TECHNOLOGY CENTRE PRAGUE

EXCELLENCE HUBS 2023 CALL AND EVALUATORS´ MOST FREQUENT COMMENTS

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WORK PROGRAMME WIDERA 2023 – 2024

Date of publication: 6 December 2022 **Overall budget: M€ 900,48**

- WP parts:
  - Introduction: Overall description of common policy objectives and rationale based on the specific programme and strategic plan (**description of key objectives**)
  - **Destination 1: Improved access to excellence**
    - **Introduction including Expected impacts**
    - **Calls (instruments) description**
  - Destination 2: Attracting and mobilising the best talents
    - Introduction including Expected impacts
    - Calls (instruments) description
  - Destination 3: Reforming and enhancing the EU research and innovation system
    - Introduction including 4 strands and Expected impacts
    - Call topics description
  - Other actions not subject to calls for proposals (grants to identified beneficiaries, **prizes**, experts contracts, public procurement, indirect management)

EXCELLENCE HUBS 2023

SIX KEY OBJECTIVES IN WP 2023 – 2024

1. **Encourage institutional reforms and transformation processes** of the R&I system at national and regional level in Widening countries in line with ERA principles;

2. **Mobilise national investments** in R&I capacity in Widening countries;

3. **Raise the bar for excellence** of R&I actors in Widening countries in partnership with outstanding European and international institutions ('win-win situation');

4. **Increase number of participations and success rates** of widening actors in research and innovation projects in other parts of Horizon Europe (notably in Pillars 2 and 3);

5. **Promote the creation of new innovation ecosystems** and scale up existing ones by a set of measures, which include place-based and international collaboration between academia and business in Widening countries;

6. **Foster brain circulation**, including inter-sectoral mobility for researchers and innovators and turn it into brain gain for Widening countries.

DESTINATION 1 – NINE EXPECTED IMPACTS

1. **Increased science and innovation capacity** for all actors in the R&I system in Widening countries;
2. **Structural changes** leading to modernised and more competitive R&I systems in eligible countries;
3. Reformed R&I systems and institutions leading to **increased attractiveness and retention of research talents**;
4. **Mobilisation of national and EU resources** for strategic investments;
5. **Higher participation** success in Horizon Europe and more **consortium leadership roles**;
6. Stronger links between academia and business and **improved career permeability**;
7. **Strengthened role** of the Higher Education sector in research and innovation;
8. Greater involvement of **regional actors in the R&I process**;
9. **Improved outreach** to international level for all actors.

CALLS AND DEADLINES 2023 – 2024

DESTINATION 1 (ACCESS)

HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-01 TEAMING FOR EXCELLENCE	12 Apr 2023 (1st stage) 07 Mar 2024 (2nd stage)
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-02 TWINNING	28 Sep 2023
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-03 EUROPEAN EXCELENCE INITIATIVE	12 Apr 2023
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-04 PATHWAYS TO SYNERGIES	28 Sep 2023
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-05 DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION SUPPORT FACILITY	28 Sep 2023
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-06 HOP-ON FACILITY	28 Sep 2023 26 Sep 2024
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07 EXCELLENCE HUBS	07 Mar 2024

DESTINATON 2 (TALENTS)

HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-TALENTS-01 ERA CHAIRS	07 Mar 2024
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-TALENTS-02 ERA FELLOWSHIPS (MSCA)	13 Sep 2023
HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-TALENTS-03 ERA FELLOWSHIPS (MSCA)	11 Sep 2024
HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-TALENTS-04 ERA TALENTS	26 Sep 2024

EXCELLENCE HUBS 2023

INTRODUCTION

POLICY CONTEXT

- Excellence hubs will be the **basis in Widening countries of the pan-European Innovation Ecosystem of the New European Innovation Agenda** (July 2022)
- The proposal should demonstrate the **win-win effects of the partnership** established by the consortium and the benefits for employment and post crisis recovery.
- This action responds to the **third priority in the ERA Communication** (September 2020) **on translating R&I results into the economy** and will especially support R&I policies aiming at boosting the resilience and competitiveness of our economies and societies.
- This means **ensuring European competitive leadership in the global race** for technology based on excellence while improving the environment for business R&I investment, deployment of new technologies and enhancing the take up and visibility of research results in the economy and society as a whole

POLICY DOCUMENTS

ERA COMMUNICATION

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels,
30.9.2020

COM(2020) 628
final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

A new ERA for Research and Innovation

{SWD(2020) 214 final}

NEW EUROPEAN INNOVATION AGENDA

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels,
5.7.2022

COM(2022) 332
final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

A New European Innovation Agenda

{SWD(2022) 187 final}

WHAT ARE EXCELLENCE HUBS

- Excellence Hubs are **networks of place-based innovation ecosystems in Widening countries** involving larger communities of actors in a regional context based on the quadruple helix principle

- Excellence hubs as a new action under the widening component are complementary but different to initiatives such as Digital hubs or the EIT regional innovation scheme (RIS) because of their strategic orientation, broader scope and alignment with widening eligibility criteria

- This action addresses **regions as R&I actors since they are the place where the innovation and industrial ecosystems breathe and develop**, making the links between Europe and business including SMEs and start-ups, research centres, innovation stakeholders as well as citizens

- Regionally developed innovation ecosystems connected across the EU will be the **driver of new European strategic value chains.**

AIM

- Focus on innovation by allowing innovation ecosystems in Widening countries and beyond, to **team up and create better linkages between academia, business, government and society**
- Foster a **real place-based innovation culture in Widening countries** based on a strategic agenda aligned with regional or national smart specialisation strategies
- **Seek synergies with the HE parts European Innovation Ecosystems, EIC Pathfinder and the EIT as well as the initiative 'Partnerships for Regional Innovation' run by the JRC**

SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

ELIGIBILITY

- Participation as **coordinators** is limited to legal entities established in **Widening countries** (as defined in the Horizon Europe regulation

- Proposals must involve **at least two R&I ecosystems from two different Widening countries**

- Each Widening country R&I ecosystem must comprise **four different categories of actors** i.e.
  a) academic institutions (universities and/or non-university research centres or labs),
  b) business entities,
  c) public authorities or authorised agencies operating at regional or local level and
  d) societal actors (e.g. civil organisations, citizens, end users, media, cultural actors etc.).

SPECIFIC CONDITIONS (1)

ELIGIBILITY (continued)

- A proposal may demonstrate involvement of a Widening country R&I ecosystem by either:

i. The participation, as a beneficiary, by one or more umbrella organisations, whose membership comprises the four different categories of Widening country R&I actors for the relevant Widening country; or

ii. The participation, as beneficiaries, of individual legal entities representing each of the four categories of actors for the relevant Widening country. In the case of representative individual entities, at least one of the business entities per R&I ecosystem needs to be an established firm with turnover. More specifically, such business entities must at the time of the submission of the proposal be established for already at least two consecutive years.

SPECIFIC CONDITIONS (2)

TOTAL INDICATIVE BUDGET

- EU contribution of between EUR 2.00 and 5.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed
- For proposals also including the optional mentoring scheme, the Commission estimates that an EU contribution of up to EUR 6.00 million would allow the outcome to be addressed appropriately

GRANT CONDITIONS

Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000. Beneficiaries should refer to **General Annex B of the Work Programme 2023-2024** for further information and guidance (+ Information on FSTP in the submission system)

EXCELLENCE HUBS 2023

BASIC INFORMATION

- **MAIN AIM** – bridge innovation divide by **teaming up innovation ecosystems in WCs and beyond** and creating better linkages between academia, business, government and society
- **At least two different place based R&I ecosystems in at least two different WCs**
- **Four different categories in each ecosystem:**
  - a) academic institutions
  - b) business entities
  - c) public authorities or authorised agencies
  - d) societal actors

CALL OVERVIEW

- HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07-01
- **Opening: 28 September 2023**
- **Deadline: 7 March 2024**
- Overall indicative budget: M€ 60
- Budget per project: M€ 2 – 5 (**up to M€ 6 in case that optional mentoring scheme is included)**
- Consortium: min. 1 + 1 ecosystem
- Project duration: up to 4 years
- Expected no. of projects: 12

EXCELLENCE HUBS 2023

PROPOSAL CONTENT

EXPECTED OUTCOMES (9)

Projects should contribute to the following outcomes:

- **Excellent and sustainable place-based R&I ecosystems** in Widening countries and beyond in relevant domains of cutting-edge science and innovation;
- **Long term joint R&I strategies** underpinned by concrete action plans of European relevance;
- **Common investment plans for R&I** including infrastructures leveraging national, regional and European funds as well as private capital in a synergetic manner;
- **R&I pilot projects alongside a joint strategy** and in line with regional and national strategies, notably regional innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3) taking into account the new Innovation Agenda for Europe;

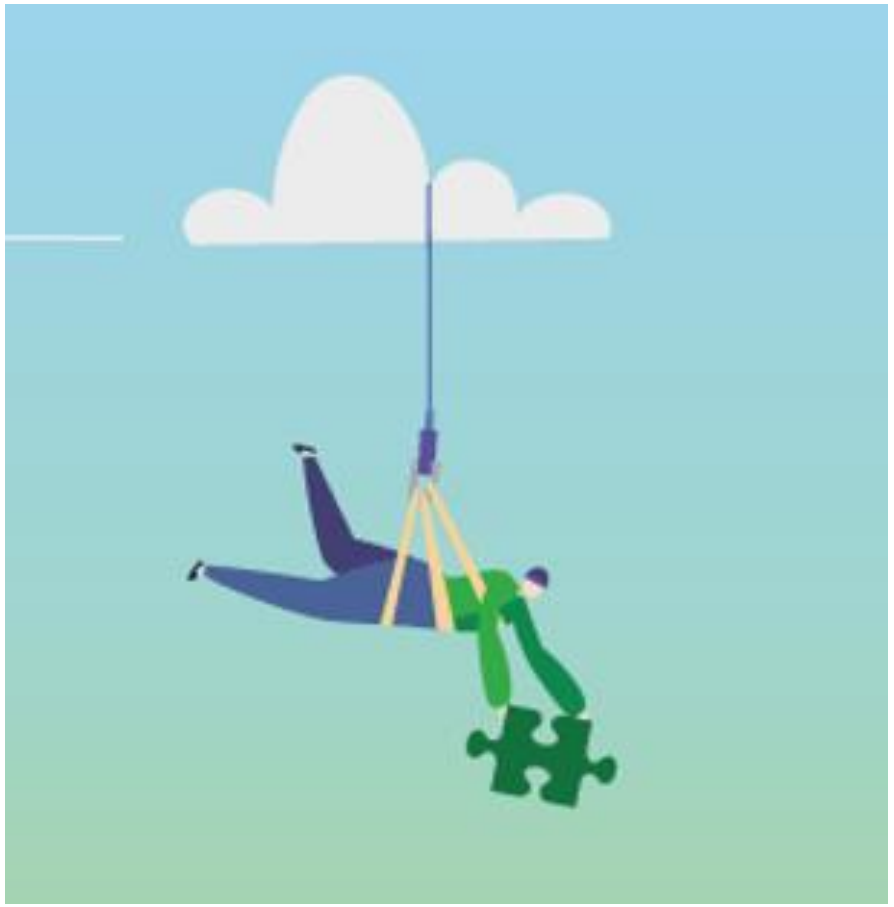
EXPECTED OUTCOMES (CONTINUED)

- **New competencies and skills for researchers, entrepreneurs and professionals** in R&I intensive domains;
- **Strengthened linkages between science and business**;
- Improved knowledge **transfer** and development of **entrepreneurial skills**;
- **New business opportunities especially for SMEs, university spin-offs and start-ups**, especially deep tech;
- Inclusion of **emerging innovation ecosystems from rural areas, EU Outermost Regions, Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries including Ukraine** by optional mentoring module.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

Include all 5 core components (+ 1 optional):

- **Cross-border joint R&I strategy** aligned with regional S3 and/or European policy priorities such as the green and digital transition;
- **R&I project** consolidating academia business linkages and providing evidence for strategy building and investment;
- **Action and investment plans** for the implementation of the strategy;
- Conceptual design and **pre-planning for pilots and demonstrators** (if applicable);
- **Accompanying measures** are complementary activities that may promote knowledge and technology transfer, visibility, mutual learning and skills development



OPTIONAL MENTORING SCHEME

NEW

- **Mentoring of an emerging place-based innovation ecosystem established in rural areas, Western Balkans or Eastern Partnership Countries including Ukraine**
- Legal entities from such countries and regions are **encouraged to join the project as participants** in order to benefit from mentoring, training, knowledge transfer even if their ecosystems are not yet developed to a full quadruple helix structure
- Consider providing **financial support to third parties** (FSTP) under the mentoring scheme especially for the support of start-ups and SMEs in the form of grants (maximum amount of such a grant is € 60 000)

TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION:

- **Two modes of involvement of a Widening Country R&I ecosystem in the project:**
  - The participation, as a beneficiary, by one or more umbrella organisations, whose membership comprises the four different categories of Widening Country R&I actors for the relevant Widening Country;
  - The participation, as beneficiaries, of representative individual legal entities representing each of the four categories of actors for the relevant Widening country.
- **Individual participants and ecosystems from other EU Member States, Associated Countries and international co-operation partners may join in duly justified cases** e.g., given by a specific expertise needed or the involvement in a relevant value adding chain
- **Projects should:**
  - Contribute to the 9 expected outcomes
  - Choose between a more regional orientation e.g., by a common denominator in their regional S3 and/or a more global orientation towards European policy priorities such as the green or digital transition
  - Demonstrate the win-win effects of the partnership established by the consortium and the benefits for employment and post crisis recovery
  -

EXCELLENCE HUBS 2023

PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

CSA SPECIAL TEMPLATE

30 pages limit for Part B, 33 pages in case of lump sum funding model

Structure of the Proposal

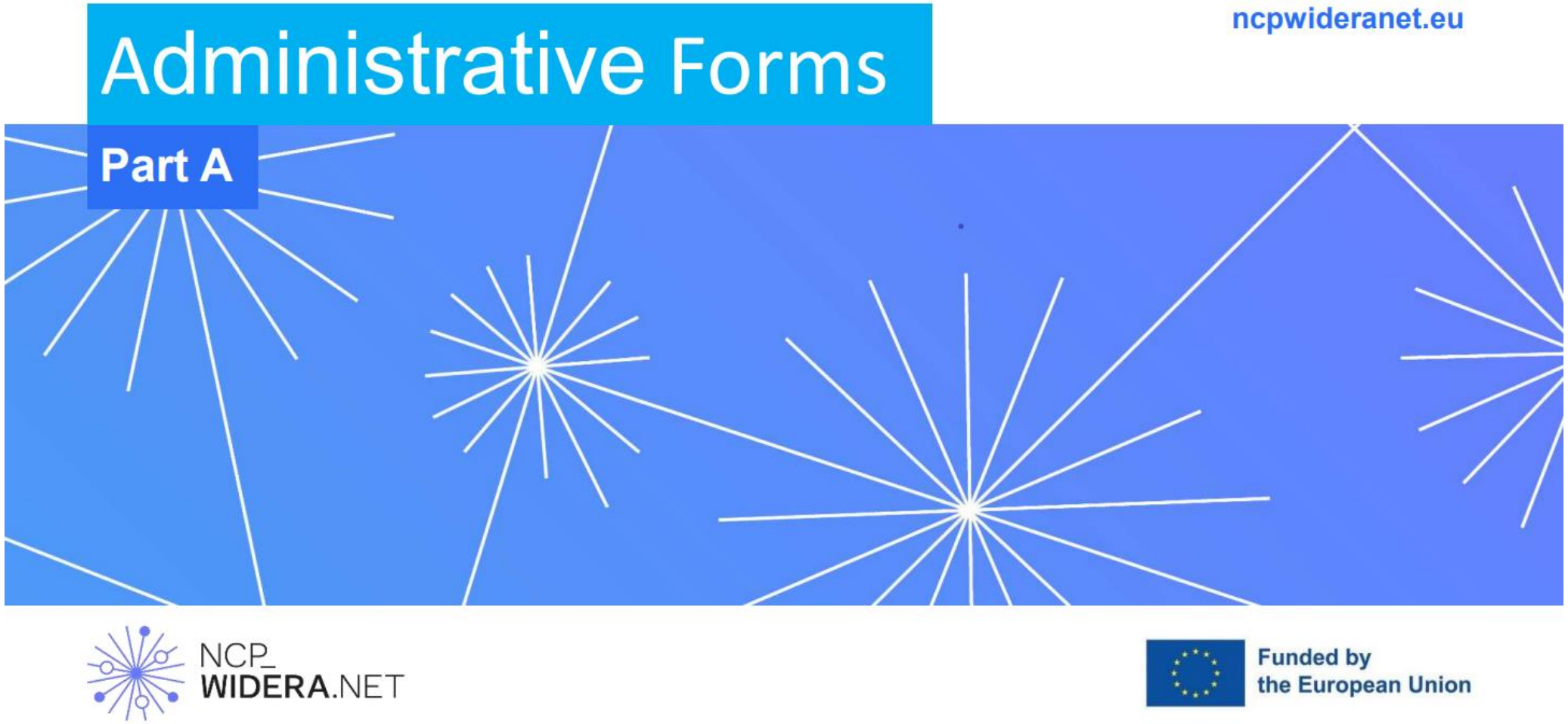
- **Part A is generated by the IT system. It is based on the information entered by the participants through the submission system in the Funding & Tenders Portal.** The participants can update the information in the submission system **at any time before final submission**
- **Part B** of the proposal is the **narrative part that includes three sections that each correspond to an evaluation criterion.** Part B needs to be uploaded as a PDF document following the templates **downloaded by the applicants in the submission system for the specific call or topic**.

Horizon Europe Programme
Specific Application Form (HE CSA)
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07

Project proposal – Technical description (Part B)

Version 1.0
13 June 2023

ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS – PART A



PART B: IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

- The **structure of the template must be followed** – it has been designed to ensure that the important aspects of your planned work are presented in a way that will enable the experts to make an effective assessment against the evaluation criteria (Sections 1 Excellence,. 2 Impact and 3 Implementation)
- After the deadline, **excess pages** (in over-long proposals/applications) will be automatically made invisible, and will not be taken into consideration by the experts.
- The proposal is a **self-contained document** – experts are instructed to ignore hyperlinks to information that is specifically designed to expand the proposal
- **DEFINITIONS** (critical risk, deliverable, impacts, milestones, objectives, outcomes, pathway to impact, research output, results, Technology Readiness Level)

PART B: TAGS IN THE TEMPLATE

This document is tagged. Be careful not to delete the tags; they are needed for processing.

- The use of electronic tags in proposal templates has been applied at corporate level to most of the programmes funded by the European Commission.
- It aims to facilitate plagiarism checks, for purely internal processing purposes, by separating the different sections of a proposal. It has neither been used nor intended to be used during the evaluations.
- A general FAQ on the topic is planned to be published in the FTO Portal by DG RTD.
- Applicants will not be penalised in any way in case they delete a tag by mistake

PART B – TEMPLATE

- 1 cover page
- 20 pages of instructions with a watermark (read carefully, do not fill your text here and remove before submitting)
- 10 pages of proposal itself (should be without watermark, **unfortunately it appears on page 8 – please remove the watermark yourselves**)

PART B: STRUCTURE

TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL

List of participants (table)

1. Excellence

1.1 Objectives

1.2 Coordination and/or support measures and methodology

2. Impact

2.1 Project's pathways towards impact

2.2 Measures to maximise impact - Dissemination, exploitation and communication

2.3 Summary KEY ELEMENT OF THE IMPACT SECTION

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation

3.1 Work plan and resources

3.2 Capacity of participants and consortium as a whole

Proposal template Part B: technical description

TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL

[This document is tagged. Do not delete the tags; they are needed for processing.] #@APP-FORM-HECSA@#

List of participants

Participant No. *	Participant organisation name	Country
1 (Coordinator)		
2		
3		
…		

Additional eligibility condition: Ecosystem composition

Each ecosystem comprises of the 4 different categories of Widening R&I actors as described in the topic description.	Yes/No
For ecosystems with individual entities, there is at least one business entity per R&I ecosystem, which is established for at least 2 consecutive years with turnover.	Yes/No

Specific for Excellence Hubs template

TABLES FOR SECTION 3.1

Table 3.1a:	**List of work packages**
Table 3.1b:	**Work package description**
Table 3.1c:	**List of Deliverables**
Table 3.1d:	**List of milestones**
Table 3.1e:	**Critical risks for implementation**
Table 3.1f:	**Summary of staff effort**
Table 3.1g:	**'Subcontracting costs' items**
Table 3.1h:	**'Purchase costs' items (travel and subsistence, equipment and other goods, works and services)**
Table 3.1i:	**'Other costs categories' items (e.g. internally invoiced goods and services)**
Table 3.1j:	**'In-kind contributions' provided by third parties**

TABLES – IMPORTANT CHANGES

- Table 3.1b: Work package description

Participants involved in each WP and their efforts are shown in table 3.1f. Lead participant and starting and end date of each WP are shown in table 3.1a.)

For each work package:

Work package number	
Work package title	

Objectives

Description of work

Deliverables linked to each WP are listed in table 3.1c (no need to repeat the information here)

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THIRD COUNTRIES

- In case you decide to opt for FSTP under the Mentoring Work Package, you have to prepare a special document, add it to the application and upload it as separate annex to the proposal part B in the Submission System.
- Fill in only the section relevant to your call (grants) – delete other parts
- For more information on terms and conditions: see Work Programme General Annexes section B (page 16) and Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement Articles 6.2.D.1

This description must address at least the following:

1. clearly detail the objectives and the results to be obtained and
2. contain the following specifications (as a minimum):
   a) the maximum amount of financial support for each third party; this amount may not exceed 60 000 EUR, unless explicitly mentioned in the Work Programme topic. If your project requires a higher amount per third party than the threshold amount set in the call conditions, justify and explain why this is necessary in order to fulfil your project's objectives.
   b) the criteria for calculating the exact amount of the financial support
   c) the different types of activity that qualify for financial support, on the basis of a closed list
   d) the persons or categories of persons that may receive financial support, and
   e) the criteria for giving financial support

EXCELLENCE HUBS 2022

EVALUATORS´ MOST FREQUENT COMMENTS

EC STANDARD BRIEFING FOR EVALUATORS

ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT 1

SECTION 1 – EXCELLENCE

- **Clarity and pertinence of 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?

- **Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures including soundness of methodology**
  - ✓ Is the methodology (i.e. the concepts, models and assumptions that underpin the work) clear and sound?
  - ✓ 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?

POSITIVE COMMENTS

- **Detailed presentation of the background, challenges, state of the art of the issue, and the relevant needs** which helps to set the scene and justify the selection of the thematic focus
- **Methodology and coordination and support measures are logical, clearly explained and convincing and have a careful consideration of the local context in each country**. There is a good balance of innovation, training, networking, strategy building, and measures related to policy transformation
- **Solid concepts, assumptions and methods** (including reference to the integration of **Artificial Intelligence** in the innovations that will be fostered)
- Proposal was appropriately developed in consultation with, and has the support of, **relevant R&I local public authorities in partner countries and alignment to the RIS3 strategies** of both countries is sufficiently demonstrated
- **Mapping of infrastructures and industry needs** and development of skills and training is included

POSITIVE COMMENTS

- **Staff exchanges between research groups and industry organisations** are a positive element, allowing the staff to acquire new competencies and strengthen the collaboration between partners.
- Measures connected with **education for students and young researchers, as well as talent retention** are well addressed.
- At regular intervals, the consortium will share project outcomes and public deliverables on the **European Open Science Cloud**
- **Gender representation in research, innovation and policy/decision making processes is identified as one of the challenges to be overcome**, and is well addressed, offering clear gender equality approach addressing the gender issues in the target sector, participation in its training, education, events, as well as in the team composition
- **Research Data Management practices** are in line with FAIR principles and well addressed, which is a strength. The proposal als**Research Data Management practices** o benefits from a Data Management Plan (DMP) prepared by all partners, and regularly updated

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

- Proposal **does not offer a comprehensive analysis of existing collaborative vs. competitive relations** within the proposed innovation ecosystems, which may affect their quality and stability
- **Overall strategy is insufficiently elaborated and the objectives are not provided in sufficient detail and lack Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** or other types of indicators that make them measurable and verifiable
- Some **objectives are not clearly specified in terms of how they will support the required strategy**, e.g. how the project will mobilise national investments in research and innovation is not clear
- **Not all the specific objectives are clearly measurable and verifiable**
- Common investment plans will be developed which is a positive element but the consideration of also **private capital in a synergetic manner is not adequately explained**
- The **gender strategy is too generic** and specific activities to strengthen gender equality are not well presented / Consideration of gender is a notable gap

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

- **Joint R&I strategy is insufficiently described** and is declared to be prepared during project execution. R&I investment plans as well as R&I pilots contain insufficient details to meet the requirements of the programme
- **KPIs are considered overly optimistic**, and the large numbers stated are not sufficiently justified in the strategies to be implemented
- It is not clear **how the participants will take IP of the various involved companies into consideration** and how the balance between what should be published and what needs to be kept as properties of the involved businesses will be managed
- **Strategies for building partnerships** with outstanding European and international institutions **are less evident** and this limits the scope of the project
- **Co-creation multi-stakeholder engagement activities are not sufficiently outlined** in the work plan to guarantee an adequate quadruple helix involvement developing successful joint R&I strategies

ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT 2

SECTION 2 – IMPACT

- **Proposed pathways towards impact**
  - ✓ Is the contribution of the project towards the 1) expected outcomes of the topic and 2) the wider impacts, in the longer term, as specified in the respective destinations of the WP, credible?
  - ✓ Are potential barriers to the expected outcomes and impacts identified and mitigation measures proposed? Is the management of the potential negative impacts properly described?
  - ✓ Are the scale and significance of the project's contribution to the expected outcomes and impacts estimated and quantified (including baselines, benchmarks and assumptions used for those estimates)?

- **Measures to maximise impact – Dissemination, exploitation and communication (DEC)**
  - ✓ Are the proposed DEC measures suitable for the project and of good quality? All measures should be proportionate to the scale of the project, and should contain concrete actions to be implemented both during and after the end of the project.
  - ✓ Are the target groups (e.g. scientific community, end users, financial actors, public at large) for these measures identified?
  - ✓ Is the strategy for the management of IP outlined and suitable to support exploitation of results?

POSITIVE COMMENTS

- There are **good foundations in the pathways proposed to foster excellent place-based innovation** that lead to long-term R&I policies underpinned by R&I and investment plans
- Multi-Actor Approach of the proposal is reasonably expected to **strengthen the links between science and business, which is key to improve knowledge transfer**
- **Uptake pathways of innovative technologies** is overall well addressed and there will be improved knowledge transfer and development of entrepreneur skills will emerge from the proposal
- The proposal has a **good training and knowledge-transfer component** which can reasonably contribute to reinforcing collaborative links and conducive to innovation excellence. Contribution to new business opportunities and new employment will be significant.
- The **dissemination plan is rich, diverse and includes tailored measures** to address the main relevant stakeholder groups (partners in the project, academic sector, business sector, policy makers and society).

POSITIVE COMMENTS

- The **expected long term outcomes are similarly well underpinned by specific and credible actions and strategies.** These include providing new competencies and skills for researchers, entrepreneurs and professionals in R&I intensive domains through planned training activities and the development of a long-term R&I strategy
- The credibility of the pathways to achieve wider impacts of the project specified in the work programme in the longer-term is clearly reflected in the **roadmap for cross regional collaboration that will guide partners in their activities post project completion**.
- The project will also have wider impacts in terms of **influencing public sector governance and stimulating economic and societal development for the two countries** concerned as well as producing beneficial outputs relevant beyond their borders
- Whilst emphasising an intention to provide open access to info and data where possible, the **proposers are highly aware of the IPR issues involved**. Appropriate plans for exploitation, based on the DESCA model, include a dedicated Exploitation Committee to oversee the protection of newly developed IP which might be potentially exploitable by the commercial partners

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

- **Roadmap to a set of scientific, economic/technological and societal impacts** on the short-, medium- and long-term **does not sufficiently match the expected outcomes and wider impacts listed in the call text**
- **Outcomes related to R&I pilot projects**, alongside a joint strategy and in line with regional and national strategies, **are insufficiently addressed**
- **Alignment and synergies with the European Innovation Ecosystems and EIT are not fully developed for all Innovation ecosystems**
- **Longer term impacts are described in general terms** and insufficient focus is provided on fostering a genuine placed based innovation culture For example, the question of how end users will be engaged in the adoption of technology and its transfer is not convincingly addressed
- **It is not fully clear how** the proposed actions **will lead to the development of entrepreneurial skills, how the proposed work will lead to new business opportunities**, and how the uptake of innovative technologies will be strengthened

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

- Proposal does not sufficiently demonstrate **the win-win effects (impacts) of the partnership established and the effects on each of the regional innovation ecosystems**. In addition, neither the long-term joint R&I strategies nor concrete action plans for European relevance are sufficiently explained
- **Quantitative indicators to track its implementation and impacts are not systematically adopted** in the design of the Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication measures – they lack KPIs, quantification and verification means
- **Lack of an appropriate exploitation plan and a strategy to manage the IPR** generated in the project – this is a major shortcoming, as Excellence Hubs are expected to foster not just innovation, but also the uptake and use of such innovation.
- **Possible stakeholders affected by the project activities are not sufficiently described**, and their involvement and roles in the dissemination activities are not clear
- **Exploitation plan and activities are not presented in satisfactory detail** - objectives within this plan are specified in very general term and the plan lacks specific details on how each partner will exploit the results

ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT 3

SECTION 3 – IMPLEMENTATION

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

- **Quality of participants and the consortium as a whole**
  - ✓ Does the consortium match the project's objectives, and bring together the necessary knowledge?
  - ✓ Does the consortium include expertise in open science practices, and gender aspects of R&I?
  - ✓ Are the participants complementing one another?
  - ✓ In what way does each of them contribute to the project? Does each of them have a valid role, and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role?

POSITIVE COMMENTS

- Consortium members have a **complementary type of disciplinary background**
- **Partnership from each participating country follows the quadruple helix approach** which has been adequately addressed in this consortium and is very positive since it can offer a good value to the proposal
- **All partners have access to the entire infrastructure of the consortium** which is a positive element, and this access will be detailed in a Consortium Agreement
- **Work packages are well designed and convincingly encompass the five core components of the call**
- A **substantial work package on R&I is evident and incorporates piloting activities**. This is well presented and justified in the proposal as part of what is overall an ambitious work programme

POSITIVE COMMENTS

- **Several commercial partners are involved in the project and thus a good possibility for exploitation of results exists**. The consortium has expertise in such areas. Nevertheless, the consortium plans to provide as much as possible of the research results as open software.
- **Interdependence across different WPs and Tasks is very well explained** and properly scheduled. The milestones and deliverables of the proposal are very good and appropriately distributed in the time plan in order to provide efficient means for good progress control of the proposed work
- **Allocation of resources to work packages is very well justified** and in accordance with objectives and deliverables and allocation of resources (PMs) across partners is broadly in line with the expected contributions
- **While highly integrated in their regional and national R&I contexts, many of the partners are also experienced in relevant European and global level projects and strategies**, ensuring high connectivity to ongoing political as well as commercial and R&I related developments.

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

- **Large number of Tasks are described in general terms only**, with no quantitative and/or time details. In some cases, their description is essentially a list of objectives rather than of planned activities
- **Identification of deliverables and milestones is not fully coherent with the WP description** to track progress through the implementation of the work plan
- There are **inconsistencies between the expected delivery time indicated** in different parts of the proposal
- **Organising research and innovation around distant resources and infrastructure is not credible**. For example, some technologies can be accessed and operated remotely, but some laboratories and innovation infrastructure require physical presence
- **Integration of the non-academic partners in the proposal and their contribution to the execution is weakened by their limited involvement in leading work packages**
- **Number of persons per month** in the proposed work packages **is insufficiently justified**

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

- **Roles and involvement of each partner** in carrying out the tasks and objectives of the project are **not sufficiently described**.
- **Although social sciences are envisaged to play an important role in the project development, it is not convincingly demonstrated that the consortium includes appropriate expertise in social sciences and humanities** / expertise in social sciences and humanities, open science practices and gender aspects of R&I is not clearly evidenced from the partner descriptions.
- **Potential action and investment plans** for implementation of the strategy as well as conceptual design and pre-planning for pilots **are not sufficiently discussed**
- **Risk identification and mitigation analysis is insufficiently developed**. The list of critical risks and contingencies is limited to the lack of commitment of stakeholders and IPR conflicts between public and private sector, while critical risks identified with project governance and team related risks are not sufficiently considered
- **One work package takes a very large part of the budget and insufficient risks are identified for that work package,** while it deals with experimental science where many experimental risks are attached

REA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITY PROPOSAL PREPARATION (INCLUDING THE LINKS TO BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS) FROM 9 FEBRUARY 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS 1

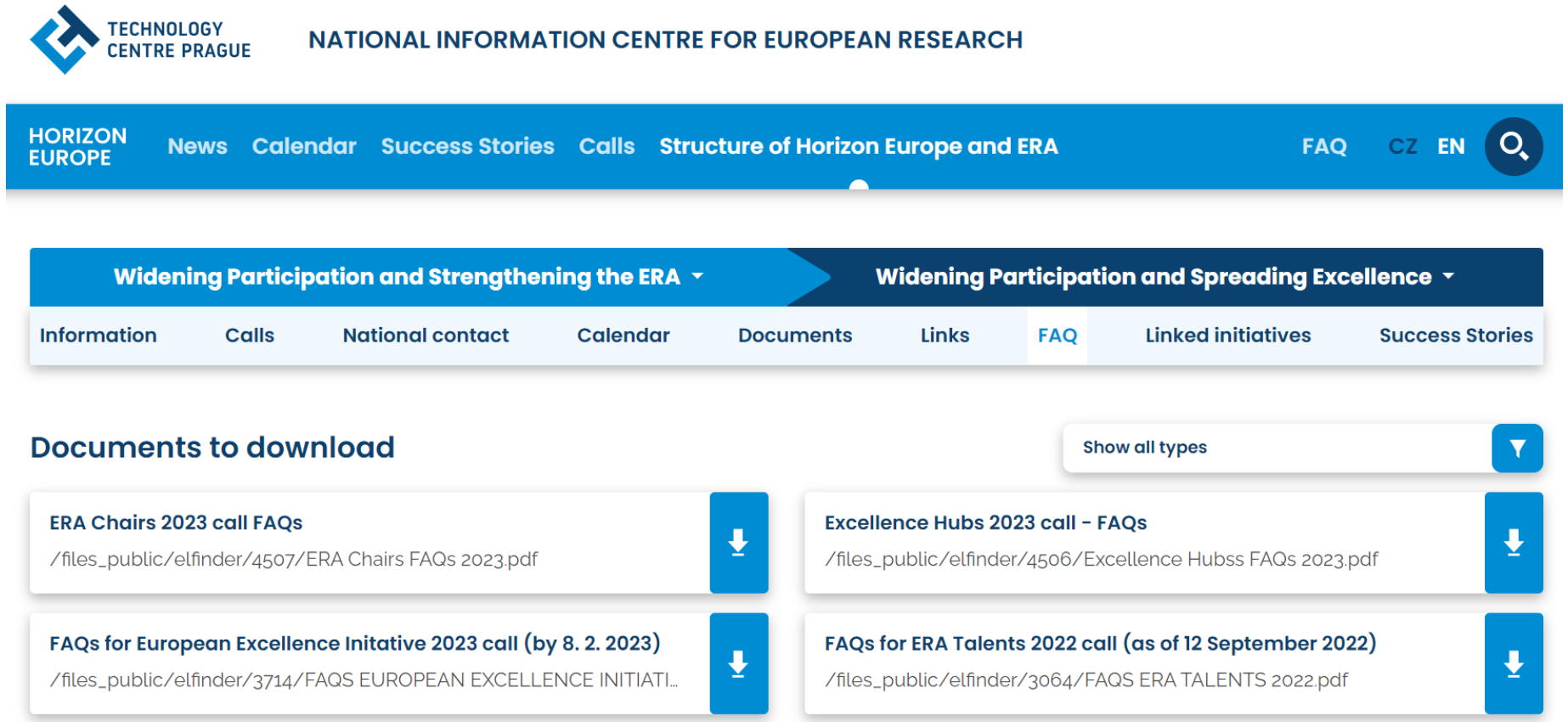
- **Describe the current status quo of involved institutions – bear in mind that a SWOT analysis is the basis of a good proposal**
- **Be self-critical and concentrate on the weaknesses and threats as these are the main reason why you prepare the proposal**
- Do not forget to take them fully into account in the Work plan, in the Work packages, tasks etc.
- Objectives must correspond to the text of the call and to the introduction of the Work Programme, the main objective and specific objectives must be well described
- Text should clear and concise, use simple short sentences, avoid buzzwords and unnecessary words, do not repeat passages and use short paragraphs – help the evaluators to orientate easily in the text
- **Choose catchy acronym and title, and pay attention to the formulation of the abstract**
- Describe the linkages or interconnectedness with national and regional RIS3 and other strategies
- Communication and dissemination: provide detailed info on activities targeting different stakeholder groups, organise a press conference (WP C&D) as a side event to the project kick off meeting (WP Management)
- **DO NOT CHANGE THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEMPLATE and use the terminology of the call**

RECOMMENDATIONS 2

- Citation of international sources – limit references to national studies and projects (if they are only in your national language)
- Bear in mind that this is an administrative submission, and not a scientific publication – use more journalistic style and always have the proposal read by someone outside the consortium (colleagues, NCPs…)
- Limit the use of abbreviations
- Refer to important documents – EU or global strategies
- Updated website of the institution (at least basic English version necessary – European and international R&I projects in which your institution participated should be easily searchable
- Stress the added value of the project to your region, country, EU and even the world ☺
- **Download the CSA template immediately after the submission system is opened**
- **Start with the proposal writing ASAP**

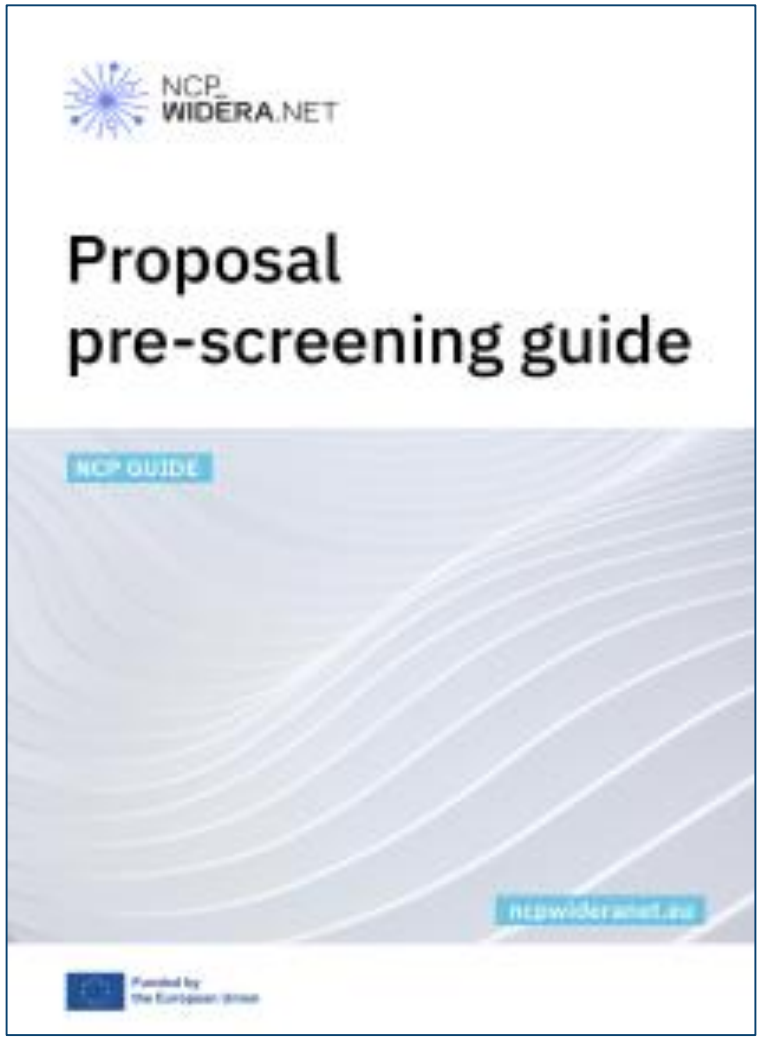
RECOMMENDATIONS 3

- **Read carefully the Excellence Hubs 2023 call FAQs –** concise document can be downloaded here



INFORMATION SOURCES

PROPOSAL PRE-SCREENING GUIDE



USEFUL INFORMATION

HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07

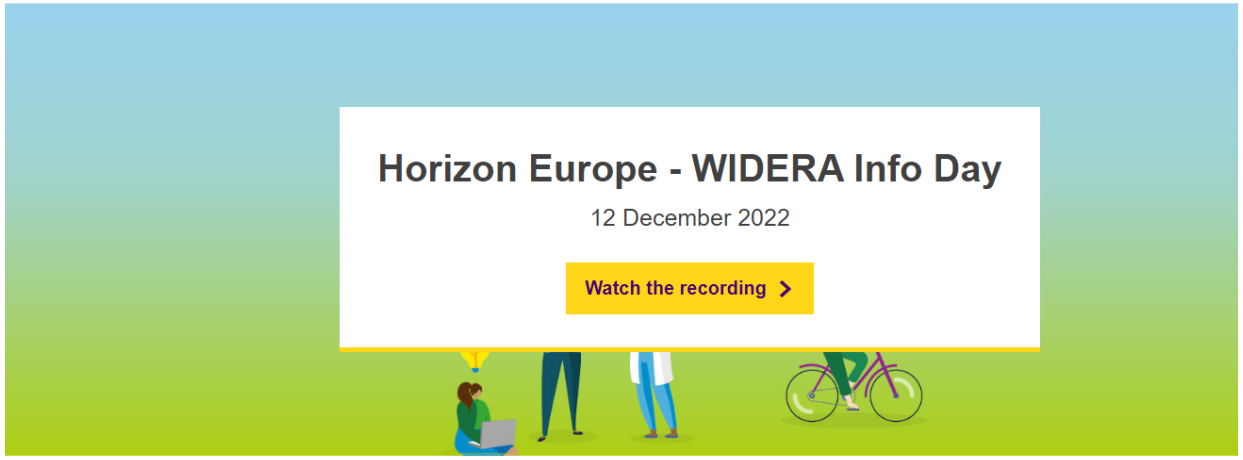
6 December 2022	**Publication of the Horizon Europe work programme for 2023-2024** Work programme
12 December 2022	**Info Day** Watch the recording
28 September 2023	**Launch of the call for proposals** Apply through the Funding and Tenders portal
7 March 2024	**Deadline for applicants to submit a proposal**
August 2024	**Applicants informed if their proposal has been selected (tbc)**
November 2024	**Grant agreement signature for successful projects**

NCP_ WIDERA.NET

NEWSLETTER

We run a monthly newsletter about policy developments, events and publications related to the WIDERA programme. We also keep our readers posted about the outcomes of our project and share news and insights from other NCP networks. You can subscribe here. You can also have a look at our past issues below.

Horizon Europe: Widening participation and spreading excellence



Under Horizon Europe, the European Commission funds research and innovation projects to strengthen research and innovation across Europe.

The 'Widening participation and spreading excellence' sub-programme contributes to building research and innovation capacity for countries lagging behind, in line with the policy objectives of the European Research Area.

Horizon Europe – Dissemination and exploitation

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Requirements

Free-of-charge dissemination and exploitation services

Dealing with non-Commission publishing houses

Further advice and resources for beneficiaries

Further resources for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions fellows and coordinators

Requirements

Beneficiaries of Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 funding must carry out activities to increase the impact of their project results:

- They must share research results with the scientific community, commercial players, civil society and policymakers ('dissemination').
- They must also take action to use their project results for commercial purposes, to tackle societal problems or in policymaking ('exploitation').

Dissemination and exploitation are a requirement as per your grant agreement, in addition to your communication activities. Check our quick guide on communication, dissemination and exploitation EN.

Free-of-charge dissemination and exploitation services

The European Commission offers various free-of-charge services to support your dissemination and exploitation activities:

Open Research Europe platform: An open access, publishing platform for scientific papers for Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe beneficiaries, including an open peer review and article revision.

Horizon Results platform: A platform for showcasing your research results, finding collaboration opportunities and getting inspired by the results of others.

QUESTIONS?

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