniques."
- "By integrating local stakeholder input, the model will strengthen policy implementation across diverse regions."

🔹 Meaning: The EU expects a refinement or upgrade of existing methods rather than a radical change.

🔹 What Evaluators Expect:

✅ A measurable, evidence-based improvement (e.g., 20% faster, 30% cheaper)

✅ A comparison to current solutions

✅ Justification of why this improvement matters

What to Avoid

🔹 What to Avoid:

❌ Vague claims like "We will improve efficiency." → Instead, specify how much and compared to what.

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3. Demonstrate / Validate / Showcase → Calls for Practical Results, Pilots, Case Studies

How to write

- "We will demonstrate the effectiveness of AI-assisted farming techniques through three pilot farms in Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands."
- "The project will validate the proposed circular economy model by conducting a 12-month industrial trial with two partner companies."
- "A public showcase event will be held to highlight the results, featuring live demonstrations of the software's capabilities."

🔹 Meaning: The EU wants proof that your idea works in a real-world setting.

🔹 What Evaluators Expect:

✅ A concrete pilot, prototype, or test environment

✅ KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to measure success

✅ A clear demonstration plan (who, where, how)

What to Avoid

❌ Saying "We will test our idea."

→ Be specific about the methodology, location, and expected results.

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4. Long-term sustainability / Scalability / Uptake → A Project's Lasting Effect Matters

How to write

- ``The project ensures long-term sustainability by integrating its training materials into university curricula across five European countries."
- "The platform's architecture is designed for scalability, allowing future adaptation to additional sectors such as healthcare and transport."
- "A commercialization strategy will facilitate the uptake of the tool by SMEs, supported by partnerships with industry leaders."

🔹 Meaning: The EU does not want a short-term project. They expect solutions that persist beyond funding and reach more users.

🔹 What Evaluators Expect:

✅ A strategy for how the project will continue after funding ends

✅ A plan for expansion, adoption, and commercialization

✅ Clear identification of who will take it up (industry, policymakers, research, citizens)

What to Avoid

❌ Saying "The project will have a long-term impact." → How? Who will maintain it? How will it grow?

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How to write a winning proposal for Horizon Europe

https://unite4horizon.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Write-a-winning-proposal.pdf

UNIVERSITATEA BABEȘ-BOLYAI
cmcc Centro Euro-Mediterraneo sui Cambiamenti Climatici
JUSTUS-LIEBIG-UNIVERSITÄT GIESSEN
Universiteit Antwerpen
indeco soft

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Rewrite the statements

1. Statement: "We will develop a new technology."
2. Statement: "The project will involve stakeholders."
3. Statement: "We aim to reduce carbon emissions."
4. Statement: "We will analyze data."

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1. Statement: "We will develop a new technology."
    - Rewritten Example: "We will design and validate a prototype for an AI-powered diagnostic tool capable of detecting rare cancers with 95% accuracy within 12 months."
2. Statement: "The project will involve stakeholders."
    - Rewritten Example: "The project will engage key stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare providers, and patient organizations, through co-creation workshops and dissemination events."
3. Statement: "We aim to reduce carbon emissions."
    - Rewritten Example: "The project aims to reduce urban carbon emissions by 30% through the implementation of smart energy grids in three pilot cities by 2026."
4. Statement: "We will analyze data."
    - Rewritten Example: "We will collect and analyze real-time energy consumption data from 500 households to optimize energy distribution and reduce waste by 20%."

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Key Horizon Europe Terms:

1. Impact Pathway : A structured plan linking project activities to long -term societal benefits.
2. Stakeholder Engagement : Involving relevant actors (e.g., citizens, industries, policymakers) in project activities.
3. Dissemination and Exploitation : Sharing project results widely and ensuring they are used effectively.
4. Innovation Outcomes : Tangible advancements in technology, processes, or practices resulting from the project.
5. Mission Alignment : Ensuring the project contributes to one of Horizon Europe's five missions (e.g., Climate -Neutral Cities).
6. FAIR Data Principles : Making data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable.

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Rewrite the paragraphs, incorporating at least two key terms from the list.

- **Original Paragraph:** "We will create a platform for sharing research findings."
- **Original Paragraph:** "Our project will help cities become more sustainable."
- **Original Paragraph:** "We will involve local communities in our project."

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1. **Original Paragraph:** "We will create a platform for sharing research findings."
   - **Rewritten Example:** "We will develop a digital platform to disseminate research findings, ensuring alignment with FAIR data principles to maximize accessibility and reuse by stakeholders."

1. **Original Paragraph:** "Our project will help cities become more sustainable."
   - **Rewritten Example:** "Our project will support the transition to climate-neutral cities by implementing smart energy grids, contributing to Mission Alignment with the Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission.``

2. **Original Paragraph:** "We will involve local communities in our project."
   - **Rewritten Example:** "Through targeted stakeholder engagement, we will involve local communities in co-designing solutions, ensuring their needs and perspectives are integrated into the innovation outcomes."

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Structuring Paragraphs for Logical Flow

Write a paragraph that includes:

- A **topic sentence** introducing the main idea.
- **Supporting details** explaining the idea (e.g., specific activities, results, impacts).
- A **concluding sentence** summarizing the point.

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Rewritten Examples

1. Original Sentence:

"The project aims to reduce urban waste."

- **Problem:** The phrase "aims to" is vague and lacks commitment.
- **Rewritten Sentence:**
- "The project will reduce urban waste by 25% through innovative recycling incentives."
- **Why It Works:**
  - "Will" emphasizes certainty and commitment.
  - Adding a specific percentage ("25%") makes the claim measurable and credible.

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2. Original Sentence:

"This solution could potentially improve energy efficiency."

- **Problem:** The phrase "could potentially" weakens the statement and introduces doubt.
- **Rewritten Sentence:**
- "This solution will improve energy efficiency by 20% in participating buildings."
- **Why It Works:**
  - "Will" demonstrates confidence in the outcome.
  - Including a measurable target ("20%") provides specificity and strengthens the claim.

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3. Original Sentence:

"The platform might lead to increased recycling rates."

- **Problem:** The word "might" creates uncertainty and undermines the project's impact.
- **Rewritten Sentence:**
- "The platform will increase recycling rates by engaging citizens and businesses through gamification."
- **Why It Works:**
  - "Will" conveys a clear commitment to achieving the goal.
  - Explaining the mechanism (gamification) adds depth and credibility to the statement.

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4. Original Sentence:

"The team plans to develop a prototype for testing."

- **Problem:** The phrase "plans to" suggests intent but not action.
- **Rewritten Sentence:**
- "The team will develop and test a functional prototype within 12 months."
- **Why It Works:**
  - "Will" emphasizes action and accountability.
  - Including a timeline ("within 12 months") adds clarity and urgency.

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5. Original Sentence:

"It is anticipated that the outcomes of this project will contribute significantly to sustainable practices."

- **Problem:** The phrase "is anticipated" is passive and lacks directness.
- **Rewritten Sentence:**
- "This project will advance sustainable practices by piloting renewable energy solutions in three cities."
- **Why It Works:**
  - "Will" makes the statement active and confident.
  - Providing concrete details (piloting in three cities) strengthens the claim.

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6. Original Sentence:

"The project seeks to engage stakeholders in co -designing solutions."

- **Problem:** The phrase "seeks to" implies an intention but not a guarantee.
- **Rewritten Sentence:**
- "The project will engage stakeholders through co -design workshops and collaborative platforms."
- **Why It Works:**
  - "Will" demonstrates a clear commitment to stakeholder engagement.
  - Specifying the method ("co-design workshops and collaborative platforms") adds precision.

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Example

This project addresses climate change by developing renewable energy solutions for urban areas. The team will pilot solar-powered microgrids in three cities, reducing carbon emissions by 30%. Data collected during the pilot will inform scalable strategies for integrating renewable energy into municipal systems. By promoting clean energy adoption, the project contributes to the European Green Deal and supports Mission 4: Climate-Neutral Cities.

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Write:

- **One SMART objective** for the project.
- **Two expected impacts** (one scientific/economic and one societal).

Scenario: Developing a circular economy platform.

Scenario: Creating AI tools for early cancer detection

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Crafting a Compelling Abstract

Instructions:

1. Each group will have the same project scenario and a couple of key details (e.g., objectives, activities, impacts).

2. Write a compelling abstract summarizing the project.

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Why Is a Compelling Abstract Important in Horizon Europe?

1. First Impression : Evaluators often read dozens of proposals, so a strong abstract helps your project stand out.
2. Clarity and Focus: A well-written abstract demonstrates that your project is well-structured, feasible, and aligned with Horizon Europe priorities.
3. Alignment with EU Goals: The abstract should clearly show how your project contributes to EU missions, societal challenges, and funding objectives.
4. Engagement : A compelling narrative can engage evaluators and make them more likely to view your proposal favorably.

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Key Elements of a Compelling Abstract in Horizon Europe

A good abstract for a Horizon Europe proposal typically includes the following elements:

1. **Societal Challenge:**
   - Clearly state the societal challenge or problem your project addresses.
   - Example: "Urban areas face growing waste management challenges, contributing to environmental pollution and unsustainable consumption patterns."
2. **Proposed Solution:**
   - Briefly describe your innovative approach to solving the problem.
   - Example: "Our project develops a digital platform to track urban waste flows, incentivize recycling, and engage citizens through gamification."

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4. **Expected Outcomes and Impacts:**
   - Highlight the measurable outcomes and long -term impacts of your project.
   - Example: "By reducing urban waste by 25% and increasing recycling rates by 15%, the project will contribute to the EU Green Deal and promote sustainable cities."
5. **Alignment with EU Priorities:**
   - Demonstrate how your project aligns with Horizon Europe's missions, clusters, or cross -cutting priorities.
   - Example: "This project supports Mission 5: Soil Health and Food, and aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on responsible consumption and climate action."
6. **Innovation and Feasibility:**
   - Emphasize the novelty of your approach and its feasibility within the proposed timeframe and budget.
   - Example: "Using cutting -edge data analytics and stakeholder co -creation, we will deliver scalable solutions within 36 months."

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Example of a Compelling Abstract

Project Title: "Circular Economy Platform for Urban Waste Management"

"Urban waste management is a growing challenge, but our project offers a transformative solution. We are developing a digital platform to track waste flows, incentivize recycling, and engage citizens through targeted campaigns. Piloted in three European cities, the platform aims to reduce urban waste by 25% and increase recycling rates by 15% within five years. By fostering collaboration between stakeholders and leveraging innovative technologies, the project will advance circular economy practices and contribute to the EU Green Deal. Expected impacts include improved urban sustainability, reduced environmental pollution, and the creation of 50 new jobs in the recycling sector. This initiative aligns with Horizon Europe's mission to support climate - neutral and resilient cities."

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Tips for Writing a Compelling Abstract

1. **Be Concise:**
   - Keep the abstract to **150–200 words** to ensure clarity and focus.
   - Avoid jargon and overly technical language.
2. **Focus on Impact:**
   - Highlight the societal, economic, and environmental benefits of your project.
   - Use quantifiable metrics where possible (e.g., "reduce emissions by 30%").
3. **Tell a Story:**
   - Present your project as a narrative: identify the problem, propose a solution, and describe the expected impact.
4. **Align with EU Priorities:**
   - Reference specific Horizon Europe missions, clusters, or policies to demonstrate relevance.
5. **Engage the Reader:**
   - Use active language and emphasize the urgency of the societal challenge.

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Try it out!

Your consortium is applying for a Horizon Europe grant on "Sustainable Smart Cities: Data -Driven Solutions for Climate Resilience."

You need to convince evaluators by writing compelling text in one of the key sections.

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Writing Focus Areas (30 min)

Each team is assigned one section and must write two short paragraphs using the correct style.

Team 1 – Excellence: How to Persuade with a Strong Opening

Task: Write an introduction to the "Excellence" section that:

- Clearly states the project's ambition in a direct, powerful opening sentence.
- Uses concise, confident wording (no vague phrases like "we hope to").
- Demonstrates why this project is innovative and needed.

 Example: Instead of "This project aims to develop tools that may help reduce energy consumption," write:

"This project will deploy (bring into effective action) an AI -driven energy optimization system that reduces urban CO_2 emissions by 25%."

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Team 2 – Impact: Convincing Evaluators with a Strong Case

Task: Write a paragraph that explains the expected impact using:

- Quantifiable, verifiable statements (not "important for many," but "expected to reach 1M citizens").
- A logical flow from problem → solution → impact.
- Persuasive but realistic language (avoid overpromising).

 Example: Instead of "This project will contribute to sustainability," write: "By optimizing real-time energy usage, we will reduce peak demand by 15%, lowering city-wide energy costs by €5M annually."

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Team 3 – Implementation: Writing with Clarity & Structure

Task: Write a short paragraph explaining the project's work plan using:

✅ Precise, structured language (avoid long, convoluted sentences).

✅ Action -oriented wording ("will deliver," "will implement" instead of passive phrases).

✅ Logical sequencing of steps (clear timeline).

📝 Example: Instead of "Various studies will be conducted and then a tool will be made," write:

"In Phase 1 (M1-M6), we will analyze energy patterns in five pilot cities. In Phase 2 (M7-M12), we will develop and test the optimization tool with stakeholders."

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Team 4 – Consortium & Budget: Writing for Credibility

Task: Write a paragraph that presents the consortium using:

- Confident tone to emphasize expertise (“leading experts in energy management,” not “some experience in energy”).
- Clear explanation of why this team is ideal for the project.
- Concise phrasing (avoid unnecessary details).

 Example: Instead of "The team includes members with experience in energy and AI," write:

"Our consortium combines Europe’s top energy scientists (TU Delft, Fraunhofer) with industry leaders (Siemens), ensuring both cutting -edge research and real -world impact."

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Key Takeaways

- Clarity wins – Use direct, simple, structured sentences.
- Persuasive, confident language – Avoid hedging (“might,” “could”), use active verbs.
- Data & specificity – Numbers and clear outcomes strengthen the impact.

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Scenario: Developing a circular economy platform.

Abstract Example:

"This project addresses the urgent need to reduce urban waste and promote sustainable consumption by developing a digital circular economy platform. The platform will track waste flows, incentivize recycling, and engage citizens and businesses through targeted campaigns. Piloted in three European cities, the project aims to achieve a 25% reduction in urban waste and a 15% increase in recycling rates by 2025. By fostering collaboration between stakeholders and leveraging innovative technologies, the project will advance circular economy practices and contribute to the EU Green Deal. Expected impacts include improved urban sustainability, reduced environmental pollution, and the creation of 50 new jobs in the recycling sector. This initiative aligns with Horizon Europe's mission to support climate -neutral and resilient cities."

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Ethics & Research Integrity

Ethics and research integrity play a crucial role in Horizon Europe proposals. The European Commission (EC) has strict guidelines to ensure that all funded research is conducted responsibly and respects fundamental rights. This includes ethical considerations, integrity in research, and legal compliance.

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Horizon Europe follows Article 19 of the Horizon which requires that projects comply with:

- EU and international ethical standards
- The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2023)
- Applicable laws (e.g., GDPR for data protection, Nagoya Protocol for genetic resources, Helsinki Declaration for human research, etc.)

Failure to address ethical concerns properly can lead to proposal rejection or funding cuts.

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In your application, you must indicate whether your project involves any of the following:

Ethics Issue	Example Risks
Humans	Clinical trials, surveys, interviews, behavioral studies
Personal Data	GDPR compliance, AI-driven profiling, tracking technologies
AI & Robotics	Bias, discrimination, ethical decision-making in AI
Animals	Use of live animals in research
Environment	Genetic modification, pollution, impact on biodiversity
Dual Use	Potential military applications of technology
Misuse & Security Risks	Cybersecurity vulnerabilities, risks of unethical applications
Third Countries (non-EU)	Research in countries with weaker ethical protections
Genetic Resources	Compliance with the Nagoya Protocol (biodiversity regulations)

If any box is checked, you must provide an Ethics Self-Assessment in Part B of your proposal.

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Ethics Review Process in Horizon Eur

Your proposal undergoes an ethics evaluation in multiple steps:

1. Self-Assessment in the Proposal Phase
   - In Part A of your proposal (the online form), you answer ethics-related questions.
   - In Part B, you provide a detailed Ethics Self-Assessment if your project involves sensitive aspects (e.g., human subjects, AI, personal data).
2. Ethics Screening (After Proposal Submission)
   - Ethics experts assess if your proposal raises serious ethical concerns.
   - If minor concerns exist, they may request clarifications.

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Ethics Review Process in Horizon Eu

3. Ethics Assessment (If Needed)
    - If serious issues are detected (e.g., clinical trials, AI risks), a full ethics assessment is conducted before grant signature.

4. Ethics Checks & Audits (During the Project)
    - Your project may undergo ethics monitoring during implementation, including site visits or audits.

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Part A

Example 1: Research Involving Humans

Question: Does your project involve human participants?

✅ Yes

Follow-up questions:

- Will they be directly involved (e.g., interviews, surveys, experiments)? → Yes
- Will they be unable to provide informed consent (e.g., minors, people with disabilities)? → No
- Will you collect sensitive personal data (e.g., health, genetic, biometric data)? → Yes
- Do you have or plan to obtain ethical approval from a research ethics committee? → Yes, approval will be obtained from [Institution Name] before starting data collection.

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Example 2: Data Protection and Privacy (GDPR Compliance)

Question: Will your project process personal data?

✅ Yes

Follow-up questions:

- What type of personal data will be collected? → Names, email addresses, survey responses.
- Will any data be anonymized or pseudonymized? → Yes, all personal identifiers will be removed before analysis.
- Will the data be shared outside the EU? → No
- How will you ensure GDPR compliance? → A Data Management Plan (DMP) will be in place, and our Data Protection Officer (DPO) will oversee compliance.

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Example 3: Use of AI and Automated Decision-Making

Question: Will your project involve the development or use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) or automated decision-making systems?

✅ Yes

Follow-up questions:

- What is the intended purpose of the AI system? → The AI system will be used for automated data classification in scientific research.
- Could the AI system lead to bias, discrimination, or ethical concerns? → Potential bias will be mitigated through diverse training datasets and transparency in algorithm design.
- Will there be human oversight in AI decision-making? → Yes, human validation will be required for all critical decisions.

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Example 4: Research Involving Animals

Question: Will your project involve research on animals?

✅ Yes

Follow-up questions:

- What type of animals will be used? → Laboratory mice (Mus musculus)
- Have you obtained or do you plan to obtain ethical approval? → Yes, approval will be obtained from the Institutional Animal Ethics Committee before experiments begin.
- How will you minimize animal suffering? → We will apply the 3Rs principle (Replace, Reduce, Refine) to limit animal use and ensure humane treatment.

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Example 5: Dual-Use or Security-Sensitive Research

Question: Could the project's results be misused for unethical purposes (e.g., military applications, cybersecurity risks, surveillance)?

✅ No

Follow-up questions:

- If Yes, what measures will you take to prevent misuse? → N/A
- If the research involves cybersecurity risks, how will you protect data? → N/A

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Example 6: Research Conducted in Non-EU Countries

Question: Will part of the research be conducted outside the EU (third countries)?

✅ Yes

Follow-up questions:

- Which countries? → Kenya, Brazil
- Will local ethical approvals be obtained? → Yes, approvals will be secured from the relevant national research ethics boards before fieldwork starts.
- Could the project pose risks to participants or local communities? → No direct risks, but we will apply ethical research guidelines to ensure fair engagement with communities.

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If you answer "Yes" to any ethics-related questions, you must provide further details in Part B – Ethics Self-Assessment and may need to submit Deliverables on Ethics Compliance (DEC) after approval.

This section explains how you will identify, address, and mitigate ethical risks while ensuring compliance with EU regulations.

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Deliverables on Ethics Compliance

DEC

What is a DEC?

- A Deliverable on Ethics Compliance (DEC) is a mandatory report that proves you are addressing ethical concerns correctly during project implementation. These deliverables are set as milestones in the Grant Agreement.

If your proposal passes the ethics evaluation, you may still be required to submit Ethics Compliance Deliverables (DEC) during the project.

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Data Protection (GDPR Compliance)

- You may need to submit a Data Management Plan (DMP) outlining how personal data is collected, stored, and protected.
- Consent forms for data collection must be GDPR-compliant.
- Due early in the project (e.g., Month 6).

Human Research & Participants

- If your project involves human subjects (e.g., surveys, interviews, clinical trials), you must obtain ethical approval from a recognized ethics committee.
- Approval must be documented before recruiting participants.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Ethics

- If your research involves AI, you may need to provide an AI bias assessment and explainability measures to ensure transparency and fairness.
- This should be submitted before AI systems are deployed.

Use of Animals in Research

- If animal testing is required, you must provide ethical clearance and a justification for why animal models are necessary.
- Compliance with the EU Directive on Animal Welfare must be demonstrated before experiments begin.

Genetic Resources & Biodiversity Compliance

- If your research involves genetic materials from non-EU countries, you must comply with the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS).
- Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs) must be documented before data collection starts.

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1. Key Elements of the Ethics Self-Assessment

Your Ethics Self-Assessment should include the following:

1.1 Ethical Issues Identification

Clearly state which ethical issues are relevant to your project.

Examples include:

- Human participants (e.g., surveys, clinical trials).
- Personal data collection (e.g., GDPR compliance).
- Use of AI (e.g., algorithmic transparency and bias prevention).
- Use of animals in research (e.g., application of the 3Rs principle).
- Research outside the EU (e.g., compliance with local laws).
- Environmental impact (e.g., compliance with sustainability regulations).

1.2 Ethics Compliance Strategy

- For each issue identified, describe how your project will comply with:
- EU laws and guidelines (e.g., GDPR, Helsinki Declaration, Nagoya Protocol).
- National and institutional regulations (e.g., university ethics committee rules).

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Examples

- 💡 Example for GDPR Compliance:
- "Our project collects personal data through online surveys. To ensure compliance with GDPR, all participants will be informed about their rights, and explicit consent will be obtained. Data will be anonymized, stored on secure EU servers, and access will be limited to authorized researchers. Our institution's Data Protection Officer (DPO) will oversee compliance."

- 💡 Example for AI Ethics:
- "The AI system developed in this project will be tested for bias and explainability. We will follow the European Commission's Ethical Guidelines for Trustworthy AI and ensure human oversight in decision-making."

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1.3 Risk Mitigation Measures

Explain how ethical risks will be minimized. This may include:

- Informed consent procedures (for human subjects).
- Data anonymization and encryption (for personal data).
- Bias assessment and fairness monitoring (for AI systems).
- Reducing animal testing through alternative methods (for research involving animals).
- Ethical clearance from local authorities (for research in non-EU countries).

💡 Example for Human Research:

"Participants will receive detailed information sheets and sign consent forms before participating in the study. We will also offer the option to withdraw at any time without consequences."

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1.4 Documentation & Approval Process

You must specify:

- Who is responsible? (e.g., Principal Investigator, Ethics Officer, Data Protection Officer).
- What approvals are needed? (e.g., institutional ethics approval, national permits).
- What documentation will be provided? (e.g., ethics committee approval letters, informed consent forms).

💡 Example for Research in Non-EU Countries:

"Since part of our field research will take place in Kenya, we will obtain ethical approval from the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) before starting data collection. All local researchers and participants will be briefed on ethical guidelines."

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1.5 Ethics Monitoring & Deliverables (DEC)

List the ethics-related deliverables that will be submitted during the project:

- Data Protection Report (Month 6)
- AI Bias and Transparency Assessment (Month 12)
- Ethics Approval from Local Authority (Before Data Collection Begins)
- Final Ethics Compliance Report (End of Project)

💡 Example for DEC Submission:

"We will submit a detailed report on data protection compliance in Month 6, including anonymization techniques, storage solutions, and a risk assessment."

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Word Doc as an example

✅ Be clear and precise – Explain your ethics approach in detail.

✅ Demonstrate compliance – Mention EU and national regulations you follow.

✅ Show risk mitigation – Address ethical concerns proactively.

✅ Include deliverables (DEC) – Show a concrete plan for ethics monitoring.

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In Horizon Europe, the European Union's latest RI funding programme, intellectual property rights (IPR) management has gained increased importance.

What does IPR refer to?

Essentially, anything that was developed prior to or during the project may be considered intellectual property (IP).

The list of such IPs can include:

- Patents
- Copyright and related rights
- Trade marks
- Know-how
- Trade secrets
- Designs
- Drawings
- Reports
- Methods of research and developments
- Documented data
- Description of inventions and discoveries
- .....

Once any of the above -mentioned items are created – someone either owns the rights to the specific IP or can/should own these rights.

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Key aspects of IPR in Horizon Europe include:

Enhanced exploitation obligations:
Beneficiaries must take measures to ensure exploitation of their results up to four years after project completion, either directly or indirectly through transfer or licensing

Horizon Results Platform : If no exploitation of key results takes place within one year after the project's end, beneficiaries must use this platform to make exploitable results available

IP support services : The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) now provide joint IP support to Horizon Europe beneficiaries

Early IPR strategy development:
Applicants are expected to present an IPR strategy in their project application, which should be reflected in the Consortium Agreement if the project is selected for funding

Access rights : The programme maintains provisions for access rights to background and results for project implementation and exploitation purposes

Protection obligation : Beneficiaries must examine the possibility of protecting their results and do so adequately if commercial or industrial exploitation is expected

Dissemination and Exploitation (D&E) plans : Projects are required to provide these plans six months after the grant signature as a mandatory deliverable.

Mandatory Results Ownership List (ROL): Beneficiaries must now provide information on the owner(s) of the results in their reporting, including whether the ownership is single or joint and the name of the owner(s).

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Ethics Checklist

Each group should use the following ethics checklist to evaluate their assigned project scenario:
Identification of Ethical Issues:

Are there risks to human participants (e.g., privacy, informed consent)?
Are there environmental risks (e.g., pollution, biodiversity loss)?
Are there societal risks (e.g., bias, fairness, inclusivity)?

Compliance with EU Guidelines:
Does the project comply with GDPR (if handling personal data)?
Does the project respect the Charter of Fundamental Rights?
Are ethical approvals (e.g., from institutional review boards) required?

Mitigation Strategies:
What steps will be taken to address identified risks?
How will transparency and accountability be ensured?
How will stakeholders (e.g., participants, communities) be involved?

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Step 2: Evaluate Ethical Risks

Groups should rate the severity of each identified risk using the following scale:

- Low Risk: Minimal impact; easily mitigated.
- Medium Risk: Moderate impact; requires careful planning.
- High Risk: Significant impact; requires robust mitigation strategies.

Step 3: Propose Mitigation Strategies

For each identified risk, groups should propose specific strategies to mitigate it.
Examples include:

- Bias in AI Algorithms: Use diverse datasets and validate results across populations.
- Privacy Concerns: Anonymize data and comply with GDPR.
- Environmental Impact: Conduct an environmental impact assessment and minimize harm.

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Horizon IP Scan

Free of charge
Intellectual Property
support service.

Helping SMEs manage
and valorise IP in
R&I collaborations.

http://horizon-ipscan.eu

#HorizonIPScan

#INNOSUP

Horizon IP Scan
Helping SMEs manage and valorise
Intellectual Property in R&I collaborations

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ETHICAL REVIEW PANEL

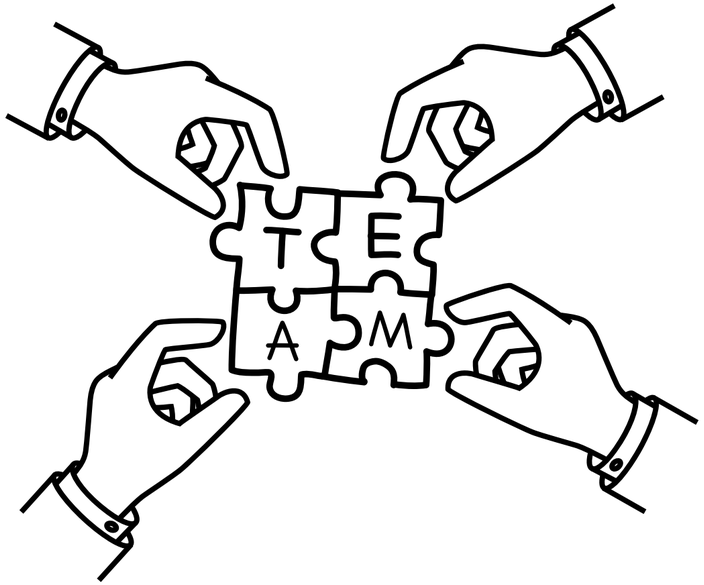
Use the following ethical checklist for evaluation:

Identification of Ethical Issues: Are potential risks clearly identified?

Compliance with EU Guidelines: Does the proposal reference relevant frameworks (e.g., GDPR, Charter of Fundamental Rights)?

Mitigation Strategies: Are proposed solutions adequate and feasible?

Transparency: Is the approach to addressing ethical issues clearly explained?



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Evaluation Criteria and Process

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Who is eligible for funding?

EU COUNTRIES

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

NON-EU COUNTRIES

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

SPECIFIC CASES

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

Activities eligible for funding

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

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

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

Standard evaluation process

Receipt of proposals

Admissibility/eligibility check Allocation of proposals to evaluators

Individual evaluation

Experts assess proposals **individually**.

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

Consensus group

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

Panel review

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

If necessary, resolves cases where evaluators were unable to agree.

Ranks the proposals with the same score.

Finalisation

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

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Admissibility, eligibility checks and additional requirements

***Admissibility** is checked by EU staff*

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

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

- Eligible activities are the ones described in the call conditions. Minimum number of partners as set out in the call conditions (at least one independent legal entity established in a MS, and,atleast two other independent legal entities established either in a MS or AC).
- For calls with deadlines in 2022 and onwards participants that are public bodies, research organisationsor higher education establishments from Members States and Associated countries must have a gender equality plan (GEP) in place.

The GEP is not part of the evaluation criteria, evaluators should not look into it. The existence of a GEP is checked internallyby staff.

- Other criteria may apply on a call-by-call basis as set out in the call conditions. In few cases, the call conditions in the topic can modify the interpretation of criteria.

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Evaluation (award) criteria

Three evaluation criteria

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

(Only one evaluation criterion for ERC -Excellence)

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

Pilot on Blind Evaluation

Blind evaluations require that Experts do not know the consortium structure and the applicant(s) involved.

Proposal - Part A

The IT system will automatically hide from Experts the indentification(consortium) data in the Proposal Details page.

Proposal - Part B

Asit is not possible to hide any information from Part B in the SEP IT tool, **it is up to the applicant to omit there any identificationdata in their first-stage application.**

Usually, admissibility checks, including whether proposal part B contains any participants' identification, are carried out by internal staff.

IMPORTANT: Should Experts notice any direct or indirect identification of the applicant, they should notify the staff officer.

If proposals **include any direct identification** of the applicant in Part B, the proposal will be declared **inadmissible. Indirect identifications** may result as well in declaring a proposal **inadmissible (analysis done case by case).** Guidance on direct and indirect identification of the applicant can be found in the 1st stage Standard Application Form template.

Evaluation criteria (RIAs and IAs)

Research and innovation action (RIA)

Activities to establish new knowledge or to explore the feasibility of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution. This may include basic and applied research, technology development and integration, testing, demonstration and validation of a small-scale prototype in a laboratory or simulated environment.

Innovation action (IA)

Activities to produce plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services. These activities may include prototyping, testing, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication.

EXCELLENCE

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

IMPACT

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

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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Evaluation criteria (CSAs)

Coordination and support actions (CSA)

Activities that contribute to the objectives of Horizon Europe. This excludes R&I activities, except those carried out under the 'Widening participation and spreading excellence' component of the programme (part of 'Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area'). Also eligible are bottom-up coordination actions which promote cooperation between legal entities from Member States and Associated Countries to strengthen the European Research Area, and which receive no EU co-funding for research activities.

EXCELLENCE

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

IMPACT

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

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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Evaluation criteria (CoFund)

Programme co-fund actions (CoFund)

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

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

EXCELLENCE

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

IMPACT

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

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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Evaluation criteria (PCPs and PPIs)

Pre-commercial procurement actions/ (PCP)

Activities that aim to help a transnational buyers' group to strengthen the public procurement of research, development, validation and, possibly, the first deployment of new solutions that can significantly improve quality and efficiency in areas of public interest, while opening market opportunities for industry and researchers active in Europe. Eligible activities include the preparation, management and follow-up, under the coordination of a lead procurer, of one joint PCP and additional activities to embed the PCP into a wider set of demand-side activities.

Public procurement of innovative solutions actions (PPI)

Activities that aim to strengthen the ability of a transnational buyers' group to deploy innovative solutions early by overcoming the fragmentation of demand for such solutions and sharing the risks and costs of acting as early adopters, while opening market opportunities for industry.
Eligible activities include preparing and implementing, under the coordination of a lead procurer, one joint or several coordinated PPI by the buyers' group and additional activities to embed the PPI into a wider set of demand-side activities.

EXCELLENCE

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

IMPACT

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

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

QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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Individual evaluation

- Read the proposal and evaluate it against the evaluation criteria, without discussing it with anybody else and as submitted and not on its potential if certain changes were to be made.

- Complete an Individual Evaluation Report (IER).

  - Evaluate each proposal as submitted and not on its potential if certain changes were to be made.

  - If you identify shortcomings (other than minor ones and obvious clerical errors), reflect those in a lower score for the relevant criterion. Proposals with significant weaknesses that prevent the project from achieving its objectives or with resources being seriously over-estimated must not receive above-threshold scores.

  - Provide comments and scores for all evaluation criteria (scores must match comments).

  - Explain shortcomings, but do not make recommendations (e.g. no additional partners, work packages, resource cuts).

  - Sign and submit the form in the electronic system.

Evaluating the excellence criterion (1/2)

Assess the project's objectives:

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

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

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

Always provide well-supported reasons to justify your evaluation.For instance, if you think that the project'sobjectives are (or are not) realistically achievable,**add always the rationale behind your opinion.**

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Evaluating the excellence criterion (2/2)

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

Assess the scientific methodology:

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

Always provide well-supported reasons to justify your evaluation.For instance, if you think that the methodologyis (or is not) sound, detailed and convincing,**add always the rationale behind your opinion.**

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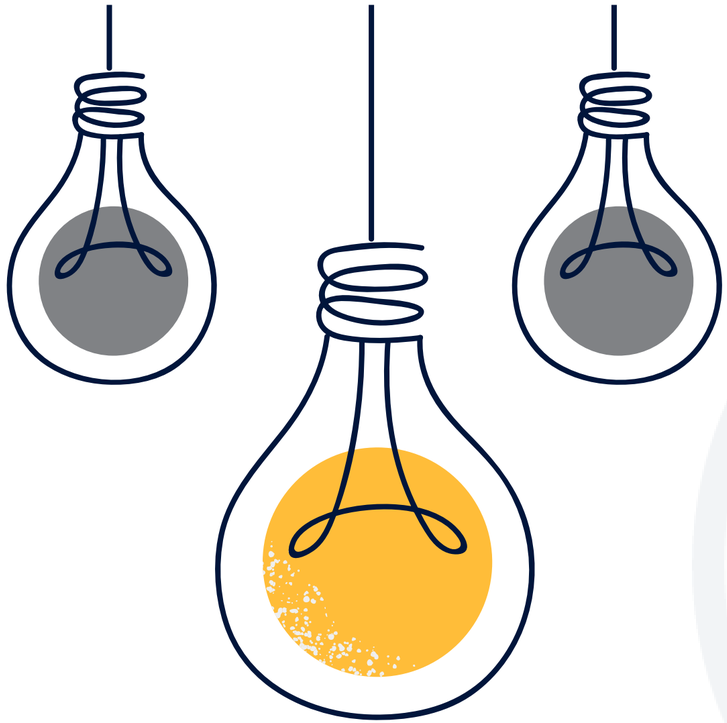
SOURCES



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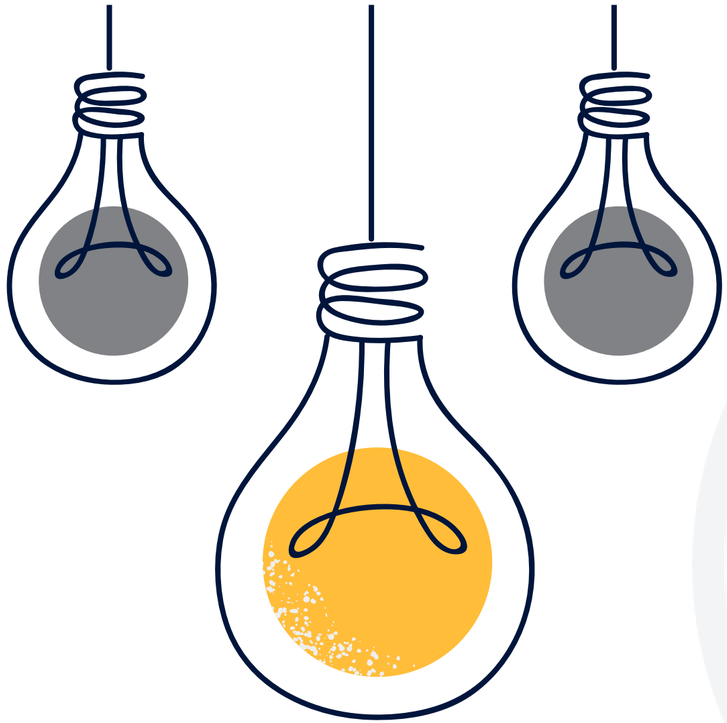

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